

Training the Spirit

Part 3 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 25th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Aug. 27.

Almost right in the center of the vast expanse of South America lies the Republic of Bolivia. One of its most well-known cities is Cochabamba, located in a fertile basin some 8,480 feet above sea level. It's pleasant year-round climate and scenic alpine beauty has won it kudos as the "Switzerland of South America," and it is a popular destination for tourists from all parts of the world.

I am extremely honored to report that Cochabamba has recently informed me of its decision to bestow honorary citizenship upon me. I understand that I will be the first person from outside Bolivia to receive this distinction. I am happy to humbly accept the honorary citizenship as the representative of the SGI members of Bolivia and around the world.

We Will Fight

At the time of the War of Independence against Spanish rule, the women of this lovely city waged a brave struggle that is remembered to this day. It took place in May 1812. In Cochabamba, as in other parts of Bolivia [then called Upper Peru], the citizens had risen in opposition to the colonial powers that had ruled the land for more than three centuries. Their uprising was swiftly suppressed, however.

The Spanish forces, who boasted superior numbers and military might, advanced within short distance of the town. The men of Cochabamba fought with selfless valor, but they suffered a bitter defeat at the hands of the colonial troops. Some of the city's leaders met to parley with the enemy, saying they would hand over the key figures of the rebel force if, in exchange, the Spanish authorities would guarantee the security of the city. But when the women of Cochabamba heard this, they thoroughly condemned such action. One woman cried out indignantly: "If there are no men left to fight with their lives for this land, then we, the women, will fight. We, together with our children, our young brothers and sisters, and our elders, will take on the enemy."

The women of Cochabamba's powerful fighting spirit and fearless resolve roused the remaining townspeople. They all rallied together, summoning their courage and determination to fight for justice.

Just one person can inspire countless others. This is an unchanging formula.

Women young and old — young mothers carrying small infants, grandmothers stooped with age — courageously made their way to the battlefield. On May 27 the fighting began. The Spanish troops outnumbered them many times. But the women did not retreat a single step. They fought intrepidly to the last.

One old, white-haired woman stood on the battlefield, two young children killed by the enemy lying at her side. A soldier approached her and shot her in the chest. The woman possessed no weapon, but she cupped her hand to the gaping bullet wound and flung her own life's blood at the soldier's face in one last gesture of defiance.

By contrast, there were men who had fled the battlefield, intent only on saving themselves. Those who were always arrogant and overbearing in their ways were the first to flee. A person's true worth is revealed at a crucial moment. Men often tend to be weak in a crisis, exhibiting cowardice. Women, on the other hand, tend to be strong in a crisis, demonstrating courage.

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The citizens of Cochabamba were no match for the Spanish forces and were soon defeated. The women laid down their lives on the battleground with great valor. The example of these noble women lives on in the Bolivian people's hearts as a model for all time. May 27, the day on which their fateful battle was fought, is celebrated as the Day of Bolivian Mothers. Today, overlooking the city, on the hill where they fought and died, stands a statue commemorating their courage.

As a Buddhist, when I heard of this episode of Bolivian history that took place 186 years ago, I offered prayers for the eternal happiness and good fortune of these most respectable women of Cochabamba.

Unsung Heroes

There is nothing more noble than ordinary people who fearlessly stand up to tyranny and bravely fight against it. They are the unsung heroes, people of the highest nobility.

The members of SGI-Bolivia are also working hard to develop ties of trust and friendship in their local communities and society at large. They are making wonderful efforts and contributions. Offering an exemplary model, of course, are the members of the women's division. I understand that the catchphrase of the men's and youth divisions is "Let's follow the lead of the women's division!"

Bolivia's former First Lady Ximena Iturralde de Sánchez de Lozada has for many years enjoyed friendly ties with the members of the women's division. As first lady, she even attended a women's division general meeting [in 1995].

A month or so ago, one of Bolivia's leading daily newspapers, *El Deber*, carried a one-page feature article on the community-service activities of the SGI-Bolivia women's division, which were praised as "promoting a spirit of humanitarianism."

In every country of the world, the members of the women's division are truly remarkable.

Winning Where We Are Right Now

Many have been the noble but unfulfilled wishes of mothers throughout history. One of the purposes of our SGI movement is to inherit those heartrending wishes and work toward making them a reality. But what do we need to do to achieve that?

First of all, we have to win in the community or area where we have our mission for kosen-rufu. To succeed there without fail. Rather than grandiose rhetoric, the important thing is to win steadily in our immediate environment. That is the path to victory and prosperity for all people around the globe. The most fundamental principle of kosen-rufu is transforming the place we are right now into the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light — in other words, drawing forth its highest possible potential.

I would particularly like to say to the members of the men's and young men's divisions: "Put down roots in your local communities" and "stand at the forefront of activities to transform your communities." I'm counting on the members of the women's and young women's divisions to "supervise" their efforts!

May all of you stride forward in your endeavors to transform your communities, united, joyous and confident, while fully supporting each other.

Words of Wisdom

I would now like to share some words of wisdom of various famous people.

Comedian of the silent-screen Charlie Chaplin said: "Let us strive for the impossible. Remember the great achievements throughout history have been the conquest of what

seemed the impossible.” He is saying that great achievements are made by daring to challenge things considered impossible, absurd or too difficult.

The Indian poet Tagore wrote:

Darkness, you cannot harm me!

Rocks, you cannot hurt me!

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What is there to fear in the world?

This is the spirit of courage, of faith. With this spirit, what can there possibly be to fear? Nothing at all.

The French sculptor Rodin urged: “Love your mission with a passion; there is nothing more beautiful than this.” These words have profound meaning.

The Norwegian dramatist Ibsen, author of *A Doll’s House*, wrote: “What is really needed is a revolution of the human spirit. And in this you shall be one of those who take the lead.” In other words, human revolution is vital. His words resonate deeply with the conviction of the SGI.

The Swiss philosopher Hilty declared to the effect: “Of all human qualities, jealousy is the ugliest, while vanity is the most dangerous. To escape these two snakes that live inside the human heart is a wonderful and pleasant thing.” People of outstanding character have banished these two snakes—jealousy and vanity — from their hearts.

John F. Kennedy said these famous words: “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country.” Those ex-members who left the SGI — among them top leaders and people who were famous in society — were ultimately only thinking about what the organization could do for them not what they could do for the organization.

One of the world’s leading philosophers, Emerson, said, “The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul.” An “active soul” — in other words, a fighting, challenging spirit. Emerson continues, “The soul active sees absolute truth; and utters truth, or creates.” The SGI has always been sharing the “absolute truth” with others.

Lastly, I would like to cite the words of the Greek historian Xenophon, who was a disciple of Socrates: “I notice that as those who do not train the body cannot perform the functions proper to the body, so those who do not train the soul cannot perform the functions of the soul...” Spiritual training — this is the purpose of our faith and practice. Today, wherever we look, people lack this “training of the spirit.” As a result, they cannot perform the work of the spirit. And without spiritual effort and exertion, there can be no peace, no protection of human dignity, no cultural creativity, nothing at all of value; one cannot manifest true humanity, instead remaining little different from an animal.

For that reason, let’s keep up our efforts to develop our spirituality and bring it to bear on all our endeavors.

A little later this year, a Soka Gakkai goodwill and cultural exchange delegation will officially visit South Korea for the first time. We plan to extend such exchange visits to many more countries around the world.

My speech today has been rather long, but I will close now. Thank you very much for listening with such patience.

Please take care of your health and have a safe trip home.

I look forward to seeing you again at next month’s meeting.

This is the final installment of this speech

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