

Q. 2. Make a précis of the following text and suggest a suitable title.

(20)

In studying the breakdowns of civilizations, the writer has subscribed to the conclusion – no new discovery! – that war has proved to have been the proximate cause of the breakdown of every civilization which is known for certain to have broken down, in so far as it has been possible to analyze the nature of these breakdowns and to account for their occurrence. Like other evils, war has an insidious way of appearing not intolerable until it has secured such a stranglehold upon the lives of its addicts that they no longer have the power to escape from its grip when its deadliness has become manifest. In the early stages of a civilization's growth, the cost of wars in suffering and destruction might seem to be exceeded by the benefits accruing from the winning of wealth and power and the cultivation of the "military virtues"; and, in this phase of history, states have often found themselves able to indulge in war with one another with something like impunity even for the defeated party. War does not begin to reveal its malignity till the war-making society has begun to increase its economic ability to exploit physical nature and its political ability to organize manpower; but, as soon as this happens, the god of war to which the growing society has long since been dedicated proves himself a Moloch by devouring an ever larger share of the increasing fruits of man's industry and intelligence in the process of taking an ever larger toll of life and happiness; and, when the society's growth in efficiency reaches a point at which it becomes capable of mobilizing a lethal quantum of its energies and resources for military use, then war reveals itself as being a cancer which is bound to prove fatal to its victim unless he can cut it out and cast it from him, since its malignant tissues have now learnt to grow faster than the healthy tissues on which they feed.

In the past, when this danger-point in the history of the relations between war and civilization has been reached and recognized, serious efforts have sometimes been made to get rid of war in time to save society, and these endeavours have been apt to take one or other of two alternative directions. Salvation cannot, of course, be sought anywhere except in the working of the consciences of individual human beings; but individuals have a choice between trying to achieve their aims through direct action as private citizens and trying to achieve them through indirect action as citizens of states. A personal refusal to lend himself in any way to any war waged by his state for any purpose and in any circumstances is a line of attack against the institution of war that is likely to appeal to an ardent and self-sacrificing nature; by comparison, the alternative peace strategy of seeking to persuade and accustom governments to combine in jointly resisting aggression when it comes and in trying to remove its stimuli before hand may seem a circuitous and unheroic line of attack on the problem. Yet experience up to date indicates unmistakably, in the present writer's opinion, that the second of these two hard roads is by far the more promising.

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War: The End of Civilizations

While examining the falls of civilizations, the author has discovered nothing new. War has always been the only reason behind the downfall of each civilization. War does not seem unbeatable until it becomes deadly. In the initial phase of a civilization's growth, it appears beneficial. Wealth and power is accumulated through battles. That is why in their initial stages, states have often fought them. However, wars do not manifest their evil nature until societies increase their manpower and resources for military to the point of lethality. Then wars reveal their fatal character. Historically, whenever this fatal point has been reached, efforts have been made to avoid wars and save societies.

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These endeavors have often
taken two forms. Refusing
to be a part of the
war initiated by a person's
state is self-sacrificing.
Alternatively, convincing states
to avoid belligerence
and eradicate points of
contentious before hand
appears unheroic. Nevertheless,
history demonstrates that
the second option is
more promising.

164/520 words