

What is a Nucleus of Universal Brotherhood?

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THE need for each one of us to experience the deeper things of life is of paramount importance, but at present one may feel particular concern for the world in which we are living. The mission of our Society is the same today as it was a hundred years ago, namely to make Theosophy available. Our purpose is to provide some guidelines which may help the individual to a deeper understanding of life and consequently to a more intelligent attitude towards the world's problems. HPB wrote:

We are not working merely that people may call themselves Theosophists, but that the doctrine we cherish may affect and leaven the whole mind of this century. This alone can be accomplished by a small band of earnest workers who labour for no human reward, no earthly recognition, but who, supported and sustained by a belief in that Universal Brotherhood of which our Masters are a part, work steadily, faithfully, in understanding, and put forth for consideration the doctrines of life and duty that have come down to us from time

immemorial. Falter not so long as a few devoted ones will work to keep the nucleus existing. You were not directed to found a realized Universal Brotherhood, but to form a nucleus for one.

Some of us may have looked into the letters and messages that were received in the early days from those whom we call the Masters of Wisdom. It is made abundantly clear that the TS was not founded for a few Theosophists who might find interest in a new doctrine or in the expansion of an ancient doctrine. It was intended to be an instrument of which we are all a part, and therefore, our responsibility. It was envisioned as an instrument in the hands of the Elder Brothers which could be used in their work — work which is concerned with the great Orphan Humanity and the uplifting of all life forms. Let us realize that we are here to do a job, to do everything we can, individually and as groups, to try to bring to the world something of the enduring wisdom of all times. Therefore we must train ourselves and look deeply into

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ourselves that we may become better parts of this one instrument. We are not, however, studying and training ourselves in order to leave behind us this troubled world and its despairing humankind in favour of an easy retreat into some glorious Nirvāna. We should be developing within ourselves a greater sense of responsibility, for the only thing which will make our strivings towards self-perfection truly viable is that we might eventually become instrumental in helping the world in which we live.

If our Society is not as useful as it might be, it is that we are not sufficiently concerned to use whatever power, beauty and intelligence of which we are capable in service to each and every man. Our band, according to Mme Blavatsky, can be small, but she meant it to be dedicated. We need a fully determined dedication, a very real earnestness in this particular work, seeking no earthly rewards or personal recognition. We have to work steadily and faithfully, ready at all times to labour ceaselessly at this enormous task.

When we signed the application form, agreeing to work for the objects of the Society, we should have meant it. It is a formality, of course, but surely it must have been something very real to us. It means being only one step away from those multitudes who so desperately require continuous help, and standing within the ranks of that other and smaller group who are seeking to train themselves in providing such help. It was such a great step, and yet so many steps are yet before us.

To understand means to study, but we are also expected to put forth for consideration, to make available by whatever means, the doctrines of life and beauty that have been committed to our understanding and our charge. And then HPB speaks of the 'nucleus' of Universal Brotherhood, which is to be a 'centre' of influence. In the dictionary we find that 'nucleus' is referred to in many different manners, as applied, for instance, in the realms of astronomy or in the realms of physics. In biology it is referred to as the germ of a cell. It may be the central part of a living body around which other integral parts of the organism are collected, or the kernel of any aggregate. A nucleus seems to be a dynamic centre through which direction is given to the cell in which it is functioning. Cells that have no active nuclei cannot be effective organisms and, of course, must necessarily wither and die.

Theosophically speaking we may regard it as the point where the life wells up from the inner planes and manifests in the outer planes. From this point of view the whole Theosophical Society is a nucleus through which something should be happening; the Society as a whole, and each Lodge and every member, can be a channel through which something is taking place. Not a channel which has become blocked because it is so concerned with its own welfare and stability, but a channel which is open and through which the life of the inner worlds can flow continually to the world in which we live.

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We may ask ourselves, how conscious are we of being a part of the integral whole, and of being such a channel at all times to those with whom we are working, sitting, eating, singing, swimming, or whatever else you like. The real Theosophist will be conscious of this more and more as he goes on through life.

Further, we may find in the dictionary definition that a nucleus is also described as something around which other things collect. Is this not then a second interpretation of our function, namely that we should act and live in such a way that others are attracted to us and to that for which we stand. Brother Sri Ram once said to me, 'What is important is how people live'. It is not what we propose to do but what we actually do that really matters. And if the world is to judge us — and the world does judge us — it will not be by what we propose to be doing, but by what they actually see us doing. This is true of world opinion about the Theosophical Society, but it can also be applied to ourselves. Our arms have to reach out in every direction. We are used to interpreting our first object much more in a horizontal sense than in any other. We might try to think of 'Universal Brotherhood' in a more vertical direction also.

In his Convention speech last year, Brother Sri Ram was suggesting to us that we did not so much need any new teaching, as that we had to interpret what we already have in a deeper way. A more vertical approach to Universal Brotherhood might mean this — that each one of us has to become a universal brother to

all and live as such. We may presume that in their deep inner experience, the Masters of the Wisdom can be justly described as Universal Brothers, because theirs is a realization of increasing identity with everything that exists on all levels of manifestation. There arises a feeling of oneness, of brotherhood, of responsibility, for all that lives.

The second century into which we are moving may be characterized by a very great effort on our part in one sense. We speak and write a great deal about the Adepts, about the Great Brotherhood, but do we really know what such titles mean? We use them all too easily: Masters, Adepts, Mahatmas, and so on. There are, it appears, great Initiations which take place from stage to stage of increasing consciousness, but do we know anything at all, for instance, about the essential difference between one such initiation and another? HPB must have known very much more about these matters, and this accounts for the wonderful and true reverence she had for the Brother who helped her. In the world today there seems to be a theory, accepted often enough by young people in many places, that the development of powers — and here we are speaking of the lower rather than of the higher *siddhi-s* — will alone somehow lead one to wisdom. This is probably a misunderstanding of the facts. Is it not much more a matter of hard work? The Adept becomes an Adept through tremendously hard labour, perhaps life after life, paying attention to all the details of a dedicated life, and not suffering himself

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to be drawn aside by all kinds of transient attractions, but concentrating with unswerving purpose upon the job at hand. He has set himself a goal towards which he is moving with great concentration and determination, and an undeviating attention to duty, a word which most of us do not care for much in the modern world. We feel that duty is an infringement of our rights. But duty, it seems, has always been a very important part of the training of the Adepts. We have the statement of the Elder Brother known as KH which reads, 'My first duty is to my Master. And duty, let me tell you, is for us stronger than any friendship or even love.'

And from the Elder Brother known as M.: 'I am as I was; and, as I was and am, so am I likely always to be — the slave of my duty to the Lodge and mankind; not only taught to, but desirous of subordinating every preference for individuals to my love for the human race.'

These Great Ones are accepted as being the inner founders of our Society. If this is the way they think, if this is the way they are going, should it not be also our way: to use whatever energy we have for the best purposes and not fritter it away? Look at all the work there is to do in the world, and set to it without wasting energy. Work in an unending effort to increase the effective radiance of one's living. And whatever we mean when we use the word 'Adept', let us not forget that as far as we are concerned it means sheer hard work, life after life, in a deepening knowledge that the One manifests everywhere in the visible and invisible

worlds, and that there is nothing at all outside this oneness.

There is an equality of a basic nature in that all men come from the same source and are wending their way to the same goal; but in a practical sense, each man is an individual and has to have individual attention. We may never push aside a person that karma has put in our way, but rather be prepared to help, or to listen to everyone, including those who do not appear to be important. For this is the real practice of brotherhood. And then, when we are really intelligent enough to elect the wise, we shall not even need democracy any more. Democracy may be said to work only when we no longer need it.

The practice of brotherhood implies that we have the highest principles active in our lives, principles of compassion, justice, chivalry, consideration for the feelings of others, and a constant attention to what we are doing to the people around us. The strength and usefulness of our organization depends on this understanding of differentiated brotherhood. It depends on our ability to cooperate, on our understanding of the law. Without all this, the nucleus cannot work; it can neither attract nor can it transmit.

Therefore the success of the Society depends entirely on the way we work. Let us not forget that no one is ever outside the field of our universality. And perhaps the most eager to embrace our ideas is the growing group of younger people who are seeking a meaning in life all around the world.

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Around the turn of the century Dr Besant and C. W. Leadbeater made reference to the beginning of the sixth sub-race in preparation of the Sixth Root-Race of the future. They wrote that in various parts of the world they had already noticed the arrival of this new type of person and the dawning of another sort of consciousness. Now surely, seventy years later, if their observations were correct, we should be seeing around us today thousands, and perhaps millions of such people, and one wonders if there is not a relationship between those very interesting groups of young people we find in practically every country of the world and the beginning of this new sub-race. We cannot continue endlessly to say that one day people will be like that. We must look at the present; these people are here now and they have come to stay. Both they and their ideals are bound to become more prominent and forceful as time goes on. They already speak of a world wherein there is a universality of attitude, a world in which ideals are deeper, more profound and more completely all-embracing.

But one of the problems of today, especially in the West, is that in their search for self-realization young people frequently are attracted and fall easily victim to the wrong type of teacher. There are relatively few teachers in the western countries who are really dealing with the philosophy of Yoga, with the totality of Yoga as a spiritual experience, and not simply in terms of exercises, although these can, of course, lead to a healthier body and more active and understanding

mind. In India it has always been understood that it is necessary to face the challenge of one's personal life, and to change one's way of living before one proceeds very far on this road. In the West enthusiastic people plunge too easily straight into *āsana-s* and *prānāyāma* without sufficient consideration for the earlier stages, which would make the later practices perfectly safe. This is a real problem in the Western world and our Society should be concerned with it.

Throughout the years we have had this deep connection with India and the background from which all Yoga sprang. but this may be a dangerous way for those who are not well instructed. The foundation for Yoga means hard work and a certain amount of sacrifice in one's life.

Young people are conditioned by speed and acceleration — these are the keynotes of our age. They insist on being instructed in one exercise and again one, and then another. We have to be very awake to this problem of the extraordinary revolution of young people. We cannot insist that they must do everything our way. The world is not like this any more. Young people are economically free, they are quite able to stand on their own feet. And what was the right way for us, may not be the right way for them. The world is changing and we cannot expect young people to conform in the same way that they were asked to conform in the past. If you invite them into a Lodge and you tell them dogmatically what is expected of them, they will not come back. And why should they? They can

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go somewhere else. So we have to offer something that truly satisfies their needs. They want to know and understand their brothers, and be close to them. Brotherhood in this sense is something very intimate, and are we giving sufficient opportunities for this in our Lodges and work? We have to make young men and women feel welcome, be pleased to see them and be prepared to listen to them. The young people of 1973 or 1974 no longer feel at home in an atmosphere of 1920. If Dr Besant were alive today she surely would not be saying the same things, but adapting her words and deeds to the present troubled times. We have to understand that young people have a deep, deep dedication in their search for truth, and we must extend cooperation and encouragement. The days of authority are, to some extent, passed, and the younger ones will only listen to words of genuine wisdom and guidance. They are interested in the contact between human beings that comes from the heart, and there lies the foundation of real brotherhood.

The time has come to face what we are and to ask ourselves about the depth of our commitment. To quote French biologist, Lecomte du Nouy:

All through evolution there have been just two kinds of living creatures: you can call them good or bad, or evolvers and adapters. The adapter has always done the expedient thing. It has conformed and appeased, adapted itself to environment and circumstances and then stopped progressing. The other kind of creature is

stubborn and rebellious. Refusing to conform, it chooses rather to surpass itself and so evolves into something better.

Where do we stand today, each one of us? Dr Besant was stubborn and rebellious in this sense; she did not appease, she did not give in. When there was a challenge she faced it. Are we fighters too? Or do we just accept things as they are? Do we really see what is going on all around us? For instance, some too easily accept the plight of the animal kingdom, believing it to exist solely for our selfish purposes. But surely the animal world has just as much right to work out its evolution on our planet as have the other kingdoms of Nature, including man! If we really want to know what happens to animals, whether we eat meat or not, we should go and see what happens, in abattoirs, for instance. Either we shall hold up our hands in horror, or we shall simply take it for granted that animals are here only for men to eat. We are not sufficiently concerned. And if one was to say to such people: 'Do you think you are compassionate?' they would be on their dignity at once and say: 'Of course I am, how could you doubt it!' But how far does that compassion go?

Every one of us might well be active in some field of service. We have to lead our own lives carefully in this respect, to see whether we, individually, are contributing or not to the problems around us. When we go to bed at night, we may ask ourselves whether we so lived today as to help in alleviating the problems

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of the world or by a life of laziness and selfishness made them worse. This is an individual responsibility, since we are all part of the world and have made it what it is now. It is an individual responsibility which no one can possibly push aside; we have to accept it because there is one world and we are part of it.

There has often been a great struggle for members of our Society to break away from the orthodoxy of their youth in order to come into this movement. Dr Besant wrote:

the Society is and always has been intended to be a living body and not a fossil. And a living body grows and develops, adapting itself to new conditions. If it is a body which is spiritually alive, it will be gaining continually a deeper and fuller view of Truth. It is absurd for us to pretend at our present stage of evolution that we have arrived at the limits of knowledge it is possible for man to obtain. So have we arrived at the limits of our understanding of Theosophy? Clearly we have not, and so there is need for constant awareness. We must be certain and truly aware that our perceptions continually deepen. Nothing could be more fatal to a Society like ours than to hallmark as truth some special form of belief and then look askance at anyone challenging it. If the Society is to live far into the future, we must be prepared now to recognize freely and frankly that our knowledge is fragmentary and liable to great modifications as we learn and understand better.

So we have a dual function to perform, all of us. To attract on the one hand and

to transmit on the other. The two are very closely linked. If our lives are being lived in accordance with the true principles of brotherhood, then inevitably we shall seem appealing and interesting to others. There is no difference that Theosophy cannot reconcile, no gulf Theosophy cannot bridge. In the world of vital and living transition in which we move today, we might heed once again the words of HPB where she says, 'If a man desires to learn to know himself, he can do this only by working with great love for Humanity . . . if one does not work for others, one has no right to be called a Theosophist.'

Is there anyone who is not my brother and yours? High and low, rich and poor, intelligent or stupid, wise or foolish, all are part of the same wholeness and our mission requires that we succeed eventually in bringing each and everyone into contact with the philosophy we have accepted for ourselves. It is a philosophy which leads to a realization of Truth which takes as many forms as we are many. He who has touched, if even for a small moment, some lofty reach of consciousness, will never be the same again, and his understanding of brotherhood as a wholeness to which every single life belongs will be immeasurably strengthened by a feeling of identification with that whole. But, even before that supreme experience comes to a man, he may realize that brotherhood is the only possible way of life on this little planet of ours, and his Theosophical interests can only deepen this understanding. The nucleus is tiny

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indeed, but in another sense it contains and embraces the whole world.

The philosophy of wholeness which is based on such a nucleus as this, points to three fundamental ideas. First, the fact of the One Universal Life. Second, the overwhelming reality of the consciousness that we call Divine; and finally, the Brotherhood which is the expression of both the worlds of our normal experience. These are basic to our understanding of Life, and all Laws flow from them.

As we move into the new century more will be demanded of us and not less — our in-going and our out-going demand our continuing attention — the one as much as the other.

The nucleus that attracts is the nucleus that shines with inner light. And the nucleus that has discovered this light will be busy radiating forth continual helpfulness, bringing life and blessing to all.

Thus may we perchance deserve a Greater Blessing. ✧

It is only when there is realization of our unity with our fellow-beings, and when the only motive is that of giving ourselves in such service as we are capable, that we can fill our lives with rich, helpful and creative action.

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To open one's heart, to become resistance-less and barrier-less, is the means of true understanding, as well as of pouring out any possible help. Let the kingdom of your heart be so wide that no one is excluded.

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We have to learn to give with our hearts. When we help from the very soul of ourselves, there can be no consciousness of a helper separate from the one who is being helped.

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Wanting nothing for yourself, you are able to go out and meet all; seeking not to become anything in particular you are your true self.

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When you give your interest, your goodwill, your sympathy, your understanding, you make a pure relationship. Let there be nothing more to it than just giving.

(Sources Unknown)