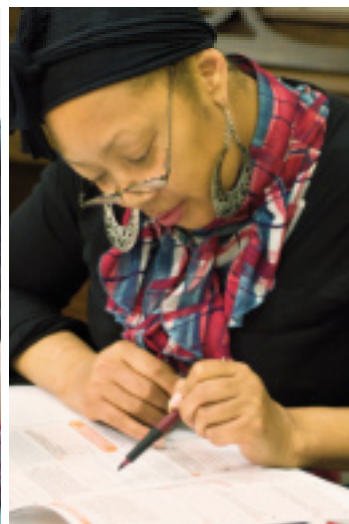


# 2010 Introductory Exam Answers



**Seeking spirit**—SGI-USA members in Houston, Burbank, Calif., Atlanta and Gainesville, Fla.

This special section presents the answers for the 2010 Introductory Exam, which SGI-USA members across the country took in October. “By studying Nichiren Buddhism and taking this exam,” SGI President Ikeda said in his Introductory Exam message, “you are creating the cause to establish, in lifetime after lifetime, a state of life and depth of wisdom equal to that of a Buddha. Taking the exam is itself a noble act. Please devote yourselves to the two ways of practice and study, confident that every effort you make will surely benefit your life.”

Results of the exam will be distributed to all participants in early 2011 through their local organization.

## Refreshing Our Faith

by *Danny Nagashima*  
SGI-USA General Director

**Congratulations on** participating in the first SGI-USA Introductory Exam in this century! It was a truly historic undertaking!

By preparing for and taking the 2010 Introductory Exam, I was able to challenge myself and refresh my faith. It was truly exciting studying together with

all of you. Now, I can't wait to review my results.

SGI President Ikeda writes: “As Nichiren Daishonin states, ‘Where there is unseen virtue, there will be visible reward’ (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 907). All who participate in and support the study exams are



sowing the seeds for becoming outstanding philosophers, educators and leaders of abiding happiness and victory” (September–October 2010 *Living Buddhism*, p. 10).

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you again for participating in the study exam, and congratulations!

## I. BUDDHIST CONCEPTS

Directions: For numbers 1 through 7, mark the answer that best completes the statements or questions.

1. In his letter "The True Aspect of All Phenomena," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Exert yourself in the two ways of ① and ②. Without ① and ②, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both ① and ② arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 386). Choose the pair of words that best fits.

- ① shakubuku, ② shoju
- ① oneness, ② non-substantiality
- ① practice, ② study
- ① concentration, ② insight

2. The Ten Worlds are:

- ten places we can travel to when we practice Buddhism.
- ten conditions of life that we can potentially experience at any time.
- ten stages we must go through to attain Buddhahood.
- ten layers of painful austerities we must undergo to become an arhat.

3. Nichiren Buddhism exists to relieve people of suffering and enable them to change their karma and become truly happy. What is karma?

- Potential effects of negative or positive causes made in past lives.
- A heavy burden that takes seven generations to erase.
- A concept that means one's future is predetermined.
- The actions of others that have a negative effect on us.

4. In "Letter to the Brothers," Nichiren Daishonin instructs the Ikegami brothers to win over the influences of the "three obstacles and four devils" by:

- closing their eyes and pretending they do not exist.
- choosing which one to challenge and ignoring the rest.
- not being influenced or frightened by them.
- being concerned about when they will be attacked by them.

5. The title and essence of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha's highest teaching, is *Myoho-rence-kyo*. Nichiren added to this title *namu* or *nam*, which is translated as:

- to dedicate one's life.
- to be granted salvation.
- to submit.
- to delight in.

6. *Honzon* is a Japanese word meaning "object of fundamental respect" or "object of devotion." The prefix *go* means "worthy of honor." While *Nam-myoho-rence-kyo* is the ultimate Law of the universe, the *Gohonzon* is its graphic expression. Nichiren inscribed the *Gohonzon* to serve as a:

- reminder of the Buddhist gods' power.
- beautiful work of art.
- declaration of humanity's imperfect nature.
- mirror to reflect our innate enlightened nature.

7. In Nichiren Buddhism, *benefit* is at times also translated as "blessing" or "virtue." While it can refer to any positive outcome or gain, fundamentally it means the virtues or excellent qualities we develop in our lives through Buddhist faith and practice. What are two types of benefit Buddhism describes?

- Large benefit and small benefit
- Conspicuous benefit and inconspicuous benefit
- Past benefit and future benefit
- Positive benefit and negative benefit

## II. THE LIFE OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

Directions: For numbers 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13, mark the answer that best completes the statements or questions. For number 10, mark two answers that best completes the statement.

8. Nichiren Daishonin was born on February 16, 1222, the son of a fisherman. He entered the priesthood at age 12 and, after many years of intense study of the teachings of the major Buddhist schools of Japan at the time, on April 28, 1253, he

- cast away the transient to reveal the true in terms of his identity.
- declared the establishment of his teaching.
- began a hunger strike to protest government policies.
- lectured on the meaning of "dependent origination."

**9. After observing the recurrence of natural disasters, epidemics, poverty and hunger, Nichiren wrote and submitted to Hojo Tokiyori, the highest authority in Japan, the treatise titled:**

- "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land."
- "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime."
- "On Overcoming Disasters."
- "Happiness in This World."

**10. This came to be known as Nichiren's first official remonstrance with the sovereign. In this treatise, Nichiren Daishonin predicted that, if the rulers did not discard their support of erroneous Buddhist teachings, then among the calamities and disasters predicted in various sutras, two disasters that had yet to strike Japan would occur. Those two disasters were (choose two answers from below):**

- invasion from foreign lands.
- unseasonable storms.
- pestilence.
- revolt within one's own domain.

As a result of this remonstrance by Nichiren Daishonin and his strenuous efforts to teach correct Buddhist practice to the people, he faced an ongoing series of persecutions, including four major persecutions.

In the first, which occurred on August 27, 1260, his residence was attacked by followers of the Nembutsu, or Pure Land school. This is known as the Matsubagayatsu Persecution.

In the second major persecution, on May 12, 1261, he was exiled to Izu Peninsula.

Not long after Nichiren's pardon from Izu, the third major persecution, known as the Komatsubara Persecution, took place on November 11, 1264. Attacked by an armed party while traveling, two of his followers were killed, and Nichiren had his left hand broken and received a deep cut on his forehead.

**11. In the fourth major persecution, on September 12, 1271, Nichiren was arrested by armed soldiers who attempted to have him secretly beheaded at a beach on the outskirts of Kamakura. This came to be known as the:**

- Samurai Persecution.
- Comet Persecution.
- Tatsunokuchi Persecution.
- Sagami Persecution.

**12. After the failed execution attempt, Nichiren was exiled to the island of Sado. While on Sado, he authored many important works, including "The Opening of the Eyes," which revealed the object of devotion in terms of the person, and "The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind," which revealed the object of devotion in terms of:**

- the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.
- the Law.
- the Buddha.
- the Sangha.

Nichiren Daishonin was pardoned from his exile to Sado and returned to Kamakura in February 1274, before settling at Mount Minobu. There, he focused the remainder of his life on fostering capable disciples, who faced increasing persecution. In February 1279, persecutions against his followers in the Atsuhara region intensified and resulted in the arrest of 20 farmers and the subsequent execution of three of them. In response to the fact that not one of those arrested gave up his faith, Nichiren inscribed the object of devotion for all humanity on October 12.

**13. Nichiren Daishonin passed away on October 13, 1282, after entrusting his teachings and responsibility for their widespread propagation to:**

- Nanjo Tokimitsu.
- Nichikan Shonin.
- Lay Nun Sennichi.
- Nikko Shonin.

### III. LEARNING FROM THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN: THE TEACHINGS FOR VICTORY

*Directions: For numbers 14 through 17, mark the answer that best completes the statements or questions.*

Please answer No. 14 based on SGI President Ikeda's lecture on this passage from "Letter from Sado":

"Fish want to survive; they deplore their pond's shallowness and dig holes in the bottom to hide in, yet tricked by bait, they take the hook. Birds in a tree fear that they are too low and perch in the top branches, yet bewitched by bait, they too are caught in snares. Human beings are equally vulnerable. They give their lives for shallow, worldly matters but rarely for the Buddha's precious teachings. Small wonder they do not attain Buddhahood" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 301).

**14. The metaphor "tricked by bait" refers to the tendency to (choose the two best answers):**

- be swept away by immediate desire.
- find fault in others.
- engage in behavior forbidden by Buddhist precepts.
- have lapses in judgment due to narrow thinking.

Please answer No. 15 based on SGI President Ikeda's lecture on this passage from "Letter from Sado":

"Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded, becomes a fine sword. Worthies and sages are tested by abuse. My present exile is not because of any secular crime. It is solely so that I may expiate in this lifetime my past grave offenses and be freed in the next from the three evil paths" (WND-1, 303).

**15. What does "worthies and sages are tested by abuse" mean?**

- Problems and sufferings are opportunities to strengthen oneself.
- We all experience the four universal sufferings.
- Pain and suffering should be avoided.
- Inflicting pain is Buddhist training.

Please answer Nos. 16 and 17 based on SGI President Ikeda's lecture on this passage from "Letter to the Brothers":

"A passage in the Six Paramitas Sutra says to become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you. Whatever trouble occurs, regard it as no more than a dream, and think only of the Lotus Sutra" (WND-1, 502).

**16. Mastering one's mind means:**

- suppressing any unwanted thought or impulse.
- basing oneself on the unwavering foundation of the Law.
- always following our personal preferences.
- perfecting our ability to meditate.

**17. In the phrase "Whatever trouble occurs, regard it as no more than a dream, and think only of the Lotus Sutra," Nichiren is teaching us that we can win in our daily lives if we:**

- make every effort to avoid difficulties in life.
- avoid creating problems in daily life.
- focus on kosen-rufu and remain steadfast in faith.
- keep reading the Lotus Sutra.

## IV. SOKA SPIRIT

Directions: For numbers 18 through 20, mark the answer that best completes the statements or questions.

**18. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood's doctrine of the supremacy or infallibility of its high priest, that the high priest must be followed despite any error, runs counter to the statement of Nikko Shonin in his "Twenty Six Admonitions": "Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against \_\_\_\_\_ and propounds his own views."**

- the law of the land
- the tide of the times
- the will of the people
- the Buddha's Law

**19. The claim of Nichiren Shoshu that "the fundamental principle of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is transmitted only to the high priest" is contradicted by many statements by Nichiren himself. For instance, in one letter, Nichiren points to the universality of the transmission, writing, "Nichiren has been trying to awaken all the people of Japan to faith in the Lotus Sutra so that they too can \_\_\_\_\_ and attain Buddhahood."**

- follow the high priest
- share the heritage
- enter the priesthood
- get what they chant for

**20. Despite the fact that Nichiren Daishonin emphasized the Lotus Sutra's teaching that recognizes that all people are equally capable of attaining Buddhahood, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood 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, including the following: "The Buddha surely considers anyone in this world who embraces the Lotus Sutra, whether \_\_\_\_\_, to be the lord of all living beings"?**

- sentient or insentient, living or dead
- peasant or samurai, ruler or subject
- lay man or woman, monk or nun
- rich or poor, wise or foolish