

## Sample Questions for the Entrance-level Exam

Next year marks a new round of SGI-USA Study Department exams, beginning with the Entrance-level Exam to be held April 19, 1998. Actual questions for the exam will be based on the sample questions that follow. These sample questions are provided for the benefit of lecturers, exam proctors and those who will be taking the exam.

The page numbers that appear in parentheses at the end of each question direct the reader to where the answer can be found in the *SGI-USA Study Program Entrance-Level Textbook* and the December 1997 issue of *Living Buddhism*. (The material published in *Living Buddhism* is taken from *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 233–47, *The Life of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 11–18, 56–78 and 83–115, and the pamphlet *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue*, “Introduction” and questions 2 and 4.)

The actual exam questions will be in a multiple-choice format. Correct answers then need only be selected from among several possibilities. Therefore, this sample test is more difficult than the actual exam will be. It is not necessary to learn the Japanese-language version of terms or principles.

Also, of the questions in the following pages, only 40 to 50 percent will appear on the exam, which is expected to consist of 25 to 35 questions. We hope this information will assist you in preparing for the exam.

— *The Study Department*

### ‘The Life of Nichiren Daishonin’

from *Living Buddhism*, pp. 14–35

**Q1:**

What was the practice that Nichiren Daishonin proclaimed on April 28, 1253?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 15)

**Q2:**

Describe the significance of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in terms of Nichiren Daishonin’s identity.  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 17–18)

**Q3:**

After the attempt to execute Nichiren Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi proved unsuccessful, he was exiled to a cold and forbidding place that he was not expected to return from. What was this place?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 18–19)

**Q4:**

What did the Daishonin teach his disciples in response to their discouragement over his exile?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 18–19)

**Q5:**

During the Sado Exile, the Daishonin completed the theoretical foundation of his teachings. What two works written during this period established the theoretical framework for his inscription of the object of worship?

*(Living Buddhism, p. 21)*

**Q6:**

Nichiren Daishonin repeatedly stated in his writings that a Buddha is what?

*(Living Buddhism, p. 18)*

**Q7:**

After what event did Nichiren Daishonin start inscribing the Gohonzon?

*(Living Buddhism, p. 23)*

**Q8:**

The inscription of “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” and “Nichiren” on the Gohonzon indicates what principle?

*(Living Buddhism, p. 23)*

**Q9:**

Following a Chinese proverb that says if one’s warnings go unheeded three times by the sovereign, one should leave the country, the Daishonin retired to Mount Minobu and prepared for the great task of eternalizing his Buddhism. Retirement did not mean a life of leisure for the Daishonin. What three things did he do at this time?

*(Living Buddhism, p. 25)*

**Q10:**

To foster the faith of the disciples he was training at Mount Minobu, the Daishonin gave an important series of lectures. What were these lectures on, and under what name were they set down in writing by Nikko Shonin?

*(Living Buddhism, pp. 24–27)*

**Q11:**

In what way did the behavior of the Daishonin’s followers after the persecutions surrounding Tatsunokuchi and the Sado Exile differ from their behavior following the Atsuhara Persecution?

*(Living Buddhism, p. 29)*

**Q12:**

What activity by Nichiren Daishonin’s followers caused the authorities to persecute them?

*(Living Buddhism, p. 27)*

**Q13:**

Who did Nichiren Daishonin name as his legitimate successor?

*(Living Buddhism, p. 32)*

**Q14:**

Why did five of the six senior priests abandon the Daishonin's teachings after he died?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 34)

**Q15:**

What slanderous acts did the five senior priests commit? (*Living Buddhism*, p. 34)

**Q16:**

Why did Nikko Shonin leave Mount Minobu and establish Taiseki-ji temple near the foot of Mount Fuji? (*Living Buddhism*, p. 34)

**Q17:**

What was Nikko Shonin's purpose in writing "The Twenty-six Admonitions"?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 35)

**'On Attaining Buddhahood'**

from *SGI-USA Study Program Entrance-Level Textbook*,  
pp. 6–31

**Q18:**

How do the Daishonin's teachings about the Mystic Law differ from the views of most other religions? (p. 10)

**Q19:**

What does it mean to "perceive the nature of your own life"? (p. 21)

**Q20:**

What is the Daishonin trying to illustrate by using the analogy of a poor man counting his neighbor's wealth day and night? (p. 21)

**Q21:**

What attitude will lead us to feel that our practice is an "endless, painful austerity"? (p. 23)

**Q22:**

What constitutes the attitudes of non-Buddhists according to this letter? (pp. 22–23)

**Q23:**

What does this letter emphasize as a key element in our Buddhist practice? (p. 23)

**Q24:**

What attitude prevents us from experiencing "great joy" in our practice? (p. 22)

**Questions 25–26 are based on the following passage:**

It [the Jomyo Sutra] further states that if the minds of the people are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds. (MW-1, 4)

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**Q25:**

What Buddhist principle is illustrated by this passage? (pp. 26–27)

**Q26:**

What does “the good and evil of our minds” mean? (p. 25)

**Q27:**

Where is the Buddha land? (p. 25)

**Q28:**

In the principle of “the mutually inclusive relationship between life and all phenomena” what does *life* represent? (pp. 18–20)

**Q29:**

In the principle of “the mutually inclusive relationship between life and all phenomena” what does *phenomena* represent? (pp. 18–20)

**Q30:**

According to Nichiren Daishonin, what beliefs constitute inferior teachings? (p. 21)

**Q31:**

When would chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo still be considered practicing provisional teachings? (p. 20)

**Q32:**

The Daishonin teaches us that when chanting to the Gohonzon we should “summon up deep conviction that \_\_\_\_\_.” (p. 23)

**Q33:**

What action of Buddhist practice does the Daishonin compare to polishing a mirror? (p. 29)

**Q34:**

According to this letter, what is “the direct path to enlightenment”? (p. 9)

**‘The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon’**

from *SGI-USA Study Program Entrance-Level Textbook*, pp. 32–53

**Questions 33–36 are based on the following passage:**

Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The body is the palace of the ninth consciousness, the unchanging reality which reigns over all life’s functions.... The Gohonzon is found in faith alone. As the sutra states, “Only with faith can one enter Buddhahood.” (MW-1, 213)

**Q35:**

What is Nichiren Daishonin urging us to seek within our own lives? (p. 39)

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**Q36:**

What is the meaning of the passage “The body is the palace of the ninth consciousness, the unchanging reality which reigns over all life’s functions”? (p. 42)

**Q37:**

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin refers to the Gohonzon as “perfectly endowed.” Why are the other Buddhist objects of worship incomplete compared to the Gohonzon? (pp. 43–44)

**Q38:**

No one has unwavering faith from the outset. How can we define faith at the beginning of our practice? (p. 49)

**Q39:**

When we chant daimoku to the Gohonzon we experience the interaction of the four powers. Two of the four powers are 1) the power of the Buddha and 2) the power of the Law. How can we activate the power of the Buddha and the power of the Law in our own lives? (p. 41)

**Q40:**

Shakyamuni’s disciple Shariputra was considered to be the “foremost in wisdom,” yet even he could not attain enlightenment through his wisdom. How did he attain enlightenment? (p. 46)

**Q41:**

Even though doubts are natural and unavoidable, it is important to strive for doubt-free faith. Instead of worrying or tormenting ourselves, what should we do when we have feelings of doubt or insincerity in our practice? (p. 51)

**Q42:**

What two actions express faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism? (pp. 51–52)

**Q43:**

What point is the Daishonin trying to teach us in this writing through the examples of the Emperor of Han and Li Kuang? (pp. 51–52)

**Q44:**

Down the center of the Gohonzon, inscribed in Chinese characters, are the words “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nichiren.” What Buddhist principle does this indicate (include the component parts of that principle)? (p. 38)

**‘Happiness in This World’**

from *Living Buddhism*, pp. 7–13

**Q45:**

How can we elevate our inner life-condition?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 7)

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**Q46:**

Why is it important to elevate our inner life-condition?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 7–8)

**Q47:**

Why does Nichiren Daishonin state that “There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo”?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 7–8)

**Q48:**

What enables us to experience the “joy derived from the Law”?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 8–9)

**Q49:**

How is “joy derived from the Law” different from the “joy derived from desires”?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 8–9)

**Q50:**

Why is attributing the cause of our happiness or unhappiness to someone else contradictory to the teaching of the Lotus Sutra?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 9)

**Q51:**

Practicing with what determination in our Buddhist practice contributes to the development of our state of life?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 8–9)

**Q52:**

How does the phrase “Happy and at ease” relate to our lives?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 9)

**Q53:**

What does it mean to be a Buddha of absolute freedom?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 10)

**Q54:**

What does achieving “peace and security” mean?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 11)

**Q55:**

What is the Buddhist understanding of “life’s hardships”?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 12–13)

**Q56:**

Why does Nichiren Daishonin tell Shijo Kingo to “strengthen your faith more than ever”?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 13)

**Q57:**

What is the meaning of Nichiren Daishonin's advice to Shijo Kingo to "just chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and when you drink sake, stay at home with your wife"? (*Living Buddhism*, p. 12)

**Q58:**

What is the purpose of our practice of faith? (*Living Buddhism*, p. 7)

**'Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue'**  
**Questions 59–63 are based on the "Introduction":**  
from *Living Buddhism*, pp. 36–41

**Q59:**

What is it about the nature of Buddhism that challenges those interested in passivity and unquestioning obedience from believers?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 36)

**Q60:**

What passage from the Lotus Sutra regarding persecutions applies directly to the SGI?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 36)

**Q61:**

How does Buddhism characterize opposition by authority?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 37)

**Q62:**

What is the meaning of obstacles to our Buddhist movement?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 36–37)

**Q63:**

What does opposition from the priesthood mean to the SGI?  
(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 37–38)

**Questions 64–66 are based on question 2:**

"Why is it important to know about the temple issue?"

**Q64:**

How can we benefit by understanding the temple issue?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 38)

**Q65:**

What is meant by "correct faith"?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 38)

**Q66:**

In terms of the future, why is it important to understand the temple issue?  
(*Living Buddhism*, p. 38)

**Questions 67–70 are based on question 4:**

“What is the real difference between the temple and the SGI?”

**Q67:**

What is Nichiren Shoshu’s position on the equality between lay members and priests?

(*Living Buddhism*, p. 39)

**Q68:**

How does Nichiren Shoshu’s view of the Gohonzon contradict Nichiren Daishonin’s view?

(*Living Buddhism*, p. 40)

**Q69:**

Nichiren Daishonin clearly states what it means to receive the heritage or lifeblood of faith.

How is Nichiren Shoshu’s view different from the view of the Daishonin?

(*Living Buddhism*, pp. 40–41)

**Q70:**

How does Nichiren Shoshu and the SGI differ in action and commitment to kosen-rufu?

(*Living Buddhism*, p. 41)

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