

RENAISSANCE REDUX

Theme: War and Peace

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BhāratShakti

Sri Aurobindo Society



Sri Aurobindo Society

BHĀRATSHAKTI

INDIA – FROM PAST DAWNS TO FUTURE NOONS

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EDITORIAL

Beloo Mehra

Greetings! And warm wishes to our readers on this special day celebrating the anniversary of the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry!

We are happy to release today the second issue of Volume 2 of the *Renaissance Redux*, quarterly journal that features some of our cherished selections from the voluminous *Renaissance* journal which entered seventh year of its publication in January 2026.

It has been my experience, and the experience of many I know, that there is no subject or issue in the world on which we cannot find deepest insight and widest possible clarity from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. We must cultivate full faith in their vision for the humanity's future and complete certitude in the tremendous Yogic work they have done for the earth-consciousness.

With the recent wars and conflicts in the world, the topic 'War and Peace' seemed most appropriate for this issue of *Renaissance Redux*. Readers will find profound insights on the multi-layered truth about war as a necessary means employed by Nature for its evolutionary purposes. We feature Sri Aurobindo's insightful essay titled *The Passing of War?* which was written in the early months of World War I. It was first published in *Arya* and then in 1920 along with three other related essays was included in a separate volume titled *War and Self-determination*.

The Mother reminds us that war will cease to exist when it becomes unnecessary to the evolution of the earth, for which man has to undergo a spiritual transformation. We also include a short piece by M. P. Pandit titled 'Violence' which was first published in 1985 in Vol. 3 of his series 'Commentaries on the Mother's Ministry'.

As always, we offer this work at the Lotus Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Ever in gratitude.

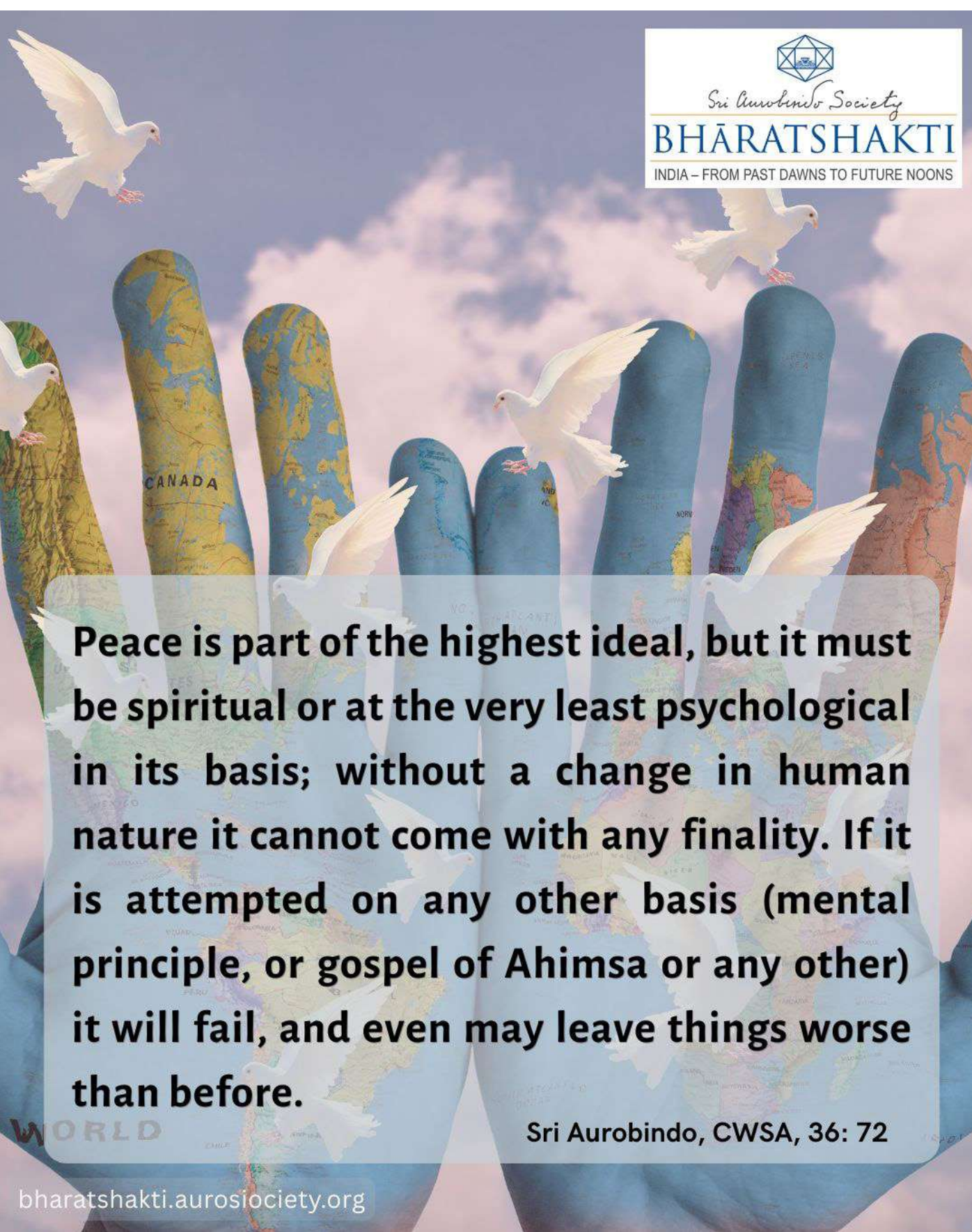




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Peace is part of the highest ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the very least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come with any finality. If it is attempted on any other basis (mental principle, or gospel of Ahimsa or any other) it will fail, and even may leave things worse than before.

Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 36: 72

ON THE WAR¹

Sri Aurobindo

War is physically an evil, a calamity; morally it has been like most human institutions a mixture, in most but not all cases a mixture of some good and much evil: but it is sometimes necessary to face it rather than invite or undergo a worse evil, a greater calamity. One can hold that, so long as life and mankind are what they are, there can be such a thing as a righteous war,— *dharmya yuddha*.

No doubt, in a spiritualised life of humanity or in a perfect civilisation there would be no room for war or violence,—it is clear that this is the highest ideal state. But mankind is psychologically and materially still far from this ideal state. To bring it to that state needs either an immediate spiritual change of which there is no present evidence or a change of mentality and habits which the victory of the totalitarian idea and its system would render impossible; for it would impose quite the opposite mentality, the mentality and habits on one side of a dominant brute force and violence and on the other a servile and prostrate non-resistance.



Scenes from the Mahabharata, c. 1650, source: wikicommons



¹ Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo [CWSA], Vol. 36, pp. 461-462

WAR AND EVOLUTION OF THE EARTH²

The Mother

13 April 1960

Disciple: Are all these wars necessary for the evolution of the earth?

At a certain stage of human development, wars are inevitable. In prehistoric times the whole of life was a war; and to the present day human history has been one long history of wars. Wars are the natural result of a state of consciousness dominated by the struggle for life and egoistic aggressiveness. And at the present time, in spite of some human efforts towards peace, there is, as yet, nothing to assure us that war is no longer an inevitable calamity. Indeed, does not a state of war, open or otherwise, exist at this moment in many parts of the world?

Besides, everything that happens on earth necessarily leads to its progress. Thus wars are schools of courage, endurance, fearlessness; they may serve to destroy a past which refuses to disappear although its time is over, and they make room for new things. Wars can, like Kurukshetra, be a way to rid the earth of a domineering or destructive race so that justice and right may reign. They can, through the presence of danger, shake the apathy of a too tamasic consciousness and awaken dormant energies. Finally they can, by contrast, and because of the horrors that accompany and follow them, drive men to seek an effective way to make such a barbarous and violent form of transformation unnecessary.

For everything that is unnecessary to the evolution of the earth automatically ceases to exist.

15 April 1960

Disciple: You have written: "They [wars] may serve to destroy a past which refuses to disappear although its time is over, and they make room for new things." Now that the

² Collected Works of the Mother [CWM], Vol. 10, pp. 52-53

Supermind has descended upon earth will war be necessary to change the present state of the world?

All will depend on the receptivity of nations. If they open widely and quickly to the influence of the new forces and if they change rapidly enough in their conceptions and actions, war may be avoided. But it is always threatening and always in abeyance; every error, every darkening of the consciousness increases this threat.

And yet in the last analysis everything really depends on the Divine Grace and we should look towards the future with confidence and serenity, at the same time progressing as fast as we can.



17 November 1965

Disciple: You write in Your Conversations: “Each time that something of the Divine Truth and the Divine Force comes down to manifest upon earth, some change is effected in the earth’s atmosphere.”³

(1) Is this change always violent and destructive, such as a revolution or a war?

The Mother: Not necessarily. What expresses itself as a war or a revolution is the resistance in the human consciousness to the New Force. When the resistance is less, everything takes place harmoniously.

(2) And is the converse always valid: if there is a war or a revolution, is it the sign of a descent of the Truth?

The Mother: Not necessarily. Human folly takes advantage of the slightest cause to manifest itself.



³ CWM, Vol. 3, p. 79

Wherever thou seest a great end, be sure of a great beginning. Where a monstrous and painful destruction appals thy mind, console it with the certainty of a large and great creation. God is there not only in the still small voice, but in the fire and in the whirlwind.

Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 13: 209



MANKIND'S ILLUSIONS ABOUT "THE PASSING OF WAR"⁴

Sri Aurobindo

Man's illusions are of all sorts and kinds, some of them petty though not unimportant,—for nothing in the world is unimportant,—others vast and grandiose. The greatest of them all are those which cluster round the hope of a perfected society, a perfected race, a terrestrial millennium.

Each new idea religious or social which takes possession of the epoch and seizes on large masses of men, is in turn to be the instrument of these high realisations; each in turn betrays the hope which gave it its force to conquer. And the reason is plain enough to whosoever chooses to see; it is that no change of ideas or of the intellectual outlook upon life, no belief in God or Avatar or prophet, no victorious science or liberating philosophy, no social scheme or system, no sort of machinery internal or external can really bring about the great desire implanted in the race, true though that desire is in itself and the index of the goal to which we are being led.

Because man is himself not a machine nor a device, but a being and a most complex one at that, therefore he cannot be saved by machinery; only by an entire change which shall affect all the members of his being can he be liberated from his discords and imperfections.

One of the illusions incidental to this great hope is the expectation of the passing of war. This grand event in human progress is always being confidently expected and since we are now all scientific minds and rational beings, we no longer expect it by a divine intervention, but assign sound physical and economic reasons for the faith that is in us.

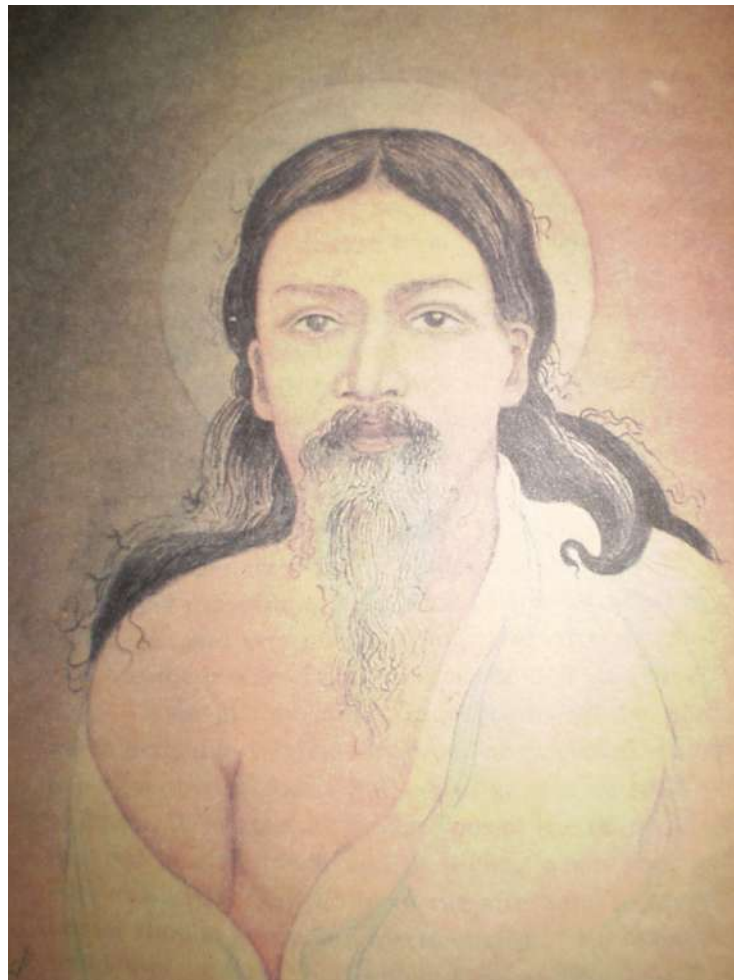
Extension of Commercialism

The first form taken by this new gospel was the expectation and the prophecy that the extension of commerce would be the extinction of war.

⁴ CWSA, Vol. 25, pp. 606-611

- Commercialism was the natural enemy of militarism and would drive it from the face of the earth.
- The growing and universal lust of gold and the habit of comfort and the necessities of increased production and intricate interchange would crush out the lust of power and dominion and glory and battle.
- Gold-hunger or commodity-hunger would drive out earth-hunger, the dharma of the Vaishya would set its foot on the dharma of the Kshatriya and give it its painless quietus.

The ironic reply of the gods has not been long in coming. Actually this very reign of commercialism, this increase of production and interchange, this desire for commodities and markets and this piling up of a huge burden of unnecessary necessities has been the cause of half the wars that have since afflicted the human race. **And now we see militarism and commercialism united in a loving clasp, coalescing into a sacred biune duality of national life and patriotic aspiration and causing and driving by their force the most irrational, the most monstrous and nearly cataclysmic, the hugest war of modern and indeed of all historic times.**



War and destruction are not only a universal principle of our life here in its purely material aspects, but also of our mental and moral existence.

Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 19: 42



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Growth of Democracy and Pacifism

Another illusion was that the growth of democracy would mean the growth of pacifism and the end of war.

- It was fondly thought that wars are in their nature dynastic and aristocratic; greedy kings and martial nobles driven by earth-hunger and battle-hunger, diplomatists playing at chess with the lives of men and the fortunes of nations, these were the guilty causes of war who drove the unfortunate peoples to the battle-field like sheep to the shambles.
- These proletariates, mere food for powder, who had no interest, no desire, no battle-hunger driving them to armed conflict, had only to become instructed and dominant to embrace each other and all the world in a free and fraternal amity.

Man refuses to learn from that history of whose lessons the wise prate to us; otherwise the story of old democracies ought to have been enough to prevent this particular illusion. In any case the answer of the gods has been, here too, sufficiently ironic. If kings and diplomatists are still often the movers of war, none more ready than the modern democracy to make itself their enthusiastic and noisy accomplice, and we see even the modern spectacle of governments and diplomats hanging back in affright or doubt from the yawning and clamorous abyss while angry shouting peoples impel them to the verge.

Bewildered pacifists who still cling to their principles and illusions, find themselves howled down by the people and, what is piquant enough, by their own recent comrades and leaders. The socialist, the syndicalist, the internationalist of yesterday stands forward as a banner-bearer in the great mutual massacre and his voice is the loudest to cheer on the dogs of war.

Courts of Arbitration

Another recent illusion was the power of Courts of Arbitration. . . to prevent war. There again the course that events immediately took was sufficiently ironic; for the institution of the great Court of international arbitration was followed up by a series of little and great wars which led by an inexorable logical chain to the long-dreaded European conflict and the monarch who had first conceived the idea, was also the first to unsheathe his sword in a conflict dictated on both sides by the most unrighteous greed and aggression. In fact this

series of wars, whether fought in Northern or Southern Africa, in Manchuria or the Balkans, were marked most prominently by the spirit which disregards cynically that very idea of inherent and existing rights, that balance of law and equity upon which alone arbitration can be founded. [. . .]

. . . so long as men go on believing in the sovereign power of machinery, it is not likely that the gods either will cease from their studied irony.

Science

There have been other speculations and reasonings; ingenious minds have searched for a firmer and more rational ground of faith. The first of these was propounded in a book by a Russian writer⁵ which had an enormous success in its day but has now passed into the silence. Science was to bring war to an end by making it physically impossible. It was mathematically proved that with modern weapons two equal armies would fight each other to a standstill, attack would become impossible except by numbers thrice those of the defence and war therefore would bring no military decision but only an infructuous upheaval and disturbance of the organised life of the nations.

When the Russo-Japanese war almost immediately proved that attack and victory were still possible and the battle-fury of man superior to the fury of his death-dealing engines, another book was published, called by a title which has turned into a jest upon the writer, *The Great Illusion*⁶, to prove that the idea of a commercial advantage to be gained by war and conquest was an illusion and that as soon as this was understood and the sole benefit of peaceful interchange realised, the peoples would abandon a method of settlement now chiefly undertaken from motives of commercial expansion, yet whose disastrous result was only to disorganise fatally the commercial prosperity it sought to serve. The present war [World War I] came as the immediate answer of the gods to this sober and rational

⁵ Sri Aurobindo is probably referring to Leo Tolstoy's works titled *War and Peace* (1869) and/or *The Kingdom of God and Peace Essays* (1909).

⁶ *The Great Illusion* Norman Angell is an influential book in the field of international relations. First published in the United Kingdom in 1909 under the title *Europe's Optical Illusion*, it was republished in 1910 and subsequently in various enlarged and revised editions under the title *The Great Illusion*.

proposition. It has been fought for conquest and commercial expansion and it is proposed, even when it has been fought out on the field, to follow it up by a commercial struggle between the belligerent nations.

Do Not Ignore Human Nature and Ingenuity

The men who wrote these books were capable thinkers but they ignored the one thing that matters, human nature. The present war has justified to a certain extent the Russian writer though by developments he did not foresee; scientific warfare has brought military movement to a standstill and baffled the strategist and the tactician, it has rendered decisive victory impossible except by overwhelming numbers or an overwhelming weight of artillery.

But this has not made war impossible, it has only changed its character; it has at the most replaced the war of military decisions by that of military and financial exhaustion aided by the grim weapon of famine. The English writer on the other hand erred by isolating the economic motive as the one factor that weighed; he ignored the human lust of dominion which, carried into the terms of commercialism, means the undisputed control of markets and the exploitation of helpless populations.

Again, when we rely upon the disturbance of organised national and international life as a preventive of war, we forget the boundless power of self-adaptation which man possesses; that power has been shown strikingly enough in the skill and ease with which the organisation and finance of peace were replaced in the present crisis by the organisation and finance of war. **And when we rely upon Science to make war impossible, we forget that the progress of Science means a series of surprises and that it means also a constant effort of human ingenuity to overcome impossibilities and find fresh means of satisfying our ideas, desires and instincts.** Science may well make war of the present type with shot and shell and mines and battleships an impossibility and yet develop and put in their place simpler or more summary means which may bring back an easier organisation of warfare.

War to End War?

So long as war does not become psychologically impossible, it will remain or, if banished for a while, return. War itself, it is hoped, will end war; the expense, the horror, the butchery, the disturbance of tranquil life, the whole confused sanguinary madness of the thing



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A black and white photograph of a knight in full plate armor, including a helmet and chainmail, holding a sword and a shield. The knight is positioned in the center of the frame, facing slightly to the right. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

War is no longer, perhaps, a biological necessity, but it is still a psychological necessity; what is within us, must manifest itself outside.

Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 25: 611

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has reached or will reach such colossal proportions that the human race will fling the monstrosity behind it in weariness and disgust. But weariness and disgust, horror and pity, even the opening of the eyes to reason by the practical fact of the waste of human life and energy and the harm and extravagance are not permanent factors; they last only while the lesson is fresh. Afterwards, there is forgetfulness; human nature recuperates itself and recovers the instincts that were temporarily dominated. A long peace, even a certain organisation of peace may conceivably result, but so long as the heart of man remains what it is, the peace will come to an end, the organisation will break down under the stress of human passions. **War is no longer, perhaps, a biological necessity, but it is still a psychological necessity; what is within us, must manifest itself outside.**

Meanwhile it is well that every false hope and confident prediction should be answered as soon as may well be by the irony of the gods; for only so can we be driven to the perception of the real remedy. **Only when man has developed not merely a fellow-feeling with all men, but a dominant sense of unity and commonalty, only when he is aware of them not merely as brothers,—that is a fragile bond,—but as parts of himself, only when he has learned to live not in his separate personal and communal ego-sense, but in a larger universal consciousness can the phenomenon of war, with whatever weapons, pass out of his life without the possibility of return.** Meanwhile that he should struggle even by illusions towards that end, is an excellent sign; for it shows that the truth behind the illusion is pressing towards the hour when it may become manifest as reality.





**ONE CAN HOLD THAT, SO LONG AS LIFE
AND MANKIND ARE WHAT THEY ARE,
THERE CAN BE SUCH A THING AS A
RIGHTEOUS WAR,— *DHARMYA YUDDHA*.**

VIOLENCE

M.P. Pandit

We are apt to be too hasty in our judgments. We treat some things as good, desirable and some as bad, condemnable. We do not pause to see if we are not going by surface appearances; we do not take pains to know how and why elements that we dub as evil have come to be. And why are they permitted to exist in this creation?

For truly nothing can exist in creation which is not allowed to be by the Divine. The Divine Will that rules and guides the universe is omnipotent and nothing can stand against it. If the Divine has permitted such things, say violence, to be a part of life there must be reasons for it.

We are certainly not living in an ideal world where all is based on harmony, understanding and unity. The world as it is, is dominated by Falsehood in its several formations, Ignorance, Ego, Desire. Under these circumstances — provisional though they be — violence is inevitable. The anti-elements have their clout in force and it can be countered only by force. At any rate in the present organisation of the world, physical force can be met only by physical force.

Violence can be opposed only by violence. Evil cannot be put down except by putting down those who live by evil and for that purpose use of force, exercise in violence is inescapable. A stage is bound to come, in the course of our evolution in consciousness, when the factors that promote aggression will no longer be there. Naturally defensive violence will no longer be required then. Till that change in the ruling conditions comes over, counter-violence is not only justified but positively called for.

There are some who call for desistance from physical violence but advocate the use of moral pressure on the offending elements. But this is worse. For this moral exercise amounts to coercion, a subtle violence. You force your will upon another obliging him to obey you. In thus forcing another to suppress his will and conform to yours, you are harming his soul. You constrict his freedom of choice in a more effective way and thus interfere with his evolution.

The effects of physical violence are temporary, those of moral violence more lasting. The resentment it builds up in another, the unwilling submission you enforce when you succeed, leave powerful negative vibrations in the atmosphere which will one day tell. They are going to rebound. As a rule, subtler vibrations of this kind are more devastating than the normal emanations of physical violence. They harm both, the person who exerts the pressure and the one who is acted upon. Spiritually it is indefensible, psychologically it is criminal.



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