



# SGI AUSTRALIA AUTUMN STUDY COURSE

## THE ONENESS OF

# MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

### SESSIONS 3 & 4

The mentor and disciple relationship is core to the hopeful and empowering philosophy of Buddhism spreading throughout society and to future generations. Nichiren, awakened to the Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, is the original Buddha. In essence this is because he manifested the Law of Life through his courageous and compassionate behaviour. Thus the Law was his mentor because he demonstrated proof beyond doubt of living with the Law at the centre of one's existence. Sharing everything with his disciples so as to instil the same confidence in the Law, not all of them inherited his spirit. Only one of his close disciples in fact remained true. Then over successive centuries, a priesthood more concerned with hierarchy and tradition did not spread Buddhism and instead oversaw a decline in Buddhism. In different periods, there were however a few (unfortunately isolated) reformists who reignited the heart of Daishonin's desire for *kosen-rufu*.

It was not until first President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and his disciple second President Josei Toda formed a community (Soka Kyoiku Gakkai) to study and discuss Daishonin's Buddhism that the movement for *kosen-rufu* became a reality. Although mainly educators, Buddhism became accessible and people could practice, study and apply it in their struggles. Makiguchi's and Toda's example of oneness of mentor and disciple, demonstrated in their united courage to face persecution during World War II, became the bedrock of Soka Gakkai's continued growth after Toda's release from prison. Makiguchi died while in prison and Toda's actions were based on avenging the injustice of his mentor's death. This spurred him, not to seek revenge, rather to create a great citadel of people striving for peace. All his efforts centred on discussion meetings that mushroomed throughout Japan.

On meeting Josei Toda at one such gathering, a young Daisaku Ikeda discerned immediately Toda's towering conviction. From this point he determined Toda as his mentor in life and strove to realise Toda's vision for the Daishonin's Buddhism to spread throughout the world. In testament to the undeniable actual proof of the SGI, President Ikeda is the living mentor of this age, having realised the widespread establishment of *kosen-rufu* globally. As with his predecessors, all his efforts centred on engaging others in open, heart-to-heart dialogue in small group discussions. For this lineage to continue requires disciples who consolidate and expand *kosen-rufu* by mastering the art of dialogue centred on compassion, courage and respect for each person's dignity. Efforts to unify through a resounding commitment to dialogue ensures the mentor's legacy continues and people have access to the hope-filled philosophy of Buddhism – which the Soka Gakkai Buddha represents – a beacon of hope for humanity.

This course, held in group discussion meetings around Australia, will examine the oneness of mentor and disciple in four sessions. These will be around the themes of:

- **The essential spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple and why it is central to SGI.**
- **The relationship of mentor and disciple between first President of Soka Gakkai Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and second President of Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda.**
- **The relationship of mentor and disciple between second President of Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda and third President Daisaku Ikeda and;**
- **Soka Gakkai Buddha – Inheriting the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple.**

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## Session 3

Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda

Mr Toda and I shared a deep spiritual bond. Now, even after he has gone, he is still with me, and always will be, in the next and all future lifetimes. This is how profound the Buddhist principle of mentor and disciple is. (President Ikeda, 55<sup>th</sup> Soka Gakkai HQ Meeting, 8 December 2005)

The victories of the disciple are the victories of the mentor. These victories correspond to the determination to challenge current difficulties, be it illness, in relationships of conflict, financial hardships or stressful work. Confidently advancing in spite of these struggles and courageously encouraging others to do the same, is an example of living the mentor and disciple relationship. SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has lived his life with this same spirit – based on the mentor and disciple relationship – as his mentor, Josei Toda, went through continuous trials and tribulations, one after another. At the time when Toda's business was in financial ruins, people quickly deserted and ridiculed him; except Daisaku Ikeda. It was President Ikeda who stood by his mentor's side the whole time, protecting him and supporting him. President Ikeda shares:

Mr Toda's businesses had failed and he was burdened with enormous debts. In the Soka Gakkai, meanwhile, propagation wasn't moving forward. The organisation was deadlocked, and on top of that it was being attacked on all sides. In those circumstances, I pledged, "I really want to make Mr Toda happy. I want to see him inaugurated as president. I want to ensure he goes down in history. I want to let the world know of his greatness." All these things have become

a reality. I want each of you to achieve a proud record of lasting accomplishment, too.

Second President of Soka Gakkai Josei Toda has been described as straightforward, direct and even stubborn. These qualities were vital in post World War II, when Toda determined to establish the Soka Gakkai based on his conviction to fulfil his mentor's wish as discussed in Session Two (April *Indigo*). Against the backdrop of a devastated Japan, many youth were seeking answers, for something or someone that could be trusted. In 1947, at a gathering held in a small home in Kamata, a young Daisaku Ikeda met and listened to "Mr Toda's intense resolve as he lectured on the Daishonin's treatise *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land...*I was overpowered by his personality, and at the same time, deeply impressed by the optimism and profound philosophical focus of this gathering of ordinary citizens." (Daisaku Ikeda, SGINL – *Discussion Meetings: A Soka Gakkai Tradition-Part 1*) On the eve of the anniversary (of the end) of World War II, this encounter for Daisaku Ikeda came to be the pivotal moment in his life. Shortly after, he joined the Soka Gakkai.

Under Toda's tutelage, President Ikeda gave his entire being to support his mentor. As the only person to have graduated from "Toda University", the training President Ikeda received was invaluable and often strict. "He patiently tutored me in law, politics, economics, physics and chemistry, astronomy and the Chinese classics, and was constantly grilling me about what I had read." (*Someone to Trust*, SGI Quarterly, January 2010) Without begrudging his situation, President Ikeda engraved his mentor's spirit in his life and created

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value from every obstacle. In the same way, President Ikeda encourages his disciples to engrave the mentor's spirit in their hearts; not to merely follow the mentor but to advance alongside the mentor. In this way, the challenges we experience become an opportunity to deepen our relationship, not only with our mentor, but our family, friends and fellow members.

From this example we learn important principles about the mentor and disciple relationship. It is the disciple who chooses the mentor. Also, that the mentor is not a perfect, god-like figure as this would make it impossible to share in the mentor's vision for humanity. The spirit of the mentor is to bring hope and inspiration to ordinary citizens through conviction, encouragement and belief. The shared vision or oneness of mentor and disciple is realised when the disciple accepts responsibility to enact this spirit in their own life. It is then possible for those disciples to encourage many people to be happy while becoming happy themselves. This is the foundation and the source of joy that each of us can derive when we choose a mentor. However, enacting the mentor and disciple relationship on a consistent basis in daily life is challenging. An expression of this relationship is to pray to the Gohonzon with determination based on the same vow as the mentor, that is, for the realisation of *kosen-rufu*. Prayer centred on the oneness of the mentor and disciple relationship opens our hearts to appreciate the struggles we go through while at the same time enabling us to see the potential in others. That is, to bring forth our Buddhahood and reveal our true potential. President Ikeda writes:

We must advance just as the Daishonin instructs. We must strive earnestly based on faith – not because someone else has told us to, but for the sake of *kosen-rufu* alone. We mustn't lose sight of faith and be led astray by the hollow temptations of glory and power.

The mentor is someone who has lived their life dedicated to realising the vow of humanity's happiness. Our own Buddhist practice is a constant expression of our vow, which is the shared commitment with the mentor not to be defeated by the negative influences

in the environment or our own negative tendencies. To support and protect the mentor means to practice in this way, neither being swayed by our ever-changing emotions nor by the constant flow of influences in society. In Buddhism we learn it is possible to create value in each of our interactions, contributing to the happiness of our friends and families.

Studying the written materials of the mentors, the three presidents of Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Daishonin, we deepen our expression of care in our interactions, positively encouraging others rather than be swayed by them. Based on this spirit of Buddhist humanism in our life, we can overcome self-doubt and "become the master of your mind" (WND1p502).

When there are obstacles that seem insurmountable, it is the unity of the mentor and disciple that brings forth potential to break through. It would be almost impossible to imagine the Soka Gakkai in post World War II compared with the current Soka Gakkai International now with its membership practising Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 192 countries and territories. This has been achieved only through the unity of the mentor and disciple. Just as President Ikeda graduated from "Toda's University", he has dedicated his life to impart the same learning through his writings and guidance. These are available for all disciples to engrave and enact in daily life, ensuring that the spirit of mentor and disciple carries on long into the future beyond our children and children's grandchildren. That is to say that the efforts and unity of the disciples will be the mentors of Buddhism in the future. That is why it is so significant that we express our appreciation by uniting with members and leaders of the SGI. Josei Toda called this Soka Gakkai Buddha. It is this unity of the disciples that will carry the spirit of the mentors in supporting the happiness of humanity into the future. This will be introduced further in Session Four.

A few weeks before President Toda passed away in April 1958; he called the young Daikoku Ikeda to his side and told him that he had dreamt of going to Mexico, where people were waiting to learn about Buddhism. One year later, President Ikeda made the first steps to fulfilling Toda's vision of people practising across the globe by embarking on an overseas tour to

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Participants from the SGIA General Members Training Course in March engaging in dialogue

begin the spread of *kosen-rufu*. Now with a strong foundation of *kosen-rufu* laid that dream is a reality and it is why President Ikeda is considered the mentor of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He has opened the path and paved the way, demonstrating how we can live as a Buddhist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Centering his activities on dialogue, he continues to prove every interaction is an opportunity to manifest the spirit of the mentor and disciple relationship. The compassionate heart of the mentor is to impart their wisdom and belief in the potential of the disciple. “Today’s university” for President Ikeda was the embodiment of Today’s compassionate belief in him. It required tremendous struggle from President Ikeda to study and work alongside his mentor and engrave all he learnt so as to fulfil second President Today’s vision for world-wide *kosen-rufu*. In the same spirit, President Ikeda is imparting his vision and wisdom for the happiness of humanity through his guidance and writings, and the proof of his continuous belief in dialogue. To carry on that spirit requires the disciples to engrave these writings in their lives and challenge to engage in dialogue. This is how President Ikeda responded to his mentor, saying:

As the organisation’s third president, I have been deeply inspired by my predecessors. I have felt a powerful responsibility to universalise and ensure the long-term flourishing of the teachings. (President Ikeda, *Tricycle Magazine* article published in August 2009 *Indigo*)

The relationship between a mentor and a disciple is essential in our Buddhist practice as the three presidents of Soka Gakkai have proven. It is crucial because it is the mentor that shows proof and it is the mentor that stirs conviction deep within the life of the disciple; giving them the inspiration to continue no matter what circumstances they are facing right now. It is a profound, eternal bond so strong that it transcends time and space. To choose to have a mentor is not to idolise, nor is it about hierarchy. The role of the disciple is not to wait for instruction and the role of the mentor is not to bark orders. Both the mentor and disciple face the same direction, advancing in unity. As President Ikeda has mentioned, “the path of mentor and disciple is the foundation of all our efforts.”

**End Session 3**

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PHOTO: BILL CROSSLAND

Joyful participants from the SGIA General Members Training Course

## Session 4

### Enacting and Inheriting the Mentor's Spirit for the Sake of the Future

In 2010, we are celebrating many milestones in the history of Soka Gakkai International. All these have been made possible because of the profound bond of mentor and disciple. The heritage of this bond of mentor and disciple is enabling so many millions of people to practice the profound philosophy of Buddhist humanism and advance the movement of world peace through dialogue. The continual actual proof shown by SGI President Ikeda is why he is considered the mentor of this age.

Established around the world through the network of SGI, there are countless dialogues occurring in people's living rooms. President Ikeda has described the warm atmosphere of these group discussion meetings held in

people's homes as a spiritual oasis and at the cutting edge of the times. These groups are where people come together to have open and free discussions and to be refreshed and revitalised. Originally encouraged by Nichiren Daishonin as he writes, "Those resolved to seek the way should gather and listen to the contents of this letter" (WND1p206). In essence, it is the Soka Gakkai that has revived this spirit of people mutually supporting each other to learn from the mentor's example by directly engaging in the same activity – that is, encouraging belief in each other's potential through dialogue. First President of Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, thoroughly enjoyed meeting members at small group meetings. However, these meetings began

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to come under the surveillance of the Special Higher Police (authority responsible for suppressing people's rights), who later imprisoned Makiguchi and Toda. "Mr Toda identified discussion meetings as the central pivot of our movement's development." (15<sup>th</sup> Soka Gakkai HQ Meeting, 6 February 2008) SGI President Ikeda continues to encourage the central importance of group discussion, saying:

Discussion meetings are the starting point of *kosen-rufu*. They are Soka gardens of happiness and peace. They are the origin of unity of mentor and disciple. They are the source of absolute victory. Distancing yourself from discussion meetings is distancing yourself from the haven of good fortune of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. (President Ikeda, *Discussion Meetings – The Starting Point of Kosen-rufu*, SGINL, 6972)

The small group meeting is the "life blood" of the SGI and the perfect embodiment of Nichiren Daishonin's and the three presidents of Soka Gakkai's spirit of care and compassion. As disciples, we have the great opportunity to carry on this spirit in the small group meetings held in our homes and local areas. As President Ikeda writes:

President Toda predicted that in the sutras of the future, the Soka Gakkai's name would be recorded as "Soka Gakkai Buddha". The unified gathering of the Soka Gakkai, directly connected to the Daishonin and working to make *kosen-rufu* a reality, is itself a Buddha. (President Ikeda's *Lectures on The Heritage of The Ultimate Law of Life*, Instalment 8)

It would be a passive, easy practice if we were to wait for others to support us or always rely on the mentor to encourage us. Especially when we have our own struggles, how is it possible to support others? "I am struggling myself!" In Buddhism, it is precisely because we are struggling that we can support and encourage others. Going through a struggle and challenging to overcome it, we can better understand and care for

another person who is going through difficulties. Our hardships then become a source of joy as we deepen our life experience gain confidence based on proof and share our experience with others. Our struggles take on new purpose and meaning in our life.

When our heart and sense of purpose change, everything changes. As we work for the happiness and welfare of others, we enter a path in which our lives come to shine with the greatest brilliance. (President Ikeda, Executive Leaders Conference, Tokyo, 10 May 2006)

We need the the desire and determination to open our heart of compassion to support our friends and family together with the commitment to dialogue. Also gratitude for the foundation laid by the mentors of the group discussion movement is paramount.

Mr Toda sternly stated, "If you think you'll always have the opportunity to hear your mentor's teachings, you're very much mistaken." Being alive at the same time as the mentor means that we have had the opportunity to receive abundant guidance directly; and to study and practice alongside a great mentor. It is the appreciation of this generation of disciples, expressed in the continuation of a vibrant group discussion movement that will ensure the legacy of the mentor is celebrated well into the future. This will be possible when each individual embraces the mentor's wish as their own, sharing the same commitment to protect and support humanity by enacting this proven methodology of creating peace. To support others in this way, dedicating one's life to raise capable people who can further care, inspire and encourage other people is the meaning of 'standing up' as a disciple. The transformation of each person's experiences into value for the sake of revealing the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which Mr Toda termed as Human Revolution, is the greatest cause towards our own happiness. This inner-motivated desire to transform our life for the sake of others is the exact same spirit lived and expressed by Nichiren Daishonin and further exemplified by the behaviour of all three presidents of Soka Gakkai. President Ikeda highlights:

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The Soka Gakkai is a beautiful realm of comrades working together for *kosen-rufu* – a realm built through the all-out struggles of the first three presidents, united by the bonds of mentor and disciples and carrying on the spirit of the Daishonin. Through the efforts of dedicated disciples striving to fulfil the mentor’s vision, our SGI network, a precious treasure of humanity, will no doubt spread even more widely throughout the world and far into the future. (President Ikeda’s Lecture Series, *On Prolonging One’s Life Span*, October 2007)

President Ikeda has taken full responsibility for the movement for world peace for 50 years and is now 82 years of age. Now, it is the disciples who have made the same vow of *kosen-rufu* who willingly receive the baton of responsibility. This is a joyful responsibility and a sublime way to live, not a burden. President Ikeda encourages us that the most valuable way to help other people grow is to consistently encourage and nurture them; especially the youth who will shoulder the future. President Ikeda shares:

In the same spirit as Mr Toda, I have thrown myself wholeheartedly into the endeavour of fostering the youth, of raising capable successors, and taken every necessary step to pave the way. (President Ikeda, Nationwide Representative Conference, Tokyo, 27 June 2006)

As such, fostering people is the foundation for all value creation. And it is especially crucial that we of the Soka Gakkai foster people of lion-hearted faith. (President Ikeda’s Editorial, Translated from January 2008 issue of *Daibyakurenge*.)

The three presidents of Soka Gakkai can be credited with creating a community inspired by the spirit of Buddhist humanism. Not reliant on hierarchy or authority, it is the first time in history a unified community of practitioners has been formed founded on small group dialogues and the happiness of each individual. Furthering this unity is reliant on disciples

consistently gathering together to discuss the writings of Nichiren Daishonin and the three presidents. This study provides the spiritual nourishment for our own growth and ensures we are not easily misled or influenced by what are termed the three powerful enemies – briefly, arrogant lay people, arrogant priests and false sages. In other words those with strong opinions who can easily exercise influence over others but do not show actual proof of their own behaviour. In contrast, first President Makiguchi died in prison for his belief; Mr Toda has said that the Soka Gakkai organisation is more important than his own life and in that same spirit, President Ikeda and Mrs Ikeda too have dedicated their lives for the sake of the SGI and the members.

As more and more people join the SGI and when President Ikeda passes away, it will be imperative that we protect the SGI and therefore the great legacy of the mentors. Constantly President Ikeda quotes the Daishonin, “it is the heart that is most important” (WND1p1000). There is no qualification that is required to encourage another person. With our hearts we harmonise with others, that is all which is required to support another person. When President Ikeda passes away, he will still be our mentor. It will be his heart and spirit that will be expressed in the lives of disciples who choose to strive and dedicate themselves to unifying with others and protecting the community of practitioners. The mentor’s life will be lived out by the proof shown by these disciples. Just as we understand the incredible lives and spirit of the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, through the expression and behaviour of President Ikeda. Crucially, it is through the unity of President Ikeda’s disciples that generations to come will have the opportunity to connect with President Ikeda. That is to say, uniting together with the same vision as President Ikeda is the mentor for future generations. In this way, the historical achievement of a global community of practitioners striving for *kosen-rufu* will survive beyond the mentor’s lifetime and future generations will benefit from a profoundly humanistic philosophy.

**We hope you enjoyed this study course**