

# Buddhist Learning Review

October 2005

Name

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District Name

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**SGI**<sup>U</sup><sub>S</sub><sup>A</sup>

Soka Gakkai International-USA



# **SGI-USA Buddhist Learning Review**

**October 2005**

*Congratulations on participating in the first SGI-USA Buddhist Learning Review!  
This Review provides an opportunity to expand your understanding of Nichiren  
Buddhism and deepen your confidence in your Buddhist practice.*

*The Review activity consists of two parts:*

- 1) Answering the Review questions (suggested time 40 min.)*
- 2) Grading and discussion (suggested time 40 min.)*

*This booklet is for you to keep as a record of your progress in Buddhist learning.  
Please enjoy the Review and have meaningful dialogue on Nichiren Buddhism!*

*The SGI-USA Study Department*

## Part I: The Life of Nichiren Daishonin

*Please read questions 1 through 5 and circle the most appropriate answer.  
(5 points for each correct answer)*

1. At age sixteen, Nichiren decided to become a priest because:
  - a. he wanted to leave behind his mundane life as a lay person.
  - b. he wanted to gain respect from others.
  - c. he wanted to lead people away from suffering.
  - d. he wanted to leave behind his identity as a fisherman.
  
2. On April 28, 1253, Nichiren declared chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the correct Buddhist practice for all people to reveal their innate Buddhahood. On this occasion, he also:
  - a. inscribed the Gohonzon as the object of devotion.
  - b. chose Nikko as his successor.
  - c. wrote the treatise “The Opening of the Eyes.”
  - d. clarified the errors of other Buddhist schools.
  
3. On July 16, 1260, Nichiren wrote the treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”:
  - a. to show how the worship of Amida Buddha can bring peace in the afterlife.
  - b. to show how the correct teaching of Buddhism can bring peace.
  - c. to show how superior military strength can bring peace.
  - d. to show how the Gohonzon embodies the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

4. Through the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, Nichiren revealed, within his life as an ordinary person, his true identity as:
  - a. the Buddha of absolute freedom.
  - b. the creator of the universe.
  - c. the high priest of the Tendai school.
  - d. the reincarnation of Shakyamuni Buddha.
  
5. Nichiren chose Nikko as his successor because:
  - a. he was the oldest of the six senior priests.
  - b. he surpassed the other senior priests in faith, practice and study.
  - c. he was from a prestigious family related to the ruling Hojo clan.
  - d. he surpassed the other senior priests in the knowledge of Buddhist rituals.

QUESTION	POINTS
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
SUBTOTAL	

## Part II: The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin

### “Reply to Kyo’o”

*Please read questions 6 through 8 and circle the most appropriate answer.*

*(5 points for each correct answer)*

*Question 9 is a short-answer question. (maximum 10 points)*

6. Nichiren stresses the importance of faith in overcoming obstacles:  
“Believe in this mandala with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?” Here, strong faith in the mandala or the Gohonzon means:
  - a. to worship the Buddhist gods.
  - b. to think of sickness as our destiny assigned by the Buddha.
  - c. to have confidence in our innate Buddha nature.
  - d. to deny medical science and simply pray.
  
7. In “Reply to Kyo’o,” Nichiren teaches us that the essential way to overcome life’s obstacles is to:
  - a. ask friends for advice.
  - b. figure out who to blame.
  - c. feel guilty because we have a problem.
  - d. bring forth our innate strength by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as powerfully as Nichiren.

8. Nichiren writes: “A sword is useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith.”

This passage means:

- a. the Lotus Sutra is an instructional manual of martial arts.
- b. overcoming cowardice is not possible with the Gohonzon.
- c. self-reliant, courageous faith and practice lead to great benefit and the protection from the environment.
- d. only those who already possess courage should practice.

9. Nichiren writes, “Then what is there that cannot be achieved?” What does Nichiren Buddhism encourage us to do in order to make the seemingly impossible possible?

Please write a brief answer in the space provided below.

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QUESTION	POINTS
6	
7	
8	
9	
SUBTOTAL	

## **“The Wealthy Man Sudatta”**

*Please read questions 10 through 12 and circle the most appropriate answer.*

*(5 points for each correct answer)*

*Question 13 is a short-answer question. (maximum 10 points)*

10. In the winter of 1280, Nanjo Tokimitsu sent one thousand coins to Nichiren Daishonin because:
  - a. his village had a successful harvest that year.
  - b. he felt obligated by his teacher’s repeated requests.
  - c. it was the custom to give money to priests.
  - d. he sincerely wanted to support his teacher despite his own great difficulties.
  
11. According to Nichiren’s writing “The Wealthy Man Sudatta,” “the way to become a Buddha easily” is:
  - a. to spend years in seclusion studying the sutras.
  - b. to develop compassion and extend ourselves to others.
  - c. to give up all of our possessions and earthly desires.
  - d. to strictly follow the orders of those in religious authority.
  
12. In “The Wealthy Man Sudatta,” Nichiren praises Nanjo Tokimitsu for making an offering, saying “How admirable, how noble!” In Nichiren Buddhism, making an offering is valuable:
  - a. even if it is made to those who distort Buddhism.
  - b. even if one does so begrudgingly.
  - c. only if it is a large amount.
  - d. if it is made as an expression of one’s sincere faith.

13. Nichiren writes, “Teaching another something is the same as oiling the wheels of a cart so that they turn even though it is heavy, or as floating a boat on water so that it moves ahead easily.” In light of this passage, explain the significance of teaching others about Buddhism.

Please write a brief answer in the space provided below.

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QUESTION	POINTS
10	
11	
12	
13	
SUBTOTAL	

## **“The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind”**

*Please read questions 14 through 16 and circle the most appropriate answer.  
(5 points for each correct answer)*

*Question 17 is a short-answer question. (maximum 10 points)*

14. In his major treatise “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” Nichiren explains that:
- the Gohonzon is activated only when it is consecrated by priests.
  - faith in the Gohonzon is the means for revealing Buddhahood.
  - silent meditation is the only way to reveal Buddhahood.
  - the Gohonzon is a deity who grants our wishes if we pray to it.
15. In “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” Nichiren explains that “the six lower worlds exist within the human world.” According to Nichiren Buddhism, being trapped in the “six lower worlds” or “six paths” means:
- we are controlled by our external circumstances.
  - we are punished by the Buddha for our disobedience.
  - we are destined by our karma to live in those places forever.
  - we cannot attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.
16. In “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” Nichiren writes, “You should believe that you have Buddhahood as well.” According to Nichiren Buddhism, those who awaken to their innate Buddhahood will:
- never be reborn into this world.
  - no longer need to practice Buddhism.
  - continually strive to help many others to reveal the same state.
  - eliminate the unenlightened nine worlds.

17. In “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” Nichiren discusses the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds. Explain how understanding this Buddhist concept helps us overcome our difficulties.  
Please write a brief answer in the space provided below.

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QUESTION	POINTS
14	
15	
16	
17	
SUBTOTAL	

QUESTIONS	SUBTOTAL POINTS
1-5	
6-9	
10-13	
14-17	
TOTAL	

## Discussion Guide

After grading the Buddhist Learning Review, please share your thoughts and experiences based on the short-answer questions 9, 13 and 17. In addition, any of the following points may be used to start a group discussion.

### Discussion Point 1:

**“Muster your faith, and pray to this Gohonzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved?” (“Reply to Kyo’o,” WND, 412).**

- **How have you broken through what seemed impossible by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo?**
- **What do you think is the key to making the impossible possible?**

### Discussion Point 2:

**“Teaching another something is the same as oiling the wheels of a cart so that they turn even though it is heavy, or as floating a boat on water so that it moves ahead easily. The way to become a Buddha easily is nothing special” (“The Wealthy Man Sudatta,” WND, 1086).**

- **Have you gained deeper understanding of Nichiren Buddhism through sharing it with others? If so, please share your experience.**
- **What makes dialogue rewarding for yourself and others?**

**Discussion Point 3:**

**“Buddhahood is the most difficult to demonstrate. But since you possess the other nine worlds, you should believe that you have Buddhahood as well. Do not permit yourself to have doubts” (“The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” WND, 358).**

- **Why is it so difficult at times to believe in our innate Buddhahood?**
- **What is the key to overcoming our doubts?**

**NOTES**

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# Answer Key

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## Correct answers to multiple-choice questions (5 points each)

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. a
5. b
6. c
7. d
8. c

9. **Suggested Answer:** Nichiren encourages us to muster our faith and pray powerfully to the Gohonzon in order to make the seemingly impossible possible.

### Grading Guide (maximum 10 points)

If your answer contains:

- all concepts in the suggested answer or an emphasis on strong faith..... 10 points
- an emphasis on strong prayer..... 5 points
- any other related concepts in the study material..... 3 points total

10. d
11. b
12. d

13. **Suggested Answer:** Teaching others about Buddhism is to help them strengthen their lives and confidently overcome their problems through faith, practice and study.

### Grading Guide (maximum 10 points)

If your answer contains:

- all concepts in the suggested answer..... 10 points
- an emphasis on helping others strengthen their lives ..... 4 points
- an emphasis on helping others overcome their problems .... 4 points
- an emphasis on faith, practice and study as a means of overcome difficulties ..... 3 points
- any other related concepts in the study material..... 3 points total

14. b
15. a
16. c

17. **Suggested Answer:** Since the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds explains that the potential for Buddhahood exists in any life-condition, we can always manifest our innate Buddhahood to overcome difficulties.

### Grading Guide (maximum 10 points)

If your answer contains:

- all concepts in the suggested answer..... 10 points
- an emphasis on the existence of Buddhahood in any of the Ten Worlds..... 5 points
- an emphasis on the possibility of manifesting Buddhahood under any circumstances ..... 5 points
- any other related concepts in the study material..... 3 points total

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