SOKA SPIRIT
CHANTING SESSIONS

► PURPOSE

1) Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo 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-rengi-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)
July Curriculum: Week 1 (July 4)

Kosen-rufu Gongyo Suggested Agenda

As a reminder, the first Sunday of each month will be designated as a virtual Kosen-rufu Gongyo. This meeting will replace the Soka Spirit encouragement call on the first Sunday. Please find a suggested agenda for the July Kosen-rufu Gongyo below, as well as instructions for the SVP video.

SUGGESTED AGENDA

1. Faith Experience

2. Announcements
   - Leadership Appointments (if applicable)
   - Activity Announcements

3. SVP Video: “Those who persevere in faith will ultimately win: The Osaka Rally—The Origin of Ever-victorious Kansai” (15 minutes)
   - Please coordinate with your region SVP (Soka Video Player) handler to prepare the video in advance.
   - The only option available is a voice-over version although it’s not labeled as so.
   - Since this is a special collection video without guidance from Ikeda Sensei, it should be followed by words of encouragement on the meeting agenda.
   - The video can be found under the following:
     > Archive Videos
     > Select “English” for language
     > Under Category, select “Special collection”
     > “Those who persevere in faith will ultimately win: The Osaka Rally—The Origin of Ever-victorious Kansai” will be third from top
     > Click the image
   - Please have the emcee announce the following before showing the video: “This video has been approved to show at this meeting. We ask that you do not make any video or audio recordings. Duplication and rebroadcast of this video in any way is prohibited. We appreciate your support and understanding. Please enjoy!”

4. Words of Encouragement
July Curriculum: Week 2 (July 11)

**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* study guide in the July 2021 *Living Buddhism*, titled “Upholding the Correct Teaching,” found on page 51.

**Context:** In June 1943, first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, Tunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, were summoned to the Nichiren Shoshu head temple. The priesthood had already bowed to government demands that they accept the Shinto talisman to worship the emperor and promote World War II, and they pressured the two to do the same and comply with the state ideology. Nichiren Daishonin’s direct disciple warned of this, writing, “Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha’s teachings and propounds his own views” (“Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko,” Gosho zenshu, p. 1618).

**Excerpt From The New Human Revolution, vol. 27:**
Accepting the Shinto talisman was an extremely grave matter, touching on the very heart of the teachings and doctrines of Nichiren Buddhism. It also signified forfeiting religious freedom and submitting to the militarist government’s policy of thought control.

Mr. Makiguchi replied adamantly: “I cannot agree to this. I absolutely refuse to accept the talisman.” …

Suppressing the raging emotions in his heart, Mr. Makiguchi said to his disciple Josei Toda after leaving the meeting: “What I lament is not the ruin of a single school but the destruction of an entire nation before our very eyes. I’m afraid of the terrible sorrow this would bring Nichiren Daishonin. Isn’t this precisely the time to remonstrate with the government?”

His disciple responded: “Sensei, I will fight with my life. Whatever happens, I will remain steadfastly at your side.”

The Soka mentor-disciple relationship is a spiritual bond based on a commitment to give one’s very life for kosen-rufu.

Soon afterward, Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda were arrested on suspicion of high treason and violation of the Peace Preservation Law, and subsequently imprisoned. …

The pure stream of Nichiren Buddhism was rigorously protected by Soka mentor and disciple Tunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, who upheld the correct teaching at the risk of their lives.

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro. To close the presentation, please respond to the prompt below.

- **Sharing this Buddhism with others is a way to ensure the flow of kosen-rufu together as mentor and disciples. What has been your experience with sharing Buddhism?**

**Reminder:** The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
We will view the video titled “Youth, Lead Lives Challenging Obstacles” (Voice-over). (5 minutes)

- Please coordinate with your region SVP (Soka Video Player) handler to prepare the video in advance. The video can be found under the following:
  
  > Archive Videos  
  > Select “English” for language  
  > Under Category, select “Speech”  
  > Scroll down to (Voice-over) “Youth, Lead Lives Challenging Obstacles”  
  > Click the blue Voice-Over image

- Please have the emcee announce the following before showing the video: “This video has been approved to show at this meeting. We ask that you do not make any video or audio recordings. Duplication and rebroadcast of this video in any way is prohibited. We appreciate your support and understanding. Please enjoy!”

- *Since this video is a speech and contains guidance from Ikeda Sensei, words of encouragement should come before the video on the meeting agenda.*
**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* study guide in the July 2021 *Living Buddhism*, titled “Youth, Valiantly Share the Sufferings of the People,” found on page 52.

**Context:** In speaking about the importance of empathizing with the struggles of the people, Shin’ichi Yamamoto explains to journalists Nichiren Daishonin’s words, “The varied sufferings that all living beings undergo—all these are Nichiren’s own sufferings” (*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 138).

**Excerpt From *The New Human Revolution, vol. 27:***

These words express the infinitely compassionate life state of Nichiren Daishonin, who regarded the sufferings of humankind as his own and opened the way for all people to attain enlightenment. As his disciples, we strive to live with this same spirit.

Rather than being absorbed only with our own problems, we empathize with and share the struggles of all kinds of people, dedicating our lives to kosen-rufu in order to show them the way to indestructible happiness.

We listen to the problems and concerns of our friends and do our best to encourage them. Out of a sincere wish for their happiness, we talk with them about Nichiren Buddhism and chant for them. It is through such heartfelt daily efforts that we connect our lives to Nichiren Daishonin.

By living this way, we break out of the confining shell of egoism and bring forth the expansive life states of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and Nichiren Daishonin, thereby setting in motion a profound inner transformation. ...

Shin’ichi told the reporters: “We can’t understand others’ hardships if we haven’t experienced suffering ourselves. If leaders who lack such empathy come to hold sway over society, it will be a great misfortune for its citizens. That’s why I’m always encouraging the youth, our future leaders, to take on challenges and hardships. I want them to become people who can understand others’ suffering. To be able to do that, they mustn’t avoid difficulties but willingly accept and wrestle with them more than anyone else.”

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro. To close the presentation, please respond to the prompt below.

- **How have your sufferings or difficulties enabled you to empathize with or encourage another person?**

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