

Words to the wise: Mentor & Disciple

The Lotus Sutra teaches us: ... “If one seeks out the teacher of the law, he will soon attain the way of the Bodhisattva. If he follows and studies under this teacher, he will be able to see Buddhas equal in number to the sands of the Ganges River.” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 165–66)

From SGI President Ikeda:

* Creative individuals capable of directing the course of the future are born out of truly challenging and inspiring teacher–student relationships. (September 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 50)

* The names of presidents Makiguchi and Toda will doubtless come to shine with increasing brilliance; rather, it is the mission of a disciple to see to it that they do. Toward that end, we need to show splendid actual proof by producing many humanitarian and globally minded individuals. (September 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 43)

* I have always lived in the same spirit as President Toda, day in and day out continuing a dialogue with him in my heart. This is why I have no regrets. (Aug. 29, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 4)

* Shin’ichi was at times overwhelmed by the scope of the challenge that lay before him. On occasion, he felt a deep sense of anxiety. But he would then recall how his mentor had risen amid the ashes of Japan’s defeat to complete his chosen mission, to build a great castle of happiness by accomplishing a membership of 750,000 households. Whenever Shin’ichi thought of that, courage and strength welled up in his heart like the sun breaking through dark clouds. As Toda’s disciple, he would carry out his mission just as resolutely as his mentor had. His courage became hope and then deep, certain conviction, until his heart called out, “Watch me, Sensei!” Rousing his courage with memories of his mentor, Shin’ichi would continue on his journey. (July 25, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 5)

* If disciples are soft and dependent, looking ever to their mentor to do them some favor or to protect them from harm, then they will accomplish nothing, however vast their number. But if even one disciple stands up with the heart of a lion, burning with the determination “I will protect my mentor without fail!” “I will undergo persecution and struggle alongside my mentor!” then everything will be accomplished. This is the path of mentor and disciple in Buddhism. (Aug. 1, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 8)

* “From your deeds and actions, however, I know that a disciple is one who strives to actualize the mentor’s vision — in this case, for the happiness of all people and the realization of world peace. Therefore, I am determined to successfully accomplish all the goals and objectives you set forth for kosen-rufu. I will reply to your expectations by winning in these endeavors.”

In fact, Kawanaka always came with news of some laudable success or achievement when he met Shin’ichi. He modeled his behavior after that of Shin’ichi, whom he looked up to as his mentor; in any situation he would ask himself what Shin’ichi would do if Shin’ichi were in his place. In other words, he did not stand looking toward his mentor, thinking of himself as one of the crowd; he instead strove to live side by side with his mentor, facing the same direction in which his mentor’s gaze was focused. This was his philosophy as a disciple. (*The New Human Revolution*)

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