SOKA SPIRIT
CHANTING SESSIONS

➤ PURPOSE

1) Chant Nam-myoho-rengyo 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)
January Curriculum: Week 1 (Jan. 10)

**Preparation:** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation.

**Intro:** Today, we will review material from *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 24, study guide in the January 2021 *Living Buddhism*, titled “Experiencing Joy in Life and Death,” found on page 50. Ikeda Sensei appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

**Context:** In 1976, Shin’ichi Yamamoto visited his ailing mother, Sachi, and studied Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings together with her. In one passage, Nichiren writes: “When he was alive, he was a Buddha in life, and now he is a Buddha in death. He is a Buddha in both life and death. This is what is meant by that most important doctrine called attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form.” (“Hell Is the Land of Tranquil Light,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 456). Sensei says the following about this.

**Excerpt From The New Human Revolution:**

“Those who strive tirelessly for kosen-rufu are Buddhas in life. They are able to spend their days in great joy, undefeated by adversity in any form. And after they die, they become Buddhas in death. That’s the great teaching of attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form.

“Life is joy and death is joy. We can experience eternity in absolute joy.

“Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the very end of your life, making your being shine like a magnificent setting sun, imbuing everything in golden hues.”

Soka mothers, living their lives as emissaries of the Buddha, are together forever with the sun of victory and happiness throughout the three existences. (NHR-24, 45)

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro.

To close the presentation, use your answer to the question below to guide you in sharing how the study material connects with your personal experience. You do not need to read the question out loud, simply share your response to it.

- While there have been many challenges in 2020, how has your Buddhist practice empowered you to have hope? What is your determination with the practice as we start this new year?

**Reminder:** The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
Preparation: Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation.


Context: Nichiren Daishonin writes, “At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three, and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others” (“The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 385).

On January 5, 1977, Shin’ichi Yamamoto’s lecture on this passage from “The True Aspect of All Phenomena” was published in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper.

Excerpt From *The New Human Revolution*:
“At all times, the fundamental and unchanging principle for kosen-rufu is the stand-alone spirit. The Daishonin and Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda all bravely stood up alone. …

“Concretely speaking, the stand-alone spirit in this regard means for each of us to take full responsibility for the spread of the Mystic Law in our family, in our community and in every part of our environment.

“We all have relationships with family members, relatives and friends that are particular to each of us. From the perspective of the Mystic Law, those relationships are the realm of our mission, and they are profound bonds that connect our lives with others. … That’s what makes the principle of standing up alone so important. We should keep in mind that we are here now as emissaries of Nichiren Daishonin. As Bodhisattvas of the Earth, we need to stand up, each in our own place, and take action. Never forget that this is the only way kosen-rufu is realized.” (NHR-24, 151)

Presentation (5 minutes): For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro.

To close the presentation, use your answer to the question below to guide you in sharing how the study material connects with your personal experience. You do not need to read the question out loud, simply share your response to it.

• How have you been able to “stand alone” in your life to share Buddhism with those around you?

Reminder: The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
January Curriculum: Week 3 (Jan. 24)

**Preparation:** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation.

**Intro:** Today, we will review material from *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 24, study guide in the January 2021 *Living Buddhism*, titled “Toward an Era of Human Revolution,” found on page 45. Ikeda Sensei appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

**Context:** In thinking about the Soka Gakkai in the 21st century, Shin’ichi Yamamoto emphasizes the importance of transforming ourselves and our ways of life as exemplified by many young people.

**Excerpt From *The New Human Revolution***:

Founding Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who established the theory of value, emphasized the importance of warning about the negative consequences of loss or retribution that arises from failing to create value. Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda, in order to make the general public aware of the greatness of Buddhism in the aftermath of World War II, emphasized that Buddhism is the way to overcome suffering due to poverty, illness and family problems, and stressed the power of the Gohonzon. For us the question is: What do people seek from Buddhism now, and what aspect of Buddhism should we emphasize when we share it with others? ...

Shin’ichi felt that individuals, society and the world were seeking human revolution—the process of becoming a person who is strong at heart and takes on life’s hardships in a positive way—and regarding Nichiren Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai with expectation. While it was apparent that people were still looking to Buddhism as a means of resolving such things as economic difficulties and illness, he noticed that young people in particular were focused on transforming themselves and their ways of living. He sensed the approach of an era of human revolution. (NHR-24, 181–82)

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro.

To close the presentation, use your answer to the question below to guide you in sharing how the study material connects with your personal experience. You do not need to read the question out loud, simply share your response to it.

- How would you like to take your human revolution to the next level this year?

**Reminder:** The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
January Curriculum: Week 4 (Jan. 31)

**Preparation:** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation.

**Intro:** Today, we will review material from *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 24, study guide in the January 2021 *Living Buddhism*, titled "Consideration and Dialogue Cultivates Trust," found on p. 47. Ikeda Sensei appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

**Context:** In the 1970s, while interpersonal relationships were disintegrating in Japanese society, Soka Gakkai members strove to build friendship and trust with their neighbors through dialogue. Shin’ichi shares his experience about creating trust with his neighbors.

**Excerpt From *The New Human Revolution*:**

As a young man, Shin’ichi was always thoughtful and did his best to greet everyone in a bright and cheerful manner. It was no coincidence, he believed, that they were all living in the same apartment building; it was a sign that they had a profound connection. …

Shin’ichi held discussion meetings in his apartment. He invited several other residents of the complex and surrounding area to attend. Some of them eventually started practicing this Buddhism. …

After they moved into the Shuzanso Apartments, Shin’ichi immediately went to introduce himself to the neighbors, giving them his business card. He wanted to build harmonious human relationships with all of them.

When [his son] Masahiro was old enough to begin running around, [his wife] Mineko began putting him to bed as early as possible, so the neighbors in the apartments above and beside them wouldn't be disturbed by the noise of him playing. …

Wherever it may be, sincerity, consideration and dialogue are the way to make the flowers of friendship bloom and the fruits of trust ripen. (NHR-24, 313–15)

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro.

To close the presentation, use your answer to the question below to guide you in sharing how the study material connects with your personal experience. You do not need to read the question out loud, simply share your response to it.

- Due to the coronavirus pandemic, our interactions with others have had to change. How have you used your Buddhist practice to continue connecting with others and building trust?

**Reminder:** The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/