

# Ethical Views on War and Peace: Perspectives from Brahminical and Buddhist Literature (600 BCE to 600 CE)

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## Introduction

The discussion intended in this paper is to make an ethical estimate of the views on war and peace after recounting incidents from certain ancient Indian textual sources. These include a few portions from the works of the Brahmanical priestly thinkers and also some excerpted ideas drawn from the Buddhist literature. Both these sources cover a period ranging between 600 BCE and 600 CE.

The choice of this time-frame is significant as it records an expansion of our knowledge base which begins with the rise of Buddhism around 600 BCE. Buddhism as a philosophy rose to popularity for its unorthodox views that undermined the authority of the *Vedas*. In another direction, this philosophy is worthy of our attention for its upholding of the ethical ideal of *ahimsa* as the *paramah dharma*. Buddhist emphasis on such virtuous conduct had over a period of time generated a reasonable influence on Brahmanical thought so much so that settlement of disputes through wars were governed by some reasonable ethical ideal. In this context, it may be said that the *jus ad bellum* principle went beyond the idea of 'annihilation' of the enemy. Wars fought with a prescriptive ideology attempted to authenticate the good by vanquishing the evil force, or in some special context it meant 'resolution of conflict' to establish the ethical balance between *dharma* and *adharma*.

## Some Ethical Theories Relating to War and Peace

A general remark on the ethical estimation of war and peace will not be out of place in this context. For both war as well peace, ethical evaluation emphasizes on certain pre-defined parameters based on sanctioned rules.<sup>1</sup>

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Though used in conjunction, the features of war and peace are so distinct that acquiescence in the case of war differ considerably from the approbations that justify pacifism, and hence they cannot be inter-changeably used.

## *Ethics and War*

In ordinary circumstances, transgression of moral and humanitarian values that abrogate right to life is abhorred. Nonetheless, these sanctions are removed when the legitimacy for such violent behaviour comes from a *bona fide* political authority. However, when confronted with the question '*why should*', we enter the domain of philosophical justifications. The commonest and the most realistic way of justifying wars would be the 'consequential gain' it leads to. Consequentialism may not be a perfect ethical ideal, and the idea of 'greatest or greater good' though heuristic in nature, it is based on logic of the 'principle determining uncertain expectation'<sup>2</sup> This is a prudent way of calculating the preferred happiness/gain made in a war over the unhappiness it produces through destruction as a liability. A value relativist may argue that there is no fixed definition of determining these gains. The goal-post may shift prudentially when losses and gains are determined strategically.

## *De-Ontic Logic as Applied to War and Peace*

The de-ontic thinkers offer *prima facie* argument that dislodges realism. In their moral reasoning, maintaining peace becomes the principal obligation of the political authority. At the same time, we cannot insist upon permanent pacifism very rigidly. Even Kant, who wrote a text on *Permanent Peace*, could not consistently uphold this view. In the *Doctrine of the Rights*, he upholds that the state is entitled to resort to violence when the first move is made from the opponent side.<sup>3</sup>

A new kind of logical situation arises from the dilemma that persists between the duty to remain a pacifist and the

obligation to engage in a war to resolve injustice or to fight in self-defence. We surmise that these two duties have a contrary relation with each other. Peace is otherwise preferred, but its inhibition may as a last resort result in a war. By this logic, wars born out of natural necessity and even as a utilitarian measure are not adequate benchmarks for *jus ad bellum* principle.

It is best then to take up cases of redemption or saving from a greater evil as a de-ontic justification for a war. Likewise, a fair degree of weightage can also be given to retributive form of justice. And yet not fully so, for very often the 'duty to' in these cases would be evaluated by *post ad bellum* principle too. Justifications of this sort has a limited use of de-ontic ideal as there is a tendency to introduce utilitarian motives through the back door.

### War in Early India and its Ethical Evaluation

While theorizing on the ideas on war and peace as expounded in our ancient texts, it is possible to draw many parallels that match the general discussions mentioned above. We have realistic and pragmatic views on war as well as those that seek justification for the re-establishment of the status and glory of *dharma*. Buddhism is probably the only school of thought that overtly takes up the cause of peaceful co-existence and yet we see it as a failed opportunity for converting the same into a social theory.

Our recorded history begins with the early tribal formation in the Rgvedic period.<sup>4</sup> From accounts of the Vedic texts, we discover innumerable accounts of intra-tribe warfare. Most of these were fought as part of natural necessity to generate surplus in the form of spoils of war. To satisfy the needs of these pastoral societies, women and cattle as wealth were looted from the enemy.<sup>5</sup> At the same time historians have also discovered that the tribal heads in order to sustain the tribe, undertook some peacetime welfare measures as well, these included distribution and sometimes re-distribution of the spoils of war. The pragmatic device through which such concepts as *loptrā* (loot)<sup>6</sup> operate bears some complexity of this nature. An even more complex idea which crops up in several passages of the Rig Veda is the epithet *Vrijanasya raja* attributed to the king<sup>7</sup>. The term has two parts *Vrijana*<sup>8</sup> and *raja*<sup>9</sup> connected by the genitive case ending. Its significance lies in describing the prudential role of the king. R.S. Sharma explains that the king here is described as "slayer of the enemies (*vrijana*) and the captor of their wealth (may also be signifying *vrijana*) and the distributor of the same among his people".<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to judge whether the meaning *Vrijanansaya raja* directly expounds the idea of the king as the distributor of the booty captured through war. Nevertheless by

implication we trace from other subsequent relevant texts in the later Vedic period that kingship historically had been attributed with dual duties. In Kautilya's *Arthashastra* too we find that the king's duty includes *danda*<sup>11</sup> (controlling external enemy and errant subjects) and *niti*<sup>12</sup> (welfare measures as a peacetime activity). The king was expected to prudentially balance between duty to wage a war as a measure for gaining surplus (*alabdhalabha*) and well arranging the gained wealth (*labdhapalana*).<sup>13</sup>

### Buddhist Virtue Ethics

The Age of the Buddha and the counter-emphasis on peace happened presumably some 300 years before *Arthashastra* was composed. Interestingly, Buddhism was in opposition to the Vedic idea of *vrijanasya raja*, a sophisticated version of which we can trace in *Arthashastra*. The Buddha's challenge was to conceive a *single duty* for those in command and that was to be charitable, moral and self-sacrificing<sup>14</sup>. This idea stands alternative to making a gain through war. Enmity, the Buddha thought, bred further enmity.<sup>15</sup>

The sermon that was called the *Turning of the Wheel of Law* formed the nucleus of the Buddha's teachings. It incorporated the idea of virtuous well-being through an ethically discerning path and yet surprisingly, we can trace no collective initiative of such an ethical formulation as applied to the society. The Buddha's primary objective was to create a cluster of monastics bound by virtuous ethics. The enterprise for this (*upaya*) was directly connected to monastic welfare. The significance of morality here was that as means it was more wholesome than making a eudemonic gain, and was geared to assist in attaining *nirvana*.

The Buddha viewed the *dukkhasamudaya* (a collection of irritants or avarices which are causes of suffering), as pathological conditions which could be treated through *dukkhanirodhgamini patipada*<sup>16</sup> (measures for removing the *dukkhas*). It is through behavioural transformations that taints and avarices such as irritants, anger and selfishness could be restrained.<sup>17</sup> In the *Dhammadayad Sutta*, the Buddha said that the evil that leads to these unwelcome behaviours were the result of greed and hate<sup>18</sup>. Nirvana could be attained only after the aberrations were removed.<sup>19</sup> The beauty about this type of virtue ethics is that the knowledge is realized through sensitive practice, using karma as its pathway.<sup>20</sup>

The spiritual orientation in Buddhism does not blend happily with the ethics agenda of virtuous well-being that it put forth as an alternative to Vedic ritualism. The Buddha himself was known to have remained silent on metaphysical issues and instead instructed his followers to abide in the norms of virtuosity, which happened to

be *dana punna* (could also be replaced by the term *panna*) and *shila*.<sup>21</sup> Two questions are raised in this context. A combination of these three may suggest that the Buddha was treating ethics the utilitarian way. For, if *punna* is the end, then *dana* and *shila* becomes its instrument. There is, however, an explanation that *punna* does refer to conduct that is good and not an end that is trans-moral.<sup>22</sup> The word *panna* (noetic pathway) is often also found in combination with the word *dana* and *shila*. Even so, the *telos* factor cannot be overlooked for ethics becomes the instrumental to knowledge (end).<sup>23</sup> Damien Keown is of the view that morality is a stepping stone when it is associated with *punna* that leads to nirvana. Alternatively, its linkage with *panna* makes it instrumental to knowledge<sup>24</sup>

Keown further suggests three separate possibilities that emerge from the dichotomous relation between *panna* and *māgga*. One, ethics is extrinsic to *nibbāna*. Two, it is dispensable and subsidiary to *panna* and three, it is intrinsic to *nibbāna* and equal in value to *panna*.<sup>25</sup> We may say that in the first and the second case, ethics become the means and the gain is teleological. Nevertheless, it is impossible to calculate the eudemonic gain made by the Arhat in terms of quantum of *utils*. Whatever may be the *telos* factor engaged as goal of ethics, it is certainly not for any material gain but for gaining immeasurable happiness.

The best instance of Buddhist value of *ahimsa* applied in practice in the secular world can be traced from the policies of King Ashoka (268-232 BCE). Ashoka's discourse against war, as traced from his Rock Edicts is a respite from the ruthlessness displayed by his forefathers. He expatiated in his Rock Edicts the value of *ahimsa satya aparigraha*. Having committed a blood bath in the Kalinga war, he was repentant about it.<sup>26</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Rock Edict of Ashoka<sup>27</sup> is by far the most important document from our point of view. Here, Ashoka expressed a new idea of conquest by *dhamma* in lieu of subjugating the opponent through war and violence. By extending the message of *dhamma* beyond his territory, which included far away countries like Syria and Macedonia, he succeeded in creating new allies for himself.<sup>28</sup>

A careful study of Ashoka's views reveals that his idea of *dana, punna and shila* was not above utilitarian concerns. His ethics was geared to transform attitudes relating to *dhamma* and *adhamma* to some pleasurable result in earthly life and in heaven. Ashoka seems to have subscribed to this view as he gained in years, for he writes in his 3rd Pillar Edict, "this is important for my happiness in this world; that on the other hand, for the next."<sup>29</sup> Alongside this motivated use of Buddhism, we come across some other criticisms that the early Buddhists were not consistent about pacifism. The Buddha had preached that "enmities are never ceased by enmity in this world,

only by non-enmity (*karuna*) did they cease. This is the ancient law."<sup>30</sup> However, some of his followers among the laity compromised with this ethical ideal.

The scholars often find it difficult to justify the war that king Pasenadi (brother of Bimbisara) of Kosala fought against his nephew Ajashattu, even after formally adopting to a Buddhist way of life. Pasenadi was first defeated and routed from his kingdom by Ajatashattu. In the second phase of this battle, Pasenadi defeated Ajatashattu. Buddha, regretting the consequence of the first phase of the battle, said, "victory breeds hatred; the defeated live in pain. Happily, the peaceful live on giving up victory and defeat."<sup>31</sup> And yet, he defended Pasenadi's victory on grounds of defensive counter violence, which could be seen as a karmic result from aggression. Such responses occurred whether or not they were justified.<sup>32</sup>

The early teachings of the Buddha, when collected as canon some five hundred years after his death,<sup>33</sup> contained certain ambiguities about their chronologies as well as certain 'more wordings' that got incorporated over the years. It was on grounds of 'more wordings' that scholastic views on Buddhism split into the Theravada and Mahayana thinkers. The role of ethics in Mahayana thinking is ambiguous. Taking advantage of the liberal outgrowth, Mahayana thinkers challenged the role of ethics in Theravada that decided *dāna punna* and *shila* for accruing personal merits alone in this world and thereafter. On the other hand, Mahayana view adjusted *dana* and *shila* within the gamut of *pannā*. Hence, there is an integral relation between ethics and the metaphysical end with a proviso that the relief from the state of *dukkha* is for mankind *en mass*.<sup>34</sup> It could be for this reason that Mahayana Buddhism laid more emphasis on *Maitri* and *Karuna* as the delivering agencies through which the quantum of *dukkha* in general is reduced. It is with an altruistic motive the Arhats try to spread the message of *maitri* and *karuna* and though it has a teleological end, yet these are not prudential measures.

### War and Peace as an Exercise in Social Engineering

The recorded history that reveals the influence of Buddhist ethics sermonizing peace and its impact of *Arthashastra* seems rather unclear. Though some fledgling groups of Buddhist monks resided in the periphery of the Mauryan city, they could hardly deter the Mauryan kings for making gains through warfare.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, there is a casual mention in *Arthashastra* of *sadharanadharmā* which includes *ahimsa* as a virtue.<sup>36</sup> This could be the outcome of Buddhist influence or it could be a case of shastric redaction incorporated into this text after *Manusmriti* and *Dharmashastra* were composed a few centuries later.<sup>37</sup> In this text, *Varnashrama vyavastha*<sup>38</sup> and *svadharmā*<sup>39</sup> are



more seriously mentioned and these even the king has no right to abrogate.

*Arthashastra* emphasized more on the engineering aspect of state craft which essentially related to the development of the technique for its efficient running.<sup>40</sup> This seems to be a common theme of many similar texts on statecraft written at different points of time. Kamandaki's *Nitisara*, written in the Gupta period, *Panchatantra* of Vishnugupta and Narayana's *Hitopodesha* have also reverted to the logistic issues of social engineering overriding the ethical concerns relating to the 'ultimate good of man'.<sup>41</sup> In these texts, the king is a *vijigishu* (desirous to win a war), hence wars have a natural place among other kingly duties such as *danda* and *niti*.<sup>42</sup> Kamandaki mentions these as *tantra* and *āvāpa*, which the king uses mainly for a selfish end.<sup>43</sup> Its scope is, thus, narrow for it takes up even acts of benevolence (*dharmasādhanam*)<sup>44</sup> for making the subjects subservient to his vanity and self-aggrandizement.<sup>45</sup>

In *Arthashastra*, the king is synonymous with the state. *Prajanam sukhe sukhi*. He has been described in this passage as the *rajarsi* who promotes *yogakshema* of his subject.<sup>46</sup> This again is a peacetime activity of the king and forms part of his *svadharma*. The teleological clause in this *sutra* states '*svadharma sandaddhanahi pretya cheha cha nandati*' (by pursuing the *svadharma* alone the king after his death is glorified)<sup>47</sup> As an overlord, the king's *dharma* is to be just, impartial and lenient (*rakshana* and *palana*)<sup>48</sup> as well as a promulgator of criminal justice (*danda niti*)<sup>49</sup>

The text has certain deeper complexities which form the larger context of its characteristic. The king's magnanimity is countered by his ruthlessness when it comes to applying the laws of retributive justice or while overpowering the external enemy. This dichotomous character reminds us of the Vedic description *vrijanasya raja* attributed to the king. The primary purpose of this *shastra* as Kautilya defines, relates to the notion of *vritti* (economic activity) such as production and trade.<sup>50</sup> These have to be nurtured for retaining the existing size of the cake. Nevertheless the economy through profit-making effort alone could increase in size (*rakshitatvovardhani*). A third alternative was to reduce the economic and political strength of the enemy.

Texts like *Panchatantra* and *Hitopodesh* are replete with stories of war and intrigue. These texts typically stand for relativism, pragmatism and utilitarianism. It is self-interest that overrides all other ethical consideration for making friendly treaties.<sup>51</sup> A typical story where friends and foes are not pre-positioned appears in *Hitopadesha*. Here, an alliance between a crow and a deer can be seen to argue, thus, "No one is anybody's friend or foe; it is the *vyāvahāra* that makes friends and foes."<sup>52</sup> The other possibility of war happening is through surreptitious deals. In "Loss of Friends" (*Panchatantra*), we find

diplomatic relations between two kings snapping and resulting in acrimony, whereby subordinates engineer moves, and the king helplessly plays into the hands of such machinations.<sup>53</sup>

### War in the Name of Establishing Dharma

The rules relating to *dharma*, or rightfully establishing the norms of conduct both in ordinary parlance and in kingly behaviour came to be recognized sometime during the post-Ashokan period. Was it a sharp contrast from the realistic and the pragmatic values perpetrated in the *Arthashastra* which highlighted the objective "*prithoya labhe palanecha*"?<sup>54</sup> The popular conception of the duty of the king in the Epic Age seems to give the impression that their *svadharma* was rather de-ontic as it was geared towards protecting those who were under their protection. Thus *yuddha* would often be seen as bringing the enemy to books and thereby restore the balance between *dharma* and *adharmā*. The enemy was identified as trouble-shooters for the king and for his subjects.

Two reasons are offered generally in favour of *dharmayuddha*, one because it is a war against evil and second as opposed to *kutayuddha* of the Asuras, the ethical justification comes from the fact that war is the last option chosen after all measures of peaceful negotiations come to an end.<sup>55</sup> Our epics are generally linked to a de-ontic idea called *dharmasādhanam*. It is the end as well as the means for waging a just war. Having said so, a careful analysis reveals certain anomalies. This happens to be so because there are no uniform guidelines for moral behaviour, hence rules for this noble cause are relativistic and quite culture specific.

One reason for this could be that *dharma*, when applied to *yuddha*, is linked to *kshatriya dharma* in a nuanced way. The latter differs primarily from the exegetic obligations undertaken by the *shrotriya brahmans*. Nor does it fit perfectly within the social ordering of *varnashramadharmā* which Manu describes as, *dharma rakshati rakshita*. The *dharma* of the king was though part of the *varnashramā* system, it had a distinct *svadharma* which was to establish the *rule of law* by force or stratagem. By shastric dictation, the king was a benevolent ruler who was also an exploiter. Manu describes the royal duty as *Vakavaccintayedarthan... vrikavaccavilumpeta* <sup>56</sup>. 'Rajdharmā Anusasanam' that forms a part of the Shantiparva of *Mahabharata*,<sup>57</sup> believed that kingship was a give and take relation between the ruler and his subject.<sup>58</sup> Hence, a limited measure of exploitation and extortion was permissible.<sup>59</sup>

A further point about this *dharma* was that it did not behove a king to be *ahimsak*. In the *Mahabharata*, Kunti's (mother of the Pandavas) admonition to her pacifist son Yudhisthira, is very clear on this point. She conveys her

message through Krishna that *yajñadi* practices of the Brahmins are not to be counted as *kshatriya* duty rather war was his primary duty.<sup>60</sup> Manu had been cited as saying “*yuddha* is the *dharma* of the *kshatriya*, it alone takes them to heaven and spreads fame in society.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, wars for survival or of self-interest and treaties for self-protection even though the alliance was unholy, may benefit the *dharma* of the king.

One last point in this context is that clash of *dharma* values or what may be termed as *dharmashankat* situations tended to undermine the universal character of *dharma*. In *Bhaktikaavya* or *Ravanabadha*,<sup>62</sup> *dharma* depended on *vritti* (culture characteristic) and likewise, it was not predefined. Rama’s encounter with Maricha was a debate about *vritti dharma*. Maricha says that the *dharma* of the *rakshas* was to slay the brahmins and oppose Vedic *dharma* which countered the *vritti* of Rama, which was to protect the former.<sup>63</sup> Mallinath, comments that Maricha’s definition of *dharma* means “*nija atmiyo nityayoh*” (culture specific *dharma*). To this Rama’s reply was “*vyatiste tu mamapi dharmah*” (my *dharma* is the reverse of this) He then elaborated that the *vrittivyapara* of *rajanya* was to slay those who were slayers of those who were on a spiritual path and sought protection from the king.<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, the *yuddha* that occurred between Rama and Ravana in the *Ramayana* also has a conflicting *dharma* basis. Ravana, smitten by Sita’s beauty approached her in Asoka Vana, (her residence in confinement) by saying “*svadharmar rakshasam bhuru, sarvoarthaiba na sansayah/ gamanam va parastrinam haranam sampramathyaiba va.*”<sup>65</sup> Subsequently, Rama fights this war to win back his wife. The ethical value of this war is thus negligible, except that there is a clash of interest arising from differences of perspective. The real *dharmashankat* happens through Divine dictation. The gods have pre-declared Ravana to be the evil force and so remind the repentant Rama at the end of the war about his divine duty, “*vadartham ravanasya pravishto manushim tanum*”<sup>66</sup>

The interesting point is that in both the epics *dharmashankat* situations are *ex post facto* decided. The reason for going to war differs from context to context and hence, the *dharma* norms governing their justification are neither *a priori* nor universal. In the Kurukshetra war for instance, *dharmashankat* arises from a controversial claim made to the throne of Hastinapur by two sets of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The controversy is more legal than ethical. The legal problem arises because Yudhishthira who is the first-born of king Pandu, by primogeniture law should be the heir apparent. However, Pandu abdicated his throne and soon died. Yudhishthira was then a minor and so, Dhritarashtra ruled as regent. Dhritarashtra’s eldest son, Duryodhana also laid a legal claim to the throne. Negotiations failed and as

a last choice, a war ensued. This decision, being a much deliberated choice, appears to satisfy the principle of *jus ad bellum*. And yet, some questions remain. For instance, to what extent is war of mammoth proportion justified to settle a family dispute? Besides, the battle involved several kings who were not directly a gainer and yet their losses outweighed their gains. Third, a reality check reveals that loss of life and property estimated at the end of the war was disproportionately high making even the victorious Pandavas remorseful. Unfortunately, these are not listed as *dharmashankat* situations, though such collateral damages would not pass the acid test of *jus post bellum* principle.

Last but not the least, if we make an assessment of the intentions behind this war, the ‘ought’ question appears to be fraught in controversy. Duryodhana’s motive for going to war was selfish and born out of a sense of jealousy and it deserved no moral approbation. For the Pandavas, retribution was the motive for waging a war, mainly as an avenging tactics was witnessed from the discussion in Vanaparva.<sup>67</sup> Yudhishthira had wagered and lost his kingdom and glory in a treacherous game of dice organized by Duryodhana. The family had to retreat to the forest and face humiliation. Gambling (*kitava*) is generally condemned in the Rig Veda<sup>68</sup> and Yudhishthira’s weakness for this game is surely blameworthy. And yet, his resolve to wage the war came only after his cousin refused to part with even a pin prick of land without a fight.

Notwithstanding this restraint, Pandava motives were not de-ontic nor did they declare the war to be a *dharmayuddha*. In fact, this term does not appear in the *Mahabharata*. Rather, the clarion call *dharmartha yuddhasva* was given by Krishna in *Shrimadbhagavatgita*. As a mentor of reluctant Arjuna, Krishna advises the former to wage this war to re-establish the *dharma* ideal.<sup>69</sup> Gita’s *dharmayuddha* concept raises two sets of *dharmashankats*, one relates to *sadharanadharmar* of *lokasangraha*. This discerning judgment is an attempt to establish peace and harmony through temperate behaviour.<sup>70</sup> This comes closest to the norms set by the Buddha. In contrast, there is the *svadharmar* paradigm by which Arjuna is asked to fight (*yuddhaya yujyasva*)<sup>71</sup>. The second *dharmashankat* situation is born out of the despondency of Arjuna that he was about to violate the *kuladharmar*<sup>72</sup> and its consequences would be grievous. Krishna, on the other hand, reminds Arjuna that destroying one’s enemy who are *atatayis* (law-breakers) was his *svadharmar*<sup>73</sup> or *kshatriya* caste duty.

These two *dharmashankats* are unique because they are not cases where the stake holders with conflicting interests are fighting, rather the impasse is created because of conflicting duties, one general and the other specific. The second problem arises from Arjuna’s inability to judge. Is

it a spiritual lacuna or is it giving into an ethical dilemma? Krishna believes it to be the former and instructs him accordingly, that the soul is invincible *nainam chhindanti shastrani*<sup>74</sup> etc. Besides, the Lord as destiny personified (*kaalo'hm*) has already destroyed the enemy, *mayai vaite nihatah purvameva/nimittamatrambhavaSabyasachi*.<sup>75</sup>

The mysteries of these metaphysical truths are infinitely deeper than mundane concerns that we have about right and wrong. Ethical views, however profound, do become problematic here because they are a 'free-rider' on the spiritual view. Free-ridership in ethics is generally discouraged because it diffuses the responsibility of the crime. Krishna's metaphysical pronouncement virtually gives license to kill with impunity.

The second problem in this context relates to the structural compulsions of *svadharma* (the caste duty) and behavioural compulsions of morality with which this war is fought. A Kshatriya's *dharma* to fight is an imperative and yet, it is a social or a religious duty and not an ethical preoccupation. On the other hand, moral sense directs us towards the intent of the action. The inter-meshing of these two creates certain analytic difficulties such as we find in Krishna's argument, "*athachet tvamimam dharmyam sangramam nakarishyasi/tatah svadharmam kirtinche hitoa papamaavapsyasi*"<sup>76</sup> It is not clear whether *paap* resulting from *akirti* is to be censored because there has been a dereliction of caste duty or because Arjuna has failed to cash in on an inevitable opportunity of acquiring every means of attaining mortal and heavenly happiness<sup>77</sup>

Another vital question relates to the much advertised passage on *nishkamakarma* and its de-ontic value<sup>78</sup>. This passage immediately follows the utilitarian motive to fight this war. It is only a reminder that pursuing a war of this stature *jaya* and *ajaya* as consequences should not be dwelt upon, rather the inclination to fight alone will reduce the *paap*. We now learn to separate action from its consequences. This sets the tune for the ensuing dispassionate action theory that forms the *summum bonum* of the *Gita's* ethical view. It is in this context that Krishna advises Arjuna not to be tempted by the result of the action.

## Conclusion

The discovery of this de-ontic ideal to wage a justified war had inspired some colonial thinkers to wage a *dharmayuddha* against the British colonial rulers. However, this ideal of *nishkama* way of waging a war may still fall short of pacifism advocated by the Buddhists. Khantipalo, a Mahayana commentator, argues that the uselessness of war as a way of solving conflict has been summed by the Buddha when he says "thus by way of *karma*, he who plunders is plundered."<sup>79</sup> Generally

speaking, Buddhism as a philosophy has displayed the efficacy to be resolute in pursuit of non-violence and non-anger even towards one's enemies. The most significant point about the fundamental humanistic ideas like *maitri* and *karuna* is that it can be universalized. Unfortunately, the caste boundaries of *dharmayuddha* dictations fail to achieve this goal.

## Notes

1. Helen Frowe, *Ethics of War and Peace*. Routledge, 2015. p. 1
2. Stevan P. Lee *Ethics and War: An Introduction*. CUP, 2012. p. 26
3. Brian Orend, "Kant's ethics of war and peace", *Journal of Military Ethics*, London: Routledge, July 2009. p.162-163.
4. Ram Saran Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*. Macmillan India. 2007 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) p. 45.
5. Sharma p. 46
6. *Rig Veda*. V. 61.5
7. *Rig Veda*. I.73.5; VI.60.13; IX.61.11
8. M.R. Kale, *Higher Sanskrit Grammar* Motilal Banarsidas. 1995. Appendix II. p. 126. Kale refers to the root verb *vrij* which means to shun, to abandon, to exclude. The word *vrijana* is the noun form derived from *vrij*. The formation thus is *Vrij + anat* (of which *t* is elided), meaning sin, or a person with villainous disposition. Monier Williams explains *vrijana* in the sense of exclusion. Thus seen in the context of possession, *vrijana* would signify unenclosed land/wealth or in exclusion of what the tribe possesses. It can also refer to the people who are outside the perview of law.
9. By applying the genitive case to *vrijana*, the meaning would be that the king is the controller or perhaps the owner of the *vrijana*. This may refer to the power attributed to the king to apply force on detractors or acquire by force other's wealth.
10. R.S. Sharma p. 50; also *Rig Veda* IX.97.10
11. R.P. Kangle *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, vol. I. University of Bombay. 1960. Book I.4.3 "*Anvikshiktrayivartanam yogakshemosadhano dandah*"
12. R.P. Kangle. *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, vol. I. I.4.3
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63. Bhattikavya II.35 " Dharmo'sti satyam tava rakshasayamanyo vyatiste tu mamapi dharmah/ brahmadrshasteyenal rajanyavrittidhrita kar mukakeshu"
64. Bhattikavya II.35 "rajne'apatye jatigraham"
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67. *Mahabharata* Ch III.7-8 *Vanaparava Arjuno'bhigamanaparvodyaya*.
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70. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2.55.64; also Ch 12.13-20
71. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch.2.38
72. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch1 30-34 Arjuna argues why kula should not be destroyed. In *Mahabharata* Ch V Udyogparva Yanasandhiparvodyaya it has been said 'Tyajet kularthe purusham' (the individual ought to be sacrificed for the sake of the family [like Krishna did when he killed Kamsa]) But the reverse is not permissible.
73. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch.2.31 &3.35
74. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2 23 "the weapons cannot destroy the soul"
75. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 11.33 "I have previously already destroyed them, you just be the instrument of killing"
76. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2.33 "It is being stated that if you do not perform dharmayuddha, you will receive an inglorious fate after death"
77. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2.32-37
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