

**THE RELATIONSHIP THAT ENHANCES OUR CHARACTER  
COMMENTARY OF “CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON”  
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I recently saw the movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* for the second time. Though it was visually stimulating and dramatically pleasing both times, I felt compelled to see it again. When I sat down to watch the movie, I was not expecting to learn anything—I just wanted to be entertained. Nevertheless, I could see elements of the mentor–disciple relationship threading its way through the movie. I was glad to have the opportunity to re-examine how I feel about this relationship and why it is important to my life.

I want to share three of the many thoughts I had on the mentor–disciple relationship based on *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. I do not want to ruin the movie for anyone who has not seen it (and I do recommend it), so this is not a movie review, but a commentary.

**Everyone needs a mentor.** Of course, we can all get by in life if we do not have a mentor or someone who can guide us along the right path, but at what cost to our development? It is important to have someone in our lives that we can follow. Naturally, our dependence on that person should not be blind. Rather, we should dedicate ourselves to fulfilling our missions under the watchful eye of someone who is fully aware of our struggles because they have been there. Their tutelage serves as a springboard for living a valuable life.

SGI President Ikeda often talks about the mentor-disciple relationship. It is evident he holds this relationship in high regard. He says: “Those who have a mentor in life are truly fortunate. The path of mentor and disciple is one that leads to personal development and growth. Those without a mentor may appear free and un beholden to anyone, but without a solid standard or model on which to base themselves, their lives become aimless and wandering” (*Faith Into Action*, p. 234).

**We should choose our mentor carefully.** There are many people who work hard, but not necessarily for the betterment of society. With so many people in the world and so many ways to interact with them, it’s no wonder that some of us fall into the wrong crowd. If it is our desire to create value and help others become happy, we should cautiously evaluate the people with whom we come in contact and choose a mentor whose views already match our own philosophy. Once we have that mentor, it is equally important that we do not lose sight of why that person is in our lives.

**We should not forget our mentor.** Watching *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* helped me realize that if one forgets the mentor and the principles he or she stands for, then the disciple quickly loses their way in the world. One of the most striking examples of the necessity of remembering the mentor occurred when one of the main characters took a path of arrogance and destruction, completely eschewing her mentor. Although both of these characters were on the wrong path anyway, the girl who forgot her mentor went further along it. She was arrogant and was convinced there was nothing more she could learn from her mentor. Her attitude led to life-altering events for some other people she met.

That character’s actions really made me consider the following quote from “The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood”: “To forget the original teacher who had

brought one the water of wisdom from the great ocean of the Lotus Sutra and instead follow another would surely cause one to sink into the endless sufferings of birth and death” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 747).

Having a bond with a mentor is the relationship that enables us to build our life-condition and character. Once each of us recognizes this, there will be no boundaries to the great actions we can take for ourselves and others.