

**MEHER BABA**

**ON**

**WAR**

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**AVATAR MEHER BABA**



## INTRODUCTION

The agitation in the minds of people over the Chinese invasion of India was voiced by a reporter of the Maharashtra Times to Meher Baba at 'Guru-Prasad,' Poona, on 4th November 1962 during the Gathering of His lovers from all parts of the world.

The reporter asked : What will be the out-come of the India-China dispute; who will be victorious ?

And Baba replied : As the Avatar of the age I have taken birth in India, so victory will be eventually for India.

When one is agitated it is not the time to enquire into the deeper issue of causes. But now that the wave of invasion has receded, a study of a Discourse by Meher Baba on 'The Origin and Effects of War' should be highly profitable—for war is a constant occurrence in the affairs of men, and since men must fight, it is well that we should at least know why we fight.



## ORIGINS AND EFFECTS OF WAR

The basic causes of the social turmoil that often precipitates into war, may be found in the individual, the social whole, the functioning of *maya* and in the very intent of God's will. Inasmuch as these are essentially one in the final analysis, this means no more than that war is a part of the divine pattern. Insofar as war affects the individual, however, it must be understood at all the levels within illusion from which it is precipitated.

The first is the level of the individual himself. It may readily be seen that most persons are immersed in their own egos and selfish viewpoints. This is the life of illusory values in which men are caught. If man were to face the truth he would understand that all life is one, and in this understanding, forget the limiting self.

But man does not face the truth, regarding himself as separate from and competing with the rest of mankind. This attitude often breeds a concept of personal happiness that creates lust for power, unbridled greed and unrelieved hatred.

Ignorant of the real purpose of life, many persons sink to the lowest level of culture, burying themselves in and contributing to the decay of forms lingering on from the dead past. Bound by material interest and a limited viewpoint, they forget their divine destiny.



They have truly lost their way, and so they lay savagely about themselves, for their hearts are torn by fear and hate.

The second level from which wars are bred is that of the social whole. Here, economic pressures are often cited as a major cause. Also, resistance to aggression seems a reasonable cause.

It would be an illusion within illusion, however, to claim that wars arise merely to secure material adjustment. They are more often the product of uncritical identification with narrow interests which, through association, finally come to be regarded as one's sole rights. To profess that humanity's problem is merely that of bread is to reduce humanity to the level of animality.

If man chooses to set himself the limited task of securing purely material adjustment, he must understand and be guided by the spiritual ramifications of this simple goal. Economic adjustment cannot be divorced from a spiritual context. Economic adjustment can be achieved only as people realize that there can be no planned cooperative action in economic matters without the replacing of self-interest with self-giving love. Failing this fundamental requisite, the attainment of the highest efficiency in production will only lead to a further sense of insufficiency and new conflict. A profound spirit of self-giving love must



underlie all effort to solve and remove the economic pressures leading towards war.

While material adjustment can only be regarded as a part of the wider problem of spiritual adjustment, spiritual adjustment in turn requires the elimination of self. It must be removed from all those phases which affect the intellectual, emotional and cultural life of man.

It may readily be seen then that a solution to the individual and social factors underlying war rests upon the spiritual enlightenment of the individual. This need not mean that wars are inevitable as long as the ego-self of the individual continues to ride rampant in the cultural and economic areas of life, for war is only the most explosive gross manifestation of the combined egocentricity of mankind. But conflict of one sort or another is inevitable until the ego-self is finally tamed and eliminated.

As man faces the truth and begins to appreciate that all humanity, nay all creation, is one, the problem of wars will commence to disappear. Wars must be so clearly seen by all to be both unnecessary and unreasonable that the immediate problem will not be to stop wars, but to wage them spiritually against the attitude of mind which generated them.

In the light of the truth of the unity of all, a cooperative and harmonious life becomes inevitable. Thus the chief task for those who

set out to rebuild humanity after a great war is to do their utmost to dispel the spiritual ignorance that envelopes humanity.

The disease of selfishness in mankind will need a cure that is not only universal in application, but drastic in nature. Selfishness is so deep-rooted that it can be eradicated only by being attacked from all sides. Real peace and happiness will dawn spontaneously when selfishness is purged. The peace and happiness that come from self-giving love are permanent. Even the worst sinner can become a great saint if he has the courage and sincerity to invite a drastic and complete change of heart.

The levels from which war springs have not yet been exhausted. The third is that of *maya*. When truly understood, all conflicts and wars are also seen to be a part of the divine game. They are thus a result of the divine will, which finds expression in the world of manifestation, through the medium of *maya*—the cosmic power that causes the illusory world of duality to appear as real.

The purpose served by *maya* is twofold : (1) it can be instrumental in trapping the mind in the duality of illusion, and (2) it can also be instrumental in freeing the mind from the grip of spiritual ignorance and bondage. *Maya* should not be ignored; it must be handled with detachment and understanding. Wars are the work of *maya*, and are either spiritually

disastrous or beneficial depending on whether they are based on attachment to or detachment from the hold of *maya*.

The final level from which the causes of war spring is no level at all, for it is a part of the divine plan of God to give to a hungry and weary world a fresh dispensation of the eternal and only truth. During war, great forces of destruction are afoot which at times might seem to be dominant. But constructive forces for the redemption of humanity are also released through various channels. Though the working of these latter forces is largely silent, eventually they are bound to bring about the transformations that will render safe and steady the further spiritual progress of humanity.

Regardless of the political and economic factors described by the historian as he looks at war in retrospect, from the spiritual point of view this sanguine phenomenon is a cyclic divine ferment over which no earthly power has control.

There are always two aspects of Divinity that are eternally active in the affairs of the world. In Persian, the destructive aspect of Divinity is termed "self-glorification", and the constructive aspect "self-beatitude". When the "self-glorification" aspect of God predominates, there is destruction and suffering on a colossal scale, as in the last world war. The aspect of "divine beatitude" on the other hand brings

peace and plenty. These are usually the golden ages of civilization.

During the phase of "self-glorification", Divinity repels Itself, so to speak, through Its own creation, while in the phase of "self-beatitude" Divinity attracts or loves Itself through Its own creation. The former is a negative method, the latter positive. Both must be regarded ultimately as instruments of divine wisdom to rouse humanity to its divine heritage of self-realization. When the individual or the race is about to lapse into bestiality, it is suffering that rehabilitates them.

Both the "self-glorification" and "self-beatitude" phases of God are exerted in cyclic waves and affect individuals and the race with similar intensity. As the destructive phase now begins to weaken, the constructive cycle of "divine beatitude" will gradually make itself felt.

Just as the recent world (war) catastrophe overwhelmed the innocent as well as the guilty, so in the approaching "self-beatitude" phase the undeserving as well as the deserving will have equal chance of receiving divine grace provided they are awake to the situation, so full and unique a cyclic dispensation it will be.

Ethics in time of war can only be judged by the degree to which they reflect the divine plan. In war there are two kinds of forces operative : (1) those which make for love, justice, harmony and the well-being of all



mankind, and (2) those which work in alliance with narrow racial and national loyalties towards the selfish exploitation of others. Nevertheless, although the last great war brought great suffering and destruction upon millions of people, it was not in vain, for out of its chaos there will emerge a new world of freedom, happiness and understanding.

He who would wage war must search his heart and make sure that the ends for which he is fighting are a reflection of the divine plan. His actions will be justified only if they help to lead humanity to spiritual brotherhood cemented by an inviolable sense of the unity of all human beings, regardless of class, colour, nationality, race, religion or creed.

One might ask how it is that at one time the causes of war seem rooted in individual human selfishness, at another in racial and economic pressures which transcend the individual, and at still another in the divine plan of God. And how can the individual help by striving to whittle down his own ego, if the outlines of war already exist in God's text of the past and the future ?

The answer to this sincere query had best be offered by means of an analogy. One's eyes see that an apple has a rosy colour, and it is said that the apple is red. One's nose may savor the aroma of the apple, and the apple is said to smell fragrant. When one takes the apple in one's hands, its skin is found to be

smooth and cool, and when one bites into it, the apple is found to be sweet and succulent.

All these sensations are coordinated in some fashion by one's consciousness into the notion of *one* apple that has *many* attributes. Its succulence is no more to be denied a place in the "reality" of the apple than is its aroma or its colour. It is recognized intuitively that all traits belong to the same apple, despite the fact that the sensations enter consciousness through different windows. Whether the object exists partially or totally in the realm of reality, or only in illusion, is of little interest for the purposes of the analogy.

The "reality" of the apple, then, has many separate facets, as interpreted by one's senses. One suspects that it would have even more if only the mind were not limited in its perceptual capability by the types and location of the "windows" that open into it.

Just as the apple possesses a variety of unarguable properties, all of which belong to the same object, so other objects and organisms often give evidence of numerous aspects of reality. The same fact in life looks different therefore to different people, its appearance being determined by the particular window of the spiritual nature from which the individual looks.

From this emerges one vital principle: each person must look at cause and effect from the window that is natural to him. To try to see through all windows is to risk stagnation in the

complexity of a whirlpool of intellectual facts that can never be integrated by intellectual means. To try to argue another out of the seeming world of reality that he sees from his window is to argue the unarguable. Roundness is as real to the apple as is fragrance, until one day both are lost in perception of the entirety.

So also it will seem to some that the causes of war lie wholly within the responsibility of the individual. For others, society will be the cause. Still others will see the hand of *maya*, and some will see the will of God.

During a war there are persons who unveil their inherent higher self through the endurance of pain, and by acts of bravery and self-sacrifice. It is better that such unselfish action be released under the stimulus of danger than not released at all. It is better that men forget their petty selves under the pressure of collective calamity, if need be, then remain permanently absorbed in fear and greed.

Great suffering awakens great understanding in man. Supreme suffering fulfills its purpose when it awakens him finally to genuine longing for real understanding. Unprecedented suffering leads to unprecedented spiritual results. It contributes to the basing of life on an unshakeable foundation of truth.

The individual must understand fully his identity with the supreme universal Soul. Having perceived this truth, he will find that his life rearranges spontaneously so that his



attitude towards his neighbour in everyday life becomes different. Then he will act upon the spiritual value of oneness, which promotes true cooperation.

Brotherhood is a spontaneous outcome of true perception. The new life for the individual is based upon spiritual understanding and is an affirmation of spiritual practicality in the truth.

Just as war is not an unmixed evil for the individual, so it may have certain forward-propelling effects on humanity as a whole. The destructiveness of war tends to bring humanity to a spiritual crisis born of the physical nightmare. Inevitably suffering and misery pose the question of what it all leads to, how it will all end. Gradually people become sick of wanting and sick of fighting. Greed and hatred finally reach such an intensity that everyone becomes weary of them. Then mankind begins to suspect that the only way out is through selflessness. The only alternative to war and its suffering is seen to be to stop hating and to love, to stop wanting and to give, to stop dominating and to serve.

Wars require the exercise of cooperative functioning, and in this resides one positive result. Still, the value of this cooperation should not be overestimated, for too often it is artificially restricted by identification with a limited group or ideal.

Often wars are carried on by a form of love, but a love that has not been properly understood. In order that love may come into its own it must be free, untrammelled and unlimited. Love exists in all phases of human life, but usually it is latent; or it is limited and poisoned by personal ambition, racial pride, narrow loyalties and rivalries, and attachment to sex, nationality, sect, caste or religion. For the resurrection of humanity the heart of man must be unlocked so that unadulterated love may be manifested in it—a love uncorrupted and free from “me” and “mine”.

People who make unlimited sacrifices for the sake of their country or political ideology are also capable of the same sacrifices for God and the truth. As war teaches that even the man in the street can rise to the greatest heights of sacrifice for a selfless cause it also teaches that all the mundane things of the world—wealth, possessions, power, fame, family and even the very tenor of life on earth—are transitory and devoid of lasting value.

In this manner the incidents of war also win man over for God through the lessons they bring. It is now high time that universal suffering should hasten humanity to the turning point in its spiritual history. It is now high time that the very agonies of our times should become a means for the bringing of real understanding of human relationship. It is now high time for humanity to face squarely the true

causes of the catastrophe of war. It is now high time to seek a new experience of reality. It is high time that men have a fresh vision that all life is one in God, who alone is real and all that matters. God is worth living for, and He is worth dying for; all else is a vain and empty pursuit of illusory value.

War is a necessary evil that is in God's plan to awaken humanity to its destiny as the new humanity. The time is now ripe. Men are ardently seeking to contact the embodiment of the truth in the form of a God-man, through whom they can be inspired and lifted into spiritual understanding. In this critical time of universal suffering men are becoming ready to turn towards their higher self and to fulfill the will of God.

They will accept the divine guidance and love which alone can bring about spiritual awakening. Divine love will perform the supreme miracle of bringing God into the hearts of the new humanity and of establishing them in a true, and therefore a lasting, happiness. Divine love will satisfy the greatest longings of mankind, make men selfless and helpful in their mutual relations, and ultimately resolve all problems. The new brotherhood on earth will be a fulfilled fact and nations will be united in the fraternity of love and truth.

What will be some of the characteristics of the new humanity that will emerge from the travail of the present? It will of course heed

science and its practical attainments. It is a mistake to look upon science as opposed to the spirit. Science is a help or hindrance to spirituality depending upon the use to which it is put. Just as healthy art is the outflowing of spirituality, so science when properly handled can be the expression and fulfillment of the spirit.

Scientific truths about the physical body and its life in the gross world can become a medium for the soul to know itself. However, if they are to serve this purpose, they must be fitted properly into a greater spiritual understanding that includes a steady insight into true and enduring values. In the absence of such spiritual understanding, scientific achievements are likely to be used destructively, thereby strengthening rather than weakening the chains which bind the spirit. The balanced progress of humanity can be assured only if science and religion proceed hand in hand.

The coming civilization of the new humanity will not be ensouled by dry intellectual doctrine, but by living spiritual experience.

It will be free from a life of limitation and will enjoy unhampered the creative life of the spirit. It will break away from attachment to external form and learn to live by the claims of the spirit. The limited life of illusion will be replaced by unlimited life in the truth, and the limitations by which the separative self



lives will wither away at the touch of true understanding.

Spiritual experience has a grip on deeper truths that are inaccessible to intellect. Spiritual truths can often be stated through the intellect, and intellect is certainly of some help in the communication of spiritual experience, but by itself the intellect is insufficient to bring spiritual experience to man or to allow him to communicate it to others.

If two persons have had headaches they can use the intellect to discuss their mutual experience. But if one of them has never had a headache, no amount of intellectual explanation will ever tell him what a headache is. A man must have had a headache to know truly what it is, and in order that he understand it, he may have to be hit on the head. Intellectual explanation can never be a substitute for spiritual experience. At best it can only prepare the ground for that experience.

The fact that spiritual experience involves more than intellect alone can grasp is often emphasized by calling it a mystical experience. Mysticism is frequently regarded as opposed to intellectuality—obscure, confused, impractical, unconnected with reality—but in fact true mysticism is none of these. There is nothing irrational in true mysticism when it is, as it should be, a vision of reality. It is a form of perception that is absolutely unclouded, so practical that it can be lived in every moment of

life, and so deeply connected with experience that, in a sense, it is the final understanding of all experience.

When spiritual experience is described as mystical, one should not assume that it involves something unnatural or beyond the grasp of consciousness. The only implication is that the experience cannot be comprehended by the limited human intellect unless it transcends its limits and is illumined by direct realization of the Infinite.

The spiritual understanding that will enliven the new humanity can never fail to accept the stern realities of life and its demands. Those who cannot adapt readily to life tend to recoil from it and to look to a fortress of self-created illusions for protection. Such a reaction is an attempt to perpetuate one's separate existence by protecting it from the demands made by life. At best this can only give a seeming solution by providing a false sense of safety arising from a false sense of self-sufficiency. It does not even constitute progress towards a final solution. On the contrary, it is a side-track from the true path.

Again and again, fresh and irresistible waves of life will beat upon man and dislodge him from the illusory shelters within which he hides. He will only invite fresh forms of suffering upon himself by trying through escape to preserve his separative existence. Only when he faces

about, awakened and supple, will he find himself clothed in the security of the inner self.

Just as the individual may try to preserve his sense of separative individuality by escape, so he may also try to retain it through an uncritical identification with forms and rituals, or with traditions and conventions. All these are preponderantly fetters which restrain the release of infinite life. If they were a plastic medium that might be readily moulded and suffused by unlimited life, they would be an asset in fulfilling the divine life on earth. Generally, though, they tend to gather prestige in their own right and to develop independently of the life they were intended to express. When this happens, all attachment to them eventually entails a drastic restriction of life.

Even as the individual may try to hold onto his separative existence through escape into self-created illusions, so he may also attempt to hold onto it by identification with some narrow class, creed, sect or religion, or by division based upon sex. He may seem to have lost his separative existence through identification with a larger whole, but more often this identification becomes a means of expressing his separative existence. This he accomplishes through feeling separate from those who belong to another class, nationality, creed, sect, religion or sex. Thus his sense of separation from the contrasting group is more fundamental than his sense of



identification with the members of his own group.

The strength, in fact the very being, of separative existence is derived from identification of the self with one of two opposites. This results automatically in distinction from the other opposite. Real merging of the limited self can only be achieved in the ocean of universal life. This involves the surrender of all sense of contra-distinction in form, belief or action, the surrender of all separative existence in all categories.

The large mass of humanity is deeply enmeshed in these separative and assertive tendencies, and one who looks on at this spectacle is bound to feel the blackest despair. It is true that the readily observable forces of lust, hate and greed cause incalculable suffering, but even in the most passionately disruptive forces there is some form of redemptive love. Buried in the muck of human misery are seed pearls of the greatest perfection, and these precious gems of individual action and feeling are not lost, but require only threading on the strong cord of spiritual knowledge.

Those who despair for mankind, and particularly in time of war, should know that real possibilities for the new humanity exist, and they will come into being through a release of love in measureless abundance. This release of love can come through spiritual awakening brought about by the masters.

Love can never be born of mere determination; through the exercise of will one can be dutiful at best. Through struggle and persistence it is possible to mould external action to conform to one's concept of right, but such results are spiritually barren because they lack, the inner warmth of real love. Love and coercion can never sit side by side holding hands.

Love springs spontaneously from within, but although love can never be forced from or upon another, it can be awakened through love itself. Essentially, love is self-communicative : those who do not have it catch it from those who have it, for one cannot absorb love without making a response. Regardless of the barnacles which may cover the surface, the response is stamped by the nature of love.

The secret of true love is that it is unconquerable and irresistible. Even the one who resists its approach is lost as he springs to plug the hole through which it is flowing past the walls of his heart. It races behind him and he turns only in time to find himself surrounded and born aloft on its irresistible might.

True love gathers power and spreads itself until it transforms everyone it touches. Humanity will attain to a new mode of life through the unhampered interplay of pure love, as it spreads from heart to heart.

When it has been recognized that there are no claims greater than those of the uni-

versal divine life that encompasses all, then love will establish peace, harmony and happiness in all of the social spheres, and it will shine forth over all in its own unequalled purity and beauty. Divine love cannot be dimmed by the clouds of duality, for it is an expression of Divinity Itself.

It is through this very divine love that the new humanity will tune itself to the divine note. Divine love will not only introduce imperishable sweetness and infinite bliss into personal life, but it will also be the means by which the new humanity will be made possible. Through divine love the new humanity will learn the art of co-operative and harmonious life; it will free itself from the tyranny of dead forms and release the creative life of spiritual wisdom; it will shed all illusions and become established in truth; it will enjoy peace and abiding happiness; it will be initiated into the life of eternity.

It has been said that war cannot be considered entirely bad, although it can hardly be considered entirely good either. There are deep-seated reasons for the occurrence of war, and when one finds oneself in the middle of the holocaust, it is helpful to have a few guiding principles.

People should face the circumstances of war with courage and the faith that no sacrifice is too great when the call of duty is clear. In the event of aggressive attack, all must



resist it by direct combat if there is no alternative. But as each individual makes such resistance, he must be certain that he is motivated solely by a sense of duty, without hatred or bitterness towards the aggressor, who has acted out of spiritual ignorance.

Further, he must not be insensitive to the suffering inflicted. On the contrary, he must render every possible aid to the victims of war.

The fact that a person is a spiritual aspirant does not release him from his duty to the social whole. This may involve some deep soul searching, because spiritual aspirants tend to be indifferent to war on the grounds that most wars are actuated by purely material considerations.

It is a mistake to divorce spirituality from material considerations, for the latter have some spiritual importance. It is not by ignoring human suffering but by handling it with creative love that the gate is opened to life eternal. It is not through callous indifference, but by active and selfless service that one attains the transcendental and illimitable truth that lies at the heart of the illusory universe.

Spiritual aspirants are rooted in the conviction of the reality and the eternity of the infinite soul. It should be easy for them then to stake life itself on the performance of a duty that springs from the claims of the spirit.

The duty of the spiritually enlightened one is an extension of the duties of the average person

and of the spiritual aspirant. He is alive to the truth that all souls are one, and the role he must play in this game of God's is necessarily determined by the spiritual illumination he has. He performs his duty in co-operation with the divine will. Being in tune with the infinite truth, he is not only free from all thoughts of selfish gain, but also from the backlash of hate, malice and revenge.

War cannot create any real cleavage, even between the people who are fighting against one another. These people seem to be different from one another because they have different minds and bodies, but when judged from the point of view of their souls, all differences are not only secondary but simply false. The spiritual unity of all souls remains inviolable in spite of all wars, and from the point of view of ultimate reality, no soul is really at war with any other soul.

There can be a war between ideologies, which may extend to and involve the minds and even the bodies of the people, but the undivided and indivisible Soul remains One in Its unimpeachable, integral unity.

All those who must undergo the rigors of war have great need for equanimity. It will be profitable to remember that the soul remains unscathed by the destruction of material things, and death itself is only a gateway to further life. Therefore those who would play their part well in the divine game should remain

unmoved by bereavement and loss, imparting to others a spirit of cheerful resignation to the divine will.

Due to lack of spiritual insight, sufferings of war inevitably embitter many persons, and they need to be helped to recover a sense of the unspoilable sweetness of life. Those who have been initiated into the eternal values of inner life must assume the responsibility of driving away unwarranted gloom and depression and cheering those who are in deep sorrow. When crisis is upon one, let one's thoughts not be for self, but for others—for the claims of the divine Self which exists equally in all.

War cannot be justified merely because it brings certain spiritual qualities as by-products, for these qualities can also be developed in time of peace. It is time now for humanity to develop a spontaneous spirit of love and service, rather than require the stimulus provided by danger to precipitate unselfish action.

All should face the crisis of war with patience, fortitude and self-sacrifice, never forgetting that the redemption of a distracted humanity through divine love is much closer than one dreams at such a time.



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