



Just Say "Yes"

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THE National President of the Theosophical Society (TS) in the Philippines, Mr Chally Romero, asked me to give a talk. I had no idea what to talk about, when, or where; I just said "yes". Then, he told me that my talk was to be given for the 145th TS International Convention. I was terrified. Thinking about the Theosophical Society's international speakers started to intimidate me, as I am far from being experienced or learned. I have not even finished a book by H. P. Blavatsky; even if I did, I am not sure if I would fully understand it. So I took a deep breath and just recalled the times that I just said "yes".

Japan Experience

When I was 16 years old our school offered a program in which students would be granted an all-expense-paid trip to Japan, sponsored by their former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Most of my classmates did not apply because they said that only those with high academic achievements and our seniors would most likely be accepted. They thought that it would be a miracle if they would even bother looking at our one-page resumés.

Even with the slim chance, I applied and

was interviewed. Surprisingly, I was among the ten students who were accepted, despite my lack of academic achievements compared to others who applied. They had us stay at a five-star hotel and we even got to experience homestays with Japanese families. All it took was just to say "yes".

United States of America Experience

When I turned 18, I learned of a program that would allow me to fly to the United States using a J1 visa. Almost everyone said that it would be impossible for me to be granted a visa since I do not come from a wealthy family. What if they would asked me how much my parents earn, or how much would be my pocket money when I would go to the US? I was uncertain as to how to answer these questions, but I applied. That was my way of saying "yes", and guess what, I was granted visa! So off I went to the US.

Youth

When we are young, and, in addition, coming from a third-world country, a lot of things may seem far from our reach because we think that there are people who are better off than us and we lack experience and resources. But this is not



the case. As a youth we have all the time to explore, to learn, to win, and to fail.

I have failed a lot of times but have realized that the best time to fail is when we are young, because time is on our side. Time gives us the chance to try to win until we succeed. Thus, youth becomes our greatest ally in saying “yes”. So, EVEN WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG, JUST SAY “YES”.

The 11th TS World Congress

In 2018, I was asked whether I would like to join the 11th World Congress of the TS. I learned that it would be the first time it would be held in Asia, in Singapore, and that it only takes place at most every 7 years. I found it quite interesting, yet also quite expensive, but I just said “yes”. The first thing I did was to open an airline website, chose the dates, looked at the price, closed my eyes, and booked a ticket!

A week later, I received an unexpected salary bonus which covered some of my expenses. My application for work leave was approved without question. It was as if it was meant to be, if only I said “yes”. I am glad I did, as I learned so much from the World Congress, meeting theosophists from all over the world, and was able to realize what a great chance it is to be part of the TS.

Self-Transformation Seminar

Another recollection is from March 2019, when I went to the Golden Link College in the Philippines to observe how Mr Vic Hao Chin, Jr, conducts the Self-Transformation Seminar for abused and

abandoned children. Then, Mr Hao Chin asked me if I could do the talk on “Diet and Health”. I was not sure how to do it, but I just said “yes”.

Having an audience from ages 7 to 21 was nerve-racking. I thought that if I was boring, they might fall asleep right in front of me. They were not so responsive with my audience engagements and I thought I might not have made my message come across. But after the talk some of the kids came to me and said how inspired they were with my stories and how grateful they were for what I shared. Had I not said “yes”, I would not have inspired those abused and abandoned, but most deserving children.

TS in the Philippines Joint-Lodge meeting

During this pandemic the Philippine Section was looking for volunteers to give talks for the Joint-Lodge meetings, which we do every Saturday. I said “yes” by volunteering to do the first talk for the meeting and we have been doing it successfully ever since.

Preparedness

Most of the time we have the tendency to think of what is worst whenever we say “yes”. We choose not to act because we think of how people will think of us, and not how great our help could be or the lesson that we could offer. We think we will be prepared next time, and that we are unprepared now. Yet the question is: “When will we be ready?” EVEN WHEN WE THINK WE ARE UNPREPARED, LET US JUST SAY “YES”.



Usefulness

Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." I was struck by these words — "not to be happy, but to be useful". How many of us would rather seek to be happy than to be useful? Becoming useful entails effort. Effort does not always come easy nor is it convenient, so we would rather say "no". What we often do not realize is that when we say "no" to something, we are actually saying "yes" to something else. So if we were to say "yes" to either, it might as well be useful.

A common reason why we do not say "yes" is that when we are young, we are afraid that we are too young. When we are old, we are afraid that we are too old. We also do not say "yes" because we are afraid of the responsibility and accountability, especially if we fail. But what we have to keep in mind is that all we have to be is to be useful. The outcome need no longer be our concern, so, **EVEN IF IT SCARES US, LET US JUST SAY "YES".**

Yes Man

Lastly, let us not become like Jim Carrey's character in the movie Yes Man, where he made a covenant to say "yes" to everything, because he was afraid that if he did not, unfortunate things would happen to him.

Duties of a Theosophist

It would be helpful to remember that the first qualification for the Path according to Jiddu Krishnamurti's *At the Feet of the Master* is Discrimination, or discernment. Let us learn to say "yes" to the real from the unreal, to the right from the wrong, to the important from the unimportant, to the useful from the useless, to the true from the false, and to the unselfish from the selfish.

Three important objectives of the Theosophical Society are study, meditation, and service. If we do not say "yes", how will we accomplish any of them?

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