INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE (SGI, Gohonzon, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo)

Compassion in Action, p. 15

Explanation of the SGI
Here we can explain that we are an organization of people helping one another practice Nichiren Buddhism. We can relate the history of the SGI and its world peace mission based on the happiness of each individual. Explanation of the practice - This is an explanation of the basics of Buddhist practice especially for guests.

That is, we are practicing Buddhism as taught by Nichiren Daishonin, which involves faith, practice and study. Here is where we can describe the great benefits of this practice.

Experiences in faith
Here members describe how Buddhist practice led to the acquisition of benefits, solutions to problems or a change in character that is referred to as human revolution. The ideal experience tells a story that can be easily understood and provide some detail about the process.

The New Human Revolution, vol. 13, p. 146
“The original purpose of the discussion meetings was to serve as a forum for Buddhist dialogue and propagation. Both President Makiguchi and President Toda put enormous effort into thoroughly responding to any inquiries from guests. With absolute conviction, they would offer logical explanations as to why Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism was the correct teaching and what constituted the path to true happiness. In this way, discussion meetings were at the forefront of the struggle to spread the Mystic Law.”

The SGI is based on the teachings and philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism, which places the highest emphasis on the sanctity of life. Members seek, through their practice of Buddhism,
to develop the ability to live with confidence, to create value in any circumstance and to contribute to the well-being of friends, family and community.

Our philosophy is rooted in the concept of “human revolution,” a process of inner transformation through Buddhist practice. It is a process that leads us to develop our character and to act not only for our personal fulfillment but also for the betterment of society.

We believe that happiness is being able to experience profound joy that comes from never being defeated by any problem in life. In fact, we use life’s challenges as catalysts to deepen and expand our inner lives. True happiness results from our efforts to manifest our highest potential—wisdom, compassion, courage and vitality.

The SGI-USA is the American branch of the SGI network, with more than 2,600 neighborhood discussion groups and nearly 100 SGI-USA centers throughout the country.

The core activity for all SGI-USA members is the neighborhood discussion meeting. These informal gatherings bring people together for Buddhist prayer, study, sharing and discussion of ways Buddhism can be applied to the challenges of daily living.

WHAT IS OUR BUDDHIST PRACTICE? http://www.sgi-usa.org/ buddhism/buddhistpractice.php

The workings of the universe are an expression of a single principle or Law, expressed as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo enables all people to perceive this Law in their own lives and to come into rhythm with it. By putting their lives in harmony with this Law, people can unlock their hidden potential and achieve harmony with the environment.

This is the ultimate expression of individual empowerment—that each person can transform the inevitable sufferings of life into sources of growth and fulfillment and become a positive influence in their family and community.

There are three basics in applying Buddhism to our daily lives: faith, practice and study. They are the primary ingredients in the recipe for revealing our innate enlightened condition, or Buddhahood. Through chanting Nam-myoho-rengekyo, studying Buddhist philosophy and taking action daily for the well-being of others, we can establish a state of profound happiness and wisdom, as well as contribute to society.

GOHONZON

The Gohonzon, a scroll practitioners chant to, was inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin and is depicted in Chinese characters embodying the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the life of Nichiren, as well as protective functions of the universe. The fundamental object of respect, the Gohonzon represents the enlightened life of each individual. Down the center are the characters Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and Nichiren’s signature. This indicates the oneness of person and Mystic Law—that the condition of Buddhahood is a potential within and can be
manifested by all people. SGI members enshrine a replica of the Gohonzon in their homes as a focal point for their daily practice. The strength of the Gohonzon comes from the practitioner’s faith—the Gohonzon functions as a spiritual mirror. Sitting in front of the Gohonzon and chanting enables a person to recognize and reveal his or her own Buddha nature, the unlimited potential and happiness of their life.


The invocation of Nam-myoho-RENGE-KYO was established by Nichiren Daishonin on April 28, 1253. Having studied widely among all the Buddhist sutras, he had concluded that the Lotus Sutra contains the ultimate truth of Buddhism: that everyone without exception has the potential to attain Buddhahood. The title of the Lotus Sutra in its Japanese translation is Myoho-renge-kyo. But to Nichiren, Myoho-renge-kyo was far more than the title of a Buddhist text, it was the expression, in words, of the Law of life which all Buddhist teachings in one way or another seek to clarify. What follows is a brief and unavoidably limited explanation of some of the key concepts expressed by this phrase.

Nam—The word nam derives from Sanskrit. A close translation of its meaning is “to devote oneself.” Nichiren established the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-RENGE-KYO as a means to enable all people to put their lives in harmony or rhythm with the law of life, or Dharma. In the original Sanskrit, nam indicates the elements of action and attitude, and refers therefore to the correct action one needs to take and the attitude one needs to develop in order to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

Myoho—Myoho literally means the Mystic Law, and expresses the relationship between the life inherent in the universe and the many different ways this life expresses itself. Myo refers to the very essence of life, which is “invisible” and beyond intellectual understanding. This essence always expresses itself in a tangible form (ho) that can be apprehended by the senses. Phenomena (ho) are changeable, but pervading all such phenomena is a constant reality known as myo. Renge—Renge means lotus flower. The lotus blooms and produces seeds at the same time, and thus represents the simultaneity of cause and effect. The circumstances and quality of our individual lives are determined by the causes and effects, both good and bad, that we accumulate (through our thoughts, words and actions) at each moment. This is called our “karma.” The law of cause and effect explains that we each have personal responsibility for our own destiny. We create our destiny and we can change it. The most powerful cause we can make is to chant Nam-myoho-RENGE-KYO; the effect of Buddhahood is simultaneously created in the depths of our life and will definitely manifest in time.

The lotus flower grows and blooms in a muddy pond, and yet remains pristine and free from any defilement, symbolizing the emergence of Buddhahood from within the life of an ordinary person.
Kyo—Kyo literally means sutra, the voice or teaching of a Buddha. In this sense, it also means sound, rhythm or vibration. Also, the Chinese character for kyo originally meant the warp in a piece of woven cloth, symbolizing the continuity of life throughout past, present and future. In a broad sense, kyo conveys the concept that all things in the universe are a manifestation of the Mystic Law.

Chanting Nam-myoho-ренге-kyo—also known as “Daimoku”—is the primary practice of SGI members. Through this practice, one is able to reveal the state of Buddhahood in one’s life, experienced as the natural development of joy, increased vitality, courage, wisdom and compassion.