

War And Peace: A study based on Indian Scriptures

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Abstract: India has been a place of various civilizations since ancient times. The concept of peaceful co-existence comes from ancient Indian texts, among which Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagwat Geeta are prominent. Indian ancient texts are mainly related to Hinduism, but Buddhism and Jainism are also of special importance. Indian religious texts, among which epics are prominent, present a nuanced view of war and peace. While giving special importance to peace, these religious texts also consider it important to wage a just war against injustice. The fact that the Bhagavad Gita considers war against injustice and for the establishment of religion as supreme and emphasizes reducing the suffering caused by war, is evidence of the ethical ideas embedded in ancient Indian thoughts on war. This matches broad principles found in ancient Indian thought about the laws of war, such as proportionality of force, care for survivors, and immunity of non-combatants, which parallels modern humanitarian law. The rules of war in ancient India, based on the Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras, governed warfare to ensure that it was conducted fairly and openly. The presented research paper is an attempt to explain the concepts related to war and peace present in such ancient Indian texts, ranging from Vedas and Shastras to Manu Smriti and Chanakya's Arthashastra.

INTRODUCTION

Indian civilization embodies a unique blend of peace and conflict trajectories. Ancient Indian scriptures give special importance to War, but Peace is supreme. Actually, War used as a mean to achieve Peace. Indian scripts are filled with multiple examples where war has been used as a tool to resolve a conflict and establish peace. Also, there is a concept of “just war” which has named as “Dharma Yuddha”. Just war is something where war is unavoidable and necessary to establish truth and, at the same time warriors follow humanitarian laws of war. This reflects the complexities of human nature and the challenges of upholding morality in war. Basically, Indian ancient texts talk about moral warfare. Ancient Indian scriptures consist Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Manu-Smriti and Arthshastra. Description related to war and peace can also be seen in Buddhist and Jain scriptures.

The World is torn between war and peace, so a question arises that what do our religious scriptures say. In Hinduism, Bhagavad Gita is a holy scripture. It is a part of Mahabharat, it describes ethics of war in depth. By not glorifying violence, it argues that fighting a righteous war is sometimes necessary. Krishna advises Arjuna that he should partake in war when his conduct in the battlefield is devoid of 'passion and hatred' and instead exhibits a sense of 'restraint'. The Gita acknowledges the complexity of war, emphasizing that peace should be the ultimate goal, but also recognizing the sometimes-necessary role of conflict. One cannot correctly understand and appreciate the position of Gita in relation to war unless one has a dur awareness of the concept of “righteous war,” since it is only the righteous war not just any war that sanctioned by Gita. According to Krishna a righteous war is a war fought for defence of people from evildoers. In Mahabharata there are six types of evildoers explained. It is said that one who sets fire, gives poison, attacks with weapon in hand, plunders the property, dispossesses of the territory as well as of women, is an evildoer. Manusmriti says “whether he be a teacher, an infant, an old man or a much-learned Brahmin, if he comes as a criminal, one should kill him without any consideration. There is no sin in killing criminal.” it may be noted that war or violence as sanctioned by the Gita is not a normal code of conduct. As indicated above, it is to be used only in an exceptional situation when one has to deal with incorrigible criminals, and where all peaceful means are found unavailing. Barring this exception, the Gita stands for peace or nonviolence as much as does any other religion-philosophical text of the world, and delivers the message of love and compassion with perfect purity of purpose. Its teaching about war, thus, can neither be ignored as an exercise in allegory nor looked upon as an exhortation for reck-less war.

WHAT BHAGWAD GEETA SAYS.

In Gita Krishna recommends Arjuna to maintain the attitude of an ideal warrior. Ideal warrior, according to him, is one whom 'passion, rage and fear' are gone and one who 'neither loves nor hates.' An essential attribute of a warrior is 'equanimity', and he finds it by not clinging to the spheres of the senses and desire and anger. A warrior may ultimately succeed in letting go all fruits of his fight so that he let fulfilment and frustration become one and the same. Gita considers one as a true warrior who holds calmness and whose acts during the war are controlled by himself. By giving teachings to Arjuna, Krishna gives a very important lesson for attaining peace. His message to combatants to partake in war when his conduct in the battlefield is devoid of 'passion and hatred' and instead exhibits a sense of restraint. He says “The one who thus restrain the self, and who governs the self, attains peace.” Also, Krishna explains, while waging a war one should not have a thought of expressing is strength and superiority because that can lead to careless use of unrestrained force that will eventually lead to more harm. Overall, Gita accepts the reality and necessity of war and it does not glorify violence instead it advocates for minimizing the pain and suffering it brings about.

Bhagavad Gita only discusses the attitude of a warrior during war and righteousness of war, the means and method during war has been discussed in Mahabharata that how a long duration of war will pass without posing threat to those who are not participating in the war. Bhishma Pitamah laid down many rules for the Mahabharat war. These rules were : War will be fought only from sunrise to sunset, a warrior will not bear arms against unarmed, women and helpless, A brave man will fight with an equal enemy as a

charioteer bear arms against a charioteer, A person running away from war will not be killed, anyone retreating from the battlefield during war will not be pursued and after the war, all deceit and fraud will be abandoned and people will treat each-other with love. It seems these idealistic rules had been made to minimize the horrors of war and protect those who could be become victims of war crimes. However, these rules were not followed strictly during Mahabharata.

THE EPIC SCRIPT OF MAHABHARAT.

The concept of peace was also discussed in Mahabharata. Shanti parva is dedicated to the governance and peaceful function of a ruler. It says that a ruler should lead a simple life and not use their powers to enjoy luxuries. It is symbolized as Dharama where ruler works to uplift all living beings and makes those laws which can enhance the welfare of all living beings. Apart from Shanti Parva, the character of Yudhishtira and Krishna's peace proposal also put some light on the idea of peace at that time. The character of Yudhishtira talks about inner peace, whereas Krishna's peace proposal is related to avert upcoming war.

Yudhishtira was the eldest of Pandavas, his unwavering inner peace demonstrating that true peace comes from a calm and virtuous heart. It can play role of a light in the darkest moment of one's life. Krishna's peace proposal was a three-part plan that involved: giving the Pandavas a part of the kingdom that rightfully belonged to them; Recognizing Yudhishtira as the rightful heir to the throne; Granting the Kauravas control of another part of the kingdom. When this proposal was denied, to avoid war, Krishna asked for only five villages for Pandavas, but Kaurvas denied that too. Thus, the war of Mahabharata became inevitable.

WAR AND PEACE IN RAMAYANA.

The first criterion for just war is arguably the most significant to the model as whole: There must be an appropriate cause to justify violence. This fact is also true for Ramayana. Valmiki, writer of Ramayana, very early inform us, that the world is imperiled by evil demons, who threaten the sanctity and well-being of the other inhabitants of the planet by means of violence and magical spells. It is a duty of a true warrior to declare war against them and destroy them. Self-preservation is a valid justification for the resort to violence. One must protect oneself against annihilation, especially in order to protect others, one can use violence as a tool for protection. There are several examples of using violence for self-defense in Ramayana. Vibhishana defends Rama's killing of the demon Khara by invoking self-defense, stating that "all living creatures must strive to the limit of their strength to save their own lives." Clearly, either it is for saving one's own life or lives of others using violence is justified. Protection warrants the execution of violence. In Ramayana era the principle of not killing women was also existed. Slaughter of female considered to be ethically wrong, but with the sense of protection there are some events where warrior had to finish a female demon. Sage Vishwamitra urges Rama to destroy a female demon Tataka, Laxman cuts the nose and ears of Shurphnakha, also, Hanuman had to destroy Lankini. For a greater cause, violence against she-demon was permissible in Ramayan. Violence is also sanctioned for punishment to the unrighteous. In His speech Rama says "the right of punishing and rewarding belongs to the kings of the earth, who retain the right to duly chastise whoever strays from the path of righteousness." Ramayan also suggests to have armed forces it says that an ideal kingdom requires arms. Kosala was an ideal kingdom and Ayodhya was the capital of Kosala. It is said that it contained all kind of weapon and its king Dashrath had a lot of chariot warriors with great fighting skills.

Secondly, Right intent is a criterion comprising just war framework. Right intent is something which independent from selfish desires and having a pure motivation to support righteousness. A righteous war always fought the sake of peace. When a war is being fought for self-serving or for the desire of glory or to provoke conflict, it is said to be an unrighteous war. In Ramayana, Valmiki explains that for using violence a warrior should have noble intentions including generosity, truthfulness, steadiness and courage. When Rama kills Vali, brother of his friend Sugriv, he had a noble intension to help Sugriv.

The Ramayana presents so many grounds to fight a just war. A war should be fought by measuring the net benefit. A warrior has to be calculative on the question: Is the fighting worth the cost? Since war puts its horrific effects on both the active participants and those who are not participating in war, for a just cause if there is another way of solving an issue then war should be avoided. Ramayana, also discusses on proportionality of means. One should exert force only to a degree commensurate with assault or crime. Ramayana offers an idyllic portrayal of the kingdom of Kosala, where the authorities would not harm even a hostile man, if he had done no wrong and meted out strict punishment only after considering the relative gravity of his offence. A very good example of proportionality of means can be found in the event when Shurphnakha meets Rama. She got attracted to Rama and out of enviousness attacks on Sita. Rama orders Laxman to disfigure her. Notably, He did not order for her execution. Ravana's minister Malyavan made a statement when he foreseen the demise of Rakshasa, "A king who is weaker than his rival or equal to him in strength should sue for peace and only one who is stronger should make war, but even he must never underestimate his enemy." Malyavan was concerned about the result of war that what is to be gained from continuing the war?

Right conduct of a war is to fight ethically. There some humanitarian rules which guide warriors that how to behave in war or in war like situation. In Ramayana, Rama always tried to be ethically right. During the great war in Lanka, Rama proclaims to Laxamana that "a foe who does not resist, is in hiding, cups his hands in supplication, approaches seeking refuge, is fleeing, or is caught off guard must not be slayed by anyone."

At the Lanka court, Vibhishana, A brother of Ravana, advised Ravana to not execute emissary Hanuman, because it would be contrary to righteousness. Vibhishana states the "the virtuous do not advocate killing an emissary, since a messenger never deserves death." There were high ethics followed during war in the period of Ramayana. It definitely upholds the necessity for appropriate conduct of war. Engagement in a battle is a highly systematized endeavor in these contexts.

In Ramayana, Valmiki not only discussed on war strategies and conduct of war, but also, there is lengthy discussions on statecraft and ethics. The legitimacy of warfare and use of organized violence for a just cause have been discussed deeply. An interest in establishing peace is the biggest justification and systemization for the use of violence.

A proper discussion on peace and non-violence also found in Ramayana. Several attempts had been made by several people in Ramayana to convince Ravana to surrender and avoid the war. Similarly, Sita, Rama's wife, had describe Rama as possessing all virtues, including not-violence. When she rescued from Ravana's private grove, Hanuman asked for her permission to kill female demons who tortured her, but Sita denied and said "A superior person never requites evil on the part of evildoers with evil." Rama has also been described as an ideal warrior who engages in war for a righteous cause, in a righteous fashion and he is well-endowed with moral ideas of non-violence, tolerance, equanimity, self-restrain and, forgiveness.

WAR STRATEGIES IN PURANAS.

Apart from Mahabharat and Ramayana, Purana are also a source to know the war and war related things in ancient India. While Ramayana and Mahabharat reveal intangible parts like: cause, moral principles and right conduct of war, the Puranas reveal the abstract and concrete elements like types of weapons, and structure of army etc. The Matsya Purana there are several examples of not following the principles of war established in Ramayan or Mahabharat period, one of them happened during the destruction of Tripura. When Agni attacked, in retaliation he did not treat the enemy politely. He destroyed beautiful gardens, temples, house and also burned women and children. The Agni is reprimanded by a demon's wife because he crossed all limits of cruelty. The general rule of war is that warrior should fight with an equally able opponent. But in Dev-Asur war both the parties broke this rule and started fighting with cavalry, infantry and warriors on chariot. Matsya Purana also presents the structure of army. Fourfold army included a combination of chariots, elephants, cavalry and infantry, this combination is called Chaturang Bal. There is also mention of various kind of weapon in the war, Bows and Arrows had different names which signifies characteristic of that weapon. Jambha, Pinaka, Rukmakavacha, Ardhchandra Bhala and Vajra are some names of weapons used at that time.

Puranas are the epic description of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. They reveal the mysterious origin of the earth and the universe as well as show that war has always existed on earth. And since, war has an ultimate goal to establish peace so the overall concept of War and Peace is very ancient. Even Hindu Gods have to fight against evil. The Devi Bhagwat Purana explain by several events that peace is established only by the grace of Goddess. It defines peace as "The state of harmony and absence of conflict that ensues from the actions of the Devi and devotion of the people." The concept of Sandhi(treaty) also comes from Purana, where Sandhi is described as a tool for making peace. The phrase "Om Shanti" is concerned with the eternal peace for all mankind. The word Shanti is a Sanskrit word and its meaning is serene, peaceful, non-violent, quite or undisturbed. It indicates abstention from mental and physical violence and unsettling influences.

VEDAS: WAR AND BEYOND

Vedas are different from Puranas. Puranas mainly glorify Hindu Gods and Goddesses by taking a reference of some ancient event, whereas, Vedas are a vast storehouse of ancient knowledge and science. it is said that Vedas have solution to every problem of mankind. Vedas are full of knowledge related to almost all subjects like God, universe, astrology, mathematics, chemistry, medicine, nature, astronomy, geography, religious rules, history and, customs etc. Vedic rishis were spiritualists, they have given the philosophy of non-difference of self and others. Also, they believe that God is in everywhere, so one should not harm other and always put an attitude of tolerance and acceptance toward others. Peace, in Vedas, is defined as highest human value and is interlinked with other values such as with truth, non-violence, purity, tolerance and forgiveness.

Rig Ved is the oldest in all four Vedas. It presents codes of conduct of a just war. "War should be fought fairly" is the basic concept that Rig Ved conveys. It states that a warrior will go to hell if he poisons the tip of arrow, attack sick or old, attack a child or a woman and attack from behind. Vedas also follow the concept of just war, where war becomes duty.

Manu-smriti is another important ancient Indian scripture. It refers to the right way to behave during wartime. It indicates that a warrior would always be a Kshatriya and he should fight fairly and show respect and mercy. It is notable that the laws of war given in the Manu-smriti and Rig Ved are very similar to Christian just war theory. These rules include: do not hurt women and children, never attack people while they are sleeping, never attack when the opposition surrendered and so on. In ancient Indian scriptures the idea of helping war victims is also reflected as making charities, educating people about the virtue of tolerance, providing spiritual and emotional support to the victims of war and so on. Atharv Ved states about non-violence that "Ahimsa is not causing pain to any living being at any time through the actions of one's mind, speech or body." Sam Ved names Ahimsa as one of five essential virtues. It is good to know that Ahimsa is broad from non-violence. Non violence is only related to not hurting physically while Ahimsa goes much deeper to prohibit the subtle abuse and the simple hurt. Ahimsa also includes not hurting someone with words. Overall, Ahimsa is a virtue which helps to maintain a peaceful environment.

CONCEPT OF PEACE IN BUDDHIST AND JAIN SCRIPTURES.

Buddhist texts value non-violence more than any other script. Buddhism teaches that Non-violence is a path to peace and that war and violence are harmful to both the victim and the perpetrator. Buddhism strongly opposes the use of violence, they classify it as a product of greed, hatred and, delusion. There are Suttas in Buddhist scriptures in which a fact found that war cannot be justified by any means. The level of morality is so high that if one takes these texts as issuing moral absolute, one would have to conclude that war can never be morally justified. A sutta says that a warrior who dies in a battle we be reborn in hell. It implies that participation in a war is immoral according to Buddhism. It believes that violence is not acceptable even for self-defense. Buddhism conveys its teachings through Jataka stories. Some statements from those stories can make one understand Buddhist thought on war and peace: One who repays an angry man with anger makes things worse for himself; not retaliating, one wins a battle hard to win." The Mahasilava Jataka tells the story of a king who was determined never to shed blood, even though this required surrendering his kingdom and becoming a prisoner of his enemy. Through the power of kindness and calmness the king managed to win release, transformed his captor into a friend and regain his kingdom. Later, In Buddhism limited violence allowed for self-defense. The Martial Art is practiced by Tibbets, Japanese, Chinese and other eastern living people many of them follow Buddhism.

One more thought from Buddhism is important for peace. It talks about resolving cause. It says that violence and conflict are the result of causes and conditions, and to eliminate them one must resolve the underlying causes. It is very close to the thought of preemptive peace-making strategy. Peace keeping, peace building and peace-making strategies of United Nation Organization is somewhere influenced by resolving cause of Buddhism.

Jainism perspective war is dominated by non-violence, but teachings of Jainism say that one should prepare himself for a war to handle with his insecurity. There are many references in Jain scriptures that all underpins the importance of living a spiritual, compassionate and peaceful life. Jainism advocates and provides guidance on removing societal conditions that preludes the war, mainly reduce inequality and insecurity, overcoming our inner weaknesses and structuring our life based on spiritual awareness.

Ahimsa is at the core of Jainism. Ahimsa means to not hurt any living beings, through our thoughts, words or actions. It means to respect all living beings and have compassion towards all living beings, no exceptions. The Sanskrit word *ahimsā*, found in the texts of Jain and Hindu philosophy, connotes a negation of the word *himsā*, “killing” or “injury”; hence it is translated as “not-harming” or “non-injury.” One of the most detailed and intricate definitions of *ahimsā* comes from Lord Mahāvīra, the 24th Tīrthānkara of Jainism:

“All living beings desire happiness, and have revulsion from pain and suffering. They are fond of life, they love to live, long to live, and they feel repulsed at the idea of hurt and injury to or destruction of their life. Hence no living being should be hurt, injured, or killed.”

“All things existing, all things living, all things whatsoever, should not be slain, or treated with violence, or insulted, or tortured, or driven away.”

“He who hurts living beings himself, or gets them hurt by others, or approves of hurt caused by others, augments the world’s hostility towards himself.”

In Sutakritang, it is clearly mentioned that there is nothing higher than the sense of security, it says one should not fear from others and one should not cause fear to others. Accumulation of arms and weapons are considered a means of security yet these, instead of giving security, generate fear and a sense of insecurity in the party that doesn’t have them. These insecurities start a race for accumulation of superior weapon and eventually a war.

Mahavira in Acharanga sutra proclaimed “There are weapons superior to each other, but nothing is superior to disarmament or non-violence. It is the selfish and aggressive outlook of an individual or a society that gives birth to war and violence.” Tattvartha sutra written by Acharya Umaswati (aka Umaswami) stated that mutual cooperation is the essential nature of human beings and the function of the soul is to help one another. Uttaradhyayana Sutra underpins the importance of war with oneself to get rid of insecurities that runs as precursor for war and conflicts.

Ideally, Jainism don’t want war, injustice, oppression or slavery. But if any situation arise, Jains, who have not taken any vow, can use nominal violence. It is very important to understand the Jain principles and scriptures such that they maintain their spirituality, yet they don’t miss out on fulfilling any of their responsibilities. Agams contains the vows (vrat) for Shrivak/Shravika and for Sadhu/Sadhvi, and they are different for both. Mahavrat is vows for Sadhu/Sadhvi and it includes complete non-violence. Ahimsa vow for Shrivak and Shrivika is called Anuvrat. Here’s the verse from yoga sastra that explains the ahimsa vow for people.

Nishkaran (without valid reason) Niraparadhi (not guilty)Trasjeevai (2-5 sensed beings) Sankalp-Poorvani (premeditated/planned) Himsa (violence) Tyag (avoid/give up) At the core, it means people should avoid, give-up premeditated or planned violence towards 2-5 sensed living beings, which are not guilty, and there is no valid reason. So, for people, minimum violence for protection is acceptable. It is responsibility of people to protect their self, family, religion, state and country and if needed they can use force or violence. They say that none of the values and principles are meant to make them weak or prevent them from fulfilling their responsibilities. They take the required action for protection but without any kashayas (anger, ego, greed, deceit) internally. This is something very close to Krishna’s philosophy on Karma, explained in Gita that one should fight for the sake of his duty not of anger, greed or ego.

In history of Jain scripture many examples of use of violence can be found, such as historically very famous Acharya Shri Kalakacharya for the protection Sadhviji, King Bhamasha, Vastupal and Tejpal fought for protection of self and others. Contemporary times are very different however, the application of Jain values and principles remain the same. Ideally, Jainism is against war, oppression or any kind of injustice. And at an individual level, they follow spirituality in such manner that do not introduce or escalate situations that starts the injustice or wars. However, if any situation that requires to protect self, family, religion, country then a Jain must act but without aggression or any kashayas within.

BASE OF INDIAN PHYLOSOPHY OF FOREIGN POLICY: KAUTILYA’S ARTHSHAstra

One of the most important Indian scriptures is Kautilya’s Arthshastra. It offers a proper glance of Indian thought on war and peace. Arthshastra can be consider as a guide for existing Indian policies related to foreign. India’s decision making holds a very beautiful combination of ethics of Ramayana and diplomacy of Arthshastra. India follows righteousness of Rama and cleverness of Krishna. Arthshastra is a collection of those qualities that makes has ability to make a great kingdom or state. It has lessons related to diplomacy, security, conqueror’s conduct, hybrid warfare, foreign policy, types of armies, quality of a king, spying techniques and so on. A part of Arthshastra also has combination of two books of Machiavelli “The Prince” and “The Art of War.”

Kautilya describes well the theory of state and its constituent. The elements of a state include the king, the ministers, the people, the fortified city, the treasury, the army and, the ally i.e. external constituent. With all these element Kautilya also explains their ideal

discord among them, his view of women as weapons of war, his use of religion and superstition to bolster his troops and demoralize enemy soldiers, the spread of disinformation.

On other hand, Arthshastra emphasised that foreign relations be determined by rationale calculation of self-interest rather than by ethical considerations. Chankya preferred peace over war and urged humane treatment of conquered soldiers and subjects. Arthashashtra's conception of foreign policy is brilliant, cohesive, comprehensive and logically sound. It is entirely theoretical without any moral subjectivity. As a scholar, Kautilya believed that diplomacy and negotiation were important for maintaining peace and stability in foreign relations. He advised rulers to pursue peaceful means whenever possible to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Ancient Indian scriptures have a range of thoughts on war and peace. Strating from the high values of Ramayana we have gone through the teachings of Gita, Puranas and Manu-smriti. Jainism and Buddhism have their own importance in peace related ideas and then a very practical scripture Arthshastra came. This range of Indian scriptures present versatile shades of Indian thoughts on war and peace.

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