



LOTUS

Members' Magazine of the Pandacan Theosophical Society



**"Error runs down an inclined plane,
while the Truth has to laboriously climb its way up hill."
- The Secret Doctrine Vol. I, p. XVII**



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PANDACAN THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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MEETING SCHEDULE:

Pandacan Lodge:

2nd and 4th Sundays of the month - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Theosophical Inquirers Study Group:

1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Lotus Magazine is edited by Luke Michael Ironside

The programme of Lodge meetings is available from the Lodge and is updated in the monthly calender at the Headquarters Building.

THE THREE OBJECTS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

*No acceptance of particular beliefs or practices is required to join The Theosophical Society.
All in sympathy with its three Objects are welcomed as members.*



To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.



To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy and science.



To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The past few months have been bustling with activity. As many of you are no doubt aware, the Pandacan Lodge had been on a hiatus since early 2016, as a result of multiple factors involving the unfortunate passing away of certain members of the lodge; the relocation of others; and a general decline in membership and activities.

The recent revival took place as a result of a series of discussions with Past President Tony Valenciano, after which a decision was made to resurrect the lodge under the administration of new Officers. I am honoured to assume the position of Lodge President, alongside Christopher See as newly elected Secretary/Treasurer.

My vision for the Pandacan Lodge is that it may serve as a beacon of light for the future of the Theosophical Movement. I believe that in this age of technological advancement, a fine balance must be struck between progression and the preservation of tradition. It is my desire that the Pandacan Lodge may serve as an example of such an equilibrium; whereby Ageless Wisdom may be presented to the world by media appropriate to this day and age, whilst yet finding its foundation in the solidity of tradition and the wisdom of our forebears.

My personal journey in Theosophy has led me to an increasing awareness of the immense beauty of its teachings, and the certain relevance of such to the events of our world today. Indeed, the world needs Theosophy, now more than ever. Let us, therefore, endeavour to carry forth the banner of brotherhood with the cry of unity upon our tongues; to act as heralds of love and service whereby the ideals of justice and peace may be achieved. The reformation of this lodge may seem as but one small step towards the accomplishment of such lofty goals, and yet the conquering of every mountain begins with such a single step.

I invite you to join with me in this exciting new endeavour. Theosophy teaches us that all things move in cycles; that everything has its period of activity and rest. Hence, does the Pandacan Lodge arise from the sleep of Pralaya to once more assume the mantle of Manvantara; to serve once again as a guiding light for seekers along the path. I am certain that together we may continue to bring about the changes so necessary to the future of our movement – and further, to our world. We stand upon the precipice of a brighter future; let us walk forward in unity, ever guided along the way by the constant flame of Truth that is Theosophy.

Luke Michael Ironside



PANDACAN LODGE NEWS

Pandacan Lodge Officers for 2017-18

President:

Luke Michael Ironside

Treasurer/Secretary:

Christopher See

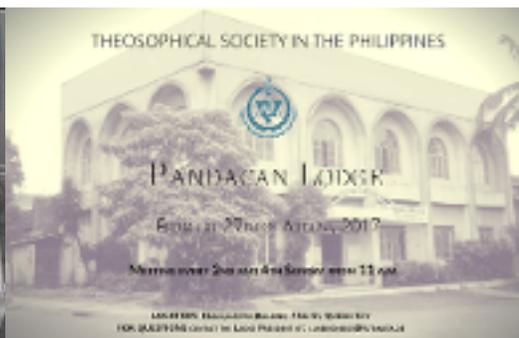


Pandacan Lodge Lending Library

We are pleased to announce the development of a lending library, to come into effect as of October, 2017.

Lending rights will be applicable to all lodge members, and by extension, to TSP members in good standing. A list of titles will be made available in due course.

RECENT EVENTS



The Pandacan Lodge has been active in organising events since its recent revival. Aside from our usual fortnightly meetings, the lodge has hosted a public event in celebration of H. P. Blavatsky's birth - the *Messenger of Light Day* - following in the tradition of the Theosophical Society in Ukraine. We were honoured by the attendance of Past President of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines, Vicente Hao Chin, Jr., and Board Member Flor Garcia.

We also hosted a public lecture by Christopher See on the topic of *Yogas, Rays and Root Races: A Comparison of Leadbeater and Bailey's Theosophy*, which was well received. Please see photos on p. 5.



Yogas, Rays, and Root Races - Public Lecture by Christopher See



PHOTOS OF RECENT EVENTS



Election of new Officers of the Pandacan Lodge



Esoteric Teachers - A lecture by Luke Michael Ironside



The Constitution of Man - A lecture by Luke Michael Ironside

MESSENGER OF LIGHT DAY



From left to right: Joel Arcenas (Lodge Member); Stanley Castro (Lodge Member); Tony Valenciano (Past President of the Pandacan Lodge); Stefan Emunds (Guest Attendee, with son); Flor Garcia (TSP Trustee); Vic Hao Chin (Past President of the TSP); Luke Michael Ironside (Lodge President); Joshua Romero Villeza (Lodge Member)

HISTORY OF THE PANDACAN LODGE

Chartered in 1974

Efforts are currently underway to unravel the history of the Pandacan Lodge, much of which is presently undocumented.

We have ascertained, as a result of information provided by International Secretary Marja Artamaa and Vicente Hao Chin, Jr., that the Pandacan Lodge was chartered in the year 1974, and that the early meetings were held in the home of the Carlos Family in Pandacan, Metro Manila. At some stage,

as a result of the passing away of certain prominent members of the lodge, the meetings were moved to the TSP National Headquarters, where they are presently held.

Below are a few photos of former Pandacan Lodge members and past activities. We hope to provide further information as to the lodge's history in following issues.

A HISTORY IN PHOTOS



Pictured here is Past President of the Pandacan Lodge, Romeo Velarde, with fellow members of the TSP in Adyar in the year 1984 - 10 years after the Pandacan Lodge's founding. From left to right are: Eugenia Tayao, Vicente Hao Chin, Jr., Benito Arguelles, Romeo Velarde, Rekha Nahar, and Jesse Alto.



Kundalini Seminar at the Pandacan Lodge in 2013. Among the attendees was Past President Tony Valenciano.

Pandacan Lodge
Searching for the Truth
TSP Library - Every Sunday - 3:30-5:30 PM

June 12, 2011
Meditation: The Yoga of Modern Theosophy
"Meditation is stilling the incessant chatter of the mind and diving deep within our consciousness, we can experience levels of joy unattainable and other means."
Presenter: Bro. Eddie Arenas

June 19, 2011
Exploring Harmony with Cosmos
"The crisis to play is not the crisis of material resources but of human resources - essentially a crisis of value."
Presenter: Bro. Albert Mabutas

June 26, 2011
Buddhism and the Field of Neuroscience
"Buddhists believe that humans are prone to suffering because their minds are overly focused on negative emotions."
Presenter: Bro. Tony Valenciano

July 3, 2011
Why such Moral Weakness?
"We must teach ourselves ways and means to maintain our inner integrity - our true nature."
Presenter: Fr. Benny Arguelles

"Still each of us can relatively reach the Sun of Truth even on this earth, and assimilate its warmest and most direct rays, however differentiated they may become after their long journey through the physical particles in space. To achieve this, there are two methods. On the physical plane we may use our mental polariscope; and, analyzing the properties of each ray, choose the purest. On the plane of spirituality, to reach the Sun of Truth we must work in dead earnest for the development of our higher nature." - HP Blavatsky

A Pandacan Lodge poster from 2011.



Another photo from the Kundalini Seminar in 2013.



MANY PATHS TO TRUTH

Dr. Rosel Doval Santos



What is Truth? Can the Truth be approached by different Paths? If so, should the Theosophical Society restrict what the lodges should study? Or should the organized study be about anything in the sun? Can we study voodoo? Can we discuss witchcraft? Should we have a body that censors what is sold in the bookshop and what is printed in our journals? Or do we exist for a mission and hence given limited time and resources for meetings, we should prioritize a certain study syllabus? What do you think?

The Second Object of the Theosophical Society encourages a study of comparative religion, philosophy and science in the collective and individual search for Truth. One of its key tenets is the upholding of one's freedom of thought. The key note of all the organized activities of the TS world-wide is tolerance. This arises from the deeply ingrained and widely accepted tenet in the Society that there are many paths to Truth.

Our literature says that in the higher realms of being, one can intuit that there is an encompassing Reality called Truth. One cannot add to it. One cannot subtract from it. One cannot comprehend it with the concrete mind. It is approached by the quiet mind that is not conditioned. It is apprehended through the various stages of Samadhi as described by Patanjali. Yet its fullness can never be completely known. The Light on the Path says: "You can approach the Light but you can never touch the Flame." Such is Truth. It is Nuomena. It is Absolute and Unknowable.

Depending on our stage of growth, we apprehend different interpretations of the Unknowable, do we not? For us, at this point of evolution, that is "truth." How should we deal with this point in a society of learners where no one is an authority on Truth?

Theosophy postulates a Divine Plan, and that Plan being Evolution (Spiritual Evolution, in contradistinction to Darwinian physical evolution). Within this postulate is derived a subsidiary postulate: that souls evolve at different rates based on the dynamics of effort, karma, dharma and the law of cycles. In other words, there are different stages of growth. Some humans are primitive in the spiritual sense of the word, some are average, others advanced, and some are even lofty intelligences or Mahatmas. If different souls incarnate and start life at different stages in the evolutionary path, would it not follow that people perceive Truth at different levels depending on their evolution? Like a diamond, Truth has many facets. We perceive Truth through the facet we see, while others see another aspect, and the advanced intelligence sees the entire diamond and its radiance, not just the facet.

It will help therefore if in our transactions, we keep to mind that "Truth is that 'which' compels," according to Sri Ram. Whatever aspect of Truth that an inquirer brings into our Theosophical group is something that may enrich us. Be it his interpretation of scripture or his way of yoga. This attitude is best expressed by what Sr Fidelis Estrada and Bishop Tutud of Bukidnon both said: "What enriches you in your religion, share it with me. What



enriches me in mine I will share with you. What we cannot accept, let us set aside and ponder over. Yet we shall not quarrel. That way we will have a dialogue of Faith and Love.”

Let us learn therefore from one another, yet always trusting our deep intuition and not any authority. When we start believing authority without subjecting it to the test of intuition, it becomes a superstition.

There are many paths to Truth. If we are to enrich our Society, let us allow all to individually explore the facets of Truth within the enriching environment of freedom that the Theosophical Society provides. However, as an organization, it may be helpful if we collectively remain conscious that there is such a thing as a theosophical Doctrine. There is no Theosophical Dogma that all should believe in. Theosophy is not a religion. However, it was founded to share certain Truths to the world. Certain presentations of Truth were given by the Mahatmas through H.P. Blavatsky and her successors. That is why her magnum opus is called the Secret Doctrine. It was not called the Secret Theory or the Secret Idea or even the Secret Dogma, but a Secret Doctrine. This Doctrine, we are told, has been and is continually validated by the efforts of countless Mahatmas and their disciples through eons of time. Not everything is “theosophy” therefore. If we say that everything is theosophical hence everything should be in our agenda of studies, even the act of human sacrifice or the fanatical martyrdom of suicidal terrorists blowing up a mosque would be mistakenly called theosophical. They may have been an aspect of Truth to Root Races of old, we will never know. For this dawning new age of thought, they are not.

Theosophy can be thought of as altruism in the real sense. It is living life according to Truth. For the present era of human evolution, is there a facet of Truth that is dawning? Could this be the message that the TS is tasked to bring to humanity at the

present time? If the religious fanatic who blows up a mosque believes that his action is according to a Truth that compels, we cannot judge him. Karma will judge and set the balance. Yet it is possible that for this era, a new Truth may have dawned that is different from that fanatical view.

One such Truth is the Truth of Universal Brotherhood. Put in other words, it is the Principle of Universal Love. The TS has but one tenet that is required of its members. Members are not required to accept anything to qualify for membership except one: Brotherhood. This is our basic Truth. Let us think about this.



Dr. Rosel Doval Santos is the National President of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines. He previously served as Vice President for 20 years under the leadership of Vicente Hao Chin, Jr. He has also been involved in the publishing work of the Theosophical Publishing House in Manila and in the Philippine Theosophical Institute as a lecturer and course designer.

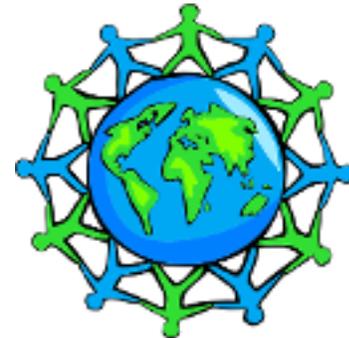


There is no Religion higher than Truth.
- Motto of the Theosophical Society



DEVELOPING CHARACTER AND BECOMING A LEADER

Victor Peñaranda



When one becomes a theosophist, one gradually becomes aware that the life journey is never easy and not always what one wants things to be. We travel the smooth and the rough. There are times when we choose to take a road less travelled or make a sudden turn somewhere that, we find out later, will not bring us to our intended destination.

We gradually learn about ourselves by exploring our imperfections. We begin to recognize that being human is also being divine, and by this mystic illumination we humbly embark on the development of our character. It is this aspect of theosophical practice that is often appreciated for its practical applications. When we are clear about our commitment to the enrichment of character, life goals emerge with clarity from the sea of existence. From being perplexed, we learn to reflect and innovate while going through the process of self-discovery and self-renewal.

I learned from the Theosophical Society that life experiences offer lessons by which we are able to develop that precious potential in each one of us — human character. The dynamic enhancement and enchantment of character involves the nurturing of the inner force that compels us to chart our destiny while performing our life duties. By dealing diligently with the necessary changes or improvements in one's character, self-transformation becomes a matter of conviction.

People are often curious about what useful or wonderful things happen in the process of crafting our character. It is safe to say the following: First, we gain a level of confidence, even serenity, by being

aware that we live in a world of impermanence. We learn that we evolve in consciousness from life to life and the best way to prepare ourselves for each existence is to live according to the law of karma.

Second, it is possible to prevail over suffering and decay because of our awareness of what is divine in us. What is a mystery can be unlocked with creative imagination; what is mystical could be grasped by awakened intuition. There is power in kindness and beauty in the cycle of ebb and flow, in the cycle of living and dying.

Third, we must be honest with ourselves and others. We have to be aware, each one of us, of our limitations and weaknesses so we may grow from strength to strength. We have to examine the kernel of truth contained in every criticism we receive. Along the way, we learn that respect and trust follow honest acts. We learn that honest work is to give your best, to do better than what you have done before, and to equate your effort with quality or excellence.

Fourth, we begin to understand inner peace by being aware of our capacity to love. It is through love that we reclaim our profound respect for other people and what is sacred in life. Only by offering ourselves to unselfish service can we be transformed into touchstones of social consensus and wellsprings of harmonious relationships.

Fifth, we become imbued with courage to be able to love, be peaceful, be honest, prevail over suffering, and be serene. To be courageous is to be fearless in conviction and selfless in action.



By developing our character we also prepare ourselves to become leaders. Leadership is not being on top of a hierarchy, not about fame, not about wielding power or use of force. Leadership begins modestly with having a purpose in everyday life (in the family, in the neighborhood, in the workplace, and so on). One who has character is a potential leader or a leader in the making. Who are they? Those who are dedicated — heart and mind — to study, meditate and serve. Those with energy to accomplish, confidence to envision, creativity to pioneer and capability to integrate various parts of our work into a substantial whole.

The Theosophical Society has to invest in developing leaders. And as a matter of theosophical practice, the mentoring of potential leaders is crucially linked to character-building. Allow me to mention some abilities expected of them:

- to be clear, calm, and resolute in considering choices and making decisions
- to be free of unreasonable attachment and negative conditioning
- to innovate under changing conditions
- to inspire by moral or ethical example
- to communicate clearly
- to manage resources effectively
- to motivate others to achieve results
- to gain the support of the people being served
- to persevere despite setbacks
- to create opportunities to unlock the potential of others.

Theosophists have to take the frontline if they are to mainstream Theosophy. This means that a new wave of leaders has to be mentored. We have to create an enabling environment for the moulding of leaders and for the transition of programmes in the organization.

In our Theosophical Society there are no followers — only seekers, volunteers, and messengers. Any one of them could be a leader. I have often mentioned to family and friends that taking the spiritual Path is one great adventure in living. And in this

adventure, the enrichment of human character is decisive. As the mystery deepens in us, so does our commitment to love and serve those within our reach. A theosophist should be ready to guide and care for others when the situation calls for it.

Remember: as we walk the Path, we become pilgrims of unlimited possibilities. As we transform ourselves, we contribute to the transformation of anywhere we choose to be.



Victor Peñaranda served as Trustee and Vice President of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines and coordinated the Section's development and training activities. He was also an experienced trainer-facilitator of the Self-Transformation Seminar. An accomplished poet, he was the recipient of the Nick Joaquin Poet of the Year Award in 2015.

Victor Peñaranda, affectionately known to his friends and family as "Bimboy", sadly passed away in the early hours of the 23rd of September, 2017. He will be remembered by the TSP community for his selfless service and dedication to the work of the Society.

The day before his passing, Mr. Peñaranda kindly gave his permission to republish one of his truly eloquent poems in this issue of Lotus. Please see p. 26.

"The sunlight ranges over the universe, and at incarnation we step out of it into the twilight of the body, and see but dimly during the period of our incarceration; at death we step out of the prison again into the sunlight, and are nearer to the reality."

- Annie Besant, Death - and After?



THE WISDOM OF THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

Luke Michael Ironside



We will here examine the Hindu concept of the Absolute, Brahman, through a selection and analysis of key passages from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the tenth of the Mukhya (or 108 major) Upanishads and one of the oldest, with scholars estimating the date of its composition to be about 700 BCE. The text is primarily a treatise on Atman, the Self, and explores subjects relating to metaphysics, ethics, and the relationship between the Self and the Absolute. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad essentially consists of a series of instructions for disciples, inasmuch as it points the way to the knowledge of the Cosmos as a living organism, in which each emanation is related; in which all Life is One. Much of the Upanishad may be considered as being cosmogonical – concerning itself with the emanation of the Cosmos from the slumber of the Cosmic Night; with the primeval manifestation of the Logos and its first duality - its distinction between itself and Maya – and thereafter, the progressive manifestation of the hierarchies, planes and principles which constitute the worlds. The Upanishad reveals the two contending forces which permeate the Universe: those of manifestation and dissolution – represented throughout the text by the Devas and the Asuras, respectively. To the disciple is revealed the mystery of the workings of these forces, which interpenetrate the world of forms, and the lives of all.

The second chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad begins with a narrative, in which the learned and proud Brahmin, Balaki Gargya, approaches the king Ajatashatru with the offer to explain to him

the nature of Brahman – the Ultimate Reality – to which the king responds that he will grant to Balaki a thousand cows, in return for the knowledge of such. Balaki endeavours to expound the sacred wisdom twelve times in succession, each time providing a definition of Brahman as the soul, or *Purusha*, in various aspects of nature; such as in the sun, moon, lightning, ether, wind, fire, water, and so on. In each attempt at definition, however, the king points out its weakness, as such definitional limitation subordinates Brahman to a particular position in nature, and as such is merely a partial definition. In the light of this refutation, Balaki is thus silenced, recognising the limits of his own wisdom and understanding which he had hitherto held in such high esteem. Although Balaki was undoubtedly learned in the knowledge of the Vedas, the king possessed the higher virtue of wisdom, this springing forth from his love of Brahman. Blinded by his pride, Balaki had sought to conquer the Mystery of Mysteries, yet in the prideful quest, found himself, at the last, both mystified and conquered.

The king Ajatashatru, recognising himself as the wiser of the two, proceeds to enquire of the Brahmin: “Dost thou know only so much, oh Balaki?” Humbled in the awareness of his own limitation, Balaki responds, “Only so much, O king”. Ajatashatru, now as instructor, prepares to impart his knowledge: “Thou hast vainly proposed to me; let me reveal to thee the Divine Wisdom”.

It is worth noting, that in the description of the Brahmin, Balaki, he is referred to as “learned”



rather than as “wise”. Knowledge and book-learning he may possess, though he is vain of his learning and by it, conceited. It is this arrogance which, when he approaches the king Ajatashatru, impels him to at once volunteer to impart to him the Divine Wisdom, without waiting for as much as a single question from the king, and to attempt his futile exposition on the nature of Brahman by the mere recital of theoretical knowledge. To each of his definitions, the king responds that such is already known to him, yet to each he adds also the missing element of spiritual fruit, which can be attained only when that theoretical knowledge is transformed into realised Wisdom by the fire of Understanding; like gold from the alchemist's furnace.

Each of the definitions given also carries a symbolic, or esoteric, element, where the “sun” means at once the visible sun of our solar system and the spiritual sun, or Solar Logos; and thus for each answer there is a multiple meaning, with the exoteric meaning sheathing the inner, mystical meaning contained within each. The sun, the soul of which is given by Balaki as the first definition of Brahman, can therefore be considered exoterically as the vital source of heat for life on earth, and esoterically as standing for that higher corresponding power which nourishes and sustains the higher principles of our complex natures. In this interpretation, the moon becomes a representation for the psychical nature in its mental and emotional aspects, which, like this twofold nature, shines by the borrowed light of a higher source – the sun – and waxes and wanes in a pendulum swing of incessant flux and influx, like the changing moods of psychical nature. The definition of Brahman as the soul, or purusha, of lightning, likewise carries a deeper shade of meaning, revealed by the king: as lightning symbolises the transmutation of power, by which the light of understanding pierces through the darkness of *avidya*, or ignorance. Just

as lightning, in the phenomenal world, breaks through and dispels the darkness of the looming clouds, so does this inner lightning dispel the ignorance of one's lower nature in the flash of consciousness that is illumination. The spiritual nature of ether, or Akasha, too, is enunciated by the king, as is that of wind as a symbol of the Great Breath, by which Fohat springs forth into manifestation; and of fire also, representing in its highest form the divine fire of spiritual rebirth. Still yet, the definition of Brahman as the soul of water is given its inner meaning by the king, where water is regarded as standing for the reflecting power through the agency of which manifestation and self-consciousness are brought into being. As self-consciousness it may be understood as the mirror of the self, by which we perceive our own natures. In like manner does the king Ajatashatru respond to each of Balaki's definitions. These inner meanings are omitted by Balaki, yet discerned by Ajatashatru, who in his wisdom perceives the unperceived.

The definitions provided by Balaki are rooted in the chasm of duality. As such, each is only a partial definition, failing to adequately explain the whole. This leads us to a definition of Brahman provided in Chapter 2, Section 3, Verse 6 of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which reads:

“Now therefore the description (of Brahman): 'Not this, not this.' Because there is no other and more appropriate description than this 'Not this.' Now Its name: 'The Truth of truth.' The vital force is truth, and It is the Truth of that.”

This “*neti neti*” (“neither this, nor that”) referred to this verse, conveys the teaching of various schools of Hindu philosophy, that the Absolute – Brahman – may only be glimpsed indirectly through the negation of conceptions about it. This description of Brahman as being devoid of attributes is referred to in Hindu philosophy as *nirguna*, which is



contrasted with the conception of a qualified Brahman – the Absolute as characterised as possessing qualities (as being *saguna*).

“*Neti neti*” corresponds to the *via negativa* of Western theology, in which God is described only by negation – standing in contradistinction to the positive, or cataphatic, approach to theological reasoning. The purpose of the negative approach is to negate the rationalisations of intellectual speculation from the non-conceptual awareness of Ultimate Reality, in which union with the Absolute is attained by the denial of the body, name, form, intellect, senses, and all such limiting adjuncts which sheathe the underlying Self, or Atman, which is itself identical to Brahman. *Neti neti* is thus a negation of all the descriptions and conceptions about Brahman, or the Absolute, but not a negation of Brahman itself, which is by its nature undifferentiated and ineffable. As a method of enquiry, *neti neti* seeks to arrive at an understanding of Brahman, or Ultimate Reality, by first understanding what Brahman is not. Being birthless and deathless, beyond the reach of speech and mind, and existing above duality, Brahman exceeds, by necessity, every superimposed formulation and idea of discursive thought. All transitory and temporary things must therefore be negated in the quest to understand Reality, after which only the pure awareness of Brahman remains.

Turning next to the third chapter, we encounter a debate between Yajnavalkya and Gargi Vachaknavi, the ancient Indian philosopher and expounder of the Vedas, in which Gargi questions Yajnavalkya as to the nature of Brahman. Let us here examine his response given in Chapter 3.8.11, in which Yajnavalkya speaks of Brahman as the “Immutable”:

“This Immutable, O Gargi, is never seen but is the Witness; It is never heard, but is the Hearer; It is never thought, but is the Thinker; It is never known, but is the

Knower. There is no other witness but This, no other hearer but This, no other thinker but This, no other knower but This. By this Immutable, O Gargi, is the (unmanifested) ether pervaded.”

Thus, in the light of the non-dual nature of Brahman, there is only ever one Witness – the Real Self, or Atman, which is itself identical to Brahman. Existing beyond the limitations of attributes and distinctions, it is unable to be seen, heard, thought of, or known. The very act of seeing, hearing, thinking, or knowing implies a separation – an object which may be seen, heard, thought of, or known. What Yajnavalkya is suggesting here is that the awareness of Brahman removes the dualism of the Witness and the witnessed, after which realisation only the Witness itself remains. Or, to use a famous phrase from the 20th century philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, it is the realisation that: “*the observer is the observed*”.

In the fourth chapter, Yajnavalkya moves on to a brief discussion of the Self, before concluding that this individual Self, or *Jīvātman*, is in fact identical to the Supreme Self – Brahman. The third section discusses the concept of *moksha* (or liberation), and postulates that the Self suffers transmigration due to the limitations of *māyā* (or illusion). Breaking free from such limitations, through *moksha*, the Self experiences the Brahman that is immediate and direct; as *sat-chit-ananda* – or “Being-Wisdom-Bliss”.

In Chapter 4.3.32, Yajnavalkya states that:

“It [the Self] becomes (transparent) like water, one, the witness, and without a second. This is the world (state) of Brahman, O Emperor. Thus did Yajnavalkya instruct Janaka: This is its supreme attainment, this is its supreme glory, this is its highest world, this is its supreme bliss. On a particle of this very bliss other beings live.”

When the Self transcends the illusion (*māyā*) of separation, it becomes as an ocean in which the

“bubbles” of the phenomenal world have immersed themselves in the single unity of the ocean's body. In this state only the witness exists, without any external objects that can be witnessed, because all that exists is the non-dual unity of the Absolute, Brahman. Nothing being separate, there is nothing that the Self may see, smell, touch, or know. The illusion of separation – the distinction between the world and Brahman – is thus the result of ignorance on the part of the observer in which the reality of Brahman is lost amid the mirage of māyā. It is only by the recognition of the unity of all things that the two, the world and Brahman, become one.

In his instruction to Janaka, Yajnavalkya describes this realisation as “*the supreme attainment...the supreme bliss*”. This total identification of the Self with all that exists is the highest attainment possible to the Self, to which state nothing is comparable. As the supreme bliss, it is contrasted with the relative joys experienced in the state of ignorance; the “*particle of this very bliss*” on which “*other beings live*” – ie, those who are separated from the supreme bliss by ignorance: by their perception of a difference between the Self and Brahman. Key to an understanding of the relationship between the Atman and Brahman is an exposition by Yajnavalkya found also in the fourth chapter, in which the king Janaka proposes the question: “What serves man for light?” In response, Yajnavalkya provides an answer which essentially evades the question: it is the sun that serves man for light. The king enquires further: “How about when the sun has set?” “Then,” Yajnavalkya says, “it is the moon that serves man for light.” “And when this has likewise set?” - “Then it is the fire that serves man for light.” “And when the fire also is extinguished?” - “Then it is the voice.” “And when the voice is silenced?” “Then is he himself (Atman) his own light.”

This is merely a precursory overview of the rich treasure chest of *theosophia* that is the Bri-

hadaranyaka Upanishad. Many other insights and ideas undoubtedly lie hidden within its depths, and I will leave it to the lips of those wiser and more knowledgeable than I to impart the pearls of further wisdom which may one day pave the paths of our own evolutionary trails through the spiritual landscape. I hope, for now, that this humble analysis may serve to awaken the appetite for further study and reflection, as we – students all – unlock, one by one, the many hitherto unexplored corridors of the universal School of Wisdom of which all and each form a precious part.

From a lecture delivered at the School of the Wisdom in Adyar, 2016. Published in Theosophy in Australia, September, 2017.



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Pictured is the author during his lecture at the School of the Wisdom in 2016.



THE FIVE PILLARS OF TOTAL EDUCATION

Vicente Hao Chin, Jr.



When you send your children to school, try to remember that almost no school gives your children total education that will prepare them for living. Schools mainly prepare students for academic competency in order that they will be more qualified for whatever career they may pursue in their life. But financial security is but a part of life. There are other aspects which are as important, if not more important, such as fulfilment and happiness. What is the point of having a lot of money if you do not feel fulfilled or happy?

Schools spend up to 14 years systematically teaching students how to master mathematics. Yet do they even spend two weeks systematically teaching young people how to handle stress? Or the art and science of happiness? Or how to have effective relationships? Do they teach students how to handle their anger? Or how to be honest and to practice integrity?

As parents, we must fill in the gaps in our children's education that the school cannot provide. The home therefore is an important school. It is at home where young minds learn the skills of living. Every day, when you interact with your children, when you have dinner with them, when you speak to them, you are conveying important life lessons to your children. Such lessons must be planned. We must remember too that a crucial element in such life education is modelling – you demonstrate how it is done.

There are five important aspects in total education. Schools teach only a few of them.

1. Health

The first pillar of total education is to teach young people how to be healthy. When health breaks down, all the dreams and visions of a life can fade and disappear. Many families lose their entire life savings in just one major surgery, and they often incur large debts that they have to pay for many years. Poor health is often accompanied by low or unpredictable energy levels. Winston Churchill once said that the secret of his success was his energy.

Physical Education in schools very often does not teach the elements of good health. They teach sports; they teach exercises. But these are not enough for one to be healthy. The most important element of health is diet – what we eat – and many teachers are noncommittal when it comes to diet because they themselves cannot restrain themselves from the wrong kinds of food and drinks, such as meat and soft drinks.

Do you know what ethnic groups have the longest lifespan in the world? They are the Okinawans of Japan, the Hunzas of Northern Pakistan, the Vilcambas of Peru and the Abkhasians of the Ural Mountains of Russia. They have the highest concentration of centenarians who are still healthy and active in society. What do these four groups have in common? They are mostly vegetarian in their diet.

The largest study of health and nutrition ever made is the 20-year research now known as the China Study which was done by Cornell Univer-



sity, Oxford University and the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine. The head of the study, Dr Colin Campbell, summarised his findings as follows:

"People who ate the most animal-based foods got the most chronic diseases... People who ate the most plant-based foods were the healthiest and tended to avoid chronic diseases. These results could not be ignored."

Do you know which ethnic groups have the shortest lifespan in the world? They are the Eskimos, the Laplanders and the Greenlanders. They live in the Arctic circle where there are no plants since the land is covered with ice and snow practically all the time. Their diet is exclusively based on meat and fish. Their average lifespan is only 35-45 years old.

Teach your children then the foundations of a healthy life, starting with diet. The other important aspects of good health are exercise, avoidance of harmful vices and a wholesome philosophy of life.

2. Emotional Maturity

The second pillar of total education is emotional maturity that brings about equanimity and cheerfulness. How little our children learn about this in school! In fact, school life is often a source of stress, depression, frustration, fear, anger and hurt.

Emotional habits such as fear, anger, depression and resentment are learned as children grow up. While there are instinctive roots to these reaction patterns, the inborn factor is insignificant when compared with the learned part. Babies for example have only two instinctive fears: fear of loud sounds and fear of falling. In time these two disappear, but as they grow up they learn a mountain of new fears from their elders and from society: fear of authority, rejection, public speaking, criticism, snakes, cockroaches, confrontation, blood, den-

tists, accidents, death, etc. Fear distorts perceptions and clouds judgment, resulting in unwise reactions and decisions.

Anger is another example of a habit that can be very harmful. People who have uncontrolled tempers often are avoided by others and become ineffective in their relationships and in their work. In your workplace, look around you and try to identify the people whom you think are worthy of promotion as managers or leaders. I am almost certain that these people are not slaves to their temper and anger. They do not lash out indiscriminately at others when they are in a foul mood. They handle their emotions well. Daniel Goleman in his best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence* wrote:

"IQ gets you a job, but EQ [emotional quotient] gets you promoted."

Temperamental people are hard to deal with; they are often unreasonable not only at work but at home. Thus their marital lives are often on the rocks. Such temperamental people are in fact frequent candidates for termination from their jobs, and some of them land in jail for assault or murder due to uncontrolled rage.

Emotional maturity is so crucial in the education of young people that the school must assiduously teach this day by day, year by year. But the problem is that most teachers themselves are not emotionally mature. They use anger and fear in handling students.

Can emotional maturity be learned? Yes, definitely, it can be taught and learned. It is no accident that some people seem to be calm but effective in dealing with difficult situations, while others fly out in rage at the slightest provocation. They each learned these modes of reaction from their elders.

An important foundation of emotional maturity is learning how to handle tension and stress in daily



life. It is well-known that there are already time-tested techniques in dealing with daily stress, and yet how many schools teach these in their classrooms? How can teachers teach these when they themselves are stressed?

3. Intelligence

Intelligence is the capacity to understand things and to apply such understanding in various life situations. Schools are supposed to be good in developing this aspect, but unfortunately there are many schools which fail seriously in the nurturing of intelligence in children. Teachers and administrators often worry too much about grades, exams and the completion of the assigned syllabus so that they don't have time to assess whether the students have intelligently absorbed the lessons or whether they have just memorised the answers.

A part of the problem is due to the emphasis on grading systems and competitive honours in schools. Students begin to equate achievement with grades and honours rather with true intelligence. Most teachers are aware that grades and written examinations are not true measurements of the genuine capability of students, and yet they are forced by the system to use them as if they are the best ways of assessing learning.

Intelligence is nurtured by an environment of curiosity, encouragement, puzzle solving, creative games, investigation, freedom, conceptual understanding, practice in actual applications in problem solving, developing the capacity for insight and lateral thinking, etc. It is hard to put numerical grades to such abilities because they are multifaceted. Howard Gardner of Harvard has identified nine kinds of intelligence, and IQ tests measure only one of them.

4. Competency

An intelligent person is not necessarily a competent person. Competence is a capacity difficult to

measure but quite easily recognised when seen. When a person is assigned a task, he or she can be relied upon to accomplish it with minimal supervision.

Competency covers a broad spectrum of capabilities that include self-confidence, intelligence, self-discipline, time management, effectiveness in dealing with people, resourcefulness, creativity, stick-ability, perseverance, etc.

High academic achievements do not necessarily translate into competency. In certain ways, wrong schooling can damage competency, such as when teachers inflict fear on the students instead of developing self-confidence.

Competence develops from the constant practice of one's intelligence, self-discipline and similar qualities in facing a situation or a problem. Small triumphs increase one's self-confidence in being competent. Repeated failures decrease the feeling of competency. Thus parents and teachers must give repeated opportunities to young people to apply their intelligence and skills in complex situations such that they feel encouraged through bite-size achievements and being praised or appreciated.

5. Character

The fifth pillar of total education is character. Without this quality, no one can truly be successful in life because character is the foundation of fulfilment and happiness.

Character is that collection of qualities that enable one to see what is right and wrong, and the moral courage to do the right thing; to forego present pleasure and gratification in favour of a higher value or future goal; to be capable of loving and being compassionate; to be selfless while attending to one's own legitimate needs; to be a part of the solution of the world rather than a part of the problem. The highest degree of character is what is



called spirituality, which is not the same as religiosity. Spirituality is the capacity to see deeper levels of reality and the larger unity which transcend our egocentric nature. Egocentricity is the root cause of unhappiness and insecurity. True character formation is an unfolding process rather than a conditioning process. It is the emergence of our deepest nature.

Theodore Roosevelt, one of the great American presidents, wrote an essay called *Character and Success* in 1900. He stated:

"In the long run, in the great battle of life, no brilliancy of intellect, no perfection of bodily development, will count when weighed against that assemblage of virtues, of moral qualities, under the name of character; and if between any two contestants, the difference in character on the right side is as great as the difference of intellect or strength the other way, it is the character side that will win."

Character has to be systematically nurtured with as much perseverance as when we teach children mathematics. Parents and teachers must be constantly on the lookout for windows of opportunity in developing character in young people. These windows open almost daily in small things like sibling conflict, conversations about national leaders and news items, adversities encountered by them, opportunities for kindness or service, etc.

Teaching character, however, differs from the way we teach mathematics or computing in one important respect. Character involves an outlook and a way of life, not simply a skill or technique. While you can demonstrate the multiplication process on a sheet of paper, you can only demonstrate character in the way one lives. In teaching character, then, we must keep in mind the advice of Dr Albert Schweitzer, the Nobel Prize winner for peace:

"Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing."

These then are the five pillars of total education:

1. Health
2. Emotional maturity
3. Intelligence
4. Competence
5. Character

Develop these qualities in your children, and you would not need to leave with them riches or fame. They will rise up to excellence in their own fields, and, what is more important, they will live a fulfilled and happy life.

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LIVING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Justice Florida Ruth P. Romero



As I entered the elevator, the two ladies inside lowered their voices. One was saying, "But I can't believe she would do this sort of thing. Why, she's such a religious woman! I can't think of a more devout person. She often goes to church, not only on Sundays, but on holidays of obligation, too." Replied the other, "Oo nga, manang na manang siya. (Yes, indeed, she's such a pious person.) Now, I wonder if she'll still be the *hermana mayor* (the person in charge of a religious festival) of our *fiesta*." Their voices trailed off as they stepped out of the elevator.

What they said remained with me the whole day. The subject of their conversation must be a common friend who had done something to merit their condemnation. Unthinkable, they said, because she's "so religious", "so devout".

I asked myself: Why should we consider the external acts of people like going to church regularly, bowing their heads on bent knees with rosaries entwined in their fingers as they mumble their prayers and joining the priests as they minister to the sick and the dying as signs of religiousity, even of spirituality?

So when such a seemingly pious person makes the mistake of crossing the borderline of sanctity, she becomes a target of criticism from the self-righteous. Indeed, many of us consider as synonymous the terms "religious", "pious", "devout" and "spiritual".

But didn't even Jesus, the Christ, consider them hypocrites who raised their hands and voices to pray at street corners? They go through the motions of being pious in public; that is, they do acts marked by conspicuous religiousity. Does it follow

that they are spiritual? Observe them and call to mind what a perceptive layman has said: "A hypocrite will often pray on his knees on Sunday and prey on his neighbors on Monday." A sincerely spiritual person will not exhibit such a dichotomy between his spiritual beliefs and his life in the outer world.

To my mind, the test of true spirituality is in how we live our lives, interact with others and relate to God. Transcending religious concepts and beliefs, a sage put it beautifully: "To be spiritual is a matter of looking into the hearts of men, sharing their joys and anguishes, and feeling that you can strengthen the weak and purify the muddy and ugly places of the world." Only as we see ourselves reflected in others can this attitude be cultivated.

Oneness of Life - In the foregoing context, one can attain to spirituality if he fully realizes that all Life is One; that the Essence of Life is the Divine Life. This is the Life that pulsates in all human beings and animals, even in so-called inanimate things like plants and minerals.

The Pantheism of the Greeks captures best this sense. It equates God with all the matter and forces of the universe. Originating from the Greek "pan" meaning "involving all" and "theism" which is to "pertain to the divine", it discerns God in everything. It is to postulate that we are all interconnected with every other creature on earth.

What a world of wisdom is to be found in this simple verse of Tennyson:

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,



Little flower – but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.”

To see beneath the color of the skin of everyone, probe beyond the nuances of language and understand dissimilarities in beliefs and practices in order to catch even a glimpse of the underlying Divinity in all, partakes of Spirituality. When the Good Word refers to us as brothers and joint-heirs with Christ, it was not referring only to those who profess to be Christians but to all mankind.

This underlying One Life is the basis of that moral quality called “harmlessness” or “non-violence”. It is so not to hurt others for we thereby only hurt ourselves. By the same token, there should be no room for envy or jealousy at the successes of others, for their joy is ours, too. Could we but internalize this principle, the vicious trait of crab mentality often attributed to our people would have no place in our collective *persona*.

For those who have given up trying to make friends of their enemies or trying to “reform” the wayward character of a loved one, they should instead address their efforts to the Divine Fragment common to all. With tender compassion and understanding, try to invoke the Christ in each person. You profess to be a “Christian”, then turn to your brother and say to yourself, “Christ ‘yan, ah” (“He’s also Christ”).

Brotherly love is not like Christmas décor that is polished and hang during the “Twelve Days of Christmas”, or much longer for Filipinos, but for all time.

Service – If the truly spiritual man lives the principle of Unity of Life by practicing the negative quality of harmlessness, he will, sooner or later, realize that his life is empty unless he recognizes its positive aspect of service. As Brotherly Love suffuses our whole being, its natural tendency is to manifest itself in acts of kindness, helpfulness and compassion rendered to others.

By being “outward-turned”, we shift the focus of our consciousness to others. Far too many of us

live our lives absorbed in “I, myself and me”. The polestar by which we are guided in times of decision-making is : “What is there in it for me?” Yet all around us, so many are suffering and sending out signals for help. Unfortunately, in spite of our better judgment, times there are when we hesitate or are reluctant to assert our better natures. Maybe the sufferer is an enemy from the past and here is now an opportunity to even up the score.

At other times, we dream up excuses like: “Let him be. He has brought this punishment upon himself.” Or : “If I help him out, he will not learn to be independent. I’m actually doing him a favor by leaving him alone.”

Has it not occurred to us that if an erring brother crosses our path and appeals to us for help, it is a sign that we are duty bound to proffer a helping hand? On such occasions, the “sin” of inaction will be a karma on our part which we will have to work out in the future.

We may not be called upon to part with cherished possessions. Life presents us with numerous occasions to do unselfish acts of service, such as sharing scanty resources; or giving a little of our time to pause and cheer up an invalid or a depressed individual; or giving up something we are actually using to someone who is in greater need of it; or going what is called the “extra mile” – all done with a smile and not with an air of martyrdom. We may feel that we are sacrificing something, but do you know that the term “sacrifice” means “to make sacred”?

As we start each day, therefore, let us resolve to be sensitive to pained cries for help. These may not be verbal, for body language can be more eloquent in sending out SOS signals.

Beyond language and actions, we can know in a flash if someone needs our help. Convinced that every other person is our brother, we can ignite the spark of intuition in our inner being to respond. For intuition is an attribute of the soul. Not being a product of the mind, it arrives at the



truth underlying facts and circumstances unerringly without having recourse to reason, science or religion.

Aspiring After the Ideal – A man who seriously treads the spiritual path but keeps on stumbling over rocks and brambles will not so easily give up if he holds up before his spiritual eyes his Ideal. This may be the personification of his religion, whether he be a Christian, a Moslem, a Buddhist or a Hindu or any of such verities as Universal Love, Compassion, Justice or Truth. Whatever it may be, surely it eschews selfishness which, in our world, our culture and time, seems to be the norm and standard of our actions.

But the man who aspires to spirituality will be guided by another set of standards. The words of the Scriptures or the image of his Lord and Master will flash before his eyes if he but takes time to reflect, meditate and ponder upon these .

Etch these words in our hearts: “Build for yourself a great Ideal – the Ideal of that which you wish to be. Think of it, dream of it, try to love it. One day you will wonder that you have become that fair thing that your thought threw on the clouds of the future.”



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"Cut out the love of self, like an autumn lotus, with thy hand! Cherish the road of peace."
- H. P. Blavatsky



"Pink and White Lotus", 14th century China, Yuan dynasty (1279-1368)



COMPASSIONATE SERVICE

Nancy Secrest



Theosophy is often thought of as a “heady” study. Theosophists love their books. The early theosophists were prolific writers, a fact we are grateful for as they set down the complex systems of seven fold principles, cosmogenesis, anthropogenesis, philosophy and ethics taught first by Madame Blavatsky in *Isis Unveiled* then later in *The Secret Doctrine*, *Key to Theosophy* and *Voice of the Silence*. Col. Olcott, Annie Besant, Leadbeater, Judge and others followed suit giving us the vast collection of literature on Theosophy and related topics that now aid us in our study of man, the universe, our place in it on many levels and our journey toward self-awareness and spiritual unfoldment.

The Theosophical Order of Service was formed to put the First Object of the Theosophical Society into action, to live Theosophy. The First Object is: To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color.

Living Theosophy requires that we go through each day recognizing the Oneness of all life, inherent in the First Object of the Theosophical Society, through compassionate action and selfless service.

In an article entitled “Reflection” written by David Bruce, the current National Secretary of the Theosophical Society in America, he says that “In her writings, H. P. Blavatsky repeatedly emphasized the importance of brotherhood as a guiding principle: ‘It is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practicing in their daily lives [bold and italics added] true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity . . . can ever be attained’ (The Key to

Theosophy). No matter how learned or erudite we may become in the metaphysics of Theosophy, let us not forget that the true measure of a Theosophist lies not in a proud and self-centered intellect, but in an open and loving heart.”

The First Object of the Society speaks to the actualization of Universal Brotherhood, but it means even more than this. According to Theosophy, Universal Brotherhood is not merely a high and lofty ideal but is eternally a fact in Nature because of the oneness and divineness of all life. Many religions and philosophies speak of brotherhood and of helping those less fortunate than ourselves. This is the Golden Rule of Confucianism, also stated by Jesus, as “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” These are good and true reasons for brotherhood and methods for carrying it out, but the theosophical meaning speaks to the Oneness of all life, not just in a metaphorical sense but actual Oneness. I like to think of it as each of us being a drop in the ocean. Once the drop enters the ocean it is blended with all other drops in the true sense of Oneness.

I was talking with Joy Mills a few years ago. (Joy was a very prominent theosophical teacher, speaker and writer who passed away in December 2016. She was beloved by many.) Joy said that the focus of our existence as human beings is self-realization. Learning who we are, who we really are. That’s what we’re supposed to be doing here. This, she said, is the central point of the Mahatma Letters. Blavatsky made this point in her writings as well calling it spiritual unfoldment. She taught that self-responsibility, ethics and altruism (service to others) are essential to true spiritual unfoldment.



As we progress along the path of self-realization, or spiritual unfoldment, we eventually awaken, or become aware of, our Buddhi nature. (The Buddhist is one of the seven principles, or bodies, of humankind which are: the physical, the etheric, the astral, the lower and higher mental, the buddhic and the atmic. If you are new to Theosophy, suffice it to say that the buddhi nature is beyond thought even on the conceptual level. It is the seat of intuition and all that is universally compassionate and noble within us.) With this awakening or awareness, compassion based on a sense of responsibility for all beings becomes a driving force in our lives, and we act as a bodhisattva acts, for the good of all. "In Theosophy the term [bodhisattva] is used to denote an individual who has reached enlightenment and may pass beyond the 'wheel of rebirth', but elects to reincarnate for the good of all." (Theosophical Encyclopedia, p. 110, TPH, The Philippines, 2006) In other words, a bodhisattva sacrifices his or her reward of transition into Nirvana to help other sentient beings until all reach enlightenment.

We may not be bodhisattvas. But, are you familiar with the term, 'fake it until you make it'? What that means, is that all of us can work as if we are bodhisattvas. All of us can help each other and humanity at large right now.

Blavatsky said that, "He who does not practice altruism: he who is not prepared to share his last morsel with a weaker or poorer than himself; he who neglects to help his brother man, of whatever race, nation, or creed, whenever and wherever he meets suffering, and who turns a deaf ear to the cry of human misery; he who hears an innocent person slandered, whether a brother Theosophist or not, and does not undertake his defense as he would undertake his own – is no Theosophist." (Lucifer, Vol. I, p 169)

Later these words, from Annie Besant, tied together Blavatsky's altruism, already a high ideal, with the sense of Oneness alluded to in the Society's First Object by saying. "The spiritual man must lead a higher life than the life of altruism. He

must lead the life of self-identification with all that lives and moves. There is no "other" in this world; we are all one. Each is a separate form, but one Spirit moves and lives in all."

We've stated that it is our quest for self-realization that touches the Buddhi nature within us and ignites our sense of compassion.

So what is compassion?

Although stated in different ways, various viewpoints, scientific, psychological and Buddhist agreed that compassion, simply put, is the response to the suffering of others that motivates a desire to help.

Compassion literally means "to suffer together." Compassion is not the same as empathy or altruism, though the concepts are related. While empathy refers to our ability to take the perspective of and feel the emotions of another person, compassion is when those feelings and thoughts include the desire to help. Altruism is kind, selfless behavior often, but not always, prompted by feelings of compassion. Scientists have started to map the biological basis of compassion. This research has shown that when we feel compassion, our heart rate slows down, we secrete the "bonding hormone" oxytocin, and regions of the brain linked to empathy, caregiving, and feelings of pleasure light up, which often results in our wanting to approach and care for other people.

According to the Buddhist view, true compassion is necessarily based on cherishing others. Compassion is a mind that is motivated by cherishing other living beings and wishes to release them from their suffering.

Earlier we spoke of the Bodhisattva path. We may not be there yet, but most of us already have some degree of compassion, albeit biased and limited. We feel compassion for the suffering of our family and friends, but we find it more difficult to feel sympathy for people we find unpleasant or for strangers. We may feel compassion for those who are experiencing a great deal of pain, but not for those who are enjoying good conditions, and es-



pecially not for those who may be trying to harm us or others. If we genuinely want to realize our potential by attaining full enlightenment, we need to develop universal compassion that embraces all beings whether beloved, family, friend, stranger or someone who engages in harmful activity. Universal compassion comes at the Buddhist level of our being and can be cultivated through meditation.

Another way of saying this is: "Compassion is seeing someone as they are and loving them anyway." (www.ehkhealing.com)

Compassion comprises all the best qualities in human beings, like sharing, readiness to give comfort, sympathy, concern and caring - all are manifestations of compassion. You will notice also that in the compassionate person, care and love towards others has its origins in care and love for oneself. We can best understand others when we really understand ourselves. We will know what's best for others when we know what's best for ourselves. We can feel for others when we feel for ourselves. Therefore, one's own spiritual development blossoms quite naturally into concern for the welfare of others, and vice versa.

Compassion is the very essence of a spiritual life, and the main practice of those who have devoted their lives to attaining enlightenment. In the book, *Stages of Meditation*, the Dalai Lama states that, "Compassion is essential in the initial state, in the intermediate state and in the final state of spiritual development." And, the question is asked, "How should we meditate on it?" The answer is given, "You should begin the process by attempting to develop loving-kindness toward beings who are in misery."

Loving-kindness is unconditional, inclusive love, a love with wisdom. It does not depend on whether one "deserves" it or not. It is not restricted to those we love. It extends out from the personal to include all living beings. It harbors no expectations of return. It is the ideal, pure, universal love held by everyone in potential. One way to develop it is through the Loving-Kindness meditation practice

also known as Metta Meditation.

We've said that compassion generates in us the desire to help others. To say this another way compassion generates the desire to be of service to suffering beings.

What of service?

HPB said that, "Theosophy teaches that altruism, selfless service to humanity, living solely to help and benefit others, and the pursuit of the Bodhisattva ideal, are all just as important for our spiritual evolution and development as meditation and aspiring to higher levels of inner unfoldment in our quest to attain Union with our Higher Self, which is ONE Infinite Divine Life."

About a year ago I was interviewed on the question of service and was asked "if someone asked you how to serve, what would you emphasize?" I said that I'd tell them to "grow where they are planted". In other words, look at where you are in life and attend first to whatever is needed in your immediate circle. We do not have to do great things to be of service. Service to one's family is just as important as service to a nation. It's also important to take care of yourself, to the extent possible, so that you will be fit enough to be of service to others. In the little book *At the Feet of the Master* we are told to take care of our body, to keep it clean and healthy, as it is "the horse upon which we ride." And, as the airlines tell us, "put on your own oxygen mask first, before helping others."

It's also important to remember to help someone in such a way as to preserve their dignity and ensure that they can continue to help themselves. Recently it was pointed out to me that it is better to give a woman a small loan to buy a piece of equipment that allows her to go into business, or set it up in such a way that she earns the equipment in some manner rather than simply giving it to her. This way she can feel good about herself because of the effort she has to put out, and she gains self confidence in the process. It's the old adage of not giving a man a fish, but teaching him to fish.



It doesn't take much effort to be of service to others, often a simple smile can be of great benefit. It's mostly a matter of attitude, of being alert and aware of people or situations to or about which we can be of help, and using our discernment to know when and how that can best be accomplished. We also need to know and respect our own limits. Obviously, one does not give all of their money to charity and let their own children starve, or walk into dangerous situations that they are neither physically, mentally nor emotionally able to handle.

The Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) is a service or charitable organization. It was founded by Annie Besant, the second president of the Theosophical Society, in 1908 as a way to put the first object of the Theosophical Society (TS) into action. It fosters a practical living application of theosophical principles, and is a way to demonstrate and practice the oneness of all life. The giving of our time, talents, energy, money, advocacy and moral support to those in need is based on compassion and on the acceptance of our responsibility toward those with whom we are One. Our TOS motto, "a union of those who love in the service of all that suffers", reminds us of our commitment to the Oneness of All Life. These are pretty elevated words about the TOS when on the surface it may seem as though we are simply doing 'good works' as are many other humanitarian service groups.

As I said, The TOS is a service or charitable organization. Our activities are many and varied. They include supporting education, healing, efforts toward peace in the world, animal welfare, and emergency relief. Annie Besant said that the chief work of those who profess themselves its votaries will be the work which is most needed at the time. For the past two years, our main international focus has been on women's issues. While this effort continues, we are also currently focused on providing a theosophically based education for children and fund raising for our schools in the Philippines, Pakistan and India.

Many groups do this kind of work. What makes the TOS different? Our current President, Tim Boyd, answered that question in an appeal letter he sent out on behalf of the TOS in America back in 2008, when he was its President. Tim said, "There

are countless groups doing valuable service work in the world . . . What makes the TOS different? Being guided by the Theosophical Worldview, sets our service approach apart. We are motivated by a sense that we are all participants in the One Life. Suffering and overcoming suffering are not isolated or regional. We all share in it."

The older I become the more I realize that balance is the key to spiritual growth. The theosophical triad of study, meditation and service exemplifies this. Study utilizes our ability to reason and think logically. Meditation helps us to tap into our Higher Selves, the divine within, and gives us respite from today's hectic world. Service then is the fulcrum – the point of balance. Service is that part of the triad which allows us to demonstrate the divine in the world. Through selfless service we help to heal suffering humanity. We draw attention to the woes of the world, and lead by example in the effort to ease suffering and right wrongs. In the process, we help ourselves. We grow spiritually as we become more and more open to seeing the unity of life wherever we look. Service can manifest itself as simple acts of kindness performed by an individual or a group, or as larger and more organized efforts. It can be aimed at family members, a neighborhood, a community, a country, a gender or other class of people, or at animals and even the planet.

So let each of us work as if we are bodhisattvas. All of us can help each other and humanity at large right now.



Nancy Secrest, the Acting International Treasurer of the Theosophical Society and the International Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service is from the United States and is now residing at Adyar in Chennai, India. Ms. Secrest also served as the National Secretary of the Theosophical Society in America (TSA) from August 1988 through December 1990. Subsequently Nancy served as National Treasurer of the TSA for eighteen years.



READING THE GITÂ

Victor Peñaranda

We meet to learn in an old building
Surrounded by trees luxuriantly humid,
Where birds of bright sounds and feathers
Constantly attempt to distract us.

The walls of our classroom are bruised
By drift of incense, chanted mysteries —
Listening to words that desire to exist.

Each day is a quest for wholeness
Divining the most compelling of duties
In the ripple of metaphor, silence between stanzas
As we encounter the epic in our ordinary lives:
The despondent hero caught in mirror of conflict
In a battlefield reserved for the heart,
His transformation invisible to warring armies.

We learn the tragic element in courage:
How it cannot be possessed unless tested.

At night we are left to our own device,
Unfolding a path slowly, each to his very own,
The way light bleeds and blooms in fertile darkness.

Each night the jackals howl by the riverside.



Victor Peñaranda was the Vice President of
the Theosophical Society in the Philippines.



THEOSOPHIA GEOMETRICA

Joma Sipe



From Joma Sipe's new collection, entitled "Theosophia Geometrica", which explores Eastern mysticism, kabbalah, magick, and sacred geometry in striking detail.



Joma Sipe is an artist from Portugal whose inspirations range from sacred geometry and mandalic art to esoteric literature and the writings of H. P. Blavatsky. His artwork has appeared on covers of the *Quest Magazine*, the journal of the Theosophical Society in America. He was the designer of the logo of the upcoming 11th World Congress of the Theosophical Society to be held in Singapore, 2018.



NATIONAL NEWS



2017 CONVENTION IN DAVAO CITY

This year's national convention will be held at Eden's Nature Park and Resort in Davao City on November 17-19, 2017, with the theme "One in Spirit: Unity in Diversity"



SPIRITUAL FILM CLUB

A group of young members of the TS in the Philippines has launched the Spiritual Film Club that meets once a month to watch and discuss about films that are theosophically relevant. Call 741-5740 for time schedules.



ZEN MEDITATION EVENT

The TSP Headquarters sponsored a 3-hour Zen Meditation session conducted by Sister Sonia Punzalan, a Catholic nun, with the support of Fr. Efren Borromeo and Jay Batoon.



ST SEMINAR FOR LIBRARIANS IN MINDANAO

The Davao Council of the Philippine Librarians Association organized a Self-Transformation Seminar August 31 and Sept. 1, 2017 at the University of Mindanao in Davao City. More than 100 librarians from various universities and colleges attended the sessions conducted by Vic Hao Chin Jr.



ST SEMINAR AT TSP HEADQUARTERS

The regular public Self-Transformation Seminar at the national headquarters was held on August 13, 19 and 20, 2017, conducted by Vic Hao Chin Jr. and Jose Victor Penaranda.



PRANIC HEALING AT TSP

Czarina Mallari of the Pranic Healing Foundation of the Philippines gave a presentation and workshop at the TSP on the topic of "Living a Life with Intention". A second workshop is planned with the Pandacan Lodge in the near future.



VICTOR "BIMBOY" PEÑARANDA (1953 - 2017)

The TSP community was saddened by the passing of our Vice President, Victor Peñaranda, in the early hours of the 23rd of September, 2017. Mr. Peñaranda was a renowned theosophical speaker, writer, and poet who was greatly involved in the development of our National Section and who touched the lives of many. He will be warmly remembered by his family, friends, and fellow TSP members.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM 2017-2018

The School of the Wisdom aims at bringing each student to survey life 'from the centre', which is intuitive awareness. An intense sense of Life must always accompany every true student.

There can be no Wisdom without an ever increasing sense of Wonder.



11TH WORLD CONGRESS

The 11th World Congress will be held in Singapore, 4 - 9 August 2018, from morning of 4th to late evening of 8th (6 nights from 3 to 9 Aug 2018) followed by the International Conference of the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS International) .



142ND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

The upcoming 142nd International Convention of the Theosophical Society in Adyar will be on the theme of "From Teachings to Insight: The Altruistic Heart".

The Convention program will have public lectures, short talks, symposiums, dialogue, cultural performances with nice possibility to meet Theosophists from various regions and countries.

Detailed programme will be published in early December.



Theosophy and the Theosophical Society

Theosophy is a body of ageless wisdom that helps us understand life and the cosmos. It demonstrates the underlying unity of all great religions when they are stripped of their superstitions and dogmas. It offers a philosophy of life that enables individuals to integrate the material, emotional, mental, social, moral and spiritual aspects of living.

The term Theosophy comes from the Greek words *theos* which means "divine," and *sophia* which means "wisdom." It is a wisdom that is derived from transcendent insights into nature.

The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, reintroduced the principles of the ageless wisdom to the public, particularly to the western world. The Society itself has no doctrine or dogma, but encourages its members to pursue truth without fear. It encourages members and students to live their lives according to such insights.

Membership in the Theosophical Society

The Theosophical Society is a non-sectarian, non-profit organization devoted to the upliftment of human welfare. Membership is open to all persons regardless of race, creed, sex, caste or color.

Should you wish to be a member and take part in the work of the Theosophical Society, write or call:

The Theosophical Society
1 Iba Street, Quezon City, Philippines
Tel. (63-2)741-5740; Fax 740-3751
Email (General Inquiries): philtheos@gmail.com
Email (Pandacan Lodge):
lukeironside@tutanota.de

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasise the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none of which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H.P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (1924)

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organisation entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title, 'The Theosophical Society'. Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organisation.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (1949)



*From the unreal lead me to the Real.
From darkness lead me to Light.
From death lead me to Immortality.*

