



Debra Williams

SGI-USA

2016 Introductory Exam Workbook
40 Sample Questions

What Is the 2016 Introductory Exam?

This October, the SGI-USA will offer the Introductory Exam for members and guests. This is an opportunity for those taking the exam to study and deepen their understanding of Nichiren Buddhism. Those who pass this exam will be eligible to take the Essentials Exam, Part 1, which is scheduled for January 2018.

- This exam is open to anyone who has not taken or passed a previous Introductory Exam, which is the first level of exams in the SGI-USA.
- The booklet *An Introduction to Buddhism* contains all the material for this exam. All new members receive this booklet upon joining the SGI-USA, and it is also sold in SGI-USA bookstores for \$2.00. You can also download the booklet for free at www.sgi-usa.org/introstudy.
- The 40 sample questions in this workbook are all based on the material in *An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition. The page numbers indicated in this workbook refer to pages in the booklet.
- The exam consists of 20 multiple-choice questions, and it will be graded as pass/no pass.
- Times and locations of the exams will be communicated through your local SGI-USA organization.
- The exam is also offered in several foreign languages. Please contact your respective language-group coordinators for more information.



SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE

Study Exams: An SGI Tradition

Today, many thinking people are re-evaluating their lives and searching for the path to genuine happiness. The ultimate answer to this quest is found in Nichiren Buddhism. Learning about and studying the hope-filled philosophy of human revolution is the purpose of the study exams that have become an SGI tradition.

Those who took the recent elementary-level study exams held in Japan (on September 28, 2014) studied hard in their spare time amid their busy work, school and other commitments. Nothing is more admirable. Having studied for and challenged the exam is in itself the greatest treasure. I hope all those who coached and supported the examinees will also be proud of their contributions.

A seeking spirit in faith gives rise to boundless benefit. A spirit to encourage others to reveal their Buddha nature shines with the spirit of the Lotus Sutra.

The important thing is that, through the study exam, members feel even more inspired to keep improving themselves, deepen their faith and advance kosen-rufu.



With regard to reading the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda said, "Rather than simply trying to understand the Daishonin's words, I seek to come into contact with his immense compassion, his towering conviction, his ardent spirit to aid and protect others, and his solemn and unswerving commitment to kosen-rufu."

—Excerpts from the July 3, 2015, *World Tribune*, p. 3

I. BUDDHIST TERMS

“Faith, Practice and Study” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 7–10)

1. What key passage from Nichiren Daishonin’s letter “The True Aspect of All Phenomena” stresses the importance of faith, practice and study?

2. What do we come to see as we deepen our faith through study of Nichiren Buddhism?

“Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (pp. 11–15)

3. What does *Nam* of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo mean?

4. What does *Renge* of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo mean?

“The Ten Worlds” (pp. 16–26)

5. Rather than being distinct realms that certain beings inhabit, what are the Ten Worlds according to the Lotus Sutra?

6. In the concept of the Ten Worlds, what differentiates the four noble worlds from the six paths?

“Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime” (pp. 27–30)

7. Nichiren states, “Each thing—the cherry, the plum, the peach, the damson—in its own entity, without undergoing any change, possesses the eternally endowed three bodies” (*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 200). What does this passage suggest regarding the attainment of Buddhahood?

8. What are the two kinds of happiness that second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda describes, and what is the distinction between them?

“The Gohonzon” (pp. 31–35)

9. Why does Nichiren refer to the Gohonzon as a mirror?

10. Where should we “seek” the Gohonzon?

“Faith Equals Daily Life” (pp. 36–39)

11. Buddhism is not magic. We undoubtedly see our prayers realized when we combine the unlimited

power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon with what elements?

12. In “The Three Kinds of Treasure,” what does Nichiren say to Shijo Kingo about the significance or purpose of Buddhism?

“Changing Karma Into Mission” (pp. 40–45)

13. Nichiren Buddhism exists to enable people to change their karma and become truly happy. What is karma?

14. How does Nichiren Buddhism view obstacles, sufferings and negative influences that arise in the course of working for kosen-rufu?

“Faith for Overcoming Obstacles” (pp. 46–50)

15. In “Letter to the Brothers,” what does Nichiren instruct his followers to do when facing obstacles in the course of their Buddhist practice?

16. When faced with the three obstacles and four devils, what does Nichiren say “the wise” will do?

II. THE LIFE OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN (pp. 50–66)

17. What was Nichiren’s main conclusion after many years of intensely studying the teachings of the major Buddhist schools of Japan?

18. What took place on April 28, 1253?

19. What prompted Nichiren to write “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”?

20. What was the significance of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution for Nichiren?

21. What two works did Nichiren write while exiled on Sado Island that clarify the “object of devotion in terms of the Person” and the “object of devotion in terms of the Law”?

22. What was the Atsuhara Persecution and what did this persecution indicate to Nichiren?

23. To whom did Nichiren entrust his teachings before the end of his life?

III. THE HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI (pp. 67–85)

24. What does the word *soka* mean?

25. While in prison for upholding his beliefs, President Toda deeply contemplated the significance and meaning of the Lotus Sutra, and eventually awakened to two essential realizations regarding what is taught in the sutra. What were the two realizations?

26. What did the young Daisaku Ikeda do on August 24, 1947?

27. What did SGI President Ikeda set out to do on October 2, 1960?

28. What has President Ikeda done every year since 1983?

29. According to the article, what has President Ikeda said of the relationship between dialogue and peace?

IV. SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S STUDY LECTURE SERIES

“The Dragon Gate” (pp. 87–91)

30. In “The Dragon Gate,” what does Nichiren highlight through the example of the carp struggling to climb the waterfall to turn into a dragon?

31. Regarding the strong currents of the waterfall that drive the carp back, what does President Ikeda say these currents can be likened to?

32. In this writing, Nichiren says, “My wish is that all my disciples make a great vow.” In his lecture, how does President Ikeda connect living based on a great vow to bringing about our practice of the Mystic Law to a successful completion?

“How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way” (pp. 92–96)

33. President Ikeda offers a detailed explanation of Nichiren’s words “revere Myoho-renge-kyo inherent in our own life as the object of devotion.” What does he say is key to activating the “Myoho-renge-kyo inherent in our own life”? And what does he say will happen if we were to lose sight of this important point?

34. In this writing, Nichiren offers an analogy, saying, “When a caged bird sings, birds who are flying in the sky are thereby summoned and gather around, and when the birds flying in the sky gather around, the bird in the cage strives to get out.” How does President Ikeda explain this analogy as it pertains to the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo?

“The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon” (pp. 97–100)

35. In “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” in what does Nichiren say “this Gohonzon” is found?

36. What is the significance of Nichiren’s statement “The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people”?

37. In this letter, Nichiren also states, “The body is the palace of the ninth consciousness, the unchanging reality that reigns over all of life’s functions.” According to President Ikeda’s lecture, what does “the unchanging reality” refer to?

V. SOKA SPIRIT (pp. 101–07)

38. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood upholds the doctrine that the high priest alone has the power to determine who attains Buddhahood and who does not. It also believes that practitioners must obediently follow the high priest. This runs counter to which statement of Nikko Shonin’s “Twenty-six Admonitions”?

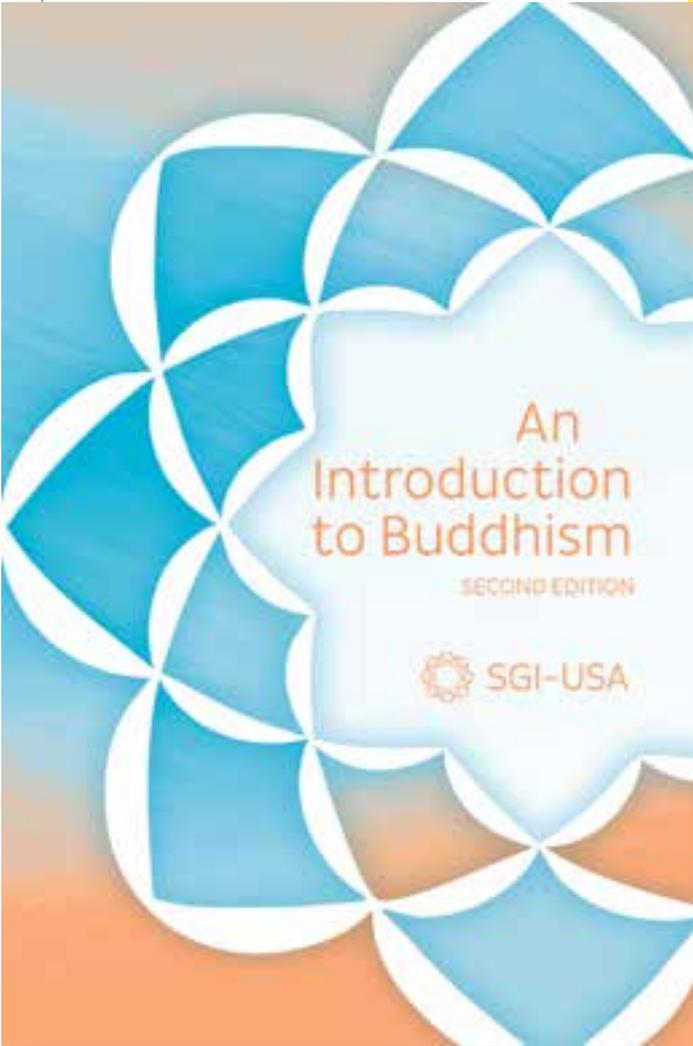
39. The claim of Nichiren Shoshu that “the fundamental principle of the Daishonin’s Buddhism is transmitted only to the high priest” is contradicted by many of Nichiren’s own statements. What is an example of such a statement by Nichiren given in this section?

40. Nichiren emphasizes the Lotus Sutra’s teaching recognizing that all people are equally capable of attaining Buddhahood. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, however, asserts that “an innate difference exists between the priesthood and laity in the Daishonin’s Buddhism.” This stands in stark contrast to many of Nichiren’s statements. What are a few examples of Nichiren’s statements expressing the equality of all people?

What to Bring on the Day of the Introductory Exam:



- A no. 2 pencil with eraser
- Your membership ID number (found on your membership ID card, or your *World Tribune* or *Living Buddhism* mailing label). The membership ID consists of 5 letters and 4 numbers. Example: SOKSU2030. If you fill in your membership ID, you will NOT have to fill in your address. If you do not have or know your membership ID, you will need to bubble in your address information.
- The name of your SGI-USA district, zone and territory.



An
Introduction
to Buddhism

SECOND EDITION

 SGI-USA

An Introduction to Buddhism

Second Edition

This booklet not only is an informative and useful resource for those beginning their practice of Nichiren Buddhism, it also serves as the material for the SGI-USA Introductory Exam being offered this October.

The booklet includes explanations of several basic Buddhist concepts, historical information and study of Nichiren Daishonin's writings.

Find the booklet at any SGI-USA bookstore for \$2 or download it for free at www.sgi-usa.org/introstudy.

SKU #300311 | \$2.00