

# Assuming the spirit of the mentor

“With regards to the sentence: ‘To make heard the lion’s roar’, ‘The Orally Transmitted Teachings’ say: The lion’s roar indicates the preaching of the Buddha. The preaching of the Law refers to the Lotus Sutra and specifically to Nam-myoho-enge-kyo [...] As such, “roar” refers to the sound of the mentor and disciple who recite [daimoku] together in unison. “To make heard” [the lion’s roar] refers to launching Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law. <sup>1</sup>

The above paragraph expresses the principle of the oneness of mentor and disciple, where the most important point is the word “to launch”. “To launch” means not being passive, but standing up and taking action. Ultimately, everything depends on the awareness and determination of the disciple.

On the other hand, in the same paragraph, the lion’s roar is not something special, it’s not like giving a lecture at an international event, for example; it is simply found in the action of initiating a sincere dialogue that directly reaches the life of the person with whom we are talking.

In fact, in the 13th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Encouragement to Devotion, Shakyamuni urges the

bodhisattvas who are making their vow, to roar with the same indomitable spirit as their mentor.

Although in this Buddhism we talk of disciples, there is no formal initiation process by which someone is officially ordained as such. The disciples are those who give “voice to the lion’s roar” and who fight for kosen-rufu in this precise moment. What matters is action.

The path of mentor and disciple is crucial in order to walk the true path of humanistic sentiment. However, these days, people tend to think of this relationship as something rather old and feudal.

In Buddhism the mentor-disciple relationship begins, on the one hand, with the benevolence of

Shakymuni Buddha who teaches the path towards enlightenment and, on the other hand, with the seeking spirit of his followers, who wish to understand the Law. In short, it is a spiritual union that is possible only through a spontaneous act of will, coming from the disciple. This is clearly shown when we observe the relationship between Nichiren Daishonin and his disciple and direct successor Nikko Shonin.

When we analyze the difference between the mentor-disciple relationship in Buddhism and other relationships, as for example the master-apprentice in the secular world, we could say that the relationship between the master and the apprentice is, on a social level, a rapport between a principal and his subordinate. The apprentice is

1) Gosho Zenshu. Page 748...

expected to serve his superior and to demonstrate absolute loyalty. In Buddhism, on the contrary, there is no hierarchy.

If one doesn't have a correct understanding of the Law, one cannot successfully carry out one's Buddhist practice. To give an example, to learn to drive a car, you have to follow the instructor's guidance, to know the rules of the road and the ways to handle it in the appropriate way. If you drive according to your whims, you will probably have an accident.

In Buddhism this is even more serious, because what is at stake is the attainment of Buddhahood, or rather, the happiness of all humanity. If one has a superficial or incorrect understanding of Buddhism, the path to happiness will close for both oneself and others. At times, the guidance from the mentor comes from his strict compassion. However, it is very important to understand his spirit. Of course, as human beings, mentor and disciples are equal, however the former strives to embrace the latter with compassion.

In his writing: "Flowering and Bearing Grain," the Daishonin says:

**"It is said that, if a teacher has a good disciple, both will gain the fruit of Buddhahood, but if a teacher fosters a bad disciple, both will fall into hell. If teacher and disciples are of different minds, they will never accomplish anything!"<sup>2</sup>**



Therefore, if the mentor and the disciple have different ideas they won't be able to achieve anything. In the end, it all depends on the disciple. The huge growth of the Soka Gakkai has been achieved through

the brilliant and indestructible bond that unites the mentor with the disciple. If we are profoundly aware of the mission that we have to live a life dedicated to kosen-rufu, we will never have anything to fear.

2) Flowering and Bearing Grain, The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin p. 909



The essence of the Soka Gakkai's spirit, which advances towards kosen-rufu and recognizes Nichiren Daishonin as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, is the eternal

bond of mentor and disciple. Soka Gakkai is an indestructible alliance of people united by the noble and supreme mission for kosen-rufu, completely free from calculated or

selfish interests. As long as the spirit of mentor and disciple remains alive, the Soka Gakkai will continue to develop eternally.