SOKA SPIRIT
CHANTING SESSIONS

► PURPOSE

1) Chant Nam-myoho-rengyokyo to establish the correct teaching for the peace of the land.
2) Hone our abilities to recognize devilish functions internally and externally.
3) Learn the essential spirit of President Ikeda and the SGI.
4) Unite around the current SGI-USA direction and focus.

► SUGGESTED AGENDA

- Daimoku and gongyo led by central figure (1 hour)
- Study presentation by youth member (5 min)
- Encouragement by region-national line leader (7–10 min)

► RESPONSIBILITIES

- Fukudoshi
Two–three youth should be assigned to support daimoku as fukudoshi for 20–30 minutes each. For tips on being fukudoshi, please see p. 2.

- MC
One youth emcee, with the support of seniors in faith, should be assigned to welcome the members and move the meeting along. For tips on being emcee, please see p. 2.

- Study Presentation
One youth, with the support of seniors in faith, should give a well-prepared study presentation (5 min) based on the Soka Spirit curriculum. Please see the Soka Spirit study guide.

- Encouragement
A region–national line leader of any division should share encouragement related to the current organizational focus and convey the spirit of the week or month.

Note: The Soka Spirit toso is a wonderful training opportunity for the youth. If there are no youth for the responsibilities above, please work with the region or zone to find youth support.
TIPS ON BEING EMCEE

- The emcee’s voice should be stirring, powerful and brimming with life force.
  “Emcees must have the determination to bear full responsibility for the meeting and use their voices to transform the atmosphere into a place of joy in seeking the Law, a true Buddhist assembly” (The New Human Revolution, vol. 25, p. 187).

- Get a good night’s sleep and eat a proper meal.
  “An emcee needs to enunciate, so that everyone can hear and understand what is said. Facial expressions are also important. An emcee mustn’t look tired or unwell. When you’re going to take on the crucial role of emcee, you need to get a good night’s sleep the day before” (NHR-25, 189–90).

- Pay special attention to timing during the meeting and be able to respond quickly.
  “There are times when you need to jump right in and speak to keep the tempo upbeat, and times when you need to take a breath and pause. If you lack that crucial sense of timing, you can possibly ruin the meeting’s mood” (NHR-25, 191).

- Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo prior to the meeting.
  “It’s vital that you chant with strong determination to make the meeting you’re moderating a success. The purpose of Soka Gakkai meetings is to advance kosen-rufu, and they are the contemporary versions of the assembly of the Lotus Sutra. As such, serving as an emcee at a meeting is to carry out the noble work of the Buddha” (NHR-25, 192).

TIPS ON BEING FUKUDOSHI

- Maintain a consistent and dynamic rhythm together with the person leading.
  “You must first listen carefully to the voice of the person leading gongyo and stay in rhythm with it. It’s important to neither get ahead nor fall behind. In addition, you should try to ensure that the rhythm of gongyo is dynamic and exhilarating like a fine steed galloping across the open plains” (The New Human Revolution, vol. 25, pp. 192–93).

- Avoid slowing down.
  “When a large number of people are participating, both the sutra recitation and chanting tend to gradually slow down, but you mustn’t allow yourself to be dragged along. You should try to lead everyone at a lively tempo” (NHR-25, 193).

- Pronounce the words in the sutra clearly.
  “It’s also necessary to pronounce the words in the sutra recitation clearly. You should strive during your own daily gongyo to do your very best at all times, making sure you aren’t slipping into sloppy pronunciation habits, and that you’re breathing in the appropriate places” (NHR-25, 193).

- Strive for a resonant, clear, powerful, refreshing gongyo. (NHR-25, 193)
March Curriculum: Week 1

Material: My Dear Friends in America, third edition, pp. 50–51

Context: In his speech to youth members, SGI President Ikeda touches on the Buddhist concept, the fourteen slanders, found in The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 755, and its relation to realizing benefits in our lives.

Key Excerpt: The fourteen slanders are taught as the causes of evil. Among those slanders are contempt, hatred, jealousy and grudges. These mean being contemptuous of, hating, being jealous of or holding grudges against those with faith.

There are cases when we wonder why benefit doesn’t reveal itself in spite of our earnest and high degree of faith. At such times, rather than entertaining doubt about the Gohonzon, it is better to ask yourself whether you are guilty of these four types of slander, because a person who harbors contempt, hatred, jealousy or grudges will realize no benefits.

Of course you are perfectly free to say what must be said even to your fellow members in faith, and it is necessary to do so. But there is a difference between words spoken with real concern for your listener and those spoken with feelings of hatred or jealousy. It is extremely important to understand and observe this distinction.

All of us who gather here together before the Gohonzon in the cause of world peace are the Buddha’s children, the family of the Mystic Law. That is why we must respect and encourage one another throughout our lives. Let me end today’s speech by urging you to be absolutely convinced that the merits of the Gohonzon and the protection of the Buddhist deities are bound to increase for a person who does so. (My Dear Friends in America, third edition, pp. 50–51)

Key Point: While it may be difficult to get along with every member, harboring ill-feelings toward fellow practitioners will prevent us from experiencing benefit. By challenging our human revolution and striving to unite, we can experience actual proof and become the driving force for unity in our families, communities and workplaces.

Presentation (5 minutes):
• Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
• Read the context, key excerpt and key point. Conclude with a personal experience and how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
March Curriculum: Week 2

**Material:** *The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life: SGI President Ikeda’s Lecture Series*, pp. 73–74

**Context:** SGI President Ikeda explains that when we strive together with fellow practitioners for the sake of kosen-rufu in the spirit of many in body but one in mind, we can vanquish any devilish functions that attempt to separate us.

**Key Excerpt:** The spirit of “many in body but one in mind,” in a sense, represents the ultimate manifestation of the “strategy of the Lotus Sutra,” which is chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon—specifically, chanting with a shared commitment for kosen-rufu.

No plans or strategies for kosen-rufu will succeed without such shared commitment in chanting. Strong practice based on such unity will also give rise to tremendous momentum. So even should there appear individuals who seek to disrupt the unity of our movement, their negative influence will be rebuffed by everyone’s focused spirit.

“One in mind,” or shared commitment, also refers to the great vow for kosen-rufu—the great vow of the Buddha who seeks to lead all people to enlightenment and also the great vow of the mentor. “One in mind” means making this great vow our own and working toward its actualization. The essence of this shared commitment can be found in chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo inspired by the wish for kosen-rufu, and this unity in chanting pulses vitally in the Soka Gakkai. (*Lecture Series*, 73-74)

**Key Point:** When we advance in the united spirit of “many in body but one in mind” based on chanting for the realization for kosen-rufu, we generate a powerful forward impetus and the energy to secure victory, personally and organizationally. Such unshakable unity is the key to winning over devilish functions.

**Presentation (5 minutes):**
- Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Read the context, key excerpt and key point. Conclude with a personal experience or determination of how you would like to apply this guidance to your life.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
**March Curriculum: Week 3**

**Material:** Refuting the False Doctrine of the Absolute Authority of the High Priest  

**Context:** Nichiren Buddhism teaches that all people equally possess the Buddha nature and are protagonists in advancing kosen-rufu. Contradicting this fundamental belief, the Nichiren Shoshu Priesthood has fabricated the doctrine of the absolute authority of the high priest, to make practitioners dependent on the priests based on position alone.

**Key Excerpt:** In his many writings, Nichiren expounds that whether priests or laity, we all have equal access to this life state regardless of how long we have practiced Buddhism, how much knowledge we have amassed or our position in the religious order . . .

Since its founding 90 years ago, the Soka Gakkai has striven to convey the equality of all people, a fundamental tenet of Nichiren Buddhism, while upholding the correct relationship between a teacher and disciple, expressed as “the oneness of mentor and disciple” . . .

In stark contrast to the ideal of the oneness of mentor and disciple, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood views a teacher of Buddhism as being qualified simply by office and rank. The high priest is venerated even without selflessly working to teach others about Buddhism. At the same time, rather than viewing laity with respect and a sense of shared commitment to spread Buddhism, the high priest views laity as unworthy of knowing “secrets” that he supposedly possesses.

**Key Point:** The priesthood’s view that a practitioner must worship the high priest to attain Buddhahood is contrary to the essential spirit of the Lotus Sutra that is based on the equality of all people. To protect Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings, we must continue to courageously have dialogue to spread and uphold the correct understanding of Buddhism for the sake of transforming society.

**Presentation (5 minutes):**

- Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Read the context, key excerpt, key point and conclude with a personal determination of how you would like to apply this guidance to your life.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
March Curriculum: Week 4

**Material:** *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 30, “Great Mountain” chapter, pp. 89–90

**Context:** While many forms of religion expound following a god or transcendent being, SGI Nichiren Buddhism asserts that the Buddha nature exists within the lives of ordinary people. In the following excerpt from *The New Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda who appears as Shin’ichi Yamamoto, refers to the collective body of practitioners of the SGI as the “Soka Gakkai Buddha.”

**Key Excerpt:** The lifeblood of the Soka Gakkai is the mentor-disciple spirit dedicated to kosen-rufu. President Makiguchi, having died for his beliefs in prison, left an immortal example of selfless devotion to propagating the Law. And the second president, Josei Toda, attained a profound awakening while in prison, becoming deeply aware of his great mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth. These events are the origin of the Soka Gakkai spirit.

After his release from prison, Toda made a vow to achieve a membership of 750,000 households, thereby creating a great network of fellow Bodhisattvas of the Earth—a goal he realized together with his disciple Shin’ichi. In this way, the Soka Gakkai demonstrated the principle, articulated by Nichiren Daishonin, that Bodhisattvas of the Earth would steadily emerge one after another to propagate the Mystic Law (see “The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 385). Shin’ichi then went on to forge strong ties of mentor and disciple with the members and take up the challenge of achieving worldwide kosen-rufu.

Toda once said: “In this Latter Day of the Law, the Soka Gakkai has spread the Mystic Law to so many people and helped them become happy that in the Buddhist scriptures of the future, the name of our organization is sure to be recorded as ‘Soka Gakkai Buddha.’”

Precisely because the Soka Gakkai is a gathering of people dedicated to the great mission of kosen-rufu, the devil king of the sixth heaven attacks it with a vengeance.

**Key Point:** The “Soka Gakkai Buddha” is a network of practitioners dedicated to enabling individuals in every realm of society to transform their lives and cultivate their mission.

**Presentation (5 minutes):**

- Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Read the context, key excerpt and key point. Conclude with a personal experience and how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
March Curriculum: Week 5

Material: My Dear Friends in America, third edition, pp. 144–46

Context: During his September 1991 visit to Boston, SGI President Ikeda refers to Nichiren Daishonin’s letter, “Reply to Sairen-bo” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 313) to confirm that we can experience true happiness in the place we are right now.

Key Excerpt: The Daishonin writes, “Wherever we dwell and practice the single vehicle, that place will be the Capitol of Eternally Tranquil Light . . .” (WND-1, 313)

Nichiren Daishonin states that the desolate island where he resides is the “Capital of Eternally Tranquil Light.” This capital does not exist off in some distant land. The Daishonin does not teach that to attain Buddhahood we must venture from where we are to some other place. Without having to take a step, the place where we live and attain Buddhahood becomes the land of eternal happiness . . .

One meaning that derives from [this point] is that the Daishonin’s teaching directly opposes evil authoritarianism.

It is said that distance gives rise to authority. This adage assails the foolish tendency of human beings to regard as respectable people or things so distant or at such height as to make them inaccessible . . .

People tend to overlook the value of things close at hand. In Buddhism, however, the reality of the present and of the place where we live is of the utmost importance . . .

Buddhism teaches that the people themselves are the entity of the Buddha. The Buddha exists not in some distant other world but in the inner realm of people’s lives, and where they live becomes the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light . . .

Viewed from this standpoint, it becomes clear that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is no place for authoritarianism. Only the Gohonzon, the world of Buddhahood, is to be solemnly revered. The Buddha exists right at this moment, in the very place where we are. (My Dear Friends in America, third edition, pp. 144–46)

Key Point: When we practice Buddhism with the belief that we ourselves are the Buddha, we can savor the greatest joy precisely where we are, making our homes, communities and societies, the capitals of eternal happiness.

Presentation (5 minutes):
• Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
• Read the context, key excerpt and key point. Conclude with a personal experience and how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.