GOOD VIBES

What meditation can do for “happy” Filiipinos

By Angelo G. Garcia

War, natural disasters, terrorism, airplanes falling from the sky, digital threats, killings, territorial conflict, climate change—there are a multitude of other things that push people on the edge. These factors contribute to why people get easily stressed nowadays. But can these same factors affect the positive Filipino spirit? Are we still smiling?

ALIENATION

 The fact is, these things affect everybody, even the “always happy” Filipinos. According to long time Raja yoga practitioner and meditation instructor **Vicky Mandap**, stressful information can take its toll on even the jolliest person. She noticed that today, more and more young Filipinos (young professionals in their 20s) are going for meditation not just to find themselves, but also to find peace.

 “We are bombarded with a lot of information. Sometimes this information takes us away from the self and then we get alienated,” she says. The solution? “Meditation actually keeps us attuned to ourselves.”

 Vicky says that beginners should first learn how to think good about themselves. The Filipinos’ innate zest for life does help, but let’s face it, not all Pinoys have a happy disposition.

 “What we believe here is that wahatever we feel comes from what we think, and what we think is the beginning of our words, actionns, and behaviors,” says Vicky, coordinator of Brahma Kumaris Makati Center.

 “Some people would look for nature to meditate, but all the (noise) pollution around us in the urban jungle would limit us,” she explains. “What we do is appreciate our inner nature, inner world, and make use of our natural qualities. One can also experience the beauty of the environment in that way. It can also bring peace out.”

 Brahma Kumaris was established by Dada Lekhraj in Hyderabad, Sindh when the region was still part of colonial India (the region is now part of Pakistan). Previously known as Om Mandali, the teachings are based on universal principles about the nature of the soul, of God, and of time. The practitioners devote their time to intense spiritual study, meditation, and self-transformation. Today, its spiritual headquarters is located in Mout Abu inn Rajasthan, India.

TRAFFIC CONTROL

 In the Philippines, Brahma Kumaris, is a non-sectarian, non-stock, no-profit organization, started 30 years ago, and has since spread th meditation practice among the Filipinos. The center welcomes people from all walks of life and of any religion, race or creed. Through meditation, it aims “to help people rediscover their goodness from within and encourage the development of spiritual awareness, attitude, and behaviour.”

 Brahma Kumaris practices Raja Yoga open eyed meditation based on positive thinking. In a meditation class, the practitioners focus on an image of light while instructors feed them with positive words and phrases.

 “Whatever I think , that is what I become. As I focus on something positive, I can also see positive changes happening in my life,” Vicky says. She started doing meditation 27 years ago. A graduate of Psychology, she used to be a school guidance counsellor. “When I started, I had the aim to be constantly happy,” she says. “I come from a happy family but I felt that this “happiness” was not constant.

 When she started practicing meditation, it did not only make her constantly happy but it also changed the way she worked. She was also able to incorporate meditation values in her job.

 “In counselling, you try to probe your patient more and more.. What’s the concern? Where is this coming from? Here it’s enough to know where people are coming from. Allowing them to move forward rather than opening a lot of concerns in their lives,” she says. “I realize that it really is more effective and I think, when talking to people, whatever peace I have is also something I can share with them uwittingly.”

PURPOSIVE SILENCE

 She says that practicing meditation can improve one’s intellect because once you clear your mind of negative thoughts and fill it with positive things, you get to focus more o whatever you do.

 Part of what the center teaches is “traffic control”, which allows students to “traffic” their thoughts during a moment of silence. Practitioners exercise this multiple times a day, even during their jobs. Practitioners only need three minutes but they can do the traffic control for an hour. “It’s silence that is purposive. Rather than thinking of so many things, you get to control what stays and what you get rid of,” Vicky explains.

 Vicky usually starts the day with a 30 to 45-minute meditation. She does traffic control when needed throughout the day. And stops everything for a few minutes of meditation at dusk, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. She says that when you start the day right, the peaceful vibrations you give out also affect people close to you, people you are with at home and people at work.

 “The mind is cluttered, the intellect is scattered. Meditation really helps people quiet their mind. When the mind is still, you can clearly see what is going on in your life,” Vicky says. “When one really gets into the practice of meditation, many of one’s questions in life will be answered. The solutions are inside of ourselves. It’s something that you need to discern and that’s when meditation helps a lot.”

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