Mentor and Disciple Are the Heart of Soka

SGI-USA July 2020 Discussion Meetings
Key Points

1. The Mentor and Disciple Relationship Is the Cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism.

2. Having a Mentor Is the Way to Develop One’s Life to the Fullest.

3. The Disciples Are Key.
The Mentor and Disciple Relationship Is the Cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism

• **Shakyamuni had 10 major disciples.** Following Shakyamuni’s guidance and using their Buddhist practice, they developed their own unique characters and qualities. Armed with a sense of their new, improved selves, they engaged in a selfless struggle to spread the humanistic teachings of Buddhism.

• For more than five decades after **Nichiren Daishonin’s** passing, Nikko Shonin carried on the solemn struggle of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

• It is the **first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai** who have revived an active and engaged mentor-disciple spirit—the essence of Nichiren Buddhism.
The Mentor and Disciple Relationship is the Cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism

The mentor-disciple relationship in Buddhism starts with the compassion of Shakyamuni Buddha to teach his disciples the path to enlightenment, and the seeking spirit of his disciples to try to understand his teaching. In short, it is a spiritual bond that depends on the self-motivated will of the disciple. This is also made clear from examining the relationship between Nichiren Daishonin and his direct disciple and successor, Nikko Shonin. The way of mentor and disciple is strict; nowhere else can we find the great path of human revolution and attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

- Ikeda Sensei, November 2017 Living Buddhism, p. 61
The Disciples Are Key

Nichiren says: “If teacher and disciple are of different minds, they will never accomplish anything” (“Flowering and Bearing Grain,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daisohnin*, vol. 1, p. 909).

In other words, the mentor-disciple relationship ultimately hinges on the commitment and actions of the disciple.

As third Soka Gakkai president, I accomplished all the goals and visions of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda. Taking on the brunt of all persecution, I fought to the end, and I triumphed. This is my greatest pride.

Now, I must entrust the future to you.

- Sensei, November 2017 *Living Buddhism*, p. 63
Having a Mentor Is the Way to Develop One’s Life to the Fullest

Whether in academics, the martial arts or any other art, when you study something and seek to master it, you need a mentor, a guide. A mentor is particularly indispensable to learning about Buddhism, which teaches the true value of life and the proper way to live. To lack a mentor in this area is to lack a concrete model of how to live as a human being.

Having a Mentor Is the Way to Develop One’s Life to the Fullest

Kosen-rufu is possible when disciples embrace the same spirit as their mentor. Without the solid pillar of the mentor-disciple relationship, it is all too easy to be swayed by one’s own emotions and the trends of the times, and one will readily cave in and give up when one’s faith is challenged.

- Sensei, November 2017 Living Buddhism, p. 55
Ikeda Sensei’s Example As a Foremost Disciple

Most of my education was under the tutelage of my mentor in life, Josei Toda. ... I learned from his example. The burning commitment to peace that remained unshaken throughout his imprisonment was something he carried with him his entire life. It was from this, and from the profound compassion that characterized each of his interactions with people, that I most learned. Ninety-eight percent of what I am today, I learned from him.

- Sensei, My Dear Friends in America, p. 449
The Disciples Are Key

“I’m always asking myself,” ‘What would Mr. Toda do in this situation?’ ‘Were my actions today in line with Mr. Toda’s spirit?’ ‘Would Mr. Toda be happy or sad if he could see me right now?’

“I’ve always inspired myself by striving to win and bring joy to Mr. Toda. That’s the source of my courage. It’s the driving force for being ever-victorious.”

“The oneness of mentor and disciple starts from living life with the same spirit as one’s mentor and always keeping the mentor firmly in one’s heart. It is easy to talk about the way of mentor and disciple, but if our mentor isn’t in our heart, we aren’t genuinely practicing Buddhism.”

Brief Experience in Faith
“The relationship between mentor and disciple is like that between a needle and thread. The mentor opens the way and reveals the principles, while the disciple, carrying on the mentor’s work, applies, develops and actualizes those principles. The disciple must also go on to surpass the mentor. The mentor, meanwhile, is ready to give everything, even their own life, for the sake of the disciple.”

- Sensei, October 2017 *Living Buddhism*, p. 63
Discussion Questions

1. When have you seen the importance of having a mentor in your life?
2. What does living based on the oneness of mentor and disciple mean to you?
3. Why is having a mentor important in times of great difficulty?
July 2020 Discussion Meeting Presentation Notes
Theme: “Mentor and Disciple Are the Heart of Soka”

Slide 1:
- Welcome and thank you for joining today's meeting!!
- The theme for today’s discussion is “Mentor and Disciple Are the Heart of Soka!”

Slide 2:
- Our Presentation today is based on 3 key points.
- They are:
  1. The Mentor and Disciple Relationship Is the Cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism.
  2. Having a Mentor Is the Way to Develop One’s Life to the Fullest.
  3. The Disciples Are Key.

Slide 3:
- To begin, we can see that Buddhism, throughout its history, has been based on the Mentor and Disciple relationship.
- **Shakyamuni had 10 major disciples.** Following Shakyamuni’s guidance and using their Buddhist practice, they developed their own unique characters and qualities. Armed with a sense of their new, improved selves, they engaged in a selfless struggle to spread the humanistic teachings of Buddhism.
- For more than five decades after **Nichiren Daishonin’s** passing, Nikko Shonin carried on the solemn struggle of the oneness of mentor and disciple.
- It is the **first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai** who have revived an active and engaged mentor-disciple spirit—the essence of Nichiren Buddhism.

Slide 4:
- Ikeda Sensei talks about the profound bond of the Mentor and Disciple relationship.
- He says: The mentor-disciple relationship in Buddhism starts with the compassion of Shakyamuni Buddha to teach his disciples the path to enlightenment, and the seeking spirit of his disciples to try to understand his teaching. In short, it is a spiritual bond that depends on the self-motivated will of the disciple. This is also made clear from examining the relationship between Nichiren Daishonin and his direct disciple and successor, Nikko Shonin. The way of mentor and disciple is strict; nowhere else can we find the great path of human revolution and attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.
Slide 5:

- In the mentor and disciple relationship, the disciples are key!
- Sensei states: Nichiren says: “If teacher and disciple are of different minds, they will never accomplish anything” (“Flowering and Bearing Grain,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daisohnin*, vol. 1, p. 909). In other words, the mentor-disciple relationship ultimately hinges on the commitment and actions of the disciple. As third Soka Gakkai president, I accomplished all the goals and visions of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda. Taking on the brunt of all persecution, I fought to the end, and I triumphed. This is my greatest pride. Now, I must entrust the future to you.

Slide 6:

- Sensei also discusses about the importance of having a mentor in life.
- “Whether in academics, the martial arts or any other art, when you study something and seek to master it, you need a mentor, a guide. A mentor is particularly indispensable to learning about Buddhism, which teaches the true value of life and the proper way to live. To lack a mentor in this area is to lack a concrete model of how to live as a human being.”

Slide 7:

- Sensei highlights the importance of disciples embracing the same spirit as their mentor.
- “Kosen-rufu is possible when disciples embrace the same spirit as their mentor. Without the solid pillar of the mentor-disciple relationship, it is all too easy to be swayed by one’s own emotions and the trends of the times, and one will readily cave in and give up when one’s faith is challenged.”

Slide 8:

- Whenever there is doubt about how one should act as a disciple, we can use Sensei’s example of being the foremost disciple.
- “Most of my education was under the tutelage of my mentor in life, Josei Toda. ... I learned from his example. The burning commitment to peace that remained unshaken throughout his imprisonment was something he carried with him his entire life. It was from this, and from the profound compassion that characterized each of his interactions with people, that I most learned. Ninety-eight percent of what I am today, I learned from him.”

Slide 9:

- In order for the disciples to strive with the mentor, the disciples must keep their mentor in their heart.
• Sensei says: “I’m always asking myself,” ‘What would Mr. Toda do in this situation?’ ‘Were my actions today in line with Mr. Toda’s spirit?’ ‘Would Mr. Toda be happy or sad if he could see me right now?’

“I’ve always inspired myself by striving to win and bring joy to Mr. Toda. That’s the source of my courage. It’s the driving force for being ever-victorious.”

“The oneness of mentor and disciple starts from living life with the same spirit as one’s mentor and always keeping the mentor firmly in one’s heart. It is easy to talk about the way of mentor and disciple, but if our mentor isn’t in our heart, we aren’t genuinely practicing Buddhism.”

Slide 10:

**(Optional slide, please share a brief 2-3 min experience related to this topic)**

Slide 11:

• To conclude, Sensei states: “The relationship between mentor and disciple is like that between a needle and thread. The mentor opens the way and reveals the principles, while the disciple, carrying on the mentor’s work, applies, develops and actualizes those principles. The disciple must also go on to surpass the mentor. The mentor, meanwhile, is ready to give everything, even their own life, for the sake of the disciple.”

Slide 12:

• Now let’s discuss!! (Feel free to utilize the zoom breakout rooms as a tool for small group discussion)

• Please use these questions as a starting point.