



Dear members and friends of the TS and TOS,

This is a short issue of our newsletter to draw your attention to two special matters. One is pure joy to report on and the other is... cause for a little anxiety.



Completion of famine relief project in the Horn of Africa

When famine broke out in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya last year, a number of you got in touch with us asking if the TOS was going to do anything to help. We contacted the TOS in Kenya who agreed to undertake a project. A village of 55 families 130 km. east of Nairobi was adopted and donations sent from around the world.

Do you recall the progress reports of the Convenor of the TOS in Nairobi? We are happy to bring you Usha Shah's final report here, marking the completion of a six-month feeding programme, the construction of a borehole and other initiatives designed to give a measure of autonomy to Kaamba Village in Kitui district. In her inimitable way, Usha recounts for us the official celebrations at which the TOS team and the villagers happily danced, sang, pumped water and planted trees. The photos will bring a smile to your face.



We wish to say a heartfelt thank-you to all who contributed so generously to this collaborative effort. We particularly and especially thank Usha and her team on the spot. Think, for a moment, of the work involved in feeding 55 families for six months at a distance of 130 km. from home, of the challenge of finding land suitable for the construction of a bore hole, obtaining permits, calling for quotes, negotiating contracts, setting up land and water ownership for the villagers, purchasing and delivering fruit trees and solar lighting... All of this was done by the TOS in Kenya whose members are, of course, entirely volunteers. Enjoy Usha's final report [here](#).

P.S. Did we say 'final' report? Wait! We have just learned that Unstoppable Usha is lining up vocational training for the ladies of Kaamba...

And now for our second matter (the worrying one)...

A truly theosophical education for the young

Time and time again, TS members lament – quite rightly – that little is done to communicate Theosophy to children. They sometimes ask us what the TOS is contributing in this regard. While many schools and literacy programmes for needy children and adults are run by the TOS and TS, few of them provide self-transformation practices and actual lessons in the principles and values of Theosophy.



H.P. Blavatsky in *The Key to Theosophy*, Section XIII on Theosophy and Education, said: "If we had money, we would found schools which would turn out something else than reading and writing candidates for starvation. Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves... We should aim at creating free men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, unselfish. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by proper and truly theosophical education."



The Golden Link College in the Philippines is striving to fulfil the educational work that Blavatsky outlined. From kindergarten to university, it teaches the theosophical philosophy as a way of life.

As many of you will recall, five years ago this exceptional College attracted the attention of John Kern, advisor to the Kern Foundation, whose mission is in part to support the popularisation of a knowledge of Theosophy. In a very generous gesture, the Foundation offered to donate a dollar to the College for every dollar we collected – up to a limit of \$20,000. This has enabled us to send at least \$40,000 each year to the College since 2008. Amazing things have been accomplished with this support for which we are very grateful.

The challenge grant for 2012 is \$18,000. Major on-going donors are the TOS in Australia, Canada, France, Italy, New Zealand and the USA. Their donations for this year amount to \$12,600. For some inexplicable reason we are not managing to move beyond this sum. We are therefore coming to you for help. If we do not do so, we will simply not reach the sum required by December 31.

Can you help us to help the Golden Link College? Eighty per cent of the children are from underprivileged backgrounds. For all the students, whatever their economic circumstances, the Golden Link is surely also the Golden Opportunity College. 😊



Read more... about the theosophical content in the Golden Link curricula.

There are several ways to donate:

If your bank is within the USA, you can:

1 a) make a regular cheque payable to the TOS and mail it to: *Theosophical Order of Service, PO Box 660, Warrenville, IL 60555*. The TOS is a 501(c)(3) organisation. All donations are tax deductible;

1 b) donate by credit card (via PayPal) on-line at www.theoservice.org. Select “CEF – The Golden Link School (Manila, Philippines)” from the drop down menu.

If your bank is outside the USA, you can:

2 a) send a bank cheque or draft to *Theosophical Order of Service, P.O. Box 660, Warrenville, IL 60555, USA*, being sure to write *Golden Link* in the memo line;

2 b) make an electronic transfer from your bank branch to the American TOS's bank branch in Wheaton, Illinois (write to us for the bank name and account details);

2 c) donate by credit card (via PayPal) on-line at www.theoservice.org. Select “CEF – The Golden Link School (Manila, Philippines)” from the drop down menu.

2 d) donate through your country's national TOS or perhaps even TS.

For help with any of these transactions, write to our international secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, at tosinternational@wanadoo.fr





As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

John F. Kennedy

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Theosophical Education at Golden Link College

OCT 2011

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Vic Hao Chin, Jr



Golden Link College

Theosophical education from kindergarten to university at the Golden Link College

Based on the belief that individuals must discover the core values of their lives for themselves free from fear, coercion and prejudice, the Golden Link College is committed to education as a preparation for life and not just as a means to earn a better living. Through innovative teaching methods that respect and nurture the individuality and creativity of its students, it integrates the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of their growth in a well-rounded programme. Teaching students to embrace their common humanity and to recognise their place in the web of life, the college strives to honour many faiths. It holds the conviction that individuals who are at peace with themselves will ultimately create a world at peace.

The news that the Golden Link School in the Philippines was extending its programme to tertiary level in August 2009 triggered interest amongst members of the TOS around the world. Mr Vijay Mital of Vasant Vihar, New Delhi, wrote expressing enthusiasm and asking about the theosophical content of the curriculum at all levels.

His question was forwarded to Vic Hao Chin, Jr, the president of the Golden Link College. In consultation with Ms Rekha Nahar, administrator of the kindergarten, primary and secondary divisions, this is his reply.

Dear friends,

We have been asked about our educational approach at the Golden Link School (now Golden Link College) and the theosophical content of the curricula. We are pleased to respond here.

Theosophical education, as we understand it, has two facets:

1. The development of the individual in terms of:
 - i. Character – kindness, selflessness, self-discipline, effectiveness in relationships, absence of fear, unfettering thinking, management of the emotions, wholesome habits, etc.
 - ii. Awakening of higher faculties and qualities (rationality, self-awareness, compassion, sense of unity, meditative silence, intuition, etc.).
2. Having a wholesome philosophy of life founded on the ageless wisdom or theosophy. This includes:
 - i. Basic principles of popular theosophy: universal unity, planes of nature, karma, reincarnation, life after death, perfectibility, the Path, etc.
 - ii. The core essence of the great spiritual or religious traditions: the perennial philosophy, including a knowledge of comparative religion.
 - iii. The application of such philosophy to daily life, profession, society and human problems (applied theosophy).
 - iv. Advanced theosophy (for those specialising in theosophy).

At nursery and primary levels, the Golden Link College focuses on the first aspect – the development of a wholesome character and inner faculties. For high school, collegiate level and faculty members, the school stresses both: character and knowledge of the ageless wisdom (in addition of course to the standard government-prescribed curriculum).

The Golden Link College offers now the following courses:

- A. Preschool (Nursery, Kindergarten and Preparatory levels)
- B. Primary (Grades 1 to 6)
- C. Secondary (First year to Fourth year)
- D. Tertiary
 - i. Bachelor of Secondary Education (Major in Science, Mathematics or English)

- ii. Bachelor of Elementary Education (General or Major in Preschool Education)
- iii. Bachelor of Science in Psychology
- iv. Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
- v. Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (Major in Operations Management or Marketing)

I. The development of wholesome character and inner faculties

The primary importance of the first facet mentioned above (the development of character and inner faculties) has been repeatedly stressed by H. P. Blavatsky and many theosophical leaders. Allow me to quote two of them. The first is from Madame Blavatsky:

If we had money, we would found schools which would turn out something else than reading and writing candidates for starvation. Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum, and devote the time to the development and training of the inner senses, faculties and latent capacities. We would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfolding of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their full natural development. We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, *unselfish*. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by *proper and truly theosophical* education.

- *The Key to Theosophy*, Section XIII, Theosophy and Education by H.P. Blavatsky

The second is from N. Sri Ram, fifth President of the TS, in one of his *On the Watch-Tower* commentaries:

What we call Theosophical Education must be education in a real sense, not the inculcation of a few ideas which we may label as Theosophy.

First of all, it has to be realised that education is primarily education of the individual, not instruction in any subject or the teaching of any technique, although these may be very necessary, and should come in incidentally.

It is not imparting anything from without so much as the drawing out of what is within, the capacities that are already in the Ego or soul, fostering the process of its natural growth and development in its fresh manifestation at a period when such help is greatly needed.

Many visitors, including foreign theosophists, who come to the Golden Link College campus have commented that they are struck first and foremost by the exceptionally loving atmosphere amongst students and teachers. This indeed, with all the school's shortcomings, is what is intended. Many factors come into it, such as the absence of the use of fear as a motivation in the education of the children; the genuine care of many of the teachers; and the absence of competition in student activities and programmes. This is tough for most new teachers who are told as soon as they are hired that they cannot use intimidation, shouting, and fear to make the students do things; they get frustrated and cry in the first few weeks because the traditional methods are the only methods they know in teaching. But we think that this quality of drawing out the best in a child through a loving relationship is a very important element of a truly theosophical education. It is something that is very, very hard to implement in almost any school that does not have a deeper philosophy of human growth and development.

Character building is a complex art and science because human nature (including that of children and youth) is so complex. In facing many and varied situations, the teacher must respond from the heart and not from a discipline manual, from love and understanding rather than from counting of merits and demerits. These qualities take years to develop in young teachers, but they are the necessary ingredients in right education. Golden Link College makes use of insights from the self-transformation process, which is rooted in the theosophical philosophy, in the nurturing of these qualities in teachers.

Through the years, we have seen the results of such an approach. Despite the fact that we don't use fear, intimidation or punishments (we use consequences, when necessary, such as paying for a broken chair), the students are remarkably (although not perfectly) well-behaved, respectful, helpful and happy. In fact, we don't have what are called 'problem students' (if anything, we have problem parents!). This is so despite the fact that Golden Link College has been admitting students who have been expelled or not accepted in other schools due to their previously 'unacceptable' behaviours. Some of our students have been transferred from two or three schools before coming to Golden Link College. After they are admitted to Golden Link College, their behaviour and attitude change remarkably within six months. The reason, to my mind, is very evident and simple. Every child becomes a balanced child in an atmosphere of love, orderliness, respect and challenge. The motivation for destructive or anti-social behaviour disappears. Happy children tend to become good children. Virtues sprout easily and naturally in such an atmosphere and environment.

Golden Link College seems to have developed a reputation in the community for effectiveness in dealing with 'problem' children. This probably explains why we have an unusually high percentage of boys enrolled.

The students are remarkably happy. They want to be in school. They are not averse to taking on challenges because there is no punishment if they fail. They are continually encouraged and commended for their efforts instead of being laughed at or put down. March 29, 2009 was the last day of school for the second batch of senior high school students. It was their graduation day. They didn't need to come to Golden Link College again because they were ready to go to colleges and universities. But the next day, March 30, the entire class turned up, in full school uniform. The teachers asked them, "Why are you here? There are no classes anymore." They said they just wanted to come to school. They were missing us! In the months since, they have been turning up in school as a group either with a reason or for no reason at all.

In reading this, please don't think that Golden Link College has a utopian environment. It is as imperfect as the people who run it. New teachers will always carry with them their own past conditionings (e.g. irritability, a tendency to feel personally insulted by small offences, impatience, personal and family problems, etc.) as well as their old teaching methods (the use of denigration, measurement by exams and grades, wanting to finish the textbook, etc.). It takes years for them to unlearn these conditionings and methods. There are of course regular assessments (equivalent to examinations) but the purpose is mainly to determine the weaknesses of the students in specific subjects or what they have not understood. This guides the teachers

in deciding whether to repeat a lesson, to modify the teaching approach, to have special enhancement classes, etc. It also helps the school to identify advanced students who are ready for more challenging tasks.

In the light of our different approach to education, it became necessary for the Golden Link College to set up its own Teacher Education programme, that is, Bachelor degrees in Elementary and Secondary Education. This started in June 2009. Thus Golden Link School became a college.

There are other things that are done naturally as part of this philosophy of education. For example, meditation is taught and the secondary students observe ten minutes of silence regularly during normal school days. Elementary students go through five to ten minutes of silence regularly depending upon the age bracket.

Children are treated as evolving souls. They are taught how to recognise negative emotions and handle them constructively. Teachers learn how to recognise tension and defuse it as soon as it develops.

There is no practice of a specific religion; instead, reverence for the divine in all and sensitivity to all forms of life are taught. Loving attention is drawn to the animal, insect life and plant life on campus: the fish, dragonflies, butterflies etc. The children are taught – and teach each other – never to harm an insect or animal in the garden. In fact one day a group of students ran up to the Administrator's office on the second floor with the urgent news that a dragonfly had died!

All meals served in the College canteen are vegetarian, something quite rare in the Philippines but well accepted by our parents and children. We hope to have a small animal farm one day where students can feed and take care of rabbits, turtles, chicks, etc.

II. Teaching the theosophical philosophy

When is theosophy as a body of knowledge taught?

1. Secondary Students

The teaching of theosophy starts semi-formally in secondary education. All high school students experience a youth camp every year where they are taught about the different levels of human consciousness, the dual nature of the human being (i.e. the individuality and the personality), life after death, the etheric double, karma, meditation, self-awareness, conditioning, etc. Reincarnation is introduced and discussed but not stressed. We naturally also take advantage of the presence of visiting Theosophists to expose our children to creative and different presentations of theosophical ideas. The children love to receive visits from people of other cultures.

College Students

All college students are required to go through several theosophical subjects before they can graduate:

Theos 1	Theosophy and the Perennial Philosophy
Theos 2	Comparative Religion
NSTP 1	Self-Transformation
Educ 15	Theosophical Education and Alternative Approaches to Education (for Education students)

They also go through a youth camp that teaches the self-transformative facets of theosophical knowledge.

2. Faculty and staff

All faculty members take part in regular study sessions on theosophy, not as a dogma, but as a philosophy and way of life with which they should be familiar as a Golden Link College teacher. They are invited to test and explore the principles for themselves. This is at least once a month; additional sessions are included during teacher training classes.

The incorporation of elements of the theosophical philosophy and way of life into the curriculum and campus life has been done rather naturally, and not through systematic design and implementation. It is continually evolving and developing. In an important sense, the campus is something like a secular ashram, a centre for inner growth, not only for the students but for the entire faculty and staff.

Since it is evolving and developing, we would greatly welcome the comments, inputs and suggestions of readers on how it may be improved.

Fraternally,
Vic Hao Chin, Jr.