

WAGING WAR FOR PROMOTING PEACE

By Brigadier Chitranjan Sawant, VSM

Waging war has been a favourite pastime of kings and captains from time immemorial. Delving deep into the art of statecraft one finds that waging a war has been an extension of pursuing national interests to the logical end. What is not achievable through diplomacy is sought to be achieved through wars. All political philosophers have a common meeting ground when they say that war is an evil, albeit a necessary evil. Indeed a state professing to pursue a policy of peace says that it had to declare war to promote peace. Thus the ultimate goal of the civilized world is peace and it cannot but be achieved by waging a war against enemies of a civilized way of life and perpetrators of terror.

Mahabharat, the mother of all wars waged on the soil of India that is Bharat, was fought as a Dharmayudh, that is as per the righteous code of conduct in war and its sole aim was to establish a state of Dharma, where Peace would prevail after eliminating Adharma or the Evil. It is a fact recorded in history that Yogeshwar Shri Krishna, who gave us Bhagwad Gita, went as an ambassador of the Pandavas to the Kaurava court to plead for peace. He was prepared to surrender many rights but the evil forces were adamant on perpetrating injustice and immorality. The Yogeshwar had no choice but to advise the Pandavas to wage a war now to promote peace eventually. The rest is history. Let us now go back to the time of human creation on our planet and revelation of the divine knowledge, VEDAS, and learn more about war and peace.

Peace is indeed the avowed goal of the man who walks on the Vedic path. Waging a war for the sake of waging a war goes against the grain of the Vedic Thought. As a matter of fact an aimless act of commission or omission is frowned upon. A man, that includes a woman too, who entertains sublime ideas and has charity for all and malice for none in his heart, acts as per the tenets of the Vedas is indeed an Arya (that is a noble man). One who is fond of bloodshed and goes against the injunctions of the Vedas is called a Dasyu (a demonlike creature). A war is not of the making of an Arya. However, when the life and limb as well as the Dharma are at stake, an Arya has little choice but to wage a war with all might and resources at his command. An Arya goes into battle with a strong will to win. Let us have a look at some of the Ved mantras on war and peace.

LEADERSHIP IN WAR

Ye Murdhanah Kshitinam Adabdhasah Swa-Yashasah Vrata Rakshante Aduhah, so goes the thirteenth mantra of 67th sukta in the 8th mandala of the Rigveda. A great leader of human beings, both in war and peace, is one who takes a vow to do a good turn to one and all and lives and dies by it. For such a leader the motto is: Society before Self. A leader in battle is convinced of the cause he is fighting for and convinces the army that he leads. This indeed is a great morale-raising factor. It is a well known principle that Moral (that includes morale) is to physical as ten to one. The Rigveda enjoins on such a leader to be Indomitable and Irrepressible, that is one who goes through thick and thin and remains unfazed. He takes the joys and sorrows of life in the normal stride of life. He is not cowed down by adversities and is never over-whelmed by the enemy forces, notwithstanding their numerical or fire-power superiority. Further, a leader in battle does not rest on his or his ancestors' laurels but earns a niche for himself through sane and timely actions. Of course, a leader cannot afford to be a rebel against the time-honoured tenets lest the soldiers under his command catch this infection and rebel against him. Such rebellious acts lead to acute indiscipline leading to fragging and fratricide. That will sound the death knell of both, the leader and the led. The perennial source of strength is the Character of the leader. Character is a cumulative outcome of fulfilling vows taken in the larger interests of the king and country. In the present context king stands for the sovereign state.

The Rigveda, inter alia, eulogizes the role of a courageous warrior. What kind of a warrior draws the admiration of his compatriots? The 5th mantra of the 55th sukta in the 1st mandala of the Rigveda provides the answer. He is the one who attacks the enemy with a Vajra and strikes decisively while he himself is calm, cool and collected. A brave soldier fights for Dharma against Adharma and deals a death-blow to the evil enemy. The Vajra is the most potent weapon in the armoury of the Vedic warriors. It finds mention in contemporary life and literature. Many folklores are woven around it. Of course, the all time popular tale of Indra requesting Rishi Dadheech for his bones to make a Vajra thereof to kill the dreaded demon demonstrates how the rulers and rishies joined hands to fight against evil and help the good triumph. This also illustrates the concept of a Total War where the entire nation is geared to fight, not the Army alone, against the enemy. Here again it is the undaunted spirit of the warrior in battlefield that keeps the flag of Aryas flying by beating Dasyus in their own game. It is, therefore, an ongoing battle between the forces of good and evil where the former must defeat the latter. In the Dharmyudh, it is the Dharm that comes out with flying colours. Moral of the story is that wars are inevitable and a nation must remain prepared for it always and everytime. History bears witness to the fact that those civilizations that paid scant attention to preparation of rank and file of warriors invariably lost wars and their civilization was wiped out from face of the earth.

Prithivya Vya Ashah Parvatanam – O sons of the Brave! Be ever on the move across the globe, in all directions and cross the mighty mountains.

The third mantra, 39th sukta in the first mandala of the Rigveda exhorts those who are in the profession of arms Not to let the grass grow under their feet. They should always be mobile in all directions across hills and dales to pursue the goal without fear. It would be pertinent to add that the military movement is undertaken all the year round and superstitions, like the one about proceeding in any one direction on a given day may be hazardous, are left by the wayside. Courage, fortitude, forbearance of a warrior are his assets that he can ill-afford to squander at the mythical altar created by ill-informed and semi-literate men of religion of the dark medieval ages.

The Rigveda mantra in the ninth mandala describes a lovely scenario of our army marching to give battle to the enemy. It is a heartening commentary on the leader and the led. The commander is in the forwardmost Ratha or the battle wagon, others follow him with implicit faith ; the rank and file of soldiers are mighty pleased in their hearts : Pra Senanih Shuro Agre Rathanam Gavyanneti Harshate Asya Sena – 9-96-1.

With morale of our forces remaining sky high, victory in battle over the enemy is a foregone conclusion. Indeed, high morale is a battle winning factor and a unique one. The leaders, both at the national level and the armed forces level, have to take every possible step to ensure that the morale of the nation and the armed forces always remains sky high. The Nation has to rise as One Man and maintain cohesion.

LET US BECOME INVINCIBLE

Mind is the man. With a view to becoming invincible, the entire country has to work for it relentlessly. Let us start with physical fitness. A healthy mind is a part of a healthy body. So, let us care for the body, irrespective of the teaching that an individual's identity rests in his soul and not in the body. Embodied soul is the answer to remain fit like a fiddle. What makes a fighting man and a woman develop nerves of steel is moral courage. Where does a soldier get moral courage from? Dharma provides moral courage to man. No wonder all efficient armies of the world give teachings and practice of Dharma a prominent place in the training schedule.

Negligence in its implementation leads the army on the path of disaster. No sane outfit wants to walk on a suicidal course. Let the rank and file become convinced of the cause they are fighting for and then they will give their best in battle. Such soldiers are focussed men and women who always strive to achieve the aim and get the goal. Nothing can stop them from achieving the target, come rain come shine.

The Rigveda extols virtues of such enlightened soldiers as described heretofore. The third mantra in 41st sukta of the first mandala runs thus :

Vi Durga Vi Dwishah Puro Ghnanti Rajaan Aisham Nayanti Durita Sirah

An enlightened and brave soldier, a Vir Kshatriya, is one who punishes enemies of the nation, destroys their fortresses, dismantles their built-up defenses and razes to ground their cities and shelters and finally exterminates them so that they do not raise their heads in revolt. Thus the aim of a well- trained army, navy and air force is to annihilate completely all enemies of the nation. Indeed, it is a clear and unambiguous Vedic mandate for taking punitive action against the enemy, internal and external, and carry the operation to its logical end. Terrorists are no exception to the rule enunciated by this Ved mantra.

Modernisation of armaments and keeping strategy and field tactics in tune with demand of the day have to be catered for in making an armed force invincible. History bears witness to defeat of inward looking nations at the hands of forward looking nations. A frog-in-the-well tendency must be discouraged. Interaction with other nations of the world is a sine-qua-non of keeping abreast with new researches in the weapon system and art of war. Stagnation of all sorts must be banished from the lifestyle of a nation. Those who shun information technology cannot stay afloat for long. They will sink sooner than later. To stay afloat one must continue swimming, even if it is against the current at times. To stay afloat a nation has to keep on kicking. So be it.

PROMOTING PEACE

Notwithstanding what has been said heretofore about waging a war, annihilating the enemy and exterminating him, the main mission of Man is Peace. It has already been emphasized that going to war is the last resort of the state policy. Disputes between two nations are to be solved through diplomacy and taking recourse to violence should be eschewed. However, more often than not, the rule of international law is thrown overboard. Might is Right – that is the law of jungle but prevails in the so- called civilized world. The injunction of the Vedas is to eschew war. War is indeed destructive. Mankind has suffered in wars. Nevertheless, when the very life and way of life are at stake, war is permissible in self-defense. If demon like men and women are bent upon destroying our way of life, we cannot but go to war against them. Here one is waging a war to promote Peace. Thus the ultimate goal is Peace, even if it has to be achieved through war.

The Yajurved in its 36th chapter, 17th mantra talks of Peace in a very persuasive style. Peace is good for the mankind and man should pray for Peace that prevails all over the divine creation. The mantra is commonly called Shanti Path. The recitation of the mantra guides us, human beings, to perfect peace. This mantra is environment-friendly as well as ecology-friendly. The mantra mentions the shiny celestial entities, talks of planet earth, of water, of medicinal herbs, green foliage, the divine knowledge and the Peace that pervades all over the Creation. Finally, Man prays for the same all-pervading Peace to be a part and parcel of his own self. Let there be Peace, Peace and Peace. Pray, when Man reposes unflinching faith in Peace, he will indeed abhor War.