

SIGNIFICANT DATES
JULY 3: DAY OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE
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SGI President Ikeda sure writes a lot about the oneness of mentor and disciple and Nichiren Daishonin does, too. Even Master Yoda, trainer of Jedi Knights in a distant galaxy a long time ago, said, “Always two there are.”

I’ve been working hard to understand this important concept, and it has not been easy.

One day I read how second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s noble character, not Buddhist doctrine, convinced the young Daisaku Ikeda to join the Soka Gakkai. But the next day, I read that the desire to be constantly together with the mentor is not the proper wish of a true disciple. That I must seek instead to struggle with all my might as a self-sufficient practitioner. It seems so contradictory. What does any of this have to do with July 3?

We commemorate July 3 because that was the day on which President Toda was released from prison (in 1945) and the day on which young Daisaku Ikeda was jailed on bogus charges of election law violations 11 years later. OK, but who goes to jail today and how does it relate to the issue of mentor–disciple?

It relates because the willingness of presidents Toda, Ikeda and Makiguchi to exchange life or freedom for the cause of human happiness is totally consistent with the example set by Nichiren Daishonin—the Daishonin never held back or took the easy way out. Nichiren Daishonin was quite prepared to die at any moment and thought only of teaching others how to stop suffering and enjoy life to the fullest extent possible through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

According to the Lotus Sutra, the constant thought of the Buddha is how to enable all people to enter the Way and quickly attain enlightenment. Those who devote themselves to this task with their prayers, thoughts, words and actions are acting as Buddhas. Such persons are profoundly in sync with the Law, with the universe, with Nichiren Daishonin and with the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai. How many more such persons will it take to change the destiny of all humankind? While the transformation of any community starts with the human revolution of one person, it will not become “effective” unless that spark is transmitted to others.

My current challenge is to grow out of the “feed-me, feed-me,” greedy-for-benefit thinking with which I joined this practice. The path of mentor–disciple requires me to become much more concerned about the happiness of others and the long-term viability of the SGI-USA.

Let me conclude with a new approach to this matter. President Ikeda wrote about the Lotus Sutra: “They change, from being voice-hearers who hear the teaching to voice-hearers who cause others to hear the teaching. They become voice-hearers who talk about Buddhism among the people. [They change from] ‘disciples who have been saved’ to ‘disciples who save others,’ ‘disciples who join the mentor in his struggle’” (*Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, pp. 46–47).

We can be either a powerful transmitter of the Buddha’s positivity or a passive receiver that reduces the aggregate level of compassion in the universe. Once we discover in our hearts the compassionate intentions of the universe (as documented in *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, for example), we can rebroadcast those signals back out into the

universe through our prayers, thoughts, words and deeds. By so doing, we are on the same compassion wavelength and frequency as Nichiren Daishonin and living the mentor–disciple relationship to the fullest possible extent!

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