

SIGNIFICANT DATE: Day of mentor and disciple — July 3 'Rhyming' Our Lives With the Gakkai Spirit

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American author and humorist Mark Twain once said, "History doesn't repeat itself, it rhymes." In SGI history, July 3 is the day every year that "rhymes" with the oneness of mentor and disciple, the essence of what we call the Gakkai spirit.

On July 3, 1945, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda was released from Toyotama Prison. He had been unjustly incarcerated with his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, first Soka Gakkai president. Makiguchi died in prison and Toda survived, thus inheriting Makiguchi's spirit and mission to spread the Law.

This event signifies the oneness of mentor and disciple, which transcends the boundaries of life and death and which Makiguchi and Toda inherited directly from their original mentor, Nichiren Daishonin. As President Ikeda writes:

What enabled Toda and Makiguchi to attain this state of oneness? It was their powerful, deep-seated resolution in faith, their determination to offer their lives for kosen-rufu — the decree of their original mentor, Nichiren Daishonin. (May 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 53)

This "deep-seated resolution in faith" is the Gakkai spirit.

Exactly 12 years later, on July 3, 1951, young Daisaku Ikeda was arrested by the Osaka Prefectural police on the false charge of door-to-door solicitation for votes. Young Ikeda, who had become Toda's disciple, was arrested on the same day that Toda had been released — this event, too, signifies the oneness of mentor and disciple.

Mr. Ikeda was released on July 17 and that evening wrote in his diary:

Shed tears deep in my heart at my mentor's compassion. Aware that the concern and worry Sensei [President Toda] has felt for me on this occasion has been deeper than the ocean. Must by all means spend the rest of my life repaying the debt of gratitude I owe him. (September 1992 *Seikyo Times*, p. 50)

Thus President Ikeda, wishing to repay his debt of gratitude, also inherited the spirit and mission to spread the Law.

From the perspective of my 20-plus years of practice, I feel I've only scratched the surface of understanding this spirit and mission. On July 3, 1976, when I participated with SGI-USA members in a New York parade celebrating America's Bicentennial, I first began to learn the Gakkai spirit. And I'm still learning it. Many extraordinary events have occurred to me during the seemingly brief period of my practice, for which I feel I must repay a debt of gratitude to my mentor, President Ikeda.

As long as I keep returning to the basics of practice, I know I can repay this debt and deepen my understanding. Last year on July 3, President Ikeda said in Los Angeles, "When one is completely dedicated to the path of mentor and disciple, there is no doubt or confusion, no uncertainty or fear." I want to "rhyme" my life with this great spirit.

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