

V. The Imperative before us

“..He would guide the world, himself he cannot guide.”[†]

The ‘they’ versus ‘us’ conflict

All the wars that we observe the world over seem distant or separate from us. They tend to be at best a subject, an issue, worthy of having an opinion on maybe, but not anything more. And this suffices partly because there is an apparent divide, a gulf between the people and events that we see engaged in war, and ourselves. ‘They’ are actively in it, and we, being on the sidelines, are by definition, passive – onlookers only. The pain and frustration of not being able to ‘do’ anything we ascribe to this passivity. But do we have a part to play on the world-stage? Or are we only meant to watch the play?

It would depend on how we see ourselves relative to everyone else. And along these lines, we could even ask- is there some truth to this ‘one Self in all’ of the ancients? ¹

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to look at the one ‘self’ we are most familiar with: Aham

‘I’ insist, because what I say is obviously the whole truth on the matter and there can be nothing else simultaneously true. In fact, by your very opposition to me, you must be wrong. And because I am separate and distinct from you, I must assert myself - it’s either you or me.

How much strife do we owe to this behavior? We know war to be a shock to the nerves, an unpleasant disturbance to the otherwise stable rhythm of our rich egoistic lives. As seen in the aggregate, man has a warring tendency within that he owes to his egoistic aggressiveness, whether subtle or obvious. This tendency or characteristic is so fundamental, that it has defied all the restraints of committees, resolutions and movements. The inevitable road-block appears to be less this or that reason or circumstance, but more our natural unchecked tendency towards self-assertion.

What we see at work in ourselves is but a microcosm of people and events ‘outside’ of us. Perhaps we should be less surprised if states and nations behave the way we do. Their representatives evince tendencies that aren’t particularly different from attributes that we ourselves exhibit.

¹ If there is, it would have everything to do with this study of war. The reference to “the one Self in all” is to the following line from [Book 2, pp 632]

“..there is a secret unity between our self and the self of others and therefore between our own lives and the lives of others”

In fact, there is an evocative line from a commentary on the Isha Upanishad : “The sense that this is I and that is you...so long as the difference between I and you exists, hatred cannot cease..war cannot cease..”

A self-interested economic throat-cutting is a ground richly fertile for war, if not a state of war itself. The mechanism differs, the end result is still pain and suffering.[†]

“Destruction is always a simultaneous or alternate element which keeps pace with creation and it is by destroying and renewing that the Master of Life does his long work of preservation.”

“..In the actual life of man intellectual, social, political, moral we can make no real step forward without a struggle, a battle between what exists and lives and what seeks to exist and live and between all that stands behind either.”

“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”

“So long as national egoisms live and are held sacred and there is no final check on their inherent instinct of expansion, war will be always a possibility and almost a necessity of the life of the human peoples. If national armies exist, the possibility, even the certainty of war will exist along with them.”

“While man remains what he is, force in spite of all idealisms and generous pacific hopes must remain the ultimate arbiter and governor of his life and its possessor the real ruler.”

“what is within us, must manifest itself outside”

*For war to cease to become a possibility,
it must become psychologically impossible.*

[†] Here is a fairly well-researched piece that outlines how this very economic throat-cutting has caused (and continues to cause) starvation and ultimately, death : “The great hunger lottery - How banking speculation causes food crises” - July 2010, World Development Movement. Full [report](#)

The question for us then boils down to something very fundamental - for our part, the side of the human equation that is directly in our hands, if we truly wish to change anything - are we willing to do any inner work?

'No' is of course an option, a tried and tested almost default option that leaves us with a lifetime of arm-chair criticism of people, events and how things 'should be'. Option B on the other hand, is essentially what ancient wisdom has long known, and silently continues to offer as the way forward, if it even has bandwidth to be considered - an option that isn't blessed as being 'scientifically proven' or given the 'go' by modern day yogis¹ - but has existed through the ages :

To divert our warring instincts towards self-conquest

self-conquest

ⁱ Sri Aurobindo, "*Savitri - A Legend and a Symbol*", pp 337

¹ 'Subject-matter experts', think-tanks, scientists, essentially everyone that has a license to stake a monopoly claim on truth.