

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT ENTRANCE-LEVEL EXAMINATION

With the exception of question #1 (Q1), each question has one correct answer and is worth three points. Q1 has two correct answers, worth two points each (four points total). There are 100 points possible on the exam. You will pass the exam by scoring 70 or above. (The exam was held April 30 nationwide.)

Part I: The Life of Nichiren Daishonin

Q1. 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 Gohonzon? (Pick two, 2 pts. each)

- (A) Maka Shikan (Great Concentration and Insight).
- (B) The Lotus Sutra.
- (C) “On Attaining Buddhahood.”
- (D) “The True Object of Worship.”
- (E) “The Opening of the Eyes.”

Q2. Which practice did Nichiren Daishonin proclaim on April 28, 1253?

- (A) Meditation.
- (B) Almsgiving.
- (C) Abiding by the precepts.
- (D) Mastering occult powers.
- (E) Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Q3. After the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and Sado Exile, many of Nichiren Daishonin’s followers wavered in their faith. In what way was the behavior of the Daishonin’s followers different during the Atsuhara Persecution?

- (A) They were willing to die for their beliefs.
- (B) They accepted Nembutsu teachings.
- (C) They abandoned their faith.
- (D) They denied any association with him.
- (E) They all returned the Gohonzon.

Q4. The inscription of “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” and “Nichiren” down the center of the Gohonzon indicates what Buddhist principle?

- (A) The oneness of mentor and disciple.
- (B) The oneness of body and mind.
- (C) The oneness of good and evil.
- (D) The oneness of Person and Law.
- (E) Earthly desires lead to enlightenment.

Q5. After the attempt to execute Nichiren Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi proved unsuccessful, he was exiled to a cold and forbidding place from which he was not expected to return. What was this place?

- (A) Kamakura.
- (B) Tokyo.
- (C) Sado Island.
- (D) Mount Minobu.
- (E) Eagle Peak.

Q6. Why did five of the six senior priests abandon the Daishonin's teachings after he died?

- (A) Their desire to marry, have children and accumulate money was very strong, and they did not care for the strict guidelines the Daishonin set down.
- (B) They gave up their faith when accused of being spies for the Mongolian army.
- (C) The steward of the Minobu area, Hakiri Sanenaga, refused to allow them to visit the temple there and threatened to behead them.
- (D) They did not understand the essence of the Daishonin's teachings, believing he had only taught a form of Tendai Buddhism.
- (E) Upon examining various documents, writings and treatise, they determined that the Daishonin's philosophy contradicted Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings.

Q7. What was Nikko Shonin's purpose in writing "The Twenty-six Admonitions?"

- (A) To show that he was capable of developing his own teachings.
- (B) To protect the purity of Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra.
- (C) To protect the purity of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.
- (D) To protect the authority of the priesthood.
- (E) To protect the secrets of Buddhism from the laity.

Part 2: "On Attaining Buddhahood"

Q8. What does it mean to "perceive the nature of your own life"?

- (A) To realize our shallow understanding of life.
- (B) To realize that Buddhahood exists at the most fundamental level of life.
- (C) To realize that we share a common destiny with all people.
- (D) To understand the source of the world's problems.
- (E) To understand that we can always be forgiven for our bad karma.

Q9. What is the Daishonin trying to illustrate by using the analogy of a "poor man counting his neighbor's wealth night and day"?

- (A) Money is not the answer to a happy life.
- (B) By focusing on other people's wealth, we can learn how to create our own.
- (C) To study Buddhism or practice good deeds while believing that the truth is outside

ourselves will not help us awaken to the true nature of our lives.

(D) Good fortune includes material wealth.

(E) By associating with those who have good fortune, we will gain our own.

Q10. According to this letter, what is the attitude of a non-Buddhist?

(A) Seeking the Law outside oneself.

(B) Perceiving the true nature of one's own life and the lives of others.

(C) Striving to have confidence in one's Buddha nature.

(D) Never being swayed by external circumstances or obstacles.

(E) Strengthening one's conviction to change his or her destiny.

Q11. Where is the Buddha land?

(A) Head temple Taiseki-ji where the high priest resides.

(B) Where the Buddha's ashes are kept.

(C) At the Bodhi tree where Shakyamuni attained enlightenment.

(D) The Buddha land is in the afterlife.

(E) Wherever someone chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and strives for kosen-rufu.

Q12. What Buddhist principle is illustrated by the passage: "It 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."

(A) The three obstacles and four devils.

(B) The oneness of life and its environment.

(C) The Three Great Secret Laws.

(D) The oneness of body and mind.

(E) The three powerful enemies.

Q13. What is the direct path to enlightenment explained in this letter?

(A) Understanding the meaning of Shakyamuni's pre-Lotus Sutra teachings.

(B) Worshiping the Buddha, lifetime after lifetime.

(C) Obeying those with superior knowledge of Buddhist teachings.

(D) Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the realization that our lives are the Mystic Law.

(E) Observing the workings of Buddhist principles in the environment.

Q14. Nichiren Daishonin teaches us that when chanting to the Gohonzon, you should "summon up deep conviction" that:

(A) The Buddha is a deluded common mortal.

(B) Life is impermanent; hence, there is nothing you can depend upon.

(C) Myoho-renge-kyo is your life itself.

(D) Your life is an endless, painful austerity.

(E) The life of Shakyamuni Buddha is separate from your own.

Part 3: “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon”

Q15. 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”?

(A) By chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and attaining Buddhahood, we can fundamentally change our karma.

(B) We have hidden supernatural powers that can only be revealed through self-mastery.

(C) Our karma is the basis of life’s functions.

(D) The fundamental darkness within us indicates the ultimate consciousness, our Buddha nature.

(E) The potential for Buddhahood exists only within Nichiren Daishonin.

Q16. 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?

(A) By asking others to chant for us.

(B) Through the power of skepticism.

(C) By resolving to chant when we have more time.

(D) By believing in the power of the Gohonzon to the point where we do not need to chant, replacing practice with faith.

(E) Through our own powers of faith and practice.

Q17. Even though doubts are natural and unavoidable, it is important to strive to have doubt-free faith. Instead of worrying or tormenting ourselves, what should we do when we have feelings of doubt or insincerity in our practice?

(A) Resolve doubts through earnest practice and study.

(B) Realize that doubts indicate the practice is not for you and stop.

(C) Practice less strongly until the storm clears.

(D) Rely on common-sense strategies.

(E) Just follow the advice of friends and family.

Q18. According to Nichiren Daishonin, what two actions arise from faith?

(A) Chanting only for our personal wants and needs each morning and evening.

(B) Practice and study.

(C) Going to meetings at least once a week and reading books about Buddhism.

(D) Chanting during the day and begging for alms in the evening.

(E) Studying Buddhist theory and lecturing to others.

Q19. What point is the Daishonin trying to teach us in this writing by using the examples of the Emperor of Han and Li Kuang?

- (A) Their clarification of the Buddhist teaching was incorrect.
- (B) The mentor-and-disciple relationship is important in Buddhism.
- (C) The power of faith can make the impossible a reality.
- (D) The Chinese had a good grasp of Buddhist doctrines.
- (E) Emperors are no better than common folk.

Q20. In this letter, what specifically is Nichiren Daishonin urging us to seek within our own lives?

- (A) The moral fiber to live correctly.
- (B) The intelligence to understand all of Shakyamuni’s teachings.
- (C) Our identities in past lives.
- (D) The Gohonzon.
- (E) Our fundamental darkness.

Part 4: “Happiness in This World”

Q21. Why does Nichiren Daishonin state that “There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo”?

- (A) When we chant, other people will assist us.
- (B) When we chant, our lives become one with the Law, enabling us to draw forth inexhaustible strength, wisdom, joy and hope.
- (C) When we chant, we realize that we don’t need to concern ourselves with others, saving ourselves lots of time and energy.
- (D) When we chant, our problems automatically disappear like dew in the morning sunlight.
- (E) When we chant, others realize that we are right and they are wrong, which makes for a much more peaceful world.

Q22. How is “joy derived from the Law” different from the “joy derived from desires”?

- (A) “Joy derived from the Law” is legal pleasure; “joy derived from desires” is illegal pleasure.
- (B) “Joy derived from the Law” is described in theory in the Buddhist teachings; “joy derived from desires” is the real experience of joy.
- (C) “Joy derived from the Law” is the happiness and protection we receive from living according to society’s norms; “joy derived from desires” is realized when we follow our intuition.
- (D) “Joy derived from the Law” is based on the eternally unchanging law of life; “joy derived from desires” is temporary and can give rise to unhappiness and dissatisfaction.
- (E) “Joy derived from the Law” is ours; “joy derived from desires” can only come from others.

Q23. According to Nichiren Daishonin, what enables us to experience the “joy derived

from the Law”?

- (A) Continuing to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo no matter what happens.
- (B) Exercising the will power to win over others.
- (C) Exercising both body and mind to fully develop all our potential.
- (D) Obeying the rules of society and learning self-discipline.
- (E) In the Latter Day of the Law, true joy is not attainable.

Q24. Why is attributing the cause of our happiness or unhappiness to someone else contradictory to the teaching of the Lotus Sutra?

- (A) Happiness is found in good circumstances and good people; without them we cannot be happy.
- (B) Other people are the foundation of our happiness.
- (C) Heredity determines the people around us; happiness is inherited.
- (D) The state of life of others can create or destroy our happiness; hence the importance of praying to find good friends.
- (E) Our happiness fundamentally does not depend on others, because only through our own faith and practice can we establish the foundation of absolute happiness.

Q25. How does the expression “happy and at ease” relate to our lives?

- (A) Chanting enables us to better enjoy the pleasures of life.
- (B) Chanting prevents us from falling victim to the enticements of a happy and easy life.
- (C) Chanting enables us to view things from the world of Buddhahood, the condition of supreme happiness.
- (D) Chanting enables us to resist the easygoing tendencies of today’s world.
- (E) Chanting enables us to avoid the problems and sufferings that threaten our happiness and easy living.

Q26. What does achieving “peace and security” mean?

- (A) It means that we get used to misery and become more passive; Buddhists are pacifists.
- (B) It means that we have achieved a life free from difficulties.
- (C) It means that whatever difficulties may arise, we can summon up the courage, strength and confidence to overcome them.
- (D) It means that our present lifetime is filled with misery, and real happiness can be found after death, in the Buddha land.
- (E) It means that we should protect our homes and altars with good security if we want to have peace of mind.

Q27. What is a Buddha of absolute freedom?

- (A) A Buddha of absolute freedom is nothing like an ordinary human being.
- (B) A Buddha of absolute freedom possesses supernatural powers.
- (C) A Buddha of absolute freedom is a Buddha from provisional sutras.
- (D) A Buddha of absolute freedom is beyond the grasp of common mortals.

(E) A Buddha of absolute freedom is an ordinary person who freely receives and uses limitless joy from the Law.

Part 5: Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue

Q28. Which statement is a passage from the Lotus Sutra regarding persecutions that applies directly to the SGI?

- (A) “The Tathagata’s secret and mystic power will protect those persecuted for their faith.”
- (B) “And since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?”
- (C) “And since the true votaries of this sutra are persecuted, they are certain to become discouraged in their faith.”
- (D) “Only one courageous in faith can withstand the persecutions that surely will come.”
- (E) “Persecutions are a natural part of this saha world; you should not feel sorry that you’re not leading a peaceful life.”

Q29. How does Buddhism characterize opposition by those in authority?

- (A) It is a sign of their wisdom.
- (B) It is a sign that we should stop spreading this Buddhism until the time is ripe so that we won’t meet any persecutions.
- (C) It is a sign that we are practicing correctly.
- (D) It is a sign of their limitless concern for our happiness.
- (E) It is a sign that our understanding of Buddhism is shallow.

Q30. What is meant by “correct faith”?

- (A) To practice as Nichiren Daishonin taught, share his convictions and develop our lives in accord with that understanding.
- (B) To practice in accord with the 700-year traditions established by the priesthood.
- (C) To practice in our own way, with complete freedom.
- (D) To practice as individuals without influence from other believers.
- (E) To practice in accord with what those in positions of authority say is right.

Q31. In terms of the future, why is it important to understand the temple issue?

- (A) So we can transmit its significance and meaning to future generations, allowing them to benefit from the example and understanding we have gained.
- (B) So we can inform future generations that this was not the time for kosen-rufu.
- (C) So we can inform our children that the end of the temple issue will signal the time that they can now widely spread this Buddhism exactly as the Daishonin taught.
- (D) So we can transmit a correct understanding of what it means to be a Bodhisattva of the Earth, something we SGI members cannot be because of the temple issue.
- (E) So we can ask future generations to fix the mistakes we’ve made and reconcile with the temple.

Q32. How does Nichiren Shoshu’s view of the Gohonzon contradict the Daishonin’s view? Four of the following statements are incorrect views of the Gohonzon based on stated positions of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. One represents Nichiren Daishonin’s correct teaching. Select the correct view.

- (A) The Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is not inherent in the lives of all people, only in the physical object of the Gohonzon and in the life of the high priest.
- (B) Believing that the Law or the Gohonzon exists within one’s own life is the essence of arrogance and will send one to hell.
- (C) The high priest has sole possession of the Law and control over the power of the Gohonzon; therefore, a believer’s individual faith is insufficient to activate the Gohonzon’s power.
- (D) Only the high priest can empower a Gohonzon by personally conducting an “eye-opening” ceremony, thus awakening the life of Nichiren Daishonin inscribed within.
- (E) The Gohonzon is the manifestation of Nichiren Daishonin’s enlightened life, which is no different from the enlightened potential within all ordinary people, tapped through the power of each person’s faith and practice.

Q33. Which of the following statements correctly sums up both Nichiren Shoshu’s and Nichiren Daishonin’s view of what it means to receive the heritage or lifeblood of faith?

- (A) Nichiren Shoshu and the Daishonin both taught that only priests can receive the heritage because the heritage lies in being strictly obedient to the high priest.
- (B) Nichiren Shoshu and the Daishonin both taught that our individual practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo without the intervention of the priests’ prayers has nothing to do with attaining enlightenment.
- (C) Nichiren Shoshu says only the high priest can possess and bestow the heritage of the Law, while the Daishonin repeatedly explains that it is one’s faith alone that enables him or her to inherit the heritage of the Law.
- (D) Nichiren Shoshu says the laity is as respectable as the priesthood, while the Daishonin proclaims that only the priesthood is capable of expounding the Law and receiving the heritage.
- (E) Nichiren Shoshu claims the Law is absolute, while the Daishonin teaches that the high priest determines everything about the heritage.

Exam Answers

1. D, E
2. E
3. A
4. D
5. C
6. D
7. C
8. B
9. C
10. A
11. E
12. B
13. D
14. C
15. A
16. E
17. A
18. B
19. C
20. D
21. B
22. D
23. A
24. E
25. C
26. C
27. E
28. B
29. C
30. A
31. A
32. E
33. C