

WAR

FROM THE THEOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

The theosophical teachings approach the concept of war variously from the karmic, mystical, metaphysical and moral or ethical aspects. War has been an ongoing fact of the human condition for 100,000s if not millions of years, which affects us all in one way or another.

According to the German Enlightenment philosopher Emanuel Kant war is a driving force behind history, a catalyst for change and evolution, as a force of nature. At the same time it also works to restore peace and harmony. Although nearly everybody craves peace why do governments still resort to war to achieve their political and strategic ends. Most wars are over territory, the struggle for land and resources. Often however there is an ideological conflict involved as well. The 2nd World War began as a conflict between two opposing ideologies, i.e. Fascism and Bolshevism, as well as Germany's need for Lebensraum (living space) in the East, and resources. The polarisation of conflicting ideologies was also behind the 40 year long Cold War, which very nearly became a hot war. Civil wars and revolutions are seen to be the most brutal of conflicts, where friends and families are often divided over the struggle for power as well as ideology.

Historically the phenomenon of Holy War or *Jihad* has been the impulse for war, creating the fanatical impulse to impose one particular religious system on others by the use of force, e.g. the early medieval Crusades against Islam. Interestingly the real meaning of the Islamic *Jihad* was the inner personal struggle within oneself for enlightenment, as depicted allegorically in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

According to Theosophy we are thousands of years behind in our evolution. We have developed one-sidedly materialistically our technical and scientific knowledge – as well as our military capacity - while neglecting our moral and spiritual development. The sense of collective morality is a relatively late development in society, but ultimately this is Nature's goal for Man.

So how are we to view war, especially if we are duty bound obliged to take part in it?

THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The epic battle on the *Plain of Kurukshetra* represents allegorically the inner battle with one own lower nature which we are obliged to engage in. We are all Arjunas. Arjuna's duty as a warrior of the Kshatriya caste, as reminded by Krishna, it is to fight. We must allow the warrior within to fight for us.

The key to [understanding] the *Gita* is [...] to look at the poem in its application to a man aspiring to devotion, then the battlefield is the body acquired by Karma and Tanha, thirst for life, while the [...] [Kurus] represent the lower self, and the Pandus the Higher Self, But if it is regarded from the cosmic standpoint, then the Speaker, the plain of the Kuru, the generals described in the first chapter, together with their instruments and weapons, are beings, forces, plains, and planets in the universe[...]. As applied to ourselves the poem is of greater interest and importance: it opens with the battle inevitable between the higher and lower natures of man, and then, from this viewpoint, Krishna, who is the Higher Self, - in order to encourage Arjuna, becomes his instructor in philosophy and right ethics, so that he may be fit to fight and conquer.

The Bhagavad Gita Ch 1 footnote p1&2

Echoing this idea of the inner struggle, we have these words from *The Light on the Path*:

Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest, be not thou the warrior. Look for the warrior and let him fight in thee. Take his orders for battle and obey them. Obey him not as though he were a general, but as though he were thyself, and his spoken words were the utterance of thy secret desires; for he is thyself, only infinitely wiser and stronger than thyself.

Light on the Path p 9/10

“*Vincit qui se vincit*” - “He who conquers himself, conquers all.”

THE TAO TE KING

Lao-Tse approaches the phenomenon of war from the moral and ethical and paradoxical perspective. It is preferable not to engage in actual war at all if possible, but if obliged by one's duty, e.g. if a general or soldier, or a citizen in self defence, then he stipulates clear codes of conduct both during and after the conflict. We will read the chapter on War *The Tao Te King* p 123-125

Other relevant quotes from *The Tao Te King*

‘.....If a great kingdom humbles itself before a small kingdom, it shall make that small kingdom its prize. And if a small kingdom humbles itself before a great

kingdom, it shall win over the great kingdom. Thus the one humbles itself in order to attain, the other attains because it is humble....’ p 112/3

‘The warrior that is strong does not conquer; the tree that is strong is not cut down. Therefore the strong and the big take the lower place; the soft and the weak take the higher place..... There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, yet for attacking things that are hard and strong there is nothing that surpasses it, nothing that can take its place..... The soft overcomes the hard; the weak overcomes the strong. There is no one in the world but knows this truth and no one truth, and no one who can put it into practice.’ p130/1

‘Gentleness brings victory to him who attacks, and safety to him who defends. Those whom heaven would save, it fences round with gentleness.... The best soldiers are not warlike; the best fighters do not lose their temper. The greatest conquerors are those who overcome their enemies without strife. The greatest directors of men are those who yield place to others. This is called the virtue of not striving, the capacity for directing mankind; this is being the compeer of heaven. It was the highest goal of the ancients.’ p 115

‘Were I ruler of a little State with a small population, and only ten or a hundred men available as soldiers, I would not use them. I would have the people look on death as a grievous thing, and they should not travel to distant countries..... Though they might own weapons and armour, they should have no need to use them.’ p 121

WAR IN ATLANTIS

The Enduring Struggle for the Benefit of Humanity

‘The Atlantean civilisation initially developed under the influence of divine dynasties who were the incarnation of spiritual beings, who reached their high condition through effort in previous periods of evolution. Not all of the beings were so highly developed. Some remained too closely allied to their material essence.

This latter group began to exert a degrading influence as the Atlanteans reached the height of their development. Among the latter developed a race of sorcerer adepts. In consequence of this there was continuous warfare between the adepts who were the genuine descendants of the Sons of Will and Yoga of the Third Root Race and the sorcerers of Atlantis. The struggle on the Atlantean continent was finally ended by the cataclysms which destroyed the continent and the sorcerers. The struggle resumed later among the descendants of the Adepts of the right and left hand paths during the Fifth Root Race.’

So could we say that our Fifth Root Race post Diluvian epoch is the direct result

of this war in Atlantis, which prematurely brought an end to that civilisation and consequent earth changes? When the final cataclysm, the deluge struck, they were in the midst of a war. The implication of this is that the struggle goes on now, whether openly, as actual physical warfare or behind the scenes on the inner planes.

THE WAR IN HEAVEN

The misinterpretation of the ‘Fall of the Angels’ in exoteric religious dogma & The Origin of the Human Mind.

The fall of the Angels is the symbolic representation of the great struggles between divine wisdom, *Nous*, and its earthly reflection, *Psyche*, or between Spirit and Soul, in heaven and on Earth. In Heaven because the divine Monad voluntarily exiled itself therefrom, to descend, for incarnating purposes, to a lower plane and thus transform the animal of clay *into an immortal god*. For [...] “The angels aspire to become men; for the perfect man, the man-god, is above even the angels.”

There is more than one interpretation, for there are seven keys to the mystery of the Fall. Moreover there are two “Falls” in theology: the rebellion of the archangels and their Fall, and the “Fall” of Adam and Eve. Thus the lower as well as the higher hierarchies are charged with a supposed crime. [...] Both are considered in Occultism as Karmic effects., and both belong to the Law of Evolution: intellectual and spiritual on the one hand, physical and psychic on the other. The “Fall” is a universal allegory . It sets forth at one end of the ladder of Evolution the rebellion, i.e. The action for differentiating intellection or consciousness of its various planes, seeking union with matter; and at the other , the lower end, the rebellion of matter against spirit, or of action against spiritual inertia. And here lies the germ of an error, which has had such disastrous effects on the intelligence of civilised societies for over 1,800 years. In the original allegory it is matter, hence the more material angels, which was regarded as the conqueror of Spirit, or the Archangels who “fell” on this plane. “They of the flaming sword (or animal passions) had put to flight the Spirits of Darkness.” Yet it is the latter who fought for supremacy of the conscious and divine spirituality on Earth and failed, succumbing to the power of matter.

If man’s uses of life should be neither to animalise nor to spiritualise , but to humanise Self, ” before he can do so he must be born human not angelic. Hence the tradition shows the celestial *Yogis* offering themselves as voluntary victims in order to redeem with human affections and aspirations. To do this they had to give up their natural status and, descending on our globe, take up their abode on it for the whole cycle of the Mahayuga, thus exchanging their impersonal individualities for the individual personalities – the bliss of sidereal existence for the curse of terrestrial life. This voluntary sacrifice of the Fiery Angels, whose nature was *Knowledge and Love*, was construed by exoteric theologies into a statement that shows “The rebel angels hurled down from heaven into the darkness of Hell” - our Earth.