SGI President Ikeda (Sensei) has outlined six criteria which he considers as essential for an organisation faced with the task of propagating a world religion in the 21st century. They are:

1. Its administration must be open and democratic.
2. It must be extremely strict in maintaining the fundamental principles of faith upon which it was founded, while giving everyone the guarantee of freedom of speech.
3. All believers must be considered as equals and their opinions must be respected in the making of decisions which concern them.
4. The principal religious activity must not be the observance of ritual, but rather a belief that motivates action, based on faith, in daily life.
5. The rejection of hereditary privileges, whilst individual worth is paramount.
6. Its doctrine must be universal and its method of propagation should suit the time.

There need be little doubt that Sensei, in defining these six criteria, is determined that we, as lay people and members of SGI, should make sure that our own house is in good order and as perfectly in tune with the times as it is possible to be.

Point 4 concerns our practice of faith and its direct relationship with our actions in daily life. Point 6 refers to the various means we use to spread the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin through SGI's movement for culture, education and peace. The remaining four criteria are concerned with the importance of basing our organisation for kosen-rufu on democratic principles.

What do they really mean in practical terms, then?

Certainly, that we must continually review every aspect and facet of our organisation to make sure that it is wholly democratic. I believe that in the construction of our organisation over the past years, we always have tried our utmost to make its procedures and systems...
democratic. Nevertheless, we have to bear in mind that what may have seemed democratic in the past may not necessarily seem to be so now or in the future.

Furthermore, fundamental to any such review is the crucial question: what is and what is not democratic? And what is a democracy of faith as compared to a political or constitutional democracy?

These are important questions which we all have to be able to answer, and I have to say that, generally, people are ignorant about this subject. This is understandable, for we are pioneers and pathfinders, none of us having been deeply involved in such a matter before we began to practice Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, which may even be quite a recent event.

We are taught that when in doubt we must always go back to the Gohonzon and the Gosho, rather than floundering about at the mercy of our emotions. How wonderful it is that this can be said with such confidence, for the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin are universal and embrace every aspect of our daily lives. Hence, even the answers to the questions I posed earlier – in particular, what is a democracy of faith as compared to a political or constitutional democracy? – can be gleaned from the Gosho.

Seven Pillars

To make SGI-UK the democracy of faith we wish it to be to take up the challenges of the new century, I would like to suggest seven pillars of faith and consequent action which should support our organisation. Based on the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, and incorporating the six criteria which SGI President Ikeda proposed above, these seven pillars can be summarized as follows:

1. **Buddhahood** – That peace and security in our country and the world can only be achieved if its foundations are based on the Buddha nature which manifests in individuals through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo; and on the freedom of these individuals to speak out, based on their sincere feelings, grounded in faith.

2. **Buddha Land** – That through the faith and practice of each individual member, our organisation itself will therefore be “the place of the Treasure Tower” – the Buddha land wherein members (and the non-members whom they support in friendship) can develop courage and determination to work unceasingly towards creating happy, harmonious, creative communities; and thus, in time, a happy, harmonious and creative world.

3. **Oneness of master and disciple** – That we must deeply understand that the heritage of the universal Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo can only be transmitted and spread in its original purity – across the world, and in ways which are appropriate to the times and to each country’s circumstances – through organisations joined in unity, based on faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and the principle of the oneness of master and disciple.

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4 The Gohonzon (the mandala that serves as a object of focus and veneration in daily Nichiren Buddhist practice) and the Gosho (lit. “great writings”, the collected letters and theses of Nichiren Daishonin.)

5 In the contemporary SGI, most now use the term “mentor” rather than “master”.

RICHARD CAUSTON

A DEMOCRACY OF FAITH
4. **Respect for uniqueness** – That the unique nature and character of each member must be recognised as an essential ingredient for the fulfilment of his or her unique mission, and that we must learn to tolerate and respect these differences; at the same time, encouraging and respecting each person’s efforts to bring about their ‘human revolution’.

5. **Trust** – That to be effective, any democratic institution, including our own organisation, must essentially contain an element of trust for those who accept responsibility for its administration and organising its activities; which functions must, nevertheless, be conducted in an open and democratic manner.

6. **Strictness in faith** – That the fundamental principles of faith and practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, on which the organisation is founded, must be strictly maintained and protected.

7. **Absolute equality** – That the organisation respects the absolute equality of all those who are its members, irrespective of whether they be men or women, or whether or not they hold titles or positions in the organisation or in society.

Let us look at each of these seven pillars in more detail.

1. **BUDDHAHOOD**

The first pillar is contained in the Daishonin’s thesis, *Rissho Ankoku Ron* ([*Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*](https://www.sgilibrary.org), p. 6), which is often translated as “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”. This ultimate truth is Buddhahood, which exists within each one of our lives and which, through the practice which Nichiren Daishonin taught us, is available to guide us all equally and without discrimination.

It is our task, as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, to help build peace and security in our country and the world, based on the Buddha nature which manifests in us through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. And so it is Buddhahood which must surely be the source of the most perfect democracy in the world, provided we desire to make use of it in our daily lives and actions.

2. **THE BUDDHA LAND**

The second pillar derives from the first and is contained in these lines from the Gosho “The Gift of Rice”: “Life is the most precious of all treasures. Even one extra day of life is worth more than ten million ryo of gold.” ([*WND*](https://www.sgilibrary.org) 1, p. 955)

Nichiren Daishonin applied this principle to every believer. For example, in the Gosho “On the Treasure Tower”, he says to Abutso-bo, the recipient:

“You yourself are a true Buddha who possesses the three enlightened properties. You should chant Nam-myoho-ренге-kyo with this conviction. Then the place wherein you dwell and chant daimoku is the place of the Treasure Tower.” ([*MW*](https://www.sgilibrary.org) 1, p. 30)

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6 The *Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* ([*WND*](https://www.sgilibrary.org)) are compiled and translated by SGI, and published online at [www.sgilibrary.org](http://www.sgilibrary.org). Mr Causton’s original references were all to the older, first English translation of the Gosho, the *Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* ([*MW*](https://www.sgilibrary.org)). Some of his references are here updated to reflect the newer translation.
Hence, as well as in our own homes, our organisation, too, will be the place of the Treasure Tower, created from the qualities of Buddhahood emanating from each member’s life.

3. ONENESS OF MASTER AND DISCIPLE

Whilst the foundations of the seven pillars of our SGI democracy of faith are the eternal, universal teachings and practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, one might say that the mortar that secures each pillar firmly to those foundations is the oneness of master and disciple. In fact, this is the sole means by which the heritage of the true Law – which is the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the Dai-Gohonzon and the Gosho – can be passed on correctly to future generations.

In this context, how the teachings should best be applied to the movement for kosen-rufu in this modern world can only be discovered through the guidance in faith of our master in life, SGI President Ikeda, and the wisdom arising from our daimoku. This should be combined with sincere dialogue based, not on emotion, but respect for the unique nature, character and potential of each person.

So important is the principle of oneness of master and disciple that the 65th High Priest, Nichijun Shonin, who so greatly supported Josei Toda in re-establishing the Soka Gakkai after the 2nd World War, said: “Faith should begin with the recognition of the master-disciple relationship and faith should develop and deepen on that basis. The powerful faith that the Soka Gakkai displays today derives solely from that basis.”

Unfortunately, this principle is so foreign to us in the West that we sometimes find ourselves, in the early years of our faith, glossing over it when we read about it – trying to avoid facing it. Probably, this is because, for most of us, we are basing our view of a “disciple” on a person who worships at the feet of his master, filled with feelings of adoration for him; walking in his footsteps, leaning on him for protection and obeying his every whim.

Yet Nichijun Shonin insists that the oneness of master and disciple should be the foundation of faith, stating further, in relation to Mr Toda and his master, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, “[Toda] carried out the master-disciple relationship to its fullest.... It was because he was so thoroughgoing in this respect that he was able to attain his profound understanding and mastery of the way of Buddha.” He goes on to say, “The student must trust the teacher, and the teacher must guide the student.”

At this point, it is essential we clearly understand that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is in no way based on blind faith, but on actual proof amidst the reality of our daily lives and actions. Thus, the master gives his guidance, based on his interpretation of the Gosho in contemporary terms and his experience of action – both for his own “human revolution” and for guiding the movement for kosen-rufu.

We, as his disciples, must then set out to prove its validity for ourselves; we absorb it, blend it with the three ingredients of wisdom – our Buddha nature, our knowledge and our experience of life – and bring it forth in order to put it into practice in our own particular circumstances. Therefore the disciple must learn to stand strongly – alone – on his chosen
path of life, continually proving the heritage of the true Law which his master has
transmitted, and passing this guidance on to others. It is in this way that our faith deepens
and our trust in the master grows. As the Gosho states, “the master is the needle; the disciple
is the thread.”

Nichijun Shonin went on to say that Mr. Toda was “more obedient to him than if Mr.
Makiguchi had been his own father.” We may think, ‘How could this be so?’ The answer
surely lies in another passage from the Gosho which reads:

“The eyes of common mortals cannot see their true identities but the eyes of the
Buddha can. As the sutra states, the sky and the sea both have paths (though we cannot see
them) for birds and fish to come and go.” (MW 2, p. 56)

All of us who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which our ultimate master, Nichiren
Daishonin, taught us, can develop the eyes of the Buddha. But it is President Ikeda, our
master of life, who guides us through the rocks and shoals of this modern world. This is why I
can say, with pride and gratitude, that Sensei has taught me everything about life, based
solidly on the Gosho.

4. RESPECT FOR UNIQUENESS

Nichiren Daishonin points out in a famous passage from The Record of the Orally
Transmitted Teachings (Ongi Kuden):

“A cherry is a cherry. A plum is a plum. A peach is a peach. A pear is a pear...they are
all supreme as they are. I, Nichiren, and those who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, can equally
reveal ourselves as the True Buddha.”

This requires us to learn to tolerate the differences we see in each other. We do not have
to like everyone in our organisation – that would be unrealistic – but we should struggle to see
the great and good points of everyone with whom we come into contact. As Nichiren
Daishonin says:

“All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo 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.” (MW 1, p. 23)

Indeed, this struggle to “transcend all differences” is an essential part of our “human
revolution” and is one reason why it is so important for us to attend our group discussion
meeting each month; for it is here, above all, that we meet and talk with a wide cross-section
of people, many of whom we might never have the opportunity to encounter in our normal,
day-to-day lives.

Moreover, it is through the blending of these essential differences, based on our faith,
that the best solutions and conclusions can always be reached; for, as is shown in the Buddhist
principle of itai doshin (“many in body, one in mind”), it is through each individual realizing
his or her own unique potential, based on faith in the Gohonzon shared with many other
unique individuals, that the great goal of kosen-rufu can be achieved. Everyone has his or her
own singular mission in life, and through recognising this in ourselves and others, we can come to see that everyone has something important and respectworthy to offer.

5. **TRUST**

In any form of democracy there is also bound to be the need for a strong element of trust. Indeed, democracy cannot function without it. SGI-UK certainly recognises this, as our motto shows: “Trust through Friendship; Peace through Trust.”

In fact, civilisation as a whole requires us to trust our fellow human beings in many different ways during our ordinary daily lives – even to trust the bus driver taking us from A to B, the professor tutoring us so that we can pass our exams or our company paying us our wages every month.

This need for trust is hard, though, on those people who for one reason or another find themselves unable to trust anybody or anything. But the only social alternative is anarchy, where everyone is left to do their own thing, resulting in chaos; or fascism, which demands absolute and, if need be, “blind” obedience, resulting in oppression.

Trust is necessary because, in any organisation or grouping of human beings, everybody cannot themselves be immediately responsible for everything. Hence, in a political democracy there are elections and, having studied the manifestos of the various parties, we place our vote – knowing that we will have to put up with whoever gains the majority until the next election.

Depending on which side wins, we then have to put our trust in the government, or in the opposition’s ability not to let them go too far off the rails.

Therefore, the point of greatest importance is whether, should the government actually go too far over the top for our comfort, our voice and the voices of others in disagreement can be heard. Most important of all, will they be sincerely considered and, we hope, acted upon?

Of course, there are many safeguards built into democratic organisations which guard the people’s right to be heard. However, if, due to apathy, people fail to use these safeguards and content themselves with just grumbling and complaining, the safeguards will inevitably become rusty and corroded from neglect. As a result, those who are cunning and power-hungry will eventually gain control and the democracy will end up a democracy in name only. I will return to this point later.

**LEADERSHIP**

The heart of this matter of trust lies, inevitably, in the system of leadership we have.

What a pity it is, in the first place, that in the English language we have to use the term “leader” for want of finding any other word – despite many a search in dictionaries and *Roget’s Thesaurus*. The French SGI members are able to use the word *responsable*, meaning “a responsible person in charge”. This is in common use in France and is a far more fitting definition; for what we term “leaders in faith” are no different from any other member, except that they have agreed to take on certain responsibilities on behalf of their members.

These responsibilities involve providing an organisation which enables members (indeed, encourages them): firstly, to develop their faith, practice and study, exactly as...
Nichiren Daishonin taught us, in happy and secure circumstances; and, secondly, to provide members with a “vehicle” which gives them the opportunity to use their individual talents and abilities to the full for the purposes of “cultural exchange”. This presents us with a challenge to be won through our faith, which as a result, grows and deepens, whilst at the same time we can widen our circle of friends in order to expand the movement for kosen-rufu.

Now, there are bound to be those who say – and I often do so myself – that everyone who chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is in fact a leader or responsible. This is absolutely correct. We are all responsible for advancing the attainment of kosen-rufu.

But where organisational and administrative matters are concerned, there is great truth in the old saying that “too many cooks can spoil the broth”. We cannot all have a hand in discussing and making decisions. If we did, we would move at a snail’s pace, whilst not only the movement for kosen-rufu, but the world in general, is moving and changing at an incredible speed.

Instead, we have to trust our so-called “leaders” to reach decisions and, if we disagree, we have to speak out.

“Ah! But...!” I can hear some of us saying, “We don’t even have the opportunity to elect the leaders”. My answer must always be, “That’s right – because they are leaders “in faith” and must stand up and be given responsibility through faith alone.” Can you imagine how disastrous it might be if such appointments were influenced by emotions, physical appearances, personal likes and dislikes or any other form of prejudice, as can be the case in decisions by referendum?

Therefore, appointments are decided by what must be a unanimous decision of the members of an “appointments board”, consisting of the most senior leaders in faith, in consultation with the leaders closely connected with the person nominated.

Once more, the need for trust is apparent. But no system is foolproof, even one based on the sincere faith of those who have to make the decisions. A vital piece of information may not have been available to them at the crucial moment, for example. So what happens if the wrong decision is made? This point is dealt with in the following sections.

ITAI DOSHIN

In a political democracy, it is probably true to say that it is matters which are hidden or undisclosed by governments, for one reason or another, which are the main points of contention and division concerning its administration. Yet, to be effective in terms of action, a government has to keep pace with the times, as new trends develop in society and circumstances change from day to day, both in this country and the world about it. Although they may moan and complain, people are aware that an element of trust in the government of the day – and, of course, Parliament – is therefore essential and inevitable if the nation’s administration is to be dynamic and effective.

Be that as it may, we are also aware that politicians are not angels and that our trust could be compromised and even betrayed at any time. Hence our great concern.
It is in this context that our democracy of faith is unique, for, as is shown in the principle of *itai doshin* (many in body, one in mind), whilst we are “many in body” – since, through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, our unique individuality and potential is accentuated rather than repressed – we should at the same time be “one in mind” in our desire to carry out the Buddha’s will. This is to advance towards the great goal of kosen-rufu based on our individual “human revolution”, motivated through our faith in the Dai-Gohonzon, practice and study.

Thus the element of trust in our democracy of faith is in no way “blind”, for if the Buddha nature is at work in those who shoulder responsibility for administration, their decisions would appear right to those who are being administered. And if they do not, through chanting daimoku, the latter will either discover the wisdom behind the administrators’ actions or, feeling still that something is wrong, they will speak out and be heard.

It is the swiftness of our advance in perfect unity, combined with an essential flexibility in our organisation and administration, which will enable us and our successors to achieve the ultimate goal of kosen-rufu as early as possible in the next millennium, which is already nearly upon us. It is for this reason, too, that in Buddhism “causing disunity among believers” is one of the five cardinal sins; for, inevitably, such disruption would seriously delay or even destroy the movement for kosen-rufu and cause not only immense suffering to the believers, but dire consequences for the whole world.

**SPEAKING OUT**

Most crucial, therefore, is not only the right of any member to speak out, but when necessary, the responsibility of each member to do so, based not on emotion but on their faith and their belief in kosen-rufu. It is the failure to do this – through laziness, cunning or lack of courage – which can create the right conditions for complaints and bitterness to fester and, as Nichiren Daishonin described it, for worms to breed ‘in the bowels of the lion’ which will ultimately destroy it.

Even the best political democracy is bound to have some flaws, because despite all the built-in safeguards, it is still subject to the emotions and desires of the electorate and the elected, which nurture the three poisons of greed, anger and ignorance (or stupidity). By contrast, our democracy of faith is based on our Buddhahood and sincere practice; for, as I pointed out earlier, “it is Buddhahood...which must surely be the source of the most perfect democracy in the world, provided we desire to make use of it in our daily lives and actions.”

This is why, if we disagree with anything in our organisation, we must first do battle with our emotions through our practice and then – and only then – decide in the calmness of our Buddha nature whether we should speak out. And remember – in our organisation everyone can go to see anyone. There is no hierarchical structure and there are no “bosses” that must be seen before you can see other, more senior “bosses”.

Remember, too, that should we fail to speak out, despite feeling deep in our lives that we should do so, we are failing to do the Buddha’s work; for we need have no doubt that SGI-UK is nothing else but the Buddha’s organisation here in this world. And if we are dissatisfied
with the response to our representations, then, after further reflection and *daimoku* we must speak out again.

**HEADQUARTERS**

Turning to practicalities, since 1989 we have reorganised and considerably expanded the structure of SGI-UK to keep pace with our growth, including the formation of 20 headquarters which are now responsible for the conduct of activities in their particular areas. This helps to shorten the distance between members and those leaders experienced in faith who are responsible for the conduct of the movement for kosen-rufu in their part of the country.

At the same time, at SGI-UK level, area leaders have been appointed whose sole responsibility is to act as a link between areas, consisting of a small number of headquarters, and Taplow Court. As members of SGI-UK’s Central Committee, these area leaders – representing women, men, young women and young men respectively – have ample opportunity to communicate the proposals, problems or anxieties of members at monthly “feedback” meetings which the Committee has now initiated in addition to their regular monthly planning meetings.

This structure, together with the right of every member to write or talk to any leader they wish, provides, I am sure, plentiful opportunity for members to express their views and concerns and influence our progress, so that our organisation is truly shaped and created by the Buddha nature at work in each person.

6. **STRICTNESS IN FAITH**

It is a part of the learning process of our faith to discover that there are absolutely no “grey areas” in Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings – no neutral ground where we can sit on the fence and decide whether or not we believe them, or which way to jump. This is because everything, in all of life, is either positive or negative, value or anti-value. We become aware that in every moment of our existence we are following either the way of the Buddha or the way of the “devil”, according to the dictates of our desires.

Since they reflect this fact of life, it is inevitable that the Buddha’s teachings are strict. As Nichiren Daishonin said in the Gosho, if we relax in faith (which means, also, practice) “even a little” the devil (the negative force of life) will take charge of us. For some of us, this may prove quite hard to accept at first, especially if we have a particularly powerful ego which enjoys nothing more than intellectual and therefore entirely theoretical discussion and arguments.

As is so frequently said, Buddhism is about the reality of daily life. It is in this context that the teachings must be put to the test and proved – not in empty theory. Thus, strictness in matters of faith is not another way of saying we must have “blind faith”, as may be required in other religions. On the contrary, from the time someone first convinces us to try chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, faith grows through us proving the validity of all that Nichiren Daishonin taught, through our daily practice and actions.
How glorious this is and how fortunate we are to have found this great master of Buddhism, Nichiren Daishonin, who taught the ultimate truth with such total confidence and conviction! So we should certainly make this strictness in matters of faith the 6th great pillar of our democracy of faith.

7. ABSOLUTE EQUALITY

Finally, we come to equality, the 7th pillar of our democracy of faith. In the Gosho “The True Entity of Life”, Nichiren Daishonin emphasises:

“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. Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku.” (MW 1, p. 93)

Ancient – and indeed “blind” beliefs in, for example, the infallibility of the Pope, the superiority of priesthoods or the divine right of kings or queens, have become relics of the past; for the people have come to realise that, hidden behind their robes of authority these figures are, after all, just men and women.

Therefore, as President Ikeda points out in his 4th and 5th criteria, what matters does not derive from titles, positions, ritual or hereditary privilege, but in our actions in the reality of the world, emanating, as the Gosho “On Attaining Buddhahood” states, “from the good or evil of our minds”.

The way ahead

These, then, are the main pillars I have proposed for the beautiful humanitarian organisation we wish to create for the new century. Together with Sensei’s six criteria, I suggest we should ponder them deeply and put them into action.

Epilogue

It has taken as many as five editorials for me to express adequately my thoughts on the nature, ingredients and motivation of a democracy based on faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism – the democracy which we wish to create under the banner of SGI-UK.

I have emphasised throughout that this is something I believe “we wish to create”; in other words, it is not something that necessarily exists at present. Yet already I have received a few letters – and it is only a very few – complaining, sometimes in the unnecessarily trite and arrogant manner used by some people when writing letters to newspapers, that if that is what I think SGI-UK is like, I must be deaf, blind and not a little daft.

I repeat, therefore, that our beautiful democracy of faith is something I believe we all “wish to create”; and I would add, furthermore, that the patience, compassionate understanding, determination and, above all, faith of every member will be necessary to its achievement – and once achieved, to its preservation.

Any form of democracy is bound to be a delicate structure, for it survives on the attitudes and minds of the people it embraces and their will to sustain it. Most importantly,
this humanitarian attitude of mind is necessary, not only among those who take the responsibility of leadership within the democracy but also in the minds of the greater majority of the people themselves.

Such attitudes of mind are, of course, particularly necessary in our democracy of faith, and here we should have the great advantage of being able to develop and sustain our humanitarianism through struggling with our human revolution and ever-deepening our faith.

“Misfortune”, Nichiren Daishonin wrote in the “New Year’s Gosho”, “comes from one’s mouth and ruins him, but fortune comes from one’s mind and makes him worthy of respect” (MW 1, p. 272). No one would contest substituting “pen” for “mouth” when necessary, for certainly the subtleties of the English language can convey emotions arising from all ten states of life, whether the words are spoken or written. Therefore, since a democracy is a structure of human relationships, Nichiren Daishonin’s warning should be heeded by us all whether or not we are “leaders”. Indeed, this need to develop the habit of chanting, even if only for a moment, before we make any proposal or objection – making sure that when we speak out what we use are words of wisdom and not emotion, lest they “ruin” our purpose – is I believe the very first action we should each now take in building the foundations of our democracy of faith.

In the Gosho “Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life”, Nichiren Daishonin wrote:

The function of fire is to burn and give light. The function of water is to wash away filth. The winds blow away dust and breathe life into plants, animals and human beings. The earth nourishes the grasses and trees, and heaven provides nourishing moisture. Myoho-renge-kyo too works in all these ways. It is the cluster of blessings brought by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. (MW 1, p. 24)

I am grateful, now, to those few members who wrote as they did to me, for they have reminded me of the need to write this epilogue. As Nichiren Daishonin points out, we, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, all carry the cluster of blessings that will manifest in our lives as we exert ourselves in faith, practice and study – and it is this cluster of blessings alone that will enable us to create the most perfect and beautiful democracy the world has ever known. Like all things in Buddhism, it begins in the hearts and minds of each one of us.7

7 This document was retrieved from the Internet Archive, reformatted and proofread by David Le Page of SGI South Africa in 2014. Some explanatory footnotes have been added, and some of the Gosho references updated to reflect the newer English translation of the Gosho. Mr Causton (with SGI-UK) was a great supporter of SGI South Africa during its early development. We should remember and realise his wish that SGI become “the most perfect and beautiful democracy the world has ever known”, so that we can in turn inspire other beautiful democracies that allow all their members, without exception, to thrive.