

Purpose and Aims of the Elementary Study Exam

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1. PURPOSE AND AIMS

1.1. Purpose

"The exams we have in the Gakkai are to encourage you in your study of Buddhism. The main point is that you not only strengthen your determination to continue studying the Daishonin's teachings throughout your whole life, but strive to put into practice what you have learned in these exams, even if just a word or a phrase. Your goal is not simply to pass a test, but to become winners in faith, victors in happiness." -- NHR vol 7, p.133

The Study topic this month is about the rationale for the Study Exam. I think that's quite important so I'll go into it as best I can, bearing in mind that I can't give what I haven't got – I personally do not know why we have a universal voluntary elementary Study Exam in SGI-UK. There are probably people here tonight who have spoken to senior leaders about it and have a better idea of the specific causes – I can only talk in generalities about the place of an exam in the concept of Study, and by examining the concept in terms of Sutra, Goshō and Guidance.

I'm saying this because I want everyone to understand that I'm not here simply to advocate a 'management' policy. I have my own views, opinions and doubts, convictions and determinations, just as you do. Buddhism is not to be confused with being a mindless Do-Bee.

So let me make clear that MY purpose tonight is NOT to convince you that our faith community, our sangha, is absolutely right. MY purpose is to explain why you should only attempt the exam if you understand why it is in your own interests and feel totally happy about it, including happy about possibly failing. Can you understand how failing could be a victory? If not, perhaps it would be better to give it a year and think again.

If we have time at the end I'll try to answer questions about the Exam itself – although I suspect that many of you are better-informed than I am and this should be more discussion than pronouncement.

1.1.1. History – the "Three Pillars"

SGI-UK is not, of course, simply rushing in where angels fear to tread. Much of the present initiative relies on President Ikeda's discussion of the *Three Pillars of Buddhist Study*, first published in English in the *World Tribune* in September 1998. These three pillars, or purposes, are:

1. *"First, Buddhist study deepens faith. Study is a torch that illuminates the path of faith. Study builds a solid framework for our faith and spurs our human revolution."*
2. *"Second, study gives us impetus to the advancement of kosen-rufu. Only when we take action in accord with the Daishonin's writings can we say that we have grasped the teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Study without practice is meaningless."*
3. *"Third, study is the key to establishing a new humanistic philosophy. Only by returning to such principles as the ultimate dignity of life, compassion, the oneness of body and mind, and the indivisibility of life and its environment can we begin to open the way toward a new humanism."*

SGI-USA interpreted these as follows:

1.1.1.1. 1st Pillar: "Essential Buddhism for Everyone" will "deepen faith"

- Buddhist study is for everyone, everyday.
- In order to "deepen faith," everyone must study and develop a firm understanding of the essentials of Buddhism, such as the basic doctrine of Nichiren Buddhism and the philosophy and practice of the SGI.
- Develop an "Essential Buddhism" study program aimed at educating new and younger members as well as raising entire members' and leaders' understanding of "Essential Buddhism"

1.1.1.2. 2nd Pillar: "Applied Buddhism for Daily Practice" will give "impetus to the advance of kosen-rufu"

- The *Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* is a work of faith, of daily practice and of guidance for kosen-rufu. For us, study must never be a mere accumulation of knowledge; rather, it must be a practice to strengthen our spirit and practice for kosen-rufu.
- We feel we can not continue to have a gap between study and the rest of the kosen-rufu movement. When study becomes part of all our daily activities, we will have a real "impetus for the advance of kosen-rufu."
- Encourage study as part of regular activities, such as discussion meetings and World Peace Prayer Meetings.
- We can practice and apply Nichiren Buddhism together correctly based on study of The Writings and President Ikeda's guidance.

1.1.1.3. 3rd Pillar: "Engaged Buddhism for Building Peace" is "the key to establishing a new humanistic philosophy"

- Develop capable people with comprehensive understanding of Nichiren Buddhism who are skilled in dialogue and can contribute to a new humanistic philosophy.
- In-depth, self-motivated study of Buddhism to foster profound understanding and new thinking among our membership and beyond.
- Motivated not by hierarchy of program, rather by interest in intensive study. There is no graduation in Buddhist study.
- When we carry out our practice of dialogue in the midst of society with the wisdom and life-force gained by studying as engaged Buddhists, we will surely lead other people toward "a new humanism" and establish enduring peace for humanity.

The first principle in considering anything is to test it against Sutra, Gosho and Guidance.

The use of the term "pillar" is instructive. You remember from *The Opening of The Eyes* the powerful declaration by Nichiren: "I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the Eyes of Japan. I will be the Great Ship of Japan." These reveal the Three Virtues of the Person of the Law. The first of these is the pillar, which symbolises the sovereign power to protect the people and ensure their welfare. The pillar is the Property of the Law, inherent in all life. It is the Dharma body of the Buddha. President Ikeda says: 'The "great desire for widespread propagation" is the heart of the Gosho. It is also the spiritual **pillar** of the Daishonin's life.' -- *Newsletter 5003XD*

I'm not convinced that the "practice of the SGI" is an essential of Buddhism, but it is certainly important in the same way that the right to bestow Gohonzon is important. We'll come back to this later.

Shakyamuni Buddha said that Buddhism consisted of three refuges: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We call them treasures. In many Buddhist schools, one becomes a Buddhist by formally taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha using an ancient Pali declaration:

"Buddham saranam gacchami, Dhammam saranam gacchami, Sangham saranam gacchami."
(*"I go to the Buddha for refuge, I go to the Dhamma for refuge, I go to the Sangha for refuge"*)

Gakkai, as in Soka Gakkai, means Society or Sangha. When Nichiren says "I will be the Pillar of Japan, I will be the Eyes of Japan, I will be the Great Ship of Japan", he is offering us the Three Refuges of Buddhism.

When we take refuge in the Buddha, we find safety and security in the Person of the Law as Sovereign, the "Pillar of Japan". Buddha – whether Shakyamuni or Nichiren – personifies the life state of the Thus Come One which protects and awakens us:

"The word Buddha is a lovely word, it means 'the one who knows', and the first refuge is in Buddha as the personification of wisdom. Unpersonified wisdom remains too abstract for us, we can't conceive a bodiless, soulless wisdom, and so as wisdom always seems

to have a personal quality to it, using Buddha as its symbol is very useful...But when we take refuge in the Buddha it doesn't mean that we take refuge in some historical prophet but in that which is wise in the universe, in our minds, that which is not separate from us but is more real than anything we can conceive with the mind or experience through the senses" (Ajahn Sumedho)

So the first Pillar of Study is taking refuge in the security and safety that comes from our own Buddha Nature, in awakening to the fundamental world of Buddhahood in our own lives.

The Second Pillar is Applying Study to Daily Practice:

"We feel we can not continue to have a gap between study and the rest of the kosen-rufu movement. When study becomes part of all our daily activities, we will have a real "impetus for the advancement of kosen-rufu." "

This is also taking refuge in the Dharma, which is the Wisdom Body of the Tathagata. And this is where exams come in. Not as a simple accumulation of knowledge, but as a practice to strengthen our spirit and practice for kosen-rufu. We can even 'take refuge' in an exam, knowing that it exists solely to support our practice, our Buddha life in the world:

The third Pillar is Engaged Buddhism for Building Peace. Obviously this is about our interaction with society. The kinds of actions involved would include Study conferences or festivals, public seminars on Buddhism and social issues etc., supported by a solid study effort. To do this we need the help of the Sangha, our community, to realise these projects:

The purpose of practice is to assist and support faith, and the purpose of study is to support practice. We can also say that practice is led by faith, and that study follows practice. Thus...we must not engage in study in a way that obstructs our practice. (– Faith Into Action p.166)

1.2. Sangha, the Third Treasure of Buddhism

"Lord, is it true what has been said — that good spiritual friends are fully half of the holy life?"

"The [Buddha] replied, 'No, Ananda, good spiritual friends are the whole of the holy life. Find refuge in the sangha community.'" — from the Pali Canon"

Sangha is the third treasure of Buddhism.

The Chinese character (that is used in the phrase "Three Treasures") to describe "treasure" means more than an expensive trinket. It is a belt worn by the head of a household. It represents the identity of that clan. The centerpiece was often a rare jade counterfoil – that is, a piece of ornate jewelry that was irregularly cut into two pieces. One half was kept by the emperor, the other was given to one of his subjects as an emblem of new responsibilities, like a fiefdom or a position in the government.

When these two halves were joined, they fit perfectly. The two pieces were used as a seal to indicate that the sovereign and his subject both affirmed an agreement.

The Buddha, the Law, and the Sangha are not just treasures of immeasurable value, they also are the treasures of knowing who we are, why we are, and what we should do – identity, understanding, and responsibility.

Recognizing the value of these treasures increases the joy of Buddhist practice.

Through the efforts of the Soka Sangha, Nam-Myoho-enge-kyo has spread to more than 187 countries, fulfilling the admonition of the Lotus Sutra: "You must single-mindedly propagate this Law abroad, causing its benefits to spread far and wide." (Lotus Sutra, Chapter 22, p. 277). This is the identity, understanding, and responsibility of the SGI.

This success in propagation also demonstrates that this Sangha is practicing correctly. We can take refuge in a Sangha which can effectively communicate correct Buddhist teaching and practice to us through the profound unity of master and disciple.

So the Three Pillars are the way the Person of the Law manifests the Buddha's three bodies of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, or Buddha Nature, Wisdom and Manifest existence. This is also Awakening, Becoming Wise, and Gaining the energy to teach others.

It means that Study itself consists of the three practices, which is another way of saying that the Wisdom Body of the Buddha is "consistent from beginning to end" with the other 9 Factors. Ted Morino, SGI-USA Study Chief, said:

"You have probably heard many times that your determination (ichinen) can change everything. The tenth of the ten factors, consistency from beginning to end sheds further light on this Buddhist teaching.

Consistency from beginning to end links the other nine factors: appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation (auxiliary cause), latent effect and manifest effect. All of these are elements that make up life in general - and your individual life. And all of them are interrelated.

The point of consistency from beginning to end is that your will can influence all the elements of your life, every aspect of your life.

Consistency from beginning to end explains that the first three factors, appearance through entity (representing phenomena, like a person's physical characteristics), and the remaining six factors (functions, like a person's behavior) affect one another. They constitute a whole.

"Each of us lives within the framework of the ten factors," SGI President Ikeda explains in Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra, volume 1. "There is consistency among all factors, and together they make up the irreplaceable totality of your being," he adds (p. 136). "

The point about Study is that if we are not adequately prepared, we cannot fulfil our mission, our Great Vow. (Or in my case, our HQ BHAG.) So study is not about acquiring and producing knowledge. It must be lived, we must struggle to put it into practice by awakening to it, enjoying it, and sharing it.

1.2.1. What does the sangha do?

The sangha gives us a refuge where we can challenge ourselves in a warm and supportive environment, a chance to practice the skills and acquire the courage to teach others correctly. This is no small undertaking, especially in the West where few people arrive at Buddhism with decades of cultural familiarity.

Let's be clear about this: there is no gosho or passage from the sutra that says you have to sit a Study exam. But there are many that say you must take every opportunity to study and test yourself.

The Sangha works with the Master Disciple bond and the spirit of itai doshin to translate that into something workable. This is the role of the Sangha, as it has been since Shakyamuni's time.

It's worth noting that there is nothing in gosho or sutra that says only SGI can bestow Gohonzon, either. But this is a part of the life of the sangha – we do things together. One may choose to take refuge or not. It's that simple, although we can complicate it as much as we want. If we want to truly learn about the path to Awakening, we need to accept the Sangha's Conditions. One of these is that the Sangha bestows Gohonzon. Another is that the Sangha sets exams, voluntary though they are. These are not arbitrary, on the contrary, they are specifically intended to benefit us instead of SGI.

We have the Daishonin's word that our determination will be tested by Tenji-ma and the Three Powerful Enemies. It will, no question. So we need to practice to make sure we have it right before we need it. That's why an exam is compassionate.

Do you, individually, need to take an exam? I don't know. I do know that challenging oneself to Study always produces enormous benefit. I could not have survived without it. Every time I brace myself to do a Study talk, I get the wonder of those key realisations. I allow myself to soak in gosho and guidance and at some point, it happens – understanding. Perhaps not a lot, but the thrill of finding that relevant truth buried under the words is electric. A little chunk of the universe just revealed itself to me, and now I can try to pass it on.

Should every member sit the Study exam? That is entirely for each member to decide. I will admit that I may not. I haven't had time to prepare adequately and I don't want to fail it, so if I can't find time to revise I'll sit it out. This is perfectly OK. However if you have gone over the questions and think you

understand them, then for heavens sake don't chicken out. Fundamentally, this exam is for you. It's a serious effort by a lot of people to give us a chance to experience Study, to challenge and test. And we need people who are willing to take that test to be capable people, to be "dharma warriors", to live up to our mission.

Some people worry about failing, about working hard and not passing the exam. This is natural, but misguided. It is exactly like struggling to make a kosenrufu donation of 5 pence, then feeling ashamed because we didn't give more. The amount is not the issue, it's what's in your mind that counts. The fact that one has struggled and overcome a financial barrier to be able to give with gratitude, or struggled and overcome anxiety about studying and exams, is itself a great victory. Each time it becomes easier, until we no longer find it a challenge at all. That is Human Revolution, the backbone of Buddhist practice, the true path to enlightenment.

Thank you!

Rick Heybroek, 11 Feb 2004

2. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

The material below is for interest and convenient reference. It includes the Preamble and Rules of SGI, with related articles from Seikyo Times, which were not included in the Elementary Exam pack.

2.1. Study Programmes Deriving from the 'Three Pillars'

For each of the purposes of Study, there is a pattern of activities.

2.1.1. First Pillar Program: "Essential Buddhism for Everyone"

2.1.1.1. Study Meetings on "The Essentials of Buddhist Study"

The serialized study material tentatively titled "The Essentials of Buddhist Study" will be beginning in the February 2003 issue of the *Living Buddhism*. The Study Department asks that the organization – specifically the youth wherever possible – conduct study meetings based on this material. The way meetings are held can be flexible based on the circumstances of each locale. A meeting can be organized as a monthly meeting at the community center replacing a new members meeting, or it can be held at the district level for entire membership as an additional district activity. The serialized material will eventually be published in a textbook. Each installment will have an easy to use quiz/question at the end so that people can use as a study guide for each installment.

2.1.1.2. Study Basic Buddhist Terms

The *World Tribune* will carry new articles of basic Buddhist terms, explaining essential Buddhist principles in an easy manner. These articles will have discussion guides so they can be studied in a discussion meeting and in many other small gatherings. Again, wherever possible, we would like to ask the youth to take an initiative for presenting this study material and leading a discussion in various meetings.

2.1.2. 2nd Pillar Program: "Applied Buddhism for Daily Practice"

2.1.2.1. Ten-minute study presentations in a district discussion meeting

We like to promote having a short presentation on *The Writings* at each monthly discussion meeting. It can be as short as 5 to 10 minutes, giving encouragement in faith based on *The Writings*. This opportunity will help leaders to develop the capability of sharing the spirit of *The Writings*, and participants in the discussion meeting can gain understanding in "Applied Buddhism." The *World Tribune* will serialize a "Gosho for Discussion Meetings" article once a month, consisting of a short passage from *The Writings* with explanation and discussion guide.

2.1.2.2. Study Presentation at World Peace Prayer Meetings

The *World Tribune* will also serialize articles for use at World Peace Prayer Meetings once a month. This study material will have a short commentary on a passage from

The Writings, which can be used as a presenter's guide. This program gives more opportunity for line leaders to be involved in study presentations.

2.1.2.3. Other Study Articles in the World Tribune

We will published more study-related articles such as "*The Writings and My Life*" and "Questions and Answers" in the *World Tribune* so that leaders can utilize the material for giving encouragement in various activities, such as visits with members and discussion meetings.

2.1.2.4. Monthly Study Meetings

We will continue to have our current monthly study meetings, alternating between the Daishonin's writings and "The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings" or *Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*. We recommend these meetings continue to be held by chapter and led by chapter, area or region leaders. *Living Buddhism* will continue to publish the study material and guide on odd- numbered month issues for *The Writings*. A preparation meeting for the study meeting is very crucial, led by area, region or zone leaders, supported by the local study committee

2.1.3. 3rd Pillar Program: "Engaged Buddhism for Building Peace"

2.1.3.1. In-depth Study Course at the FNCC

We will conduct an in-depth study conference at the FNCC with the attendance of Study Department leaders from Japan. This conference will be designed for those members who have already developed firm understanding of the essentials Buddhism so they will be able to further study the profundity of Nichiren Buddhism. Certificates of completion of the course will be awarded based on participation.

2.1.3.2. Study conferences or festivals in each locale, as is currently happening in many regions and zones.

2.1.3.3. Public seminars on Buddhism and social issues, as has happened recently in many places in response to current issues, supported by a solid study effort.

This is all precisely about the Great Vow, about Preparation, Revelation and Transmission. What are the conditions under which this rare event can take place? What happens when it does?

2.2. The Opening of The Eyes

The Opening of the Eyes, says President Ikeda, "is to open our eyes to the Daishonin's Great Vow".

Our Buddhist Practice is sometimes called the Buddhism of the Great Vow: the steadfast and absolute determination to teach the Law, to dedicate our lives for this purpose regardless of persecution. This is the same vow which Shakyamuni states in the Juryo: "Mai ji sa ze nen. I ga ryo shujo. Toku nyu mu-jo do. Soku joju busshin." "my constant thought: how I can cause all living beings to gain entry to the highest way and quickly attain Buddhahood." This vow was witnessed by Many Treasures Buddha and shared with the Voice Hearers, but manifested by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. It is the same vow which Toda Sensei shared with President Ikeda and which is manifested now by Soka Gakkai members in 160 countries: "our 'constant thought' is to assure the happiness of all people, a prosperous society and a peaceful world." (Lectures on the Sutra p.142)

Nichiren vows "I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the Eyes of Japan. I will be the Great Ship of Japan." These reveal the Three Virtues of the Person of the Law:

Three Virtues	Person of the Law	Enlightened Property of the Buddha	Result in Society
Sovereign: power to protect the people and ensure their welfare. Property of the Law, inherent in all life.	Pillar	Dharma body of the Buddha: <i>hosshin</i>	Peace
Teacher: power to give people knowledge and wisdom, to decide with correct insight. Property of wisdom	Eyes	Wisdom body of the Buddha:	Happiness

		<i>hoshin</i>	
Parent: power to embrace people with compassion, protect them from harm and enable them to become capable and independent. Property of compassionate action.	Great Ship	Manifest body of the Buddha: <i>ojin</i>	Prosperity

2.2.1. Great Vow

President Ikeda: The “great desire for widespread propagation” is the heart of the Gosho. It is also the spiritual pillar of the Daishonin’s life:

“Great desire” refers to the boundless wish arising from the Buddha’s enlightenment. It is the “original desire of life” expressed in the heart of the Buddha awakened to the truth that life itself is the entity of the Mystic Law, the one great law that encompasses all others. To “awaken” means to recollect this original desire.

In any event, the life-state of Buddhahood and the great desire for widespread propagation are one and the same. It therefore follows that this vast state of life is only manifest in those who strive to actualize kosen-rufu. If we remove ourselves from the struggle to “exert a hundred million aeons of effort in a single moment of life” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 790) toward the realization of this noble cause, we won’t be able to reveal our highest life potential. That “single moment of life” is what is called “Buddha” or “Thus Come One.” (Newsletter 5003XD)

But what does this Mind consist in? The UKE tells us that this Gosho is about Nichiren’s thoughts before openly declaring his teaching and role, and the dilemma in which he found himself: to teach, which would result in persecution and opposition; or not to teach, which would leave the field unopposed to fundamental darkness. “I, Nichiren” says, “am the only person in Japan who understands this.”

PREAMBLE

The following article titled "Soka Gakkai Rules and Regulations" appeared on page 3 in the June 7, 2002, World Tribune:

Soka Gakkai Rules and Regulations

Revised April 1, 2002

Preamble

The Buddhist spirit of compassion and peace, first expounded by Shakyamuni, is crystallized in the Lotus Sutra. This sutra represents the quintessence of Mahayana Buddhism and clearly sets forth teachings to lead all people to happiness. Nichiren Daishonin embodied the essence of the Lotus Sutra in the Three Great Secret Laws, establishing an eternally enduring path for saving humanity.

The Soka Gakkai is a religious organization in accord with the Buddha's will and mandate, charged with the mission of kosen-rufu, to spread Nichiren Buddhism worldwide. The organization was founded on Nov. 18, 1930, by the first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and second president, Josei Toda.

Presidents Makiguchi and Toda initiated the practice of propagation in the effort to realize kosen-rufu. During World War II, they were imprisoned by the national government, which used State Shinto to enlist spiritual support for its policies, bringing about President Makiguchi's death in prison.

President Makiguchi, who taught Buddhism as a guide for daily living and a philosophy of value-creation, bequeathed to posterity the spirit of selfless dedication to spreading the Law by offering his life for Buddhism.

During his imprisonment, President Toda awakened to the ultimate truth that the Buddha is life itself, and to his own identity and mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth. Upholding the principles of human revolution, he revived and renewed the significance of Nichiren Buddhism in the contemporary world. He solidified the foundation for kosen-rufu in Japan by fulfilling his vow to enable 750,000 families to embrace this teaching in his lifetime.

The third president, Daisaku Ikeda, has propagated Nichiren Buddhism not only in Japan but throughout the world, applying the philosophy of Buddhism to the promotion of peace, culture and education. He has opened the way for the worldwide propagation of Buddhism for the first time in history.

The spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple and the selfless practice of propagating the Law for the attainment of kosen-rufu embodied in the lives of the three founding presidents is the core spirit of the Soka Gakkai. Herein lies our eternal guiding model. The Soka Gakkai, rooted in the spirit of Buddhist compassion, shall be dedicated to realizing world peace and happiness for all humanity.

Chapter I. General Provisions

Article 1. Name: This association shall be called the Soka Gakkai.

Article 2. This association shall regard Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. It shall embrace with faith the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws bestowed upon the entire world, base itself on the Daishonin's writings and seek to realize, as its ultimate goal, the worldwide propagation of Nichiren Buddhism, thus fulfilling the Daishonin's mandate.

Article 3. The three founding presidents—first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, second president Josei Toda and third president Daisaku Ikeda—embody the spirit of selfless dedication to spreading the Law for the attainment of kosen-rufu and shall be considered as eternal models of the association.

Article 4. The objectives of this association shall be to propagate Nichiren Buddhism throughout the world, contributing to the realization of world peace and the flourishing of human culture. Based upon such a foundation, this association will spread Nichiren Buddhism's teachings, conduct ceremonies and functions, and help its members to establish and deepen their faith.

RULES AND REGS

3. PRESIDENT AKIYA'S WORDS FROM THE NATIONWIDE GENERAL PREFECTURE CHIEF'S MEETING (MARCH 2002), REGARDING REVISIONS OF THE SOKA GAKKAI'S BYLAWS.

Yesterday, at the council meeting of the Soka Gakkai, a decision was made to revise the Soka Gakkai's bylaws, and that those revisions will take effect on April 1, 2002. As we enter the 21st century, opening the curtain to the century of peace and the century of life, the Soka Gakkai is now embarking on its second set of "seven bells." Under the guidance and leadership of SGI President Ikeda, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism has now spread to 180 countries and territories around the world. The worldwide spread of the Daishonin's teachings -- global kosen-rufu -- has gotten under way with the Daishonin's Buddhism developing as a genuine world religion. This fact makes it abundantly clear that at this significant time the Soka Gakkai is the only religious body that has been practicing Buddhism in exact accord with the Daishonin's teachings and has been carrying out the Buddha's intention and will. What has enabled this unprecedented global spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism to develop? It has been none other than the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple shared among and carried on consistently by the first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the second president, Josei Toda, and the third President, Daisaku Ikeda, as well as their practice based upon the spirit to spread the Law even at the cost of their lives (shishin guho) toward the realization of kosen-rufu.

At this crucial time, as we usher in a new era, these revisions have been enacted with a vision to perceive the future of kosen-rufu spanning the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law. The intent was to create bylaws that are appropriate to establishing an unshakable foundation for the Soka Gakkai, a foundation that will last into the distant future.

The bylaws as they have existed until this revision were established in April 1979, at a time when we still maintained our relationship with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. Since then, partial revisions were enacted from time to time in response to various circumstances. However, sections remained within the bylaws that continued to bind us to Nichiren Shoshu. On this occasion, those sections have been completely amended. The key revisions can be described as follows:

First, the newly amended bylaws make clear that the Soka Gakkai is an independent religion. In other words, it is the Soka Gakkai that has been carrying on the correct lineage of Mahayana Buddhism that began with Shakyamuni, and is directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin in a spirit that accords with the Buddha's will and intention. A preamble stating to this effect, and summarizing the Soka Gakkai's position and role, has been added to the bylaws.

Second, the new revisions make clear that the Soka Gakkai must inherit the spirit and practice of its three founding presidents as its eternal guideline. This itself constitutes the Gakkai spirit. The revisions provide a system or structure to be instituted to ensure that the spirit of the three presidents will be preserved and passed on strictly and correctly within the Soka Gakkai.

Third, in order to develop and provide for the social mission of the Soka Gakkai, as well its contributions to the international community, the roles of the future division, education department, international division, as well as that of the Soka Gakkai International have been clearly established in the bylaws.

4. CONCERNING CHAPTER ONE OF THE GENERAL RULES OR BYLAWS

these bylaws were established in order to express the basic teachings and objectives of the Soka Gakkai.

Article I remains unchanged, and states that in the rest of this document the word "this body" shall refer to the Soka Gakkai.

Article II clearly sets forth the Soka Gakkai's doctrine. In the previous version of the bylaws, this article read: "Based on the doctrines of Nichiren Shoshu, [the Soka Gakkai] shall view Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, take as our basis the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary

of true Buddhism inscribed on the 12th day of the 10th month of the second year of koan (October 12, 1279), which is enshrined at the head temple, Taisekiji, of Nichiren Shoshu." This has been changed to read, "Article II: This body shall respect Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, shall accept and believe in the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, which was bestowed upon all humankind, shall make the Goshu, writings of Nichiren Daishonin, our foundation, and will take as our great vow the realization of kosen-rufu of Jambudvipa, or the spreading the Daishonin's teachings to all humankind, which was the Daishonin's will." The Daishonin is the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, we accept and believe in the Dai-Gohonzon of the three Great secret laws, we make the Goshu our foundation, and aim to accomplish kosen-rufu as our goal---this is the Soka Gakkai's doctrine. Moreover, it is clear that this represents the doctrinal basis, the most fundamental principles, of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Article III has been newly established: "Article III: First president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, second president Josei Toda, and third president Daisaku Ikeda -- the first three presidents -- are people who embodied the spirit to propagate the Law even at the cost of their lives toward the realization of kosen-rufu, and they shall serve as eternal leaders of this body." Therefore, we shall respect these three presidents as our eternal teachers or mentors in our struggle to achieve kosen-rufu. The foundation of the Soka Gakkai for the next ten thousand years has thus been clearly set forth in the bylaws.

Article IV regards the goal or objective of the Soka Gakkai. The previous bylaws in this regard read, "To protect Nichiren Shoshu from without." This has been deleted and revised to read, "Basing itself on the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin." What I have just explained above represents the most central or core part of the bylaw revisions.

SPEECH ON THE REVISION OF THE SOKA GAKKAI BYLAWS BY STUDY DEPARTMENT CHIEF SAITO

Article II of the recently revised bylaws addresses the doctrine of the Soka Gakkai. It states that the Soka Gakkai "shall respect Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, shall accept and believe in the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, which was bestowed upon all humankind, shall make the Goshu, or writings of Nichiren Daishonin, our foundation, and will take as our great vow the realization of the kosen-rufu of Jambudvipa, or the spreading the Daishonin's teachings to all humankind, which was his will."

This article summarizes in four essential points the doctrine of the Soka Gakkai. It expresses the Gakkai's essential faith that is directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin, which it has maintained since its founding. Regarding the first point, respecting Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, in the Goshu Nichiren Daishonin states, "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity, for it has the beneficial power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan, and it blocks off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering" (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 736).

Thus, in order to save on a fundamental level the people of the Latter Day of the Law, the age when it is said that "quarrels and disputes prevail, and the pure Law is obscured and lost," Nichiren Daishonin revealed and propagated Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the core and essence of the Lotus Sutra and the fundamental principle or law of life itself. The foundation of the faith of the Soka Gakkai is to revere Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law who embodies the three virtues of parent, teacher and sovereign to all people of this age.

Next, the phrase "accept and believe in the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, which was bestowed upon all humankind" addresses the essential principle of faith in the Dai-Gohonzon, which the Soka Gakkai has consistently maintained. During the Atsuhara persecution, ordinary believers demonstrated their spirit to persevere in their faith even when their lives were threatened. In response to this, Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon, which was the purpose of his advent in this world, on the twelfth day of the tenth month, 1279.

Replying to the spirit of the people, who had aroused genuine strong faith in seeking peace and happiness, and in order to save from suffering all the people of the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law, the Daishonin manifested as the purpose of his advent the Dai-Gohonzon, in which he embodied his great vow to realize kosen-rufu and establish a Buddha land. Therefore, the faith of the

Soka Gakkai lies in arousing a great desire or great vow for kosen-rufu exactly in accord with the Daishonin's heart; it is the strong faith to advance and practice for the salvation of ordinary people. The Gohonzon, which is one with the very life of the Daishonin, reveals itself only in strong faith that finds expression in a persevering struggle for kosen-rufu, which aims to defeat and destroy devilish functions. This is referred to as the object of devotion of kanjin, the object of devotion for observing the mind. "To accept and believe in the Dai-Gohonzon" indicates none other than the strong faith of the Soka Gakkai.

In the second article, the phrase "bestowed upon all humankind" (jp. Ichienbudai soyo -- lit. bestowed upon Jambudvipa) addresses the Daishonin's heart to save all people of Jambudvipa -- indicating the entire world -- throughout the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law, which he embodied in the Dai-Gohonzon, and this is the real fundamental principle underlying the Dai-Gohonzon.

Nichiren Daishonin states, "Showing profound compassion for those unable to comprehend the gem of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the Buddha wrapped it within the five characters [of Myoho-renge-kyo], with which he then adorned the necks of the ignorant people of the latter age" (WND, p. 376).

Based on the bunshin santai, or emanations of the Buddha's body, to embrace Gohonzon that are transcriptions of the Dai-Gohonzon of the second year of koan

(1279) with correct faith is to embrace the Dai-Gohonzon. Bunshin santai, or "emanations of the Buddha's body" is a principle based on the Lotus Sutra and the Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings. It refers to how the Buddha, in order to save living beings, dispersed emanations of his body among various lands and taught, through those emanations, the same teaching in those lands. The people in those lands where the Buddha's emanations appeared were all able, through the power of their faith, to receive precisely the same benefit. [Since the Gohonzon is a manifestation of the Daishonin's Buddhahood] when we pray with faith to the Gohonzon enshrined in each of our homes, this itself is embracing the Dai-Gohonzon. Nichiren Shoshu's contention that one must visit some specific place in order to attain Buddhahood is found nowhere in the Daishonin's teachings and does not accord with his intent. In the Goshō it says that "the place where one upholds the Lotus Sutra is itself the place of practice; it is not to be found by leaving this place and going elsewhere" (Goshō Zenshu, p. 781). And, "Therefore, wherever we dwell and practice the single vehicle, that place will be the Capital of Eternally Tranquil Light. [And, without having to take a step, those who are our disciples and lay supporters can view Eagle Peak in India and day and night will go to and from the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light that has existed for all time. What a truly inexpressible joy it is!]" (WND, p. 313).

Next, regarding the Three Great Secret Laws, Nichiren Daishonin, in order to save the people of the Latter Day of the Law, embodied the eternal law of beginningless time (kuon-ganjo), the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that he himself practiced, in the form that corresponds to the three kinds of Buddhist learning---precepts, meditation, and wisdom. These he called the Three Great Secret Laws: the object of devotion of the essential teaching (meditation), the high sanctuary (Jpn kaidan---lit. precepts platform) of the essential teaching (precepts), and the daimoku, or invocation, of the essential teaching (wisdom). Through his exposition of the Three Great Secret Laws, the people of the Latter Day of the Law became able to believe in and practice the Mystic Law. The ultimate expression of the Three Great Secret Laws is the Gohonzon, the correct, powerful teaching of the Latter Day of the Law that is open to all people.

The Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon in order to save all people from suffering. When the people believe in or embrace the Gohonzon with faith, taking it as the correct teaching of the Latter Day of the Law revealed by the Daishonin, they can well forth the world of Buddhahood within their lives -- a life condition exactly equal to that of the Daishonin. The Goshō states, "Believe in this Gohonzon, the supreme object of devotion in all of Jambudvipa. Be sure to strengthen your faith, and receive the protection of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions" (WND, p. 386). "I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in sumi ink, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart. The Buddha's will is the Lotus Sutra, but the soul of Nichiren is nothing other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (WND, p. 412). As these passages suggest, faith based upon the Gohonzon is the way of faith revealed and taught by the Daishonin himself. The Soka Gakkai has persevered since its founding in carrying out faith based upon the Gohonzon exactly as the Daishonin taught.

The third point I want to make is regarding making the Goshō, Nichiren Daishonin's writings, our foundation.

This provision clearly records that it is the Gakkai's tradition to base ourselves on the Gosho. The Daishonin's writings are an expression of the true Buddha's teachings covering both the aspect of doctrine or principles, and the aspect of practice. The Soka Gakkai will persevere with the Gosho -- the work that we may accurately call the "great scripture of the Latter Day of the Law" -- as its eternal standard.

The fourth point regards the great vow or desire for the wide propagation, or kosen-rufu, of the Daishonin's teachings throughout the entire world. This was the Daishonin's will and intent. This article clearly specifies that the great desire to accomplish kosen-rufu is the essence of the Gakkai spirit. The Daishonin taught that the heritage of the ultimate law of life and death, or the lifeblood of faith in his teachings, exists only in the network of believers who possess this great desire for kosen-rufu and persevere toward achieving it in the united spirit of many in body, one in mind.

He also taught that the path to Buddhahood exists only in a Buddhist practice aimed at widely spreading the teachings, a practice directed at kosen-rufu. This is the practice of transmitting the Mystic Law gradually from one person to two, from three people to ten, and so on to millions or billions of people. This great vow to achieve kosen-rufu accords with the essential spirit of the legitimate or orthodox body of believers that is dedicated to transmitting the teachings of Buddhism to the world.

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NAVIGATION POINTS FOR OUR ETERNAL JOURNEY

BY GREG MARTIN

SGI-USA VICE GENERAL DIRECTOR

'In many ways, our understanding of Nichiren Buddhism and the SGI's mission has grown significantly in the last decade. Reading the revised Soka Gakkai bylaws, I was pleased by their clear statement of the foundational principles upon which our faith, practice and organization are based.

On April 1, the Soka Gakkai revised its bylaws for the first time since 1979 to better reflect our ongoing development as a global religion and our separation from the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. The preamble and first articles (see below) make explicit our heritage, core beliefs, basic spirit and primary goal.

I find the changes both refreshing and comforting. In many ways, our understanding of Nichiren Buddhism and the SGI's mission has grown significantly in the last decade. Reading this document, I was pleased by its clear statement of the foundational principles upon which our faith, practice and organization are based — not so much new as newly understood.

The revisions confirm the religious identity of the Soka Gakkai as the body of believers with a direct connection to Nichiren Daishonin, dedicated to accomplishing his will and mandate to carry on the heritage of true Mahayana Buddhism, which extends back to Shakyamuni Buddha's Lotus Sutra. Quite simply, we firmly believe that we are the only body existing today that can be considered true votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, true Mahayana Buddhists and true disciples of the Daishonin.

The revisions confirm that the essence of faith and practice in the Soka Gakkai is "faith directly connected to the Daishonin." There are several components of this "directly connected" faith. We believe in the Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law who embodies the three virtues of parent, teacher and sovereign. We base ourselves on the writings of the Daishonin, believing them to be the great scripture of the Latter Day, and base our practice on their teachings as the eternal standard of the Soka Gakkai.

We embrace with faith the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws bestowed upon the entire world. The Daishonin inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon in response to the Atsuhara farmers' unrelenting faith in the face of governmental persecution, embodying his great vow for kosen-rufu. The faith of the Soka Gakkai lies in arousing a great desire or great vow for kosen-rufu in accord with the Daishonin's spirit.

The true meaning of the Gohonzon's inscription becomes manifest only in one's strong faith to wage a tenacious struggle for the people's happiness and defeating devilish functions seeking to obstruct that path. Practicing with this spirit is to "embrace with faith."

The Dai-Gohonzon was bestowed upon the entire world and embodies the Daishonin's compassionate spirit to lead all people to happiness. Based on the concept of emanations of the Buddha's body [the principle of the Buddha projecting emanations of his or her body to various lands and teaching the Law leading the people there to enlightenment], to "embrace with faith" the Gohonzon that is a transcription of the Dai-Gohonzon is to embrace the Dai-Gohonzon itself.

We strive to realize as our ultimate goal the worldwide propagation of Nichiren Buddhism, thus fulfilling his mandate for creating a peaceful world. This is the great vow for kosen-rufu that is the heart of the Soka Gakkai spirit. We are convinced that the heritage of the ultimate Law flows only within the body of believers whose members possess this great wish for kosen-rufu and are united by the faith of many in body, one in mind. This great wish for kosen-rufu is the heart and soul of the correct body of practitioners dedicated to correctly transmitting Buddhism.

We cherish the three successive presidents who, because of their undeniable actual proof in upholding and spreading the Mystic Law, shall be considered as perpetual examples of practicing Nichiren Buddhism with the spirit of selfless dedication. They will always be — within the history of the Soka Gakkai that they founded, built and developed — models and teachers of faith and practice.

That is the gist of it. On the surface perhaps, not so exciting or new. But at the same time, I think, timely and significant in laying out the foundational principles upon which faith and practice within the SGI are based. As we continue on the centuries-long voyage to kosen-rufu, it is important, I believe, to confirm the primary spirit and goal of our movement to guide us during our journey.
