

## SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL EXAM

The answer(s) to each question from the Oct. 25 exam are underlined.

### PART I: Ten questions from Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra, Volumes 2 and 3.

**Q1.** In the “Life Span” chapter (16th chapter) of the Lotus Sutra, the revelation that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood in the inconceivably remote past stands in marked contrast to the view that he attained enlightenment for the first time in his present lifetime beneath the bodhi tree in India, a view maintained up to and throughout the first half of the Lotus Sutra. What is the significance of this revelation? Select the TWO CORRECT answers. (2 points each.)

- a. Shakyamuni has a much longer life span than a common mortal.
- b. Shakyamuni explains the eternity of life in terms of his own existence.
- c. Enlightenment in this lifetime is merely theoretical; the enlightenment in the remote past is the true enlightenment.
- d. Eternity is the true aspect of the lives of all living beings.
- e. “Beneath the bodhi tree in India” indicates this saha world, while “inconceivably remote past” indicates the Buddha’s world.

**Q2.** The appearance of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter (15th chapter) of the Lotus Sutra has profound significance. From below, select the ONE statement that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. Shakyamuni entrusts the Bodhisattvas of the Earth instead of the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching with propagating the Lotus Sutra after his death.
- b. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are bodhisattvas who possess the eternal Mystic Law in their lives.
- c. Of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the Lotus Sutra says that “in this *saha* world they dwell in the empty space in its lower part.”
- d. Those who practice with faith in the Gohonzon and advance kosen-rufu with the same mind as the Daishonin are at the level of practice that will one day qualify them as followers of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.
- e. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth endure great persecution in the polluted world of the Latter Day of the Law.

**Q3.** Why is the interpretation of the “Thus Come One’s secret and his transcendental powers” important from the viewpoint of the Daishonin’s Buddhism? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. Because without the clarification of the Law originally enabling all Buddhas to attain enlightenment, that is, of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the path for all people to attain Buddhahood could not be opened.
- b. Because Shakyamuni’s true identity is revealed as the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the distant past of *gohyaku-jintengo*.
- c. Because it is alluding to the ultimate cause behind the Buddha’s enlightenment in the

remote past.

d. Because it is the crystallization of the contents of the entire “Life Span” chapter, which points to the path for ordinary people to become Buddhas.

e. Because Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the true Buddha and all other Buddhas are provisional Buddhas who manifest functions of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

**Q4.** What is the meaning of “time without beginning” (Jpn *kuon ganjo*) from the viewpoint of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. “Time without beginning” means a point in time when Shakyamuni made the original cause for his enlightenment, even more distant than the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*.

b. “Time without beginning” means the “original moment” at which the Mystic Law was created by the original Buddha.

c. “Time without beginning” means the point in time when Nichiren Daishonin attained enlightenment, after the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo* when Shakyamuni attained enlightenment and before the “Latter Day of the Law” when we ordinary people attain Buddhahood.

d. “Time without beginning” means that life exists eternally and is eternally endowed with the ten worlds. When we awaken to this, every moment becomes for us this “original moment” or “time without beginning.”

e. “Time without beginning” is the same as “Time without end.” It is this cyclical nature of time that prompts all Buddhas to “turn the wheel of the Law.”

**Q5.** What does the principle of “true cause” and “true effect” in the “Life Span” chapter mean from the viewpoint of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

a. Shakyamuni’s bodhisattva practice in the remote past, which became the cause of his enlightenment, is the true cause. And the result, his attaining Buddhahood, is the true effect.

b. Bodhisattva practices (true cause) lead beings of the nine worlds to a realm of Buddhas (true effect), where they extinguish the nine worlds within their lives and dwell only in the world of Buddhas.

c. Both the true cause and the true effect are contained in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and exist simultaneously in our lives at each moment we have strong faith in the Mystic Law.

d. The nine worlds are all present in beginningless Buddhahood (true effect) and Buddhahood is inherent in the beginningless nine worlds (true cause).

e. Shakyamuni, the common mortal of the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*, attained Buddhahood (true effect) as a result of practicing Nam-myoho-renge-kyo (true cause).

**Q6.** What does the sentence “They will fail to realize how difficult it is to encounter the Buddha and will not approach him with a respectful and reverent mind” in the “Life Span” chapter indicate concerning the relationship between mentor and disciple in Buddhism? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. It is extremely difficult to encounter the Buddha (mentor). Therefore, the disciple must appreciate and sincerely worship the Buddha (mentor). To be worshipped in this way is the purpose of the Buddha’s appearance in this world.

b. When the disciple possesses a strong seeking spirit toward and sense of appreciation for the Buddha (mentor), who has attained a supreme state of life as a human being, the disciple will develop the same supreme state of life. This is the Buddha's (mentor's) intent.

c. The Buddha (mentor) does not easily reveal himself to his disciples when the disciples are many. When the disciples are few, the Buddha (mentor) begins to teach in earnest.

d. The mentor's potential for Buddhahood is always superior to the disciple's potential for Buddhahood. For this reason, the disciples should depend completely upon the mentor in all matters.

e. The Buddha (mentor) will dedicate himself to the people (disciples) only when the people dedicate themselves to the Buddha and serve the Buddha with a respectful and reverent mind.

**Q7.** What are the three enlightened properties? From below, select the THREE CORRECT answers:

a. Property of the Buddha

b. Property of the Law

c. Property of appearance

d. Property of wisdom

e. Property of entity

f. Property of action

g. Property of nature

**Q8.** "The Three Treasures" mentioned in the "Life Span" chapter are revered in Buddhism as treasures that lead people to happiness. What does the SGI recognize as the correct three treasures of the Latter Day of the Law? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. Treasure of the Law (the Gohonzon), Treasure of the Wisdom (the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra) and Treasure of the Action (action of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth).

b. Treasure of the Buddha (Shakyamuni), Treasure of the Law (the Lotus Sutra) and Treasure of the Priest (Nichiren Daishonin and, in the broad sense, all priests who uphold the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra).

c. Treasure of the Buddha (Nichiren Daishonin), Treasure of the Wisdom of the Buddha (his writings) and Treasure of the Action of the Buddha his propagation effort).

d. Treasure of the Buddha (Nichiren Daishonin), Treasure of the Law (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws) and Treasure of the Priest (Nikko Shonin, and in the broad sense, the harmonious gathering of believers who correctly uphold and spread the Daishonin's Buddhism).

e. Treasure of Gohonzon (Dai-Gohonzon), Treasure of Daimoku (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws) and Treasure of the High Sanctuary.

**Q9.** In the phrase of the "Life Span" chapter "single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha, not hesitating even if it costs them their lives," what does "single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha" mean from the standpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. It means that people single-mindedly desire to see Shakyamuni Buddha, even after his death.

b. It means that, since the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*, people had been single-

mindedly desiring to see Shakyamuni appear in this *saha* world.

c. It means to single-mindedly view Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

d. It means to see the Buddha in one's own mind.

e. It means that people must single-mindedly desire to see the Buddha's protection, especially when their lives are in danger.

**Q10.** What does the phrase "I am always here preaching the Law" mean in the Latter Day of the Law from Nichiren Daishonin's perspective? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. That the Buddha is always preaching the Law in the Ceremony in the Air.

b. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in this *saha* world.

c. That the Buddha is always in the treasure tower desiring our salvation.

d. The eternal teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

e. The Buddha's compassion to propagate the Law.

**PART II: Five questions from "The Opening of the Eyes" (1) from *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*.**

**Q11.** In "The Opening of the Eyes," Nichiren Daishonin proclaims, "I, Nichiren, am the richest man in all of present-day in Japan." The next sentence in this passage suggests that the Daishonin developed this rich inner state, which President Toda described as "invincible" and "free from fear," because of what? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. Because he was not beheaded at the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and felt immense relief that his life was no longer in danger.

b. Because he arrived safely on Sado Island with the protection of the Buddhist gods despite the fact that many Nembutsu believers were intent on killing him.

c. Because he was able to finish writing a number of important doctrinal works despite the severe environment on Sado Island.

d. Because he was able to realize that he was the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Fukyo), whom Shakyamuni predicted in the Lotus Sutra would appear in the Latter Day of the Law and experience the same persecutions the Daishonin did.

e. Because he had dedicated his life to the Lotus Sutra and waged a life-and-death struggle to propagate its teachings as the sutra's true votary.

**Q12.** Quoting the Nirvana Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin points out that even a "good" Buddhist practitioner becomes "an enemy of Buddhism from within" if he or she sees someone slandering Buddhism and fails to do what? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. To pray for their happiness.

b. To ignore them.

c. To befriend them.

d. To reproach them.

e. To avoid them.

**Q13.** At the end of "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin addresses the confusion

of many followers by posing the question: In propagating this teaching, what merit does it bring, what can you gain, if you arouse the enmity of those around you? How does the Daishonin answer this question? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. You must select the right time and right place to propagate this teaching, otherwise you arouse the enmity of those around you.
- b. You must always speak mildly and befriend others, otherwise you will arouse the enmity of those around you.
- c. You must disregard those around you whose enmity you arouse.
- d. You must continue to propagate this teaching, pointing out the truth, even if you arouse the enmity of those around you.
- e. If you arouse the enmity of those around you, you should have the courage to apologize.

**Q14.** With what intention did Shakyamuni, Taho and the various Buddhas from the ten directions gather in one place in the “Emergence of the Treasure Tower” (11th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. To see the emergence of the treasure tower.
- b. To ensure the future propagation of the Lotus Sutra.
- c. To protect the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.
- d. To attend the Ceremony in the Air.
- e. To listen to a lecture on the Lotus Sutra.

**Q15.** Had the Daishonin not spoken out and proclaimed the correct Buddhist teaching for the Latter Day of the Law, he may have led a peaceful life, but what, in his own words in “The Opening of the Eyes,” would he have been lacking? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Courage
- b. Fortune
- c. Compassion
- d. Faith
- e. Action

**PART III: Six questions from “The Opening of the Eyes” (2) from *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*.**

**Q16.** What was the Daishonin’s purpose in writing “The Opening of the Eyes”? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. To clarify the true three virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent.
- b. To reproach the theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra.
- c. To explain the true method for performing the eye-opening ceremony, which is based solely on the Lotus Sutra.
- d. To clarify that he alone possesses the true three virtues of the Law, Wisdom and Emancipation.
- e. To “open the eyes” of the rulers of Japan to the cause of the calamities and disasters afflicting the country.

**Q17.** What is the relationship between the three virtues and the SGI’s movement of

peace, culture and education? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

a. The virtue of sovereign lies in closing off the paths of evil, thus saving people from misery. This accords with the SGI's peace movement.

b. The virtue of sovereign accords with the SGI's cultural movement, because the function of a sovereign is diplomacy, without which there can be no true cultural exchange.

c. The virtue of parent accords with the SGI's cultural movement, because like a parent, culture fosters people's inner lives.

d. The virtue of the teacher relates to the SGI's movement of education.

e. The passage from the Lotus Sutra "This, my land, remains safe and tranquil" indicates the virtue of sovereign. Therefore, the SGI's peace movement accords with the virtue of sovereign.

**Q18.** The first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, said that, "Of all the Nichiren schools existing today, Nichiren Shoshu most closely resembles the Tendai School of the Daishonin's time." In looking back, why can we say that this observation has proved to be true? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. Because Nichiren Shoshu had carried the correct lineage of Buddhism from the Daishonin in the same way as the Tendai School carried the correct lineage from the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai.

b. Because Nichiren Shoshu is the largest sect of all the Nichiren schools existing today, just as the Tendai school was the largest school of Buddhism in the Daishonin's time.

c. Because the Tendai School transmitted the Lotus Sutra to Japan, and, in the same manner, Nichiren Shoshu transmitted the Daishonin's teaching to modern society worldwide.

d. Because the Tendai school had carried on only the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, as Nichiren Shoshu had carried on the theoretical teaching of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

e. Though the Tendai school was aware of the superiority of the Lotus Sutra, they not only failed to reproach evil, but took the side of the Daishonin's persecutors. Nichiren Shoshu, similarly, has repeatedly obstructed kosen-rufu, an undertaking for the people's happiness.

**Q19.** What can we learn from "The Opening of the Eyes" about being "praised by fools"? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

a. Those who act in exact accord with the Lotus Sutra are sure to be praised, even by fools.

b. To be praised by fools means to be persecuted by fools.

c. Even those who are ignorant of Buddhism will praise the greatness of the true teaching.

d. True practitioners of the Lotus Sutra are praised by fools first, then praised by the great sage eventually.

e. To be praised by fools is the greatest disgrace, while to be persecuted by them is the highest honor.

**Q20.** T'ien-t'ai states that the method of propagating Buddhism "should be that which accords with the time." What is it that should not change with the time? From below, select

the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. The essential rituals of Buddhism.
- b. The form of Buddhist practice.
- c. The nobility of the Buddha's disciples.
- d. The method of propagating Buddhism.
- e. The spirit of dedicating oneself to the Law and people's happiness.

**Q21.** In light of the Daishonin's teachings, how can those who propagate the Mystic Law in the Latter Day of the Law be described? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. They are far nobler than even the practitioners of the Former and Middle Days of the Law.
- b. They are greatly extolled by Shakyamuni, Many Treasures Buddha and all Buddhas of the ten directions.
- c. They will always experience comfortable and easy circumstances.
- d. They must be the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.
- e. They stand amid storms of obstacles and calumny.

**PART IV: Six questions from the "Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue" pamphlet.**

**Q22.** What action does Nichiren Daishonin state in the Goshō that believers should take at "a time when truth and error" in Buddhism "stand shoulder to shoulder"? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the Law.
- b. Look for the saint or sage who can make a correct judgment.
- c. Chant daimoku to protect the essential teaching.
- d. Avoid developing slander in one's own mind.
- e. Question oneself objectively about one's attitude toward the truth.

**Q23** Nichiren Daishonin states, "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myōhō-rensō-kyō in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women." In contrast to this, what did Nichijū Fujimoto, Nichiren Shōshū's general administrator, state in a letter to the Sōka Gakkai in January 1991? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. To talk about men and women with a sense of equality is an expression of great conceit.
- b. There are no nuns in the modern history of Nichiren Shōshū.
- c. Men and women, whether clergy or laity, are fundamentally different and live differently.
- d. To talk about the priesthood and laity with a sense of equality is an expression of great conceit.
- e. Priests and lay persons have exactly the same status, except during ceremonies or on Buddhist holidays.

**Q24.** Nichiren Daishonin states: "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who chant Nam-

myoho-renge-kyo.” In contrast, what is the assertion of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. The Gohonzon outside yourself is a manifestation of the Daishonin’s life as an enlightened human being, but the Gohonzon within means the enlightened potential within all ordinary people.
- b. The Gohonzon is the embodiment of the Buddha’s wisdom and compassion.
- c. One’s power of faith and practice to the Gohonzon enables one to tap the power of the Gohonzon within.
- d. The Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo exists nowhere but in the physical object of the Dai-Gohonzon.
- e. To claim control over the power of the Gohonzon is the basest form of exploitation of the Daishonin’s teaching.

**Q25.** Nichiren Shoshu has claimed that the Gohonzon issued by SGI is counterfeit because the high priest has not performed the “eye-opening ceremony” upon it. What was Nichiren Daishonin’s view of the “eye-opening ceremony” as expressed in the Gosho? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. The eye-opening ceremony performed upon the Gohonzon is essential to empower it.
- b. The eye-opening ceremony is an essential formality passed down from provisional, esoteric Buddhism.
- c. The eye-opening ceremony gives power to statues of Shakyamuni Buddha and other Buddhist objects.
- d. A formal eye-opening ceremony by good priests is necessary but not by evil priests.
- e. In performing the eye-opening ceremony for painted or wooden Buddha images, the only authority to rely on is the Lotus Sutra.

**Q26.** In his letter “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings,” the Daishonin states, “From the very day you take faith in this teaching, you should be fully prepared to face the three kinds of persecutions.” According to the text, how should we respond to criticism and attack by entrenched authority? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. We should be fully prepared with precise legal strategy to sue those authorities who are criticizing and attacking us.
- b. We should be confident that they will be defeated spontaneously by the Buddhist gods.
- c. We should pray for the happiness of those authorities who are attacking us.
- d. We should take pride in being subjected to such opposition, for it is proof that we are on the right track.
- e. We should humbly reflect on our attitude, and put a stop to those actions that cause those authorities to want to attack us.

**Q27.** Nichiren Daishonin writes, “It is important to speak with even greater conviction to those who slander.” What should our attitude or behavior be toward temple members? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. We should act with compassion toward those destined to suffer, even if they have denounced us.
- b. We should naturally try to help them escape such misery with our strong and consistent prayer.

- c. We should seek to see great misfortune befall those who slander.
- d. We should speak with great conviction about the reality of the temple issue so that we may eventually convince temple followers to disassociate from the temple.
- e. We need to use common sense and approach them with warmth and respect because each person is unique.

**PART V: Six questions from “An Explanation of Nikko Shonin’s Twenty-six Admonitions” by SGI President Ikeda.**

**Q28.** What was Nikko Shonin’s primary motivation in writing his “Twenty-six Admonitions”? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. It was for the eternal salvation and protection of humankind.
- b. It was to be sure that future generations would correctly conduct the formalities and rituals of Buddhism.
- c. It was so that later students of Buddhism, specifically priests, would carry on their practice correctly.
- d. It was to be sure that the Daishonin’s golden words regarding kosen-rufu would be treasured.
- e. It was for the sake of encouraging people to dedicate their lives to the path of the Mystic Law.

**Q29.** What is the similarity between the “five senior priests” of the Daishonin’s time and Nikken? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Both excommunicated large numbers of lay believers.
- b. Both physically demolished a temple that was to be the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism.
- c. Both promoted the worship of statues of Shakyamuni Buddha.
- d. Both betrayed their masters, differing in every regard from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.
- e. Both became engaged in lawsuits over their alleged inappropriate behavior.

**Q30.** The essential spirit of Article 3 of Nikko Shonin’s “Twenty-six Admonitions” is to treasure and base oneself on what? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. The Gohonzon.
- b. The daimoku.
- c. Action for kosen-rufu.
- d. The writings of Nichiren Daishonin.
- e. The Three Treasures.

**Q31.** Presidents Makiguchi and Toda refused to follow the high priest’s instructions to incorporate worship of a Shinto amulet into Soka Gakkai members’ practice. They based their refusal on Article 17 of the “Twenty-six Admonitions.” What does this article state? From below, select the ONE CORRECT answer:

- a. Unless you have a thorough understanding of and firm faith in the teachings, you should not study T’ien-t’ai’s doctrines.
- b. You should be inclined to engage in discussion or deliver lectures, and you should refrain from pursuing secular concerns.

- c. You must not accept offerings from slanderers of the Law.
- d. You should not sit together with slanderers of the Law for fear of suffering the same punishment as they.
- e. Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha's Law and propounds his own views.

**Q32.** Why does Nikko Shonin tell us not to “accept offerings from slanderers of the Law” in Article 22 of his “Twenty-six Admonitions”? From below, select the ONE answer that is NOT CORRECT:

- a. Because one suffers the same retribution as do the slanderers.
- b. Because one already owes a debt of gratitude to slanderers.
- c. Because to accept offerings made by slanderers is to condone their slander.
- d. Because one becomes guilty of the same offense as the slanderers.
- e. Because one will be placing the amassing of wealth above upholding the teachings.

**Q33.** Article 16 of Nikko Shonin's “Twenty-six Admonitions” states, “Even though they may be lowly, you should deeply respect and regard as your teachers those \_\_\_\_\_.” From below, select the ONE phrase that CORRECTLY completes the above sentence:

- a. who have stronger faith in the Gohonzon.
- b. whose practice of Buddhism is longer than yours.
- c. who entered the priesthood before you.
- d. whose ability at giving lectures is beyond your own.
- e. whose understanding of Buddhism surpasses your own.

**Note:**

**Q7. Korean:** B, C, D.

**Q23. Spanish:** E

**Q27. Spanish:** E