

Nucleus of Universal brotherhood

In 1881 the Theosophical Society adopted a simplified version of the objects of the Society, the first of which was “To form the Nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity.” Although minor modifications to the wording have taken place over the intervening years, the central theme has remained unchanged, and by 1894 the wording still used today had been adopted: “To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.”



Universal Brotherhood

That the Adepts who inspired the founding of the Theosophical Society gave fundamental importance to this first object is evidenced by several letters of the Mahatmas. “The *Chiefs* want a ‘Brotherhood of Humanity,’ a real Universal Fraternity started; an institution which would make itself known throughout the world and arrest the attention of the highest minds” (*ML*, p. 39). The Adepts sometimes lament the failure of the early members of the Theosophical Society to grasp the true intent of this first object. In 1880, the Mahatma KOOT HOOMI wrote: “The term ‘Universal Brotherhood’ is no idle phrase. Humanity in the mass has a paramount claim upon us It is the only secure foundation for universal morality. If it be a dream, it is at least a noble one for mankind: and it is the aspiration of the *true adept*” (*ML*, p. 20).

The concept of universal brotherhood rests upon the idea of the One Life, the fact that all humanity shares a common life. In an interview with Charles Johnston, HELENA P. BLAVATSKY stated that “universal brotherhood rests upon the common soul. It is because there is one soul common to all men, that brotherhood, or even common understanding, is possible. Bring men to rest on that, and they will be safe. There is a divine power in every man which is to rule his life, and which no one can influence for evil, not even the

greatest magician. Let men bring their lives under its guidance, and they have nothing to fear from man or devil" (CW 8:408). She also characterized this essential brotherhood as "a kinship which exists on the plane of the higher self" (CW 12:302), not on the outer personal or physical self. She believed that, if this view of kinship were universally accepted, most social evils and international conflicts would disappear.

How is this to be carried out in practical life? H. P. Blavatsky states that the Mahatmas had laid down certain guidelines for the practical working of the ideal of universal brotherhood in the following words: "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 DEFENCE AS HE WOULD UNDERTAKE HIS OWN — IS NO THEOSOPHIST" (CW 8:171).

Some letters of the Mahatmas seem to imply that the term Universal Brotherhood also refers to the Brotherhood of Adepts and their coworkers. In writing about the consent to form an Anglo-Indian Branch of the Theosophical Society, the Mahatma Koot Hoomi states: "But, this consent, you will please bear in mind, was obtained solely under the *express and unalterable condition* that the new Society should be founded as a Branch of the *Universal Brotherhood*, and among its members, a few elect men would — *if they chose to submit to our conditions*, instead of *dictating theirs* — be allowed to BEGIN the study of the occult sciences under the written directions of a 'Brother'" (ML, p. 30).

Thus the changes in the wording of the first object of the Theosophical Society seem to be relevant to this dual definition of the term Universal Brotherhood during the early years of the Society:

1881: To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity.

1888: To form **the** nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

1896: To form **a** nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

The change of the words "the nucleus" to "a nucleus" and "a Universal Brotherhood" to "the Universal Brotherhood" is noteworthy. The last version

implies that the Theosophical Society is but one of the many nuclei of the Universal Brotherhood of humanity, whereas the earlier versions speaks of the TS as the nucleus of a particular Brotherhood of Humanity. In general, the term Universal Brotherhood is understood by Theosophists as the brotherhood of the whole of humankind, rather than a nondiscriminatory brotherhood of a particular band of spiritual people.

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