

Bhagavad Gita and Russia-Ukraine War Paradigm

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INTRODUCTION

Happiness is ultimate end of life. Peace leads to happiness. War breeds disharmony, discord and hatred. When war is unavoidable then it becomes a duty to engage, fight and court martyrdom every where. India is a living civilisation, despite several invasions and brave attempts made to neutralise them. History tells us that India fell for betrayal of few people from within and allowed enemy to occupy our territory. The Partition of India in 1947 points at machinations of enemies within and not outside. Bhagavad Gita, a text dating to 150 BCE of Vedic period, deals with practical problems of life. It revolves round how a man discharge his duties as a member of imperfect society and at the same time realises his spiritual journey enshrined in the Vedic tradition. Bhagavad Gita deals with conflict resolution at individual, family, community, national, regional and international plane. Bhagavad Gita focuses on integral view of life instead of compartmentalised view of life. It is a duty to fight winning or losing war rather than to adopt a defeatist plan and retreat.

Russia-Ukraine war is a case study in the back-drop of conflict resolution in Bhagavad Gita of Vedic traction. Soviet Union disintegrated on December 26, 1991 and brought to the end of sovereign state (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic) and 15 other sovereign states including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Georgia. In 1991, Ukraine ended participation in commonwealth of independent state (CIS of nine members— Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) formed after disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. Turkmenistan and Ukraine ratified creation of CIS agreement and later abandoned it. On February 24, 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine and war continues till date. Russia attempted to settle a situation by resorting to war and precipitating a conflict to no end or a full-scale or limited nuclear war in modern times. Is war an outdated instrument of modern times? Or, a credible instrument of foreign policy?

WAR AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN BHAGAVAD GITA: AN OVERVIEW

The Bhagavad Gita is cast in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Arjuna, a leader fighting on Pandava's side, realises that war is fratricidal and futile. His personal inclination comes in the ways of his family and social duty. Arjuna becomes a pacifist and quietist, and refuses to fight. Arjuna suffers an anxiety stroke. Krishna his friend, counsellor and charioteer recalls:

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥ भगवद् गीता: 2:23 ॥

Him the weapon cut not; Him the fire burnt not; Him the water wet not; Him the wind dries not (Bhagavad Gita: 2: 23). In Indian spiritual tradition, it is family, social, national or international obligation to fight and not to run away from the battle. Body perishes, but soul is eternally migrating in the cycles of birth and death.

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।
तस्मा—दुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय कृतनिश्चय ॥ भगवद् गीता, 2:37 ॥

O son of Kunti! If you killed in the battle, you get to heaven. If victorious, you enjoy the kingdom. Therefore, arise resolved to fight. (Bhagavad Gita, 2:37).

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।
यदी भाः सद्दशी सा स्याभ्दासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥ भगवद् गीता, 2:37 ॥

'What brilliance there would have been if a thousand suns were to blaze forth all of a sudden in the sky— to that was comparable the splendour of that great being' (Bhagavad Gita, 11:12).

Robert Oppenheimer, the father of atomic bomb, remembered Bhagavad Gita: 'Now I am become Death, the destroyer of the worlds' when he witnessed detonation of nuclear weapon on July 16, 1945.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानम धर्मस्य तदात्मानमं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ भगवद् गीता, 4:7 ॥

Whenever there is decline of virtue and ascendance of wickedness, then O scion of the Bharat !
I manifest Myself in a body (Bhagavad Gita, 4:7).

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥ भगवद् गीता, 4:8 ॥

For protection of virtuous people and destruction of the evil, I am born age to age (Bhagavad Gita, 4:8).

Bhagavad Gita reveals that duty of a person is to fight and court supreme sacrifice for family, community, society, nation and the planet Earth. The concept of Jihad is alien to Bhagavad Gita. The teachings of Bhagavad Gita are universally applicable and foundation of Hindu civilisation. The attempts are being made by the vested interests to demean, distort and defame Vedic literature in India, despite its intellectual heights and stature. Shivraj Patil, a Congress party leader, claimed that ‘the concept of jihad was not just in Islam but also in Gita and Christianity’. (The Hindu, New Delhi: 21/10/2022). Bhagavad Gita, on the contrary, deals with universal ethical problem.

परस्परविरोधे तु वयम् पंचशच ते शतम् ।
परैस्तु विग्रहे प्राप्ते वयम् पंचाधिकम् शतम् ॥ अरण्यपर्व ॥

‘While fighting with each other, we are five and hundred and fighting with others, we are hundred and five’ (Aranyaparva).

India suffered defeat at hands of traitors rather than the invaders. If you fail to know others then victory turn into defeat. India suffered defeat in Indo-China War. Indian leadership courted China and ignored incursions in the North-Eastern sector in 1962. China militarily engages with India to settle border dispute. China is exercising economic might, military power and ideological influence to sabotage democracy, independence and peace everywhere. India has fought four wars with Pakistan— 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999. Pakistan is exporting terrorism in the world and India is a victim country. China is, a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations has come in defence of terror outfits sheltered by Pakistan. A politically divided India on issue of unity and integrity and security of the state constitute threat within.

WAR AND PEACE: INDIAN DILEMMA

INDO-PAK WAR, 1947 AND INTERNATIONALISATION OF K-ISSUE:

To live at peace with one other is the most natural thing to do. But it is not so with Pakistan. Pakistan is moving with a nuclear bomb in one hand and begging bowl in other hand. The people of Pak-occupied Kashmir, Sind, Baluchistan have openly staged revolt after 75 years of creation of Pakistan. On October 22, 1947, raiders encouraged by Pakistan entered the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. On October 26, 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh (1895-1961) signed the Instrument of Accession with Dominion of India and Indian Army entered Srinagar. The Apostle of Peace, Gandhiji approved of India's action in sending troops to Jammu and Kashmir to repel the tribal invaders. When Gandhiji was asked about his response to armed action in Jammu and Kashmir and his conviction about non-violence, he argued that 'a mass movement has different terms of reference compared to what a nation and state has to do to defend its unity and territorial integrity' (1)

On December 31, 1947: Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru announced cease-fire without consulting the Cabinet and Indian Army engaged in the Indo-Pak war. October 17 1949 Indian Constituent Assembly adopts Article 370 a special, transitional and temporary provision ensuring a special status and internal autonomy to the state of Jammu & Kashmir. On January 1, 1948, India submitted a formal complaint to the Security Council under Chapter VI of the UN Charter under Article 35, which reads: 'Any member of the UN may bring any dispute or any situation of the nature referred to in Article 34, to the attention of the Security Council or the General assembly'. Article 34 reads: 'The Security Council may investigate dispute, or any situation, which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace or security'.

Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council is empowered to take action with respect to the threat to peace, breach of the peace, and acts of aggression. Article 39 reads: 'Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or any act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Article 41 and 42 to maintain international peace and security'.

Under the provision of Chapter VI of the UN Charter, India referred a 'situation' and not 'dispute' to the Security Council. When Security Council considered India's complaint, Pakistan had no presence in Kashmir. Curiously, Security Council accepted that Pakistan had a part in the plebiscite process and made it an India versus Pakistan question, with all its consequences. The aggression, not accession, is the issue.

The Security Council Resolutions on India and Pakistan Question includes---

(i) Resolution 38 (17-01-1948); (ii) Resolution 39 (20-01-1948); (iii) Resolution 47 (21-04-1948); (iv) Resolution 51 (03-06-1948); (v) Resolution 80 (14-03-1950); (vi) Resolution 91 (30-03-1951); (vii) Resolution 96 (10-11-1951); (viii) Resolution 98 (23-12-1952); (ix) Resolution 122 (24-01-1957); (x) Resolution 123 (21-02-1957); (xi) Resolution 126 (02-12-1957); (xii) Resolution 209 (04-09-1965); (xiii) Resolution 210 (06-09-1965); (xiv) Resolution 211 (20-09-1965); (xv) Resolution 214 (27-09-1965); (xvi) Resolution 215 (05-11-1965); (xvii) Resolution 307 (21-12-1971)⁷.

The Security Council resolution 47 of April 21, 1948 stated that Government of Pakistan should undertake the withdrawal from the State of Jammu & Kashmir of tribesmen and Pakistani nationals not normally resident therein who have entered the State for the purpose of fighting, and to prevent any intrusion into the State of such elements and any furnishing of material aid to those fighting in the State. The Council noted with satisfaction that both India and Pakistan desire that the question of accession of Jammu & Kashmir State to India or Pakistan should be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite. Pakistan has never complied with first part of resolution of vacating the aggression and drawn international mileage on the conduct of plebiscite under the auspices of the UN. A referendum in Jammu & Kashmir at the early stage would have gone decisively in India's favour and it was in Pakistan's interest to postpone it far as long as possible. The entry of hostile elements into the territory of Jammu & Kashmir in October 1947 was contrary to international law. The issue of aggression was sidelined. The dispute over Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan was a non issue. But, the non-issue gained currency in the UN forum. On August 5, 2019, Indian Parliament deleted Article 370 of Indian Constitution and ensured complete integration of Jammu & Kashmir State with Union of India. On October 31, 2019, two union territories Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were carved out of the erstwhile princely state excluding Pak-occupied Kashmir.

INDO-PAK WAR, 1965:

Under Operation Gibraltar, Pakistani Army designed to infiltrate forces into Jammu and Kashmir in 1965. The Tashkent declaration on January 10, 1966 ended Indo-Pak. Former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri died at Tashkent in a mysterious circumstances. Shastri led Indian Army to victory in 1965. Indian Army captured Burki village in Lahore and humbled Pakistan which led to truce initiated by USSR-USA combine.

BANGLADESH CRISIS, 1971:

After India-Pakistan war in 1965, Pakistan engaged full-fledged war in 1971. ‘Indian Army had an army chief who was a Parsi; the eastern army commander was a Sikh; the chief of army staff of the eastern command, who evolved the strategy for East Pakistan, was a Jew; the director of military operations was an Anglo-Indian; and three Goan Christians commanded major battle formations in that war— one being Lieutenant General Walter Pinto, who commanded a corps; Major General Eustace D’Souza, a division in Jammu & Kashmir; and Major General Ben Gonsalves, who commanded a division in the East. The vice-chief was lieutenant General was Stanley Menezes, according to Major General (retired) Ian Cardozo’ (Navhind Times, Goa: 22/01/2023).

KARGIL WAR, 1999:

Kargil War (03/05/1999 - 26/07/1999) resulted due to infiltration of Pakistani troops into Indian side of Line of Control in Siachin in Jammu and Kashmir. India repulsed armed aggression of Pakistani soldiers in Indian territory in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999. India fought three-and-half battles with Pakistan and one with China in 1965. No first strike is no more a nuclear war strategy for New India in 2023. Prime Minister Narendra Modi at G-20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia that ‘today’s era must not be of war’ in the sidelines of Russia-Ukraine war (Times of India, New Delhi, 16/11/2022).

कुछ तो बात है कि हस्ती, मिटती नहीं हमारी। सदियों रहा दुश्मन, दौर—ए—जमाँ हमारा।

॥ मुहम्मद इक़बाल ॥

There is something that is beyond explanation. Identity defies a full stop, despite we encounter enemy endlessly (Muhammad Iqbal).

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR AND PEACE, STABILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Conflict is outcome of divergent interests, goals, values or ideologies and conflict resolution refers to accommodation of these conflicting interests, goals, values or ideologies to avoid mutually assured destruction between two or more groups, communities or countries. The United Nation's role in peace and security suffered from its inability to extricate itself from the clutches of the western powers. The role UN was influenced by the cold war rivalries and there is revival of post-cold war rivalries in February 2022. The Europe-centric world-view down and out after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The United States of America, Canada, two countries of North America and 28 European countries are members of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation have pitted against Russia. Ukraine is a non-NATO member state.

Congress of Vienna (1814-15) brought peace to Europe until 1914. One hundred years after World War I, 'Europe's leaders are sleepwalking toward a new, all-out war' (2). As in 1914, they believe that the war in Ukraine will be limited and short-lived. But, it may not be so. The US sees Ukraine as the 'country of sacrifice'. The duration of the war depends on that goal— change in leadership in Russia.

Ukraine is the country of sacrifice for US and US-led NATO alliance. The ultimate goal of US is to defeat of Russia and counter China politically, economically, militarily and diplomatically. Russia-Ukraine war will continue till US attains its objective of change of leadership in Russia. President Vladimir Putin has attempted to reverse the disintegration of Soviet Union unleashed by Michael Gorbachev way back in 1991. Russia-Ukraine war points at religious-cum-cultural conflict between Catholic Church and Orthodox Church. Russia-Ukraine war is clash within western civilisation and revival cold war era.

The Time magazine has declared Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, as person of the year in 2022. After Soviet invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Zelensky is no more a joker with the boyish face. He is 'much harder and deaf to distractions, or else his country might not survive' (3). Zelensky is pitted against a nuclear state Russia with a late-model iPhone on the land in the biggest information age. If Ukraine leadership fall out of focus, they are in danger. The attention of the world is a shield and military and economic aid from the United Kingdom, United States of America and NATO allies dragged Ukraine's resistance against Russian illegal invasion till date.

War is not an outdated instrument to re-integrate Ukraine with former Soviet Union of December 26, 1991.

President Volodymyr Zelensky believes that it is European war to with Ukraine at the centre-stage. Zelensky in his address to European Parliament said: “Do prove that you will not let us go. Do prove that you are indeed Europeans, and then life will win over death, and light will win over darkness” (4). So far, focussing on human lives is the finest move on Ukraine’s part against Russia. It is reason and wisdom winning out against speed and ambition, according to Ukraine war room thinkers. Russia resorted to fierce retaliations at the risk of courting a nuclear war to ensure total fall of Ukraine. Ukraine is a sacrificial country for US, Europe and their NATO alliance.

CONCLUSION

The United Nations efforts to resolve K-issue have, in fact, led to instability, exploitation and state-sponsored violence in PoK, Baluchistan and Sindh. Indian Parliament has asserted Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as integral part of Union of India. The people of PoK have favoured to rejoin Indian Union under present political dispensation in India— leadership of Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. Today’s era is not of war. But, India faces hostile China a bigger threat than unstable Pakistan. Pakistan and China are nuclear states. India will be forced to reclaim its lost territories in Pak-occupied Kashmir in 1947 at the risk of nuclear flash-point in the backdrop of Russia-Ukraine war. War is neither futile nor lost its utility.

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