

The Theosophist as the Ideal Citizen In War and In Peace

By C. JINARAJADASA, M. A., Cantab.



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I HAVE used in the title of my discourse four words of profound significance, each of which needs a precise definition: Theosophist, Citizen, War and Peace. Let me define each, but with the avowal that each definition is mine only, and that others may define differently, with different deductions from them all in the end.

THEOSOPHIST

The word is derived from Theosophy, which means the Wisdom of God, or Divine Wisdom. The first half of the word, **Theos**, postulates a Divinity, a Personalized Consciousness, in the usual implication of the word. From that follows the deduction that the universe is never at any moment the result of a mere "fortuitous concourse of atoms," but on the other hand the result of the operations of a Directing Will. From this follows the logical conclusion that that Will operates according to a plan. In brief, a believer in Theosophy accepts as a fact that, in and through all things, a Directing Will is at work, with a Plan of Action from moment to moment towards a predetermined end.

This plan has been given various terms, such as "the Plan of God, which is Evolution," the "Archetypal World," a "Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." The dominating thought is therefore that in and through all things, from an electron to a star, from an amoeba to an angel, there is a Pattern.

A Theosophist, then, is one who has discovered this pattern. That pattern is seen, felt and intuited as existing without him and within him; never an instant but he is conscious that all things are moving to an ordered end, just as a lotus root when buried in mud will, in the process of its ordered growth, inevitably produce the beautiful flower.

Certainly a Theosophist will need more than can all his faculties of heart and mind, to state in terms of words, concepts and emotions what he discovers little by little of the Archetypal Plan. But he is aware of its existence all the time, with the consequence that he grows steadily, both in intuition and in intellectual conviction, that the root of all things and all events is a Principle that is the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. From this intuition, from this vision, he knows past all doubting that he is himself in some measure the Good, the True and the Beautiful. The Theosophist is one who sees the Plan, the Pattern; and where he does not as yet see any part of the pattern, he seeks by study, by meditation, and by aspiration, to see it, to know it directly for himself.

In some measure, to a degree not found in those who are not Theosophists, the Theosophist stands as it were at the center of a revolving wheel, whose spokes are the aspects of life which we call religion, science, art, philosophy, education, business and philanthropy. He is therefore both a Friend of the Wisdom and a Lover of all that lives. He can well state his creed of today in the words used long ago in Egypt:

The Principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

CITIZEN

The Pattern which the Theosophist discovers shows him clearly that he is a unit in a whole, and that he as the unit molds the destiny of the whole, as he himself

as the unit is molded by the drift of the whole. It is to him a perpetual delight to know that he is one brother in a great Brotherhood of all that lives; and a little insight shows him that everywhere, in all points in the universe, there is Life, the same Life in a speck of dust as in a creative Logos.

But to be brother to all that lives means to the Theosophist a responsibility to all that lives. Since the Theosophist is a human being, his supreme responsibility is towards all other beings like himself. The concept of a Universal Brotherhood of all Mankind passes from being a mere intellectual ideal into an ever-present, ever-driving Reality.

It is from this realization of an interlinking of all mankind, and in a very precise manner the interlinking of man and man within any community, whether small like a village, or large like a nation, that the reality underlying the word "citizen" derives its implications of responsibility, duty and sacrifice. The Theosophist knows, by his knowledge of the Pattern, that men have not come together to form communities because of greed or for the purposes of self protection; but that they have come together primarily because they are to be mutually helpful, each to give what he can to the others, and to receive from them what he needs, and to help to release in every other the Goodness, Love and Beauty that lie hidden in the heart of every man, woman and child.

It is towards this goal that the Great Plan has fostered civilization from savage to civilized; therefore the word "civilized" connotes the duties of Citizenship. Among these duties are "a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked," to protect the weak against exploitation by the strong, and to release the hidden Beauty of the Divine in all men and things, by aiding in the development of the sciences and the arts, and by all ways which appeal to the Highest in man, and which bind man to man and nation to nation.

Inseparable from a high ideal of Citizenship is the virtue of tenderness and compassion. Beautifully has this ideal been placed before us by H. P. Blavatsky in these well-known words:

Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye.

But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain; nor ever brush it off until the pain that caused it is removed.

These tears, O thou of heart most merciful, these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal.

WAR

It is when the ideal of "charity immortal" has been woven into the inmost texture of a man's being that he knows how to approach intelligently the problem of war—war that is the negation of all charity. For the Theosophist realizes, since he has seen the Pattern which "mightily and sweetly ordereth all things," that his first duty is not to solve the difficult problem of whether war is justifiable or not, but to defend those who are unjustly attacked, and to aid to deliver them, as best he can and in his limited measure, by thrusting back the oppressors within his nation or without in the world, who stamp upon human aspirations, and who try to chain men in their thousands or millions into a bondage of servile obedience under the threat of dire pain, mutilation and death.

To every Theosophist who thinks sanely, the problem of war is not the problem far away: "Am I finally helping mankind to continue in a state of darkness?", but the immediate problem: "Are those who are nearest to me, of my community or nation, who are a part of me, and of whom I am a part, to be allowed to be crushed by fear, to be made to despair by the loss of all their hopes and dreams, while I stand by looking

on, troubled in mind and heart before a world that is not ideal yet, which has not yet realized Universal Brotherhood?"

It is noble to dream of a perfect world; and there are times when we must sacrifice everything to our dreams (and life itself is little at best when it comes to sacrifice). But there are times too when to contemplate a dream far away means to prevent that dream from coming nearer, by blindness to the fact that the Ideal is slowly realizing itself by actions in men's hearts and minds, that the Ideal requires the destruction of the present in order that the future may more reveal the Ideal. Ideals are not mere ideas; they are Creative Powers. And he who is ready to sacrifice for his Ideal must not be blind to the fact that there are times when he must sacrifice even all his cherished convictions which he has regarded as his Ideal, when he must allow the Creative Powers to create through him, even though in the process his heart and mind are wracked into pieces. For, pity for a few may mean an ultimate cruelty to all.

But all these complicated problems whether war is right or wrong are approachable from a different angle, when it is once realized that war does not mean death, in the sense that when a man dies he loses all that is precious. The simple fact that the Soul of man is Spirit and can never die, whether in the battlefield or in the home—for death is merely a release of the Spirit from its fleshly garment—gives a completely new aspect to the destruction of human lives on the battlefields of the wars. We have that truth thus in the noble words of **The Bhagavad Gita:**

Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;
Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are
dreams!

Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the
spirit forever;

Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the
house of it seems!

Who knoweth it exhaustless, self-sustained,
Immortal, indestructible,—shall such
Say, "I have killed a man, or caused to kill?"

Nay, but as when one layeth
His worn-out robes away,
And, taking new ones, sayeth,
"These will I wear today!"
So putteth by the spirit
Lightly its garb of flesh,
And passeth to inherit
A residence afresh.

Is it always so "tragic to lose one's life?" Shall we see and note? On January 1, 1940 this was reported in England:

Mrs. Nellie Cath, 32, and Mr. Ernest Bewell lost their lives in a vain attempt to rescue Leslie Harvey, 11, who fell into Ravenscliffe Dam, Fogley Woods, Bradford.

And two days later this:

Survivors of the Fleetwood trawler Barbara Robertson, sunk by a German submarine, state that J. Clark, deck hand, of Wetton-terrace, Hull, was killed while going back to rescue ship's cat. He was the only casualty.

What hundreds of cases of self-sacrifice and heroism in times of peace, and of thousands now in times of war, do we not read, are we not thrilled by, towards a loftier vision of the nobility and greatness of man? Certainly the hero loses his or her life, but only to discover what is infinitely more precious than the body's life, which is the nature of his or her own soul. I had rather a thousand times be one of these who, as the saying goes, "loses his life," than not be given such opportunities to shine forth for once in my innate nobility, and not live on in undisturbed tranquillity, wrapped in my own plans of happiness and success. For, truly did Giordano Bruno say, "To know how to die in one century is to live in all centuries to come."

It is not death that matters, whether on the battlefield or in bed; what matters is **how** we die. To die in a battle for what one believes to be right (never mind whether that belief is rightly based or not, but to die for the sake of something **greater** than one's self), to die in a home or hospital but still flying the flag of one more ideal service to be rendered to one's fellowmen, this is death of the body truly, but also a release of the hidden powers of the Soul. Therefore so wonderfully has the Great One said, He Who is the Lord of Compassion, and Who would not desire that a tiny blade of grass should be trodden under foot unless the Great Pattern desired that the life of that blade should be reborn as a more shapely blade, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Is War, that in these days blows to pieces combatant and citizen alike, that disrupts the structure of civilization, the **cause** of suffering and evil, or is War only the **effect** of antecedent evil and cruelty? Horror-struck by the evils of war when it suddenly descends, men do not inquire whether perhaps a war is not due to ourselves for the way we have lived in the "piping times of peace." Have we piped and been merry, thinking only of ourselves, blind to the misery around? We denounce the armament manufacturers, the financial magnates, as the producers of wars, not realizing that these men are only ourselves in another form, in very truth the creation of our own civilization, from the benefits of which we are glad to profit, but to whose evils we are glad to be blind lest they disturb our placidity.

But all mankind is one chain; this is what the Theosophist realizes. And above all, the evil that comes as cruelty in deed existed first as cruelty in thought somewhere. We do not realize that each angry thought of ours, yours and mine, not the other fellow's, gives birth in some inventor's mind to a new design for a death-dealing weapon. We blame the makers of these

weapons and the promoters who float their companies; these merely light the fuse to the heaps of ammunition which we have created and laid down. Tennyson with his poet's vision saw the true foundations of the so-called "peace" of our days, how it is the callousness of the ordinary self-righteous citizen who prates of "peace" that makes wars inevitable. The industrial conditions which Tennyson described eighty-seven years ago have changed little today; they are better in some lands, but in others they are as Tennyson describes.

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,
 When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex,
 like swine,
 When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie;
 Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a company forges the
 wine.

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's head,
 Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the trampled wife,
 And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for
 bread,
 And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life,
 And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the villainous centre-
 bits
 Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless nights,
 While another is cheating the sick of a few last gasps, as
 he sits
 To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights.

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee.
 And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's bones,
 Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war by land and by
 sea,
 War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred
 thrones.

And let me here narrate the story of St. Francis of Assisi and the wolf of Gubbio. The story appears in

the **Little Flowers of St. Francis** as one of his miracles. There lived in the hills near the town of Gubbio a fearful wolf, who destroyed the flocks of the shepherds, descending even to the town to seek his prey. St. Francis went out to seek him; he remonstrated with the wolf for the injuries he was doing to men. The wolf replied that he had to live. Francis then asked if arrangements were made for his sustenance, would the wolf cease to prey on the flocks of men? The wolf agreed. Whereupon Francis returned to Gubbio, the wolf following him; he there called a gathering of the citizens and called upon them to promise to give regular rations to the wolf. They agreed, and the wolf on his side put his paw in Francis' hand and swore on his part to keep the pact. And Francis went away, and the wolf and the citizens lived in amity thereafter. Such is the story in **Little Flowers**.

But Ruben Dario, the brilliant poet of Nicaragua continues the tale, as follows:

When the Divine Saint returned to the city all sought him with complaints and lamentations and testified with a thousand grievances to what they had suffered and lost from that infamous and devilish wolf. St. Francis became very grave, and proceeded to the mountain to find the treacherous and blood-thirsty wolf. And when he came to the wolf's lair he addressed the beast: "In the name of the Father of the whole universe, I demand, O perverse wolf, that you answer me; why have you returned to evil? Answer. I listen." Then in a raucous voice the animal replied, his mouth foaming and with menacing eyes: "Francis, my Brother, come not too near. There in the convent I lived tranquil, and whenever I went forth among the people they gave me to eat and I was content and lived tamed. But I began to see that in all their homes dwelt Envy, Passion and Anger, and that all faces were lit with hatred, lust, infamy and lies. Brother made war against brother, the weak were submerged and the wicked made their gains. Man and woman behaved as dog and bitch, and on a certain day they all gave me blows. They saw

me humbled and that I licked their hands and feet. I followed your sacred commandments; all creatures were my brothers—men my brothers, my brothers the cattle, my sisters the stars, and my brothers the worms. But they gave me blows and chased me away, and their laughter was to me like scalding water. Then from my entrails fierceness was reborn and all at once I felt myself once more a wolf of evil, but always better than those evil men. And so I commenced here again my combats, to defend myself and to gain my sustenance as does the bear and the jackal, who must kill in order to live. Leave me alone in my mountain, leave me in my lair, leave me to live with my freedom. And you, Brother Francis, return to your convent; proceed on your road with your holiness.”

The Saint of Assisi answered him not a word. He gazed upon him with a look of penetration and departed in tears and in despair, and spoke in his heart unto the Eternal God. The wind of the woods carried up his prayer; it was: “Our Father which art in Heaven . . . ”

PEACE

Each war ends at last, tragically for the conquered and sometimes equally tragically for the conqueror. But is the peace that follows of such a sort that it is a mirror of that peace of the Divine “which passeth understanding?”

The first fact which we need to realize about what men term “peace” is that peace does not mean utter tranquillity, like the tranquillity of a pool whose surface is not ruffled by wind. It is on such a surface that scum forms and the water becomes polluted. True peace means always activity, but it is activity different in spirit from the activities of war. War’s activities are intense, and never for a moment still; so are those of peace. The difference lies in that war’s activities, strenuous as they are, have hatred at their root. The activities of peace—of a peace that is rightly conceived—are no less strenuous but the element of hatred is absent. But that does not mean that the activities of

peace meet no opposition. Resistance to any action is the very structure of our universe. True peace means effort to reconstruct, to reveal, to release, to surmount obstacles; intense strenuousness characterizes the true ways of peace.

To the Theosophist, peace means that organization of human society in which the Divine Pattern becomes daily more and more manifest to the observant mind and the sensitive intuition. And it is the function of peace to so organize human institutions that day by day more and more of the children of men become eager to cooperate with the Divine Plan.

The Plan is steadily molding all mankind's institutions; it plans new inventions, new industries, new ways of commerce; step by step it ushers in new sciences and arts. Prophets and poets are its messengers to tell the people of an ideal civilization where the Divine Pattern shall be recognized as the structure of all things; scientists are inspired to discover new laws, philosophers to build new syntheses, artists to tell how the "real" can be fashioned to mirror the "ideal," and organizers are taught how to unbuild and build so that new patterns in the Plan can be revealed. The ways of peace are strenuous ways, and if rightly directed by those in charge, no man, woman or child but is inspired by peace to attempt lovelier creations of the heart and mind.

Peace within a nation means friendliness towards all, even to animals and to plants. Wherever any injustice exists, because it is unheeded, there is no true peace but only its appearance. Truly it was said in India: "The tears of the poor undermine the thrones of kings." Where a single heart cries in pain that can be relieved, peace has left, and war appears on the horizon. Peace is where all men are instinctively aware of cruelty and injustice to man or beast, as a musician is aware of a faulty rhythm or a false note in music.

It is when there is true peace, that men have not only new eyes and ears to see and hear; every sense is

more delicate, and new subtleties, nuances, shadings are found which the senses never found before.

It is a characteristic of true peace that men are happy not only with men; they are restless till they are happy with animals and plants also. Our domestic animals, too, who give us their love and service, tell us of new elements of joy in peace; the very flowers and trees call on us to be one with them and so discover new depths in ourselves.

It is supremely the call of peace to each man that he must create with heart and mind and intuition. It calls on man to use the spade, the mattock, the machine to cultivate the earth, to call upon her to reveal her treasures; it calls on man to revere Nature and to come to her as a child, to receive from her touch peace of heart and mind and the illumination of intuition. It calls on men to be poets, lawgivers, prophets, artists and philosophers.

When such a peace exists, there is little need of gospels to tell man of righteousness, or of the existence of God. For man sees, with every one of his senses, the Pattern on all sides; and he finds no place or thing where the Pattern is not flashing its message of the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

It is with such views on war and peace, with such a vision of the Divine Pattern on high which is reflected in things here below, that the Theosophist puts on the robe of the Ideal Citizen. Because he knows that his body is but a garment, a tool for work; that as the soul he never dies; that come what may he must be true to his highest Self, for it is a part of the Eternal Self; then he acts in life in whatever situation or role that his karma molds for him. And he acts not mechanically, but conscious that out of good he must make a better, and that it is a part of his soul's honor that he must attempt nothing but the best. He may fail again and again; but every failure reminds him of his honor never to slacken his efforts to come to the goal which he has set before him.

Is he called on to fight to defend those unjustly attacked? The true Theosophist springs forward instantly, determined to conquer the evil. He may not succeed, he may lose his life; but he knows that his failure is the stepping stone for another on his way to success. And since all Life is one, he knows that he, too, will share in the greater release of Life-for-all which his failure has made possible.

As the Theosophist so lives his life as the Citizen, bearing the brunt of his karma, shadowed by many a disappointment, but striving each instant "to lift a little of the heavy karma of the world," he obtains a greater reward than riches, titles, honors, even perfect health, can give. It is the increasing joy of others which flows to him because he has been mankind's helper. Greater than even his agony on the cross is the Vision of the Archetypal World; and though karma, ill-health and old age may give him isolation, he feels he is one with all that lives, and that continually they send him their benediction, because he has renounced his self and served.

THE CITIZEN AND TODAY

The ideal citizen in the crisis of today, if he has in any measure seen or sensed the Pattern, can decide only in one way. War is horrible, the bringer of evil; but to refrain from a "righteous war," as **The Bhagavad Gita** describes it, is not merely cowardice, but means also to cooperate in the coming of greater evils for mankind than anything the present war has brought or will bring.

True that always the Everlasting Arms enfold all men with Love and Understanding in their embrace. Those arms have no sense of wrath against such children of men as work against the Great Plan; but nevertheless they sweep them aside, lest the future of mankind as a whole be delayed.

Today, Humanity stands at a parting of the ways. We stand at the middle point of human evolution, in

the middle of the Fourth Round, in the Fifth Root Race, the Aryan, and at the dawning of the Sixth Subrace of the Aryan Race in the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The old era of "strong men," of the dictators who force what they consider the "right" on all men, is passing. The Pattern is weaving a new design, where every man and every woman is called upon to give of his or her best to a joint administration within the Nation, and for the World as a whole, also. Today is the "Great Divide." On the result of this, the second World War, depends whether men will go forwards, or backwards, whether through cowardice we obliterate the Pattern for a while, or through understanding and sacrifice we commit ourselves to the Pattern of the new day. Cost what it will of blood and treasure, of self-sacrifice and weariness, the ideal citizen must go to the end, giving of his strength of brain and eye and arm in the battlefields, and of his means and comforts if he cannot be a combatant.

He, who is "For all Men" first and last, will see his way clearly enough, and will know, directly for himself, that he has found "the Way," when he so acts that one day, in no far off future, "charity immortal" shall be revered by all men as their rule of life on this our sad Earth.
