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THE FIRST OBJECT OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color. — *First Object of the Theosophical Society*

How easy it is to pay lip service to the First Object of the Theosophical Society! Who doesn't embrace the idea of living in peace and harmony with others? There is no great risk attached to holding such a view in today's ever-shrinking world where people increasingly recognize the necessity for concord in the global community. But while embracing the idea of brotherhood is easy, putting it into practice may not be so simple.

The Theosophical writer Ernest Wood gave voice to this apparent truth: "It is easy to go and live in a forest, and from that seclusion feel good will toward all mankind; but it is another matter if you have to take your part in the struggle of life." Yes, indeed. How easy it is to feel harmonious when surrounded by the warmth of friends and like-minded colleagues. How easy it is to feel serene when in the company of those who share our views and opinions. But notice how quickly our sense of brotherhood turns to discord when we are obliged to endure the company of an unpleasant and disagreeable person. How quickly our sense of tranquility gives way to resentment and frustration when karma forces us to endure an apparent injustice. We may even identify with Linus, a character from the "Peanuts" comic strip, who once professed, "I love humanity; it's people I can't stand."

The time when the spiritual seeker could retire to the secluded life of the ashram, temple, or monastery is largely a thing of the past. Very few people can afford to take that approach today. Those who are serious about developing a rich, inner life of the spirit must attempt to do so while living amidst the chaotic turmoil of the outer world.

In her writings, H. P. Blavatsky repeatedly emphasized the importance of brotherhood as a guiding principle: "It is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practicing in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity . . . can ever be attained" (*The Key to Theosophy*). No matter how learned or erudite we may become in the metaphysics of Theosophy, let us not forget that the true measure of a Theosophist lies not in a proud and self-centered intellect, but in an open and loving heart.

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