

From the Special No. of THE THEOSOPHIST
1975

Rohit Mehta

The Three Objects

VERY often it is stated by Theosophists, and non-Theosophists as well, that while the Theosophical Society has done much work along the lines of the First and the Second Objects, it has done very little for the fulfilment of the Third Object. It is necessary to examine this statement as also the implications of the Three Objects.

The First Object suggests the formation of a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. Now, the idea of brotherhood, irrespective of outer distinctions, has received recognition from the world at large. Brotherhood for certain economic and social purposes is already at work as indicated by the numerous international organizations that have come into existence in recent times. We find delegates from all over the world meeting for some international conference or the other to take decisions on matters affecting the whole world. The specialized agencies of the United Nations are also indicative of this feeling of international fraternity. The World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labor Organization and such other organizations and associations are symbolic of the new factors that have come into operation with reference to the present-day civilization. The two World Wars of this century have strangely enough brought the nations of the world together on economic and social planes. The peoples of the world have felt the necessity to break down barriers of race, religion and nationality in certain spheres of life as it is felt that the continuance of those barriers would hamper the development of special and economic plans.

There is also an increasing recognition on the part of the nations of the world to come together on the plane of cultural activities. In this sphere the work of UNESCO has been very admirable. Scientists, educationists and men and women of culture belonging to different races and nationalities meet constantly in various parts of the world for exchange of ideas and for clarification of ideas. This is indeed very helpful for the creation of an atmosphere of brotherhood.

But, if brotherhood has been accepted by the world at large, and, if activities for the furtherance of brotherhood are being initiated in different fields of life, what is the special work of the Theosophical Society in terms of the First Object? Has the Society to do anything in particular with regard to the First Object which other international organizations and associations are not doing?

It needs to be remembered that the brotherhood which is being increasingly recognized in economic, social, cultural and scientific fields is very much in the nature of a policy statement. To an ever-increasing number of people, brotherhood has begun to appear as the best policy. In other words, they are seeking to fulfill certain specific ends by pursuing the path of international fraternity of human brotherhood. But, truly speaking, brotherhood practised for the fulfilment of certain ends and objects, however noble they may be, is a complete negation of brotherhood. If I become brotherly to someone in order to achieve a certain purpose, whether material or so-called spiritual, then I am indeed exploiting that person for the sake of my ideals and objectives. In such an approach it is not the person that matters, it is my ideal that matters; and for its fulfilment I am using that person as an instrument. It is the relationship of usage which I am establishing with that person, for he is useful to me in the practice of my ideal! Brotherhood as a means to some end is indeed a complete denial of brotherhood.

What does brotherhood as an end in itself mean? Surely it means accepting life as it is. How can brotherhood be conditional? If I state that the "sinner" must become a "saint" — or move towards sainthood — in order to claim my brotherhood, then surely it is no brotherhood at all. To accept the person as he is, is indeed to respect his intrinsic worth. It is truly to recognize the dignity of Man. It must be admitted that we are far, far away from the fulfilment of this concept of brotherhood. Our usual tendency is to respect the man for *what he has* rather than for *what he is*. If race, religion and nationality do not stand in the way of accepting the person as he is, it is opinion, ideology, concepts of values, social status, etc., that prevent us from accepting the person as he is. We look at others through a glass, darkly. In order to accept the person as he is, one must have a clear perception of that person. Now, a clear perception is a direct perception with nothing intervening between the perceiver and the perceived — not even the subtlest of mental images or ideological concepts. Brotherhood requires such a direct or unveiled perception.

But the human mind is, by its very constitution and functioning, incapable of direct perception. Its process of acquiring knowledge is always indirect. How is man to come to direct knowledge? Mind is the highest instrument of cognition that he possesses today. Can the mind be ignored? It is quite obvious that the mind cannot be by-passed. Even though H.P.B. describes mind as "the great slayer of the Real," she says in *The Voice of the Silence*.

To live and, reap experience, the mind needs breadth and depth.

It is true that for direct experience mind has to be transcended. But, how to transcend the mind? To transcend the mind with the help of the mind is indeed the way to direct perception. To explore the ways of the mind and to exhaust their possibilities is to bring the mind to a deep silence without making it dull and passive. Since brotherhood demands direct perception, it is the way to this perception which is indicated in the Second and the Third

Objects of the Theosophical Society. The Second Object deals with the exploring of the ways of the mind even as the Third Object deals with the transcending of the mind.

Let us see how the Second and the Third Objects of the Theosophical Society help to move along this line. The Second Object draws our attention to "the study of Comparative Religion, Science and Philosophy". Let us not forget that it is not comparative study, but study of comparative religion which is indicated here. A comparative study usually seeks similarities and many a time misses uniqueness. To study a thing or a thought without comparison is to comprehend its intrinsic worth. In comparison there is always a standard in terms of which different things are measured. The Second Object, therefore, encourages the study of different religions, philosophies and sciences. As stated above, this study is to the end of exploring the avenues of the mind with reference to the understanding of Life. Religion, science and philosophy reveal certain Laws of Life. A study of these branches of knowledge enables one to understand them in terms of the mind.

In the Second and the Third Objects there is a distinction made between study and investigation. Study is essentially a mental process. Since the Second Object emphasizes study of religion, science and philosophy, its implication obviously is to examine the explanations and the interpretations given by the mind of those Laws of Life which are revealed in these three main branches of human knowledge. The Third Object speaks about the "unexplained laws of Nature" indicating thereby that there are certain laws for which explanations *are* to be found. And it is these explanations that are sought to be studied in terms of the Second Object. It is only in this background that the Third Object becomes intelligible, particularly the phrase "unexplained laws of Nature". The Second Object suggests the exploration of the entire range of the mind. It is quite evident that religion, science and philosophy cover the whole field of human knowledge for they refer to Reality, Nature and Man respectively — the *Ishwara*, the *Jagat* and the *Jiva* of the Hindu philosophy. In other words, the Second Object seeks to give breadth to the mind. We are using here the word mind in its meaning of the composite process of thought and emotion. The purpose of the Second Object is to enlarge the horizons of the mind, to extend its range so that there is no avenue of the mind which remains unexplored. Even though the mind's process of acquiring knowledge is indirect, it is necessary if one is to move on the pathway to direct or unveiled perception.

It should, however, be remembered that the mind's explanations can cover *only* the realm of quantity. It can give only statistical explanations of the phenomena of Life. It can formulate laws with reference to measurable quantities only. And so the qualitative aspects of life — those aspects which cannot be put in the framework of statistical measurement — must ever

remain unexplained to the processes of observation and examination carried on by the mind.

The whole problem of human relationship becomes complicated when the unpredictable factor of human personality is ignored. Very often we try to measure human personality in terms of statistical laws, or, in other words, in terms of the laws of which mind has a satisfactory explanation. But the mind can formulate only statistical averages based on the study of forms and patterns. It is undoubtedly necessary for man to observe outer structures as that is what attracts his attention at first. In observing the manifested universe and examining its structural laws, his mind becomes alert and active. It is this which is indicated in the Second Object of the Theosophical Society. To explore the possibilities of the mind — that indeed is the purpose of the study of comparative religion, science and philosophy. Curiously enough, he who knows the possibilities of the mind, he knows at the same time the limitations of the mind. While the explanations of the mind are satisfactory up to a point, there is "something" which they leave unexplained. Call it the unpredictability of human personality or call it the mystery of Life. It is obvious that mind cannot unravel the mystery of Life.

It is here that the Third Object becomes intensely significant, for it invites our attention to the investigation of "unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man". It may be asked, why are the unexplained laws and the latent powers of man put together? What is the relationship between the two? First, let us see what is meant by the latent powers in man. There was a time when Theosophists were perhaps the only group of people who talked about clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy and such other phenomena. But today these have become subjects of scientific study. Parapsychology has grown rapidly in the last few years and has dealt exhaustively with the subjects of paranormal cognition as also paranormal action. Does the Third Object of the Theosophical Society envisage development of psychic and paranormal faculties of clairvoyance, clairaudience, etc., for the understanding of the mystery of Life? Will these psychic faculties enable us to investigate unexplained laws of Nature? It has to be remembered that clairvoyance, clairaudience and such other paranormal faculties are only extensions of physical senses. They carry the process of structural examination into super-physical realms. But just because the study of forms and structures is extended to spheres of super-physical existence, man is not brought nearer to the understanding of the mystery of Life. He may have greater structural details but something "unpredictable" still escapes his net. The "unpredictable" or the "unexplained" remains unperceived even though we may use the most powerful microscope — whether physical or super-physical. And so the "latent powers in man" cannot mean an extra-sensory perception life telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, etc. It must mean a new dimension of consciousness — a consciousness which transcends the limitations of the mind.

Now the Third Object asks us to "investigate" unexplained laws and the powers latent in man. To investigate is to carry on a careful search. Thus, while the Second Object lays stress on study, the Third Object emphasizes search. How can the higher dimension of consciousness be sought after by the lower? How can the mind know that which lies beyond its frontiers? It is only when the mind is quiet that a new dimension of understanding dawns upon human consciousness. And so the investigation is to be done, not by means of mental operations — nor by making the mind dull and dead. It is when the mind becomes a perfect reflecting medium that new facets of human personality can be discovered. And, in the discovery of the new facets of human personality there take place also the discovery of unexplained laws of Nature. Thus the "the powers latent in man" and "unexplained laws of Nature" are inter-related, or, to put it differently, the discovery of the one naturally leads to the discovery of the other.

Since Brotherhood demands direct perception, it is but obvious that for the fulfilment of this objective the ways and the explanations of the mind must drop away. But they can drop away only when the mind is aware of its own limitations. Again this awareness can come only when the mind has explored all its possibilities. While the First Object stresses the need for direct perception, the Second and the Third Objects indicate to us the path along which we must move if we are to perceive directly the other person — i.e., to see him as he is.

The Three Objects of the Theosophical Society form one integrated whole. They cannot, therefore, be considered in isolation, separated one from the other. It is when we do so that we wrongly evaluate the work of the Theosophical Society. Together the Three Objects indicate what may be called the Theosophical Approach to Life. The Theosophical Society stands pre-eminently for Brotherhood — and Brotherhood implies "right perception of things objective". How to come to this right perception? It is this which is indicated under the study of comparative religion, science and philosophy and under the search for unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man. As has been stated above, the study is to be carried on with a view to exploring the possibilities of the mind, and the search is to be undertaken in the background of the awareness of the mind's limitations.

So long as unrestricted study and unfettered search remain the guiding principles of the Theosophical Society, so long is the Society true to its fundamental objective of forming a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity.