

## STUDY DEPARTMENT ADVANCED-LEVEL EXAMINATION SAMPLE QUESTIONS

*The Advanced-level Examination, which any current SGI-USA member who has passed the Intermediate-level or Senior-level Examination is eligible to take, will be held Oct. 21. Those who pass the exam will become post-graduates in the SGI-USA Study Department.*

*The study materials for the advanced exam are the same as announced at the end of 1998. The materials are from three different sources. Selected Lectures on the Goshō, vol. 1, and The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, vol. 1, are available at SGI-USA bookstores and from the SGI-USA Mail Order Center. Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue is available on the SGI-USA Web site ([www.sgi-usa.org](http://www.sgi-usa.org)).*

**Source No. 1:** *Selected Lectures on the Goshō*, vol. 1, published by NSIC in 1980.

A) “The True Entity of Life” (pp. 3–24, 30–39, 58–70, 87–89).

B) “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law” (pp. 95–109, 121–23, 150–55, 169–72, 190–95).

C) “The True Object of Worship” (pp. 203–23, 240–81).

**Source No. 2:** *The Wisdom of Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, published by World Tribune Press.

D) The entire book (1st through 9th installments of the “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra” series that began in the April 1995 *Seikyo Times* and continued in *Living Buddhism*).

**Source No. 3:** *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue*.

E) The entire pamphlet.

**The Advanced-level exam will be made from material covered by the following sample questions.**

### **Selected Lectures on the Goshō — “The True Entity of Life”**

#### **Q1:**

In “The True Entity of Life,” Nichiren Daishonin combines what two view points, from which two important writings, to explain the Gohonzon? (p. 17)

#### **Q2:**

With respect to the “true entity of all phenomena,” what is the difference between the Lotus Sutra and other sutras? (pp. 19–20)

#### **Q3:**

The Daishonin states: “Where there is an environment, there is life within it. Miao-lo states, ‘Both life (*shoho*) and its environment (*eho*) always manifest Myoho-enge-kyo.’ What makes the Lotus Sutra’s view of life and environment superior to other teachings? (pp. 22–23)

**Questions 4–8 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

No one but Nichiren has ever revealed these teachings. T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo knew in their hearts but did not declare them aloud. There was reason for their silence: The Buddha had not entrusted them with the mission, the time had not yet come, and they had not been the Buddha’s disciples from ages past. No one but Jogyo, Muhengyo and the other leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth can appear during the first five hundred years of the Latter Day to spread the Law of Myoho-rence-kyo. Only they are qualified to inscribe the object of worship which physically manifests the ceremony of the two Buddhas seated together in the Treasure Tower. This is because both the Law and the object of worship are the reality of *ichinen sanzen* revealed in the *Juryo* Chapter of the essential teaching.

**Q4:**

What is signified by “the Buddha had not entrusted them with this mission?” Who did the Buddha entrust and why? (p. 31)

**Q5:**

When is the right time to spread the Mystic Law and who understands it? (p. 31)

**Q6:**

As for where the Bodhisattvas of the Earth live, the Lotus Sutra identifies it as “the space below the earth.” How do T’ien-t’ai and Nichiren Daishonin respectively describe the dwelling place of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth? (pp. 32–33)

**Q7:**

What is the difference in purpose between transient bodhisattvas and the Bodhisattvas of the Earth? (pp. 32–33)

**Q8:**

What is the significance of the statement, “No one but Jogyo...can appear during the first five hundred years to spread the Law of Myoho-rence-kyo”? (pp. 34–35)

**Questions 9–11 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

The two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Taho, are merely functions of the true Buddha, while Myoho-rence-kyo is actually the true Buddha. The sutra explains this as “the Tathagata’s secret and his mystic power.” The “secret” refers to the entity of the Buddha’s three properties and the “mystic power” to their functions. The entity is the true Buddha and the function a provisional Buddha.

**Q9:**

How are “entity” and function” portrayed on the Gohonzon and what does that mean to our practice? (p. 36)

**Q10:**

What is the difference between the two categories of “true” and “provisional” as applied to human life, and what comparison does T’ien-t’ai use to illustrate their relationship? (pp. 36–38)

**Q11:**

Summarize the meaning of the “Tathagata’s secret” both in terms of Shakyamuni’s Lotus Sutra as T’ien-t’ai defines it and from the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. (pp. 38–39)

**Q12:**

The Daishonin states, “No matter what, maintain your faith as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and forever exert yourself as Nichiren’s disciple.” Why is this statement the key to attaining Buddhahood and the spirit of the SGI? (pp. 58–61)

**Questions 13–14 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth. And since you are a Bodhisattva of the Earth, there is not the slightest doubt that you have been a disciple of the Buddha from the remotest past.

**Q13:**

How do we become “of the same mind as Nichiren?” (pp. 62–67)

**Q14:**

In addition to chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, what else identifies one as a Bodhisattva of the Earth? (pp. 62–67)

**Q15:**

The Daishonin states, “There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women.” What is the significance of this statement in regards to the SGI efforts for kosen-rufu? (pp. 62–67)

**Questions 16–17 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future. Doesn’t this signify “emerging from the earth”?

**Q16:**

Why does this statement signify “emerging from the earth”? (pp. 67–70)

**Q17:**

What is the significance of the statement “Only I, Nichiren, first chanted Nam-myoho-

renge-kyo”? (p. 68)

**Q18:**

What part of “The True Entity of Life” is so important that President Ikeda encourages us to memorize it? Also explain the significance of this passage in terms of our practice. (pp. 87–89)

**Q19:**

Nichiren daishonin states, “Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism.” In light of this passage, where does Buddhism exist and manifest itself? (pp. 87–89)

**Selected Lectures on the Goshō — “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life”**

**Q20:**

According to the opening portion of the lecture on “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” what is the Buddhist view of life and death expressed in the title of this letter? (pp. 103–04)

**Q21:**

What is the significance of our state of life in each successive moment? (p. 107)

**Q22:**

What does “the ultimate Law” (*ichidaiji*) in the title signify? (pp. 108–09)

**Q23:**

Nichiren Daishonin states, “Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment countless aeons ago, the Lotus Sutra which leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from each other.” Explain this passage literally and from a deeper viewpoint. (pp. 121–23)

**Q24:**

The Daishonin states: “Therefore, to chant Myōhō-*renge-kyō* with this realization is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death. To carry on this heritage is the most important task for Nichiren’s disciples, and that is precisely what it means to embrace the Lotus Sutra.” What does it mean to chant with “this realization”? (pp. 121–23)

**Questions 25–27 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-myōhō-*renge-kyō* with one mind (*itai doshin*), transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate law of life and death. Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren’s propagation. When you are so united, even the great hope for *kosen-rufu* can be fulfilled without fail.

**Q25:**

What does it mean to chant with “one mind”? (pp. 150–55)

**Q26:**

What relationship does diversity have to the Buddhist principle of unity? (pp. 150–55)

**Q27:**

What is the “true goal of Nichiren’s propagation”? (p. 151)

**Questions 28–29 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

Gold can neither be burned by fire nor corroded or swept away by water, but iron is vulnerable to both. A wise person is like gold and a fool like iron. You are like pure gold because you embrace the “gold” of the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra reads in part, “Sumeru is the loftiest of all mountains. The Lotus Sutra is likewise the loftiest of all the sutras.” It also states, “The good fortune of the believer cannot be burned by fire or washed away by water.”

**Q28:**

What is the meaning of the analogy comparing gold and iron to a wise person and a foolish one? (pp. 169–72)

**Q29:**

In terms of our lives, what do fire and water symbolize? (pp. 169–70)

**Questions 30–31 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

Be resolved to summon forth the great power of your faith, and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death. Never seek any other way to inherit the ultimate law and manifest it in your life. Only then will you realize that earthly desires are enlightenment and the sufferings of life and death are nirvana. Without the lifeblood of faith, it would be useless to embrace the Lotus Sutra.

**Q30:**

What does this passage tell us about the role of faith in terms of our practice to the Gohonzon? (pp. 190–95)

**Q31:**

What does it mean for our faith to be “steadfast and correct” at the moment of death, and what awareness does this teach us to pray with? (p. 191)

**Q32:**

Where and to what extent does the “heritage of the ultimate law” flow? (pp. 193–94)

## **Selected Lectures on the Goshō — “The True Object of Worship”**

### **Q33:**

What does the Daishonin mean when he talks about “Shakyamuni” and “the Lotus Sutra” from the standpoint of his own enlightenment? (pp. 207–09)

### **Q34:**

Explain the inscription of the Gohonzon in terms of the Person and the Law. (pp. 207–10)

### **Q35:**

What is the meaning of the three powerful enemies in terms of Nichiren Daishonin’s life? (pp. 210–11)

### **Q36:**

In Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings, what does it mean to “observe one’s mind and to find the Ten Worlds within it”? (p. 213)

### **Q37:**

What is the difference between “a Buddha” and “a common mortal”? (p. 214)

### **Q38:**

What tends to result from having a “subservient attitude” toward an object of worship? (p. 216)

### **Q39:**

Discuss the Three Great Secret Laws in terms of the One Great Secret Law (pp. 217–18)

### **Questions 40–41 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

An arbitrary interpretation of these quotations may distort their meaning, but in essence they mean that Shakyamuni’s practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase, Myoho-rence-kyo. If we believe in that phrase, we shall naturally be granted the same benefits as he was.

### **Q40:**

In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin explains the principle of “embracing the Gohonzon is attaining Buddhahood” (*juji soku kanjin*). Explain this principle in terms of practice. (pp. 240–45)

### **Q41:**

Beyond its literal meaning, how should we interpret the phrase “Shakyamuni’s practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase Myoho-rence-kyo” from the standpoint of the Daishonin’s intent? (pp. 242–44)

### **Q42:**

What is the difference between the Buddhism of the True Cause and that of the True

Effect? (p. 246)

**Q43:**

How can those who believe in the Gohonzon today, in the Latter Day of the Law, apply the message of the Parable of the Three Carts and the Burning House? (pp. 255–56)

**Q44:**

Explain the significance of the phrase that opens the verse section of the Life Span (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads “*ji ga toku bu(tsu) rai,*” meaning, “Since I attained Buddhahood. . . .” (p. 257)

**Q45:**

What is the meaning of the statement, “The enlightened life of Shakyamuni Buddha is our own flesh and blood. His practices and resulting virtues are our bones and marrow”? (pp. 264–67)

**Questions 46–50 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:**

Chapter Eleven of the Lotus says: “Those who choose to protect this sutra serve Taho Buddha and me...They also serve all the other Buddhas present who dignify and glorify all the worlds.” Shakyamuni, Taho, and all the other Buddhas in the ten directions represent the world of Buddhahood within ourselves. By searching them out within us, we can receive the benefits of Shakyamuni, Taho, and all the other Buddhas. This is what is meant by the following passage in Chapter Ten: “If one hears the Law for even a single moment, he will be able to attain perfect enlightenment.”

**Q46:**

Explain this passage in terms of the three enlightened properties of life. (pp. 268–69)

**Q47:**

What does it mean to “choose to protect this sutra”? (pp. 268–71)

**Q48:**

What is the meaning of “If one hears the Law for even a single moment, he will be able to attain perfect enlightenment.” (pp. 268–72)

**Q49:**

If hearing is not merely listening, but life-to-life interchange, what hinders our “hearing”? (pp. 271–74)

**Q50:**

In his explanation of this passage, President Ikeda warns us of the danger of “hatred and jealousy” (*onshitsu*). What guidance does he give for overcoming this danger? (pp. 272–75)

## The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, Volume 1

### Q51:

Nichiren Daishonin states: “The Juryo chapter states: ‘Once I also practiced bodhisattva austerities, and the life which I then acquired has yet to be exhausted. My life will last twice as many aeons from now.’ He was speaking of the world of Bodhisattva within ourselves. The bodhisattvas of the earth are the followers of the Lord Shakyamuni.” What is the function of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in terms of supporting our inner life-condition? (pp. 277–78)

### Q52:

The Daishonin states: “The teachings such as those of the non-Buddhist writings and those of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana Buddhist scriptures all partially explain the phenomena inherent in one’s life. They do not explain them as the Lotus Sutra does.” In what manner does the Lotus Sutra give other teachings and philosophies their proper perspective? (p. 13)

### Q53:

What negative effects may result from basing our view of life solely on “the teachings such as those of the non-Buddhist writings and those of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana Buddhist scriptures,” instead of the Lotus Sutra? (p. 13)

### Q54:

The Lotus Sutra begins with the phrase “This is what I heard.” In the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” how does Nichiren Daishonin interpret this phrase? (p. 16)

### Q55:

The Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings states: “His body neither existing nor not existing, neither caused nor conditioned, neither self nor other...” What does “his body” refer to in the context of the sutra? How did second Soka Gakkai president Toda interpret the meaning of “his body”? What is the significance of Mr. Toda’s realization to humankind? (pp. 22–23)

### Q56:

What does Nichiren Daishonin say are the three meanings of myo [of *myoho*, the Mystic Law]? These are the attributes of what? (p. 24)

### Q57:

In the Lotus Sutra, what is the meaning of the expression “teacher of the Law”? (p. 50)

### Q58:

The Daishonin states: “When one knows the Lotus Sutra, one understands the meaning of all worldly affairs.” In light of this passage, what is the primary focus of the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra? (p. 55)

### Q59:

The Daishonin spoke of the Lotus Sutra in terms of its comprehensive, abbreviated and essential forms. What is the essential and most appropriate form of the Lotus Sutra for

today's practice? (p. 68)

**Q60:**

The Lotus Sutra begins with the passage “This is what I heard.” From the standpoint of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, what is the essence of this passage? (pp. 73–75)

**Q61:**

What is the significance of the assembly of various beings at Eagle Peak as described in the “Introduction” chapter of the Lotus Sutra? What do those beings in the assembly signify in terms of the Ten Worlds? (p. 86)

**Q62:**

In the Lotus Sutra, there is no distinction between men and women in attaining Buddhahood. Substantiate this claim using more than one example from the sutra. (p. 88)

**Q63:**

Nichiren Daishonin states: “Abutsu-bo is therefore the treasure tower itself, and the treasure tower is Abutsu-bo himself. No other knowledge is purposeful.” In light of this passage, what is the symbolic meaning of the treasure tower in the Lotus Sutra? What does it teach us? (p. 93)

**Q64:**

According to the Daishonin, what does it mean to “reside in the Ceremony in the Air”? Explain the significance of the Lotus Sutra’s progression from the first assembly on Eagle Peak to the Ceremony in the Air and back again to Eagle Peak in terms of our practice. (pp. 96–97)

**Q65:**

What is the distinction between Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and Shakyamuni’s Buddhism from the viewpoint of the three assemblies and the two places? (pp. 97–99)

**Q66:**

The Daishonin states: “The nine worlds have the potential for Buddhahood” and “Buddhahood retains the nine worlds.” Explain each of these passages in terms of “the three assemblies in two places” as described in the Lotus Sutra. (p. 97)

**Q67:**

The “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states: “The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone.” According to the sutra, what is the “one great reason” the Buddhas appear in the world? (pp. 114–15)

**Q68:**

What is the implication of the Buddha seeking to open the door of Buddha wisdom [the state of Buddhahood] to living beings as described in the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra? (p. 115)

**Q69:**

What are the three types of expedient means that T'ien-t'ai identifies in his Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra? Which types of expedient means are discarded in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra when it states, "honestly discarding expedient means"? (pp. 121–24)

**Q70:**

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. How could this be anything other than the boundless joy of the Law?" Explain this passage in terms of the "secret and mystic expedient." (p. 128)

**Q71:**

Explain the concept of "the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle." In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, how is the one vehicle expounded? (p. 140)

**Q72:**

What is the meaning of "the unification of the three vehicles within the one vehicle"? Explain the two aspects of the unification. (p. 142)

**Q73:**

The Daishonin states: "If the worlds of the two vehicles do not attain Buddhahood, then the worlds of the two vehicles within each of the other eight worlds will not attain Buddhahood. And if the worlds of the two vehicles within each of the other eight worlds do not attain Buddhahood, then none of the other eight worlds will attain Buddhahood." In light of this passage, compare the Lotus Sutra with the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings in terms of the enlightenment of the two vehicles and the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, and explain the equality of all living beings as expounded in the Lotus Sutra. (pp. 148–49)

**Q74:**

In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni expresses his goal to "make all persons equal to me, without any distinction between us." What Buddhist principle explains why it is possible for the Buddha's disciples to share the same goal and to practice the way of the oneness of mentor and disciple? (p. 156)

**Q75:**

Nichikan, the 26th high priest, emphasized that striving to attain the same state of life as the Daishonin is the very essence of Buddhism. Nichikan states: "We ourselves manifest the life of the founder, Nichiren Daishonin" and "our lives immediately become the Gohonzon of 'three thousand realms in a single moment of life,' the entity of the founder, Nichiren Daishonin." What does Nichikan say we must do to make this possible? Contrast Nichikan's view with the position of the current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. (pp. 159–60)

**Q76:**

How does Nichiren Daishonin explain the meaning of "consistency from beginning to end" from the standpoint of the Buddha's enlightenment? What does the Daishonin say is

“the reason the Lotus Sutra is acclaimed for its great impartial wisdom”? (p. 172)

**Q77:**

In “On Attaining Buddhahood,” the Daishonin writes: “Therefore, when you chant myoho and recite rengo, you must summon up deep faith that Myoho-rengo-kyo is your life itself.” Explain this passage in terms of the true entity of all phenomena. (p. 182)

**“Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue”**

**Q78:**

How do Nichiren Shoshu and the SGI differ with regard to their views of equality, the heritage of the Law and the Gohonzon? (pp. 13–16)

**Q79:**

Discuss the true significance of “eye-opening” in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. (pp. 20–22)