

11. A Study of “The Philosophy of Value” and the Role of Soka Gakkai International to Impart Value based Humanistic Education

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ABSTRACT

True restoration of humanity is only possible if the Education System is based on Humanistic Ideals. “Only a Human Being can foster another Human Being.” Daisaku Ikeda, President Soka Gakkai International. It takes a humanistic teacher to raise a truly humanistic student. To grow, blossom and flourish beautifully students and teachers require a profound philosophical base. The timeless principles of Buddhism on which Soka Education is based believes in unleashing the highest potential of each student and create value in society. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s Theory of Value closely connects a student with social life. Education that brings Beauty Benefit and Good truly adds value to the life of an individual and the country at large.

The prevailing lethargy due to the Pandemic, Juvenile delinquency, classroom violence, unruly social behaviour has put high school education in a lamentable state. The paper under consideration is a humble attempt to bring to light the efforts put in by Soka Gakkai International to foster students to become human beings of true ability, wisdom and knowledge, willing to dedicate themselves for the common good.

The paper urges Educators to reach out to students with compassion and wisdom not only to equip them intellectually but also morally to lead a happy and harmonious co-existence in society.

Keywords: *Philosophy of Value, Soka Gakkai International, Humanistic Education*

“Value arises from the relationship between evaluating subject and the object of evaluation. If either changes relative to the other, it is only obvious that the perceived value will change. The differences and shifts in ethical codes throughout history provide but one of the more outstanding proofs of the mutability of value.”

- Tsunesaburo Makiguchi

Introduction

What is the purpose of Life? Many people who introspect and reflect may interrogate themselves. Thinkers & Scholars would answer “It is the Pursuit of Truth.” This would probably mean the discovery of the rotation of the earth around its axis and revolution of the earth around the Sun. But many others would ask what value this knowledge does have, which implies human beings are constantly looking for value and the abstract truths are almost of no value. Daisaku Ikeda (President SGI) says “We all know how to grow rice. That knowledge is the understanding of one truth, the recognition of a certain concept, but no matter how detailed, that knowledge alone won’t give us the satisfaction of a full stomach. Once having eaten our fill, however, we can all understand the value of rice- even without knowing how it is grown. It stands to reason, that truth is not the substance of value.”

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (First President SGI) in his thesis, “The Philosophy of Value” says “The purpose of life lies in the pursuit of happiness, or more specifically, in the pursuit of value. The recognition of truth has, in itself, no value whatsoever, but people persist in

regarding it as an immensely valuable achievement. This leads to a grave confusion in thinking. Unless that confusion is resolved life cannot go on smoothly.”

“The two processes of recognising the truth and evaluating it are often confused; the confusion springs from illusion that truth is a value. This brings up the weakness of our critical approach. We tend to evaluate things hastily and irresponsibly without fully understanding them, based on our personal opinions. This is evaluation without recognition. Before we judge if something has value, we have to recognise or understand it correctly. When we judge things hastily, we neglect to understand them.” The entire human race is ultimately aiming at producing value. How much value we achieve determines how happy we are.

Makiguchi's system defined value as Beauty, Gain and Good. That which possesses supreme value, he termed as highest good. Value, he explained further, lies solely in the nature of the relationship between life and the objects with which it interrelates. He explains the purpose of human life is to create value. Since value derives from the relationship between humans and their surroundings, people must fully develop their unique capabilities to lead lives of supreme value. A life of highest good is truly worth that effort, but it also necessitates a correct and absolute philosophy-one that perfectly clarifies human life.

If beauty gain and good compose positive values, then ugliness, loss and evil are negative values. Positive value is the substance of human happiness, and negative value of unhappiness. This is what Makiguchi outlined in “The Philosophy of Value”

Research Methodology

The paper under consideration makes use of Secondary Data from selected Buddhist Texts and Soka Gakkai Published Literature. An attempt has been made to study the Theory of Value creation propounded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the First President of Soka Gakkai International (Value Creating Society) and relate it to Soka Education. The Pandemic Crisis, the prevailing lethargy, the increasing mental and emotional illnesses have necessitated to take up this study.

Concluding observations have been made based on the study of the work of Buddhist Sage-Nichiren Daishonin, the Three founding presidents of Soka Gakkai international and the efforts made by SGI to bring humanism to the field of education.

Important Note - It may be noted that original lines of authors have been quoted in this study so as to bring out the essence of value creation very clearly and forcefully. The various citations have been given due recognition and credit in the paper.

Objectives of Study

- To understand The Philosophy of Value.
- To study the underlying principles of Buddhism which form the basis of value creation?
- To appreciate the efforts made by Soka Gakkai and its mentors in imparting humanistic & value creating education to society.
- To articulate heartfelt observations.

Value Creation & Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism

Nichiren Daishonin was a sage in twelfth century Japan. He studied various Buddhist texts and concluded that there is a Buddha in each human being. An every human being has the potential of attaining the highest life state that is Buddhahood. Nichiren Daishonin says that a Buddha is

not a person with a halo around his head, but a person who with his/her constant endeavour tries to attain a towering life state and achieve his/her goals, thereby becoming happy. Makiguchi arrived at the Daishinon's teachings through his study of value. His activities included discussion meetings where people gave experimental proof of the life of highest good through personal experiences. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is about unleashing highest human potential and becoming absolutely happy. Buddhism believes that every human being possesses infinite and immeasurable powers of the Buddha. When awakened people can create value of the highest good and become supremely happy.

Value Creation – Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's "Philosophy of Value"

Makiguchi developed his Theory of value during his long career as the principal of a primary school in Japan. His theory is based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhist philosophy which he embraced late in his life.

It was when Makiguchi was a young teacher that Japan began to pursue aggressive policies of national wealth and military strength, with the intent of imperial expansion. In the educational field highest importance was attached to national aim of expansion and dominion. Scripts of political doctrines were circulated in schools to instil unquestioning patriotism.

In 1903, at the age of 32, Makiguchi published a thousand paged works "Jinsei Chirigaku" meaning "The Geography of Human Life". This was published on the eve of Russian- Japanese war in which Japan emerged as a super power. The matter of fact is that seven of Japan's eminent scholars from Tokyo Imperial University gave a petition to the government to take a hard stance against Russia and fuelled the public enthusiasm for war against Russia.

In contrast, Makiguchi strongly condemned narrow minded nationalism and national egotism. His major work finds relevance to contemporary education policies and is quoted -

- **The Geography of Human Life-** John Dewey wrote "The unity of all sciences is found in geography. The significance of geography is that it presents the earth as the enduring home of the occupations of man. The world without its relationship to human activity is less than a world." Makiguchi's interest in geography, in particular the interaction between and impact of geographical features and human activities draws parallels from Dewey's writing in the Book School & Society.
- **The interdependent connections between individual & life of the world-** Unless the ultimate aim is established, intermediate aims cannot be fixed. Without perceiving the world, one cannot understand the nation. Unless the life of the nation is realised, individual livelihood cannot be secured. Therefore, if we are to achieve stability of individual livelihood in every household, the wellbeing of the nation must first be established. And, without the well-being of the world, that of a nation cannot be assured.
- **Experiential learning for global citizenship-** School education should be closely connected in practice with actual social life so that it can transform unconscious living into fully conscious participation in the life of society. Education integrated into the life of society will yield benefits of a well-planned life. This will eliminate the undesirable effect of mechanical uniformity, which is a danger in standardized education.

- **Humanitarian Competition-** The methods of humanitarian competition are not, of course, simple or unitary; all other forms of competition -military, political, economic-must be conducted within a humanitarian framework. In other words, the objective of states should not be merely the selfish pursuit of their own good but should be to enhance the lives of other people as well. We must choose those methods that profit ourselves while profiting others. We must learn to engage consciously in collective life.
- **The system of value creating pedagogy (Soka Kyoiku Taikei)-** I am driven by the intense desire to prevent the present deplorable situation- ten million of our children and students forced to endure the agonies of cut-throat competition, the difficulty of getting into good schools, the examination hell and the struggle for jobs after graduation-from afflicting the next generation. I therefore have no time to be concerned with the shift in vagaries of public opinion.
- **Philosophy of Value Creation-** Value arises from the relationship between the evaluating subject and the object of evaluation. If either changes relative to the other, it is only obvious that the perceived value will change. The differences and shifts in ethical codes throughout history provide but one of the more outstanding proofs of the mutability of value.
- **The Role of Educators-** Education is not the piece meal merchandising of information; it is the provision of keys that will allow people to unlock the vault of knowledge on their own. It does not consist in pilfering the intellectual property amassed by others through no additional effort of one's own; it would rather place people on their own path of discovery and invention.

(Quoted from 'The Philosophy of Value' – Tsunesaburo Makiguchi)

Value Creation – Foundation of Soka Education

Soka Education meaning value creating education is based on the Philosophy of Value propounded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. This theory in turn is based on Buddhist principles by Twelfth century sage Nichiren Daishonin. The principles pay highest respect to the dignity of life and the ability of each individual to unleash their fullest potential in their lifetime.

Makiguchi proposed this theory of value creation at a time when Japan was at war with Russia and trying to establish its supremacy in the world. This was also when contemporary educators were introducing Western theories into Japan. During this time individuals in Japan were forced to place utmost importance to national prestige which was emphasised and imposed upon children in school. Makiguchi advocated that the purpose of education should be the happiness of children. The well-being and happiness of children are the fundamental ideals on which Soka education rests.

Makiguchi's student centred philosophy stressed on the transformed role of teachers. Teachers should not assume dictatorial positions but come down from the throne to touch students' lives. They should not become objects of worship or veneration but offer guidance to those who wish to ascend the throne of learning. He expected teachers to be equal partners in the process of learning. Soka education is not an injection of knowledge but a humanistic process that nurtures students to blossom beautifully.

Soka Education- Goals for Global Citizenship

Drawing inspiration from Makiguchi's thinking and the Buddhist understanding of interdependence Soka Gakkai President Daisaku Ikeda offered the following goals-

- The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living beings.
- The courage not to fear or deny any difference but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them.
- The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places.
- Education that fosters these qualities is the most pressing imperative facing humankind in the 21st century.

(Quoted from the book Soka Education- A collection of papers & essays by Daisaku Ikeda)

The Soka School System

The founder of Soka School System is the President of Soka Gakkai International- Daisaku Ikeda. The Soka School System is a Japanese corporate body which oversees, kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools, junior colleges and universities in Japan as well as globally. United States of America, Brazil, South Korea, Singapore, and Honkong, Malaysia are some of the countries where Soka Schools have their presence. They have affiliations and tie ups with schools and colleges in many countries. Soka University of America has a 7:1 Student -Teacher ratio and the average class size is 12 students. It is one of the top liberal arts colleges in the United States of America.

Heartfelt Observations: Hope- filled education

The summation of Makiguchi's philosophy in the words of SGI, President, Daisaku Ikeda –
“To enrich our lives and become happy, we must create true value. There is no other way. Value stems from the nature of the relationship between life and the world surrounding it. A life manifesting the positive values indicates harmony with the outer world. Conversely, a life marked by the negative values is one of discord with its surroundings. The kind of life a person leads then becomes the most important issue.”

Daisaku Ikeda explains in his book the human revolution- There is an old saying: “To cast pearls before Swine”. Pearls hold immense value for human beings but none at all for pigs. Ultimately, value lies in the nature of the relationship between subject and object, or between our lives and the surrounding environment.

The study led to the following observations-

Teaching Methodology of Gautam Buddha -Dialogue

The Teaching Methodology of Shakyamuni Buddha the use of dialogue. All the sutras written by the Buddha are in the form of dialogue. He came in direct contact with the human sufferings of birth, ageing, sickness and death and showed people the path to happiness, and revealed the truth of his own enlightenment. His doctrines reveal that human contact leading to refinement of the moral character and the search for truth is the basis of educating the mind. The search for truth or any learning is shallow and superficial if it does not have humanistic roots.

Purpose of Education- Pursuit of Happiness

Makiguchi asserted that the purpose of education must be the enduring happiness of learners. He believed that true happiness is found in a life of value creation. Value creation is the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstances. Makiguchi's ideology of value creation originated from the

insights that he got from Buddhist doctrines. Josei Toda & Daisaku Ikeda have brought the teachings of this great reformer to the world.

University's Mission- Ability and not Authority

Daisaku Ikeda says university's mission is not to produce people of authority but people of true ability, intelligence and conviction, who will dedicate themselves to the good of people. Universities need to raise individuals to shoulder the next age. That'll decide the destiny of humankind.

Sincerity of the Teacher- Foundation of Education

More than the methodology of teaching, the teacher should put efforts in building confidence and trust in students. The teachers should create an environment in which students discover the joy of learning, exploring and enquiring.

Stress & Sensitivity – Warm Compassion & no Comparison

As NichirenDaishonin writes in the Goshō “Cherry blossoms are cherry blossoms, and plum blossoms are plum blossoms.” Students should be shown warm compassion and not comparison. Allow them to grow and blossom in their own unique ways. Enable them to unleash their fullest potential and remove their self-doubts and complexes.

Empowering the Youth- Building a Sustainable Future

It is essential to deepen the students' awareness and understanding about the environmental issues threatening the planet. It is also imperative for students to reflect on their modes of living & lifestyles to renew and reform to resolve sustainability problems.

Humanistic Education – Towards Global Citizenship

As Daisaku Ikeda says, “Global Citizenship is not determined by the number of languages one speaks or the number of countries to which one has travelled.” Buddhism teaches that both good and evil are potentialities in people. It is the sustained and courageous effort to seek out the good in people through dialogue and engagement that makes an individual truly global. Taking action, working together, respecting diversity are the characteristics of a global citizen.

Soka Gakkai Initiatives – Truly commendable

A new global movement of humanistic education has been growing to renew and revive a peaceful and happy co-existence in this world. The Soka Gakkai education division has been focussing on exploring ways in which colleges and schools can impart a better educational experience. Experiential learning, engagement in society, cross cultural communication, appreciating diversity has been the hall mark of soka activities, events and exhibitions. Keeping the Buddhist perspective of education based on principles of wisdom, courage and compassion in mind, Soka Educators have done ground breaking work in creating value in society.

Based on the study, it could be concluded that Soka education enables students to become capable to chart out their own path and advance upon their chosen field of endeavour. Not cramming students with knowledge with little practical value but aligning to the needs of the society.

The essence of value creating education can be summed as “Beauty, Benefit and Good” The beauty of education lies in satisfying the seeking spirit of an individual. The benefit of education is, in its ability to provide a livelihood and comfortable living to the individual. The good of education is not only doing well to oneself but also good to society.

References

A) People

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NichirenDaishonin- Twelfth century sage in Japan
Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (first President of Soka Gakkai International)
Josei Toda (Second President of Soka Gakkai International)
Daisaku Ikeda (Third President of Soka Gakkai International)
John Dewey (Educational Theorist)

B) Terminologies & Abbreviations

- Soka meaning value creating
- The system of value creating pedagogy (Soka Kyoikutaikai)
- Soka Gakkai International (SGI) - NGO, Buddhist lay organisation,
- Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG)

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