

SGI-USA INTRODUCTORY EXAM

Sample Questions

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 are the two key components of practice in Nichiren Buddhism?
3. What do we come to see as we deepen our faith through study of Nichiren Buddhism?

“Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 11–15)

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

“The Ten Worlds” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, 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” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 27–30)

7. How does Nichiren describe the meaning of “attain” as it pertains to “attaining Buddhahood”?
8. 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?

“The Gohonzon” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 31–35)

9. In “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” what does Nichiren Daishonin say about seeking the Gohonzon?
10. Today, the SGI has embraced the Gohonzon as Nichiren truly intended. What does Nichiren say about “this great mandala”?

“Faith Equals Daily Life” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 36–39)

11. Through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, how do we produce the most meaningful results or rewards?
12. In “The Three Kinds of Treasure,” what does Nichiren instruct Shijo Kingo to do in dealing with jealous colleagues, some of whom had spread rumors and made false reports about him?
13. In the same letter, what does Nichiren also say to Shijo Kingo about the significance or purpose of Buddhism?

“Changing Karma Into Mission” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 40–45)

14. Nichiren Buddhism exists to enable people to change their karma and become truly happy. What is karma?
15. Describe the process of changing karma in Nichiren Buddhism.
16. How does Nichiren Buddhism view obstacles, sufferings and negative influences that arise in the course of working for kosen-rufu?
17. What is the principle of “lessening karmic retribution”?
18. Compare the principle of “voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma” with that of “changing karma into mission.”

“Faith for Overcoming Obstacles” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 46–50)

19. What words of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai does Nichiren cite to encourage his followers who will surely face obstacles in the course of their Buddhist practice?
20. When faced with the three obstacles and four devils, what does Nichiren say “the wise” will do?

II. THE LIFE OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

(*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 50–66)

21. What was Nichiren’s initial reason for deciding to become a Buddhist monk?
22. What was Nichiren’s main conclusion after many years of intensely studying the teachings of the major Buddhist schools of Japan?
23. What took place on April 28, 1253?
24. What prompted Nichiren to write “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”?
25. What two things did Nichiren predict would happen if the people continued to believe in misleading teachings and failed to embrace the correct Buddhist teaching?
26. What was the significance of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution for Nichiren?
27. What was the Atsuhara Persecution?
28. To whom did Nichiren entrust his teachings before the end of his life?

III. THE HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI

(An Introduction to Buddhism, second edition, pp. 67–85)

29. What does the word *soka* mean?
30. 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 messages of the sutra. What were the two realizations?
31. What did Daisaku Ikeda do on August 24, 1947?
32. What did SGI President Ikeda set out to do on Oct. 2, 1960?
33. What has President Ikeda done every year since 1983?
34. According to the article, what has President Ikeda said of the relationship between dialogue and peace?

IV. SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S LECTURE SERIES "LEARNING FROM THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN: THE TEACHINGS FOR VICTORY"

(An Introduction to Buddhism, second edition, pp. 87–100)

"The Dragon Gate"

35. In "The Dragon Gate," what does Nichiren emphasize through the analogy of the carp struggling to climb the waterfall to turn into a dragon?
36. Regarding the strong currents of the waterfall that drive the carp back, what does President Ikeda say these currents can be likened to?
37. 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 our practice of the Mystic Law to a successful completion?

"How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way"

38. President Ikeda offers a detailed explanation of Nichiren's words "revere Myoho-enge-kyo inherent in our own life as the object of devotion." What does he say is key to activating the "Myoho-enge-kyo inherent in our own life"? And what does he say will happen if we were to lose sight of this important point?
39. 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 our practice of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo?

“The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon”

40. In “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” what is the significance of Nichiren’s statement “The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people”?

41. In this letter, Nichiren also states tht “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 this statement mean?

42. In “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” what does Nichiren say about faith and the Gohonzon?

V. SOKA SPIRIT (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, second edition, pp. 101–07)

43. 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 requires that practitioners must obediently follow the high priest and never question whether his teachings or actions correctly acord with Nichiren’s teachings. This runs counter to which statement of Nikko Shonin’s “Twenty-Six Admonitions”?

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

45. 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?