

**Understanding Mentor and Disciple
Unity — the Key to Victory
By AMELIA MORAN, New York**

The key to victory lies in unity. This is one of the precious lessons I've learned from my mentor, SGI President Ikeda, and through practicing in the SGI-USA. People who strive to work together in harmonious unity accumulate the benefit and fortune to be protected by all around them in lifetime after lifetime.

Because of the remarkable unity displayed in the mentor–disciple relationship among presidents Makiguchi, Toda and Ikeda, the SGI has developed into what it is today, surmounting all obstacles. An example of this unity was shown when Makiguchi was pondering who would help him publish his manuscript *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*. Without the slightest hesitation, Toda said: "I'll do it, no matter what the effort required.... I want to do it for you, Sensei!"

In turn, President Ikeda, as he explained last year in his Columbia University speech, resolved to follow Mr. Toda as his mentor in life when he learned that Toda and Makiguchi had been jailed for opposing Japan's militarist government.

Indeed, throughout his visit to the United States last year, President Ikeda introduced and explained Makiguchi's work during his major speeches. This had been Mr. Toda's wish — to spread Makiguchi's ideals throughout the world. Thus, President Ikeda's work for world peace today is in honor of the mentor–disciple relationship.

President Ikeda has said:

The uncompromising relationship of master and disciple cannot be based on partial or incomplete efforts. Only by fully realizing the vision of the master can one call himself a true disciple.

The true disciple is one who is totally committed to fulfilling the master's ideals. He lives by the truth in his heart, swayed by neither praise nor blame. This shows the true measure of a person.

Throughout my practice, I have tried to maintain this attitude and set an example so that others can see what it means to have a mentor in life. Sometimes, though, I've needed my seniors to remind me of President Ikeda's guidance.

As a new member I did my best to practice correctly, yet I somehow was always finding fault with my leader. She, in turn, was always finding fault with me.

Our leader invited us to dinner one evening. He explained how our lack of appreciation and unity was not only impacting negatively on our lives but was also discouraging our members. He urged us to overcome this tendency and learn to see each other's good points.

After that, we both learned how to talk with appreciation about each other. Even today, although we do not practice in the same area, we ask about each other's welfare.

In his book *Learning From the Goshō*, President Ikeda writes: "When we base ourselves on this spirit of 'one in mind,' there is neither envy nor backbiting. Nor is there shirking of responsibility. Instead, we can manifest strong, broad-minded faith, and our lives will overflow with benefit."

I am so glad my leaders helped me understand this early in my practice, thereby enhancing my seeking spirit to continuously learn President Ikeda's intent and apply it to my practice.

I have found that emulating my mentor by trying to unite with others is not always easy, but the dividends make it worthwhile. For instance, when I became a leader, two very capable women's division members found it almost impossible to get along with each other. Yet, by chanting, home visiting them and continuously urging them to talk with each

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other and me, we gradually built bonds of appreciation and trust.

In my family, too, my husband and I, over the many years of our practice, have learned how to apply President Ikeda's guidance about unity to our family life. With chanting and seeking guidance, we have learned to be more patient and tolerant of each other — and to disagree while maintaining a sense of mutual appreciation.

To my son, our resulting family life has been so encouraging that he is spontaneously chanting every day to live up to his potential. Although we introduced him to the practice as a child, he stopped when he became a teenager. He told me that based on how he saw his parents grow and develop he was encouraged to start practicing again. Now, people ask him what makes him act the way he does. So, he is constantly introducing people to this Buddhism — because he has seen how it unites people.

Throughout my practice, my spirit to unite with others has given me the courage and determination to carry out, to the best of my ability, whatever I can for the sake of the members and kosen-rufu. The mentor–disciple relationship has taught me this spirit.

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