



INDIAN JOURNAL OF LEGAL AFFAIRS AND RESEARCH

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1

Peer-reviewed, open-access, refereed journal

IJLAR

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www.ijlar.com

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Introduction

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Preface

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence in legal scholarship. This volume presents a curated selection of articles that reflect the diverse and dynamic nature of legal studies today. Our contributors, ranging from esteemed legal scholars to emerging academics, bring forward a rich tapestry of insights that address critical legal issues and offer novel contributions to the field. We are grateful to our editorial board, reviewers, and authors for their dedication and hard work, which have made this publication possible. It is our hope that this journal will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and will inspire further inquiry and debate within the legal community.

Description

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is an academic journal that publishes peer-reviewed articles on a wide range of legal topics. Each issue is designed to provide a platform for legal scholars, practitioners, and students to share their research findings, theoretical explorations, and practical insights. Our journal covers various branches of law, including but not limited to constitutional law, international law, criminal law, commercial law, human rights, and environmental law. We are dedicated to ensuring that the articles published in our journal adhere to the highest standards of academic rigor and contribute meaningfully to the understanding and development of legal theories and practices.

HUMANITARIANISM IN PRACTICE: THE ROLE OF RED CROSS THROUGH THE LENS OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the humanitarian role of the Red Cross through the lens of the Indian Knowledge System. The principles of Ahimsa, Dharma, Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam, Seva, Karuna, Sarvodaya provides an ethical and philosophical foundation that parallels with the humanitarian ideals of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Ancient Indian, epic and vedic texts such as Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagavada Gita, Arthashastra, Manusmriti, and Jataka Tales, emphasise humane treatment, restraint in warfare aligning with the Red cross principles of neutrality, impartiality, humanity, voluntary service, etc. the study also integrates vedic perspective on disease and disaster management, highlighting preventive measures and techniques. The case studies from the Indian Red Cross Society illustrates these values in practice with the conclusion that Indian Knowledge System enriches and reinforces the humanitarian philosophy of the Red Cross Society.

KEYWORDS: Humanitarianism, International Red Cross Society, Indian Knowledge System, Ahimsa, Dharma, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Seva, Sarvodaya, Mahabharat, Ramayana, Bhagavada Gita, Arthashastra, Indian Red Cross Society.

INTRODUCTION

Humanitarianism is the practice of aiding individuals who struggle to uphold basic human rights without discrimination, as every person is inherently valuable and entitled to rights. Even in the 21st century, many regions of the world still continue to suffer from conflict, violence, disaster, and pandemics. Humanitarianism seeks to alleviate human suffering and promote dignity during any crises. It is both the practice and belief of enhancing individuals' well-being and alleviating

pain through actions motivated by empathy, compassion, and the intrinsic value of human life. It is not merely about providing relief during times of crisis but also fostering an ethical lifestyle founded on compassion, dignity, and a sense of global responsibility.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, established in 1863 by **Henry Dunant**, a Swiss businessman, who was on his way to meet French Emperor Napoleon III when he journeyed through the town of Solferino in Northern Italy. He stumbled onto the battlefield following a fierce conflict between Franco-Sardinian and Austrian troops, where around 40,000 wounded soldiers were abandoned without adequate medical care. Appalled by their plight, Dunant rallied local volunteers to provide assistance, using the phrase **Tutti Fratelli** (meaning, “All are brothers”) to emphasise the significance of aiding soldiers from all factions.

Dunant chronicled this encounter in his book named ‘*A Memory of Solferino*’, suggesting two main ideas:

1. the formation of neutral national relief organisations to aid the injured during conflicts; and
2. the creation of an international agreement aimed at safeguarding medical personnel and services on the battlefield.

Dunant’s book and concepts received favourable reactions from prominent individuals.¹ These suggestions resulted in the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863 and the signing of the first ever Geneva Convention in 1864, which created the legal framework and designated the Red Cross emblem as a sign of protection. This initiative led to the creation of National Red Cross Societies across different nations, forming a global network dedicated to alleviating human suffering in times of war and public emergencies.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement’s core principles are **humanity, neutrality, impartiality, unity, universality, independence** and **voluntary services**. These principles serve as a moral guide in conflict zones, disaster relief operations, and healthcare services worldwide. Spanning various borders and cultures, the International Red Cross and Red

¹<https://www.icrc.org/en/about-international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement>

crepuscule serves everywhere and for everyone. These universally recognised symbols-the **Red Cross, Red Crescent and the Red Crystal**, embody assistance and optimism during the times of turmoil and disaster.

The National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies function independently within their own countries, delivering essential humanitarian aid grounded in local communities. They address emergencies in their countries and provide international assistance when necessary, all while complying with the national laws.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is not only an organization in fact it is a global network of humanitarians with more than 500,000 staff, more than 16 million volunteers from 191 national societies around the world. These national societies along with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross forms the movement. The IFRC oversees responses to emergencies before, during and after disasters, climate crisis, and health emergencies. They assist national societies in strengthening the resilience of individuals facing vulnerabilities. In contrast, the ICRC offers humanitarian aid and protective services amidst armed conflicts and internal disturbances, while also ensuring adherence to international humanitarian law.²

This paper explores how the humanitarian efforts of the Red Cross Society resonates with the values and principles of the Indian Knowledge System. The Indian Knowledge System, also known as the **Indian school of thought** or **Hindu philosophy**, encompasses a wide array of knowledge, belief, and practices that have been developed and passed down from ancient times in the Indian subcontinent. This knowledge system is deeply embedded in the ancient vedic scriptures and has evolved over thousands of years, influencing the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual landscape of India.³

² <https://www.icrc.org/en/about-international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement>

³ Kapil Kapoor, Indian Knowledge systems: Nature, philosophy, and character, in Indian knowledge systems, Vol. 1, (Ind. Inst. Od Advanced Study ed.,2020).

The Indian Knowledge System encompasses several principles that provide direct humanitarian orientation, namely *Ahimsa* (Non-Violence) from Jain, Buddhist and Hindu philosophies advocating for avoidance of harm to all living beings; and *Dharam* (Duty) or righteousness is an individuals obligation to uphold harmony in the society; *Seva* (Selfless Service), serving voluntarily as an offering to both humanity and the divine; *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (The world is one family), this principle encourages the sense of universal kinship and compassion; *Karuna* (Compassion), a sense of empathy towards every living being in the world, in Buddhism it is expressed as desire for others to be liberated from suffering. These principles of Indian Knowledge System are distinctly evident in the humanitarian beliefs of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

This paper also analyses how ancient Indian literature reflects a nuanced approach to the treatment of war prisoners, balancing the imperatives of justice, compassion, and political stability. Drawing from epic texts such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, normative codes like *Manu smriti*, pragmatic treaties like *Arthashastra*, and spiritual narratives like *Jataka Tales*.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

1. The correlation between the humanitarian principles of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and ethical values of the Indian Knowledge System.
2. The connection between ancient Indian epics and Vedic learnings reflecting in the modern humanitarian law.
3. Roles and impacts of the International and Indian Red Cross societies.

OBJECTIVE

1. To examine alignment between philosophical values of Indian Knowledge system and the humanitarian principles of the Red Cross.
2. To analyse ancient Indian texts and Vedic perspectives in relation to modern humanitarian framework adopted by Red Cross.
3. To assess the integration of Indian Knowledge System with Red Cross can promote a more holistic, ethical, and culturally grounded approach towards global humanitarianism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical framework, utilizing primary sources such as ancient Indian literature and international humanitarian law, in addition to secondary resources concerning the Red Cross and Indian Knowledge Systems. The study integrates doctrinal, interpretive, and case-based evaluations to emphasize the alignment of traditional wisdom with contemporary humanitarian efforts.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The research aims to illustrate that the tenets of the Indian Knowledge System are in strong alignment with the humanitarian principles upheld by the Red Cross, reinforcing values such as non-violence, compassion, obligation, and global welfare. It will demonstrate that incorporating IKS viewpoints can enhance modern humanitarian approaches, making them more culturally informed and ethically robust. The study also expects to showcase the Indian Red Cross Society as a concrete example of this integration through its efforts in disaster relief, healthcare, and social service.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON RED CROSS

Geneva Conventions and Their Additional Protocols

The International Humanitarian Law is a set of rules that seeks to limit the effects of armed conflicts for humanitarian purposes. It protects individuals who are not involved in the hostilities or who have ceased to participate and restrict means and methods of warfare. This set of rules is also referred to as the *law of armed conflict or law of war*. It is founded on the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality, with its roots embedded in historical legal codes such as the Hammurabic Code, Justinian's Code, and the Lieber Code. Whereas the modern International Humanitarian Law was developed after Henry Dunant witnessed the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino in 1859. He advocated for the protection of wounded soldiers and proposed creating a civilian group. The Committee of five, later the ICRC, was formed to implement these ideas, resulting in the Geneva Convention of 1864, where the protective emblem of a red cross on a white background was introduced.

THE GENEVA CONVENTION OF 1864

Following the successful conclusion of the Geneva Conference of 1863, the Swiss Federal Council, at the behest of the Geneva Committee, invited the governments of all European nations and several American states to a diplomatic conference aimed at adopting a convention for improving the conditions of the wounded soldiers during wartime. The conference took place from 8-22 August 1864, with 16 states in attendance. The draft convention presented to the conference, which was created by the Geneva Committee, was approved without significant modifications.

The core principles established in the convention, which have been upheld by subsequent Geneva Conventions are as follows:

- Assistance to the wounded without discrimination based on nationality;
- The inviolability of medical personnel along with medical facilities and units;
- The distinctive emblem of the red cross on a white background.

The Convention of 1864 was superseded by the convention of 1906, 1929, and 1949 on the same subject. Nevertheless, it remained in effect until 1966 when the last state party finally acceded to the 1949 Conventions.⁴

The four Geneva Conventions established in 1949, ratified by all nations, serves as the foundation of the International Humanitarian Law. They are complemented by the Additional Protocols of 1977, concerning protection of victims, and the 2005 Additional Protocol III, which pertains to a distinctive emblem. These Conventions and Protocols aim to safeguard combatants, members of armed forces who are wounded, sick, shipwrecked, civilians and prisoners of war, also medical personnel, chaplains, and civilian support staff afforded for protection.

1. First Geneva Convention:(64 Articles)

Protects wounded and sick soldiers in armed forces on land, along with medical personnel. It ensures humane treatment without discrimination and adequate care. Provisions include the right to ICRC and authorised organisations to assist and collect the wounded.

⁴ American Red Cross, Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols (Apr. 2011),

2. Second Geneva Convention:(63 Articles)

Extends the previous convention's protections to armed forces at sea. It covers shipwrecked personnel and hospital ships, which cannot be used for military purposes or attacked. Neutral ships may assist without fear of capture.

3. Third Geneva Convention:(143 Articles)

It covers the treatment of prisoners of war, ensuring humane treatment, adequate housing, food, and medical care. Prisoners of war must not be tortured or subjected to unfair trials. Family communication and repatriation are guaranteed.

4. Fourth Geneva Convention:(159 Articles)

Protects civilians during armed conflict and occupation. It ensures protection from murder, torture, and discrimination, and provides care for children, the sick, and expectant mothers. Hostage-taking, pillage, and collective punishment are prohibited.

ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL

• **Protocol I of 1977:**

Expand protection for civilians, medical personnel, women, children and journalists in international armed conflicts. It prohibits indiscriminate attacks, unnecessary suffering, destruction of vital resources, environmental damage, and the recruitment of children under fifteen years of age.

• **Protocol II of 1977:**

Strengthens protections in non-international conflicts such as civil wars, murders, pillage etc. It prohibits violence, hostage-taking, slavery, and attacks on civilian infrastructure.

• **Protocol III of 2005:**

Introduced the red crystal as an additional protective emblem alongside the red cross and red crescent, ensuring neutrality where other emblems might have religious or political connotations.⁵

⁵ American Red Cross, Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols (Apr. 2011),

ALIGNING INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM PRINCIPLES WITH THE HUMANITARIAN APPROACH OF THE RED CROSS

Indian Knowledge System, the rich tapestry of spiritual, philosophical and ethical thinking, offers a universal paradigm for peace that endures. Core concepts such as Ahimsa, Dharma, and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam are concrete paradigms and not some abstract ideals for which there is no use other than intellectualised thinking. Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, transmuted the ancient concept of Ahimsa into a potent tool of socio-political change, extending the ideology that peace must begin in the individual and radiate outward into society.

The concept of Dharma, as outlined in the texts like Bhagavad Gita, emphasises ethical duty buttressed by cosmic order, serving as a moral compass in an era of moral relativism. While that, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, a Maha Upanishad maxim, inspires a global ethic of togetherness, compassion, common well-being, a vision more relevant for our time of cultural conflict and climate crises. It is an ancient Indian philosophical idea that transcends boundaries of culture, religion, and nationality.

AHIMSA (Non-Violence):

Ahimsa, defined in *Taitrya Shakha of Yajurveda* (5.2.8.7) most prominently expressed in Jainism and subsequently very profoundly in Buddhism and Gandhian philosophy, is the denial to inflict harm in word, thought, or deed. This concept aligns with the Red Cross principle of humanity, which expresses that the red cross movement places beyond anything else; the need to act in order to prevent and alleviate human suffering. Respect for human dignity and helping people, regardless of who and where they are is paramount over everything.

The Bhagavad-gita, India's foremost philosophical text, presents a nuanced perspective on ahimsa that considers the complexities of the world. It praises ahimsa as a divine trait (16.02).

“Nonviolence; truthfulness; freedom from anger; renunciation; tranquillity; aversion to faultfinding; compassion for all living entities; freedom from covetousness; gentleness; modesty; steady determination; ... – these transcendental qualities belong to godly men endowed with divine nature” -Bhagavada Gita, 16.02

According to the Gita, ahimsa encompasses more than just refraining from physical harm; it also entails steering clear of verbal abuse. The Gita encourages us to communicate truthfully in a manner that is at least not provocatively distressing to others — and ideally is uplifting to them (17.15). Here, uplifting speech does not mean flattering or coddling; it refers to words that inspire and uplift morale. Notably, in the Gita’s perspective, the scope of ahimsa extends beyond physical and verbal harm; it also involves preventing spiritual harm, which means avoiding actions that would negatively impact others' spiritual well-being and opportunities⁶.

DHARMA (Moral Duty):

The idea of Dharam is defined in *Manusmriti*, under verse 2.1,

*“ vidvadbhiḥ sevitaḥ sabbhirnityamadveṣarāgibhiḥ /
hrdayenābhyanujñāto yo dharmastaṃ nibodhata || 1 ||”
“Learn that Dharma, which has been ever followed by,
and sanctioned by the heart of, the learned and the good,
who are free from love and hate.”*

Dharma is the principle of righteous living. It is a unifying concept within Hinduism and means the cosmic and moral order that preserves the universe. It prescribes self-control, righteousness, and mutual respect, making it a vital element for fostering sustainable peace in both organisational and personal context. The Bhagavad Gita highlights the significance of Dharma as personal integrity paired with social responsibility, approached with detachment and discernment.⁷

The Red Cross’ commitment to neutrality and fairness mirrors this principle, under Article 26, of 1st Geneva Convention of 1949 which provides care to every individual without discrimination. It provides that the Red Cross Movement must not take sides, either in speech or in action at any time or place. Neutrality ensures the movement can provide medical assistance to civilians and wounded or detained fighters during hostilities without being perceived as interfering in conflict.⁸

⁶ Chaitanya Charan, Ahimsa: Gita Insights on Nonviolence and Deterrence, Gita Daily (Apr. 26, 2022),

⁷ Roshan Boodnah, From Ahimsā to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: The Indian Knowledge System as a Blueprint for Sustainable Peace (July 2025)

⁸ Indian Red Cross Society, Seven Fundamental Principles of Red Cross, Indian Red Cross Society,

VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM: (Universal Kinship)

The concept Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam originates in the vedic scripture Maha Upanishad (Chapter 6, Verse 72):

“ayam bandhurayam neti ganana laghuchetasam udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam”

This verse states that *“Only small men discriminate saying: One is a relative; the other is a stranger. For those who live magnanimously the entire world constitutes but a family.”*

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, "the world is one family" is a vision of world unity that is rich, transcending boundaries and diversity. This perspective effaces strict differentiation of identities, welcoming inclusivity and solidarity. It is a global citizenship ethics that invites co-operation, empathy, and shared responsibility.

This idea resonates with the principles of Universality and Impartiality of the Red Cross Society, under Article 15 and 16 of the 1st Geneva Convention, 1949. The Universality of suffering requires a universal response. It is one of the Movement's great strengths that we are present in virtually every country in the world through our 191 member National Societies. This principle also means that National Societies have a collective responsibility to support each other's development and to work together in partnership and solidarity during disasters, for the benefit of all.

The concept of Impartiality does not include an exhaustive list of factors. But it makes clear that no group of people will be denied services or receive preferential treatment based on anything other than their needs.

SEVA (Selfless Service):

In Hinduism, *Seva* is referred to as *Karma Yoga*, as outlined in the Bhagavad Gita. It is carried out without anticipating any reward, serving as a means to cleanse one's heart and advance toward moksha.

The Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Verse 19) states: "Thus, relinquishing attachment, perform actions as a duty, for by acting without attachment to the outcomes, one reaches the Supreme."

The Bhagavada Gita (Chapter 2, Verse 47) states: “Your authority is in action alone, and never in its fruits; motive should never be in the fruits of action, nor should you cling to inaction.”

In Sikhism, seva represents a form of service to Waheguru (the Supreme God), facilitating a closer relationship with Waheguru. The concept of seva is foundational to many Sikh principles and is highlighted frequently in the Guru Granth Sahib. This scripture not only addresses how to perform seva but also emphasizes the appropriate mindset to adopt and the spiritual benefits derived from engaging in seva.

Indian culture has always regarded seva as a sacred duty. From community kitchens like Langars, to disaster relief in villages, voluntary service is considered an offering to humanity and the divine, echoing the Red Cross emphasis on voluntary service.

The principle of voluntary service represents the common motivation uniting all those working within the Movement: a desire to help others; under Article 26 of 1st Geneva Convention. It is both a source of inspiration and a statement of solidarity. Whether members volunteer without pay or with some form of acknowledgement or even modest remuneration, it is not inspired by desire for financial gain but by individual commitment and devotion to the humanitarian purpose. This is freely chosen and accepted as part of the service the Movement provides to the community.⁹

SARVODAYA (Welfare of All):

Popularised by Mahatma Gandhi, Sarvodaya promotes the upliftment of all, particularly the weakest sections of society. This directly parallels the Red Cross’s commitment to protecting the most vulnerable.

ANCIENT INDIAN TEXTS AND PRINCIPLES OF RED CROSS

MAHABHARATA: An ethical guidance after war (400 BCE – 400 CE)

In Mahabharata, the 12th and 13th parva, ***Chapter 122, Verse 6-7***; i.e. ***Shanti Parva and Anushasana Parva(chapter 114, 142)*** recognises the prisoners as members of society deserving

⁹ Indian Red Cross Society, Seven Fundamental Principles of Red Cross, Indian Red Cross Society,

protection and just treatment. These parvas were narrated after the devastating war of Kurukshetra, focusing on justice, governance, and morality. Bhishma instructs Yudhishthira that the essence of kingship is the welfare of all subjects, regardless of their role in war.¹⁰

“na ripūn himsayet rājā dharmato vijitān yudhi |

na cāpi rakṣitān śatrūn pāṇḍavo’pi haniṣyati ||”¹¹

“The king must not harm enemies who have been conquered according to Dharma.

Nor should the Pāṇḍava slay foes who are under protection.”(12.122,6-7)

Duties of a king include ensuring justice for all, including captives.(19.15-17)

Righteousness applies equally to friends, enemies, and neutrals. (15.28)

The principle of Red Cross also resembles this teaching in its concept of Impartiality.

In the Mahabharata’s post war, *Sauptika Parva, chapter 18, Verse 30-40* treatment of Ashvatthama illustrates the ethical dilemma between punishment and revenge. Here, Ashvatthama, responsible for horrific deeds is captured. The Pandavas debate whether to kill him or impose a lesser punishment. This episode shows that upholding Dharma includes measured justice and refraining from personal revenge, even in dealing with the enemies. Today these principles are prevalent in the concepts of Red Cross as well as the concept of impartiality under Article 9 of 1st and Article 84 of 3rd Geneva Conventions.

The concept of ceasing hostilities after nightfall is found in ancient Indian literature such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. This practice was part of the ethical framework of warfare, based on Dharma, which mandated that conflicts should only occur during the day. Engaging in combat after sundown was deemed adharmā (immoral), and those who perished after dark were thought to be barred from entering Heaven. This guideline was maintained for both ethical considerations, promoting fairness and honour in warfare and practical reasons, as fighting in the dark was nearly unmanageable without adequate illumination and visibility.¹²

¹⁰ Mala Chandrashekhar, Shanti Parva: The Book of Peace in the Mahabharata, The Cultural Heritage of India (Feb. 19, 2024),

¹¹ Vyāsa, The Mahabharata, Book 12, Shanti Parva, ch. 122, vv. 6–7 (K.M. Ganguli trans., Motilal Banarsidass 1970)

¹² Kapil Kapoor & Avadhesh Kumar Singh, Indian Knowledge Systems (2 vols., Indian Inst. of Advanced Study & D.K. Printworld 2005

BHAGVADA GITA: (400 BCE – 200 CE)

According to Krishna, the attribute of a true warrior lies in ‘calmness’ and ‘self-control’. Arjuna is urged to partake in war devoid of ‘passion and hatred’ and instead embody ‘restraint’, for only ‘the one who thus restrains the self, and who governs the self, attains peace’. The Gita’s message stresses that a warrior without peace, restraint, and calmness causes only ‘harm’ and is unworthy of waging the Dharmayuddha.

ahiṃsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir apaiśunam |
dayā bhūteṣv aloluptvaṃ mārdaṃ hrīr acāpalam ||

“Non-violence, truthfulness, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquility, refraining from fault-finding, compassion toward all beings, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, and steadiness — these are divine qualities.”(16.2)¹³

The Gita accepts the necessity of war but does not valorise violence; instead, it seeks to minimise suffering. Krishna advises Arjuna to cultivate calmness and peace over anger, hate, vengeance, or the urge for superiority, as unrestrained force leads to greater harm. The central message is maintaining restraint in war—an ethic that prevents unnecessary harm and ensures a true warrior spirit. Violence without restraint contradicts warrior ethics.

This ethic resonates with International Humanitarian Law (hereinafter, IHL), which also seeks to limit the negative consequences of armed conflict by fostering restraint. However, unlike IHL, the Gita does not detail methods or limits of warfare; this is later addressed in the Mahabharata’s Bhishma Parva. Thus, the Gita serves as a meditation on righteous war and the warrior’s disposition, while later sections elaborate on conduct in battle.

RAMAYANA: (500 BCE – 100 BCE)

In the *Sundar Kanda and Yudha Kanda*, Sarga 36, verses 24-28 and Sarga 58, Verses 115-120 the last Adhyayas of the epic, teaches:

“śaraṇāgataṃ vā trūtavyaṃ nṛśaṃsaṃ na paraṃ smṛtam |
ari-saṅgataḥ śatruḥ prāṇān rakṣati rāghavaḥ ||”

¹³ Bhagavad Gītā, ch. 16, v. 2 (S. Radhakrishnan trans., HarperCollins 1993) (orig. Sanskrit text).

“Do not kill those who have surrendered. Tend to their wounds, and give them proper sustenance, for compassion toward the fallen increases honor.”¹⁴

(Yudha Kanda, Sarga 36, Verses 24–28): Rama instructs Lakshmana not to kill a disarmed or surrendering enemy (Ravana’s brother Vibhishana when he comes for refuge).

(Sarga 58, Verse 115–120): After Ravana’s army is defeated, Rama orders care for the wounded, showing compassion even to foes.

(Sundara Kanda, Sarga 49, Verse 17–20): Hanuman assures Sita that Rama will ensure safety even for those who surrender from Ravana’s camp.

In this context, Rama’s army defeats enemies in Lanka. After the battles, instructions are given to take care for the wounded and handle prisoners respectfully. The story emphasises that after victory, warriors must act with restraint. Mercy and healthcare are essential duties towards prisoners. The ancient learning of compassion towards enemies is parallel to the present humane treatment protocols in the Humanitarian Law.

MANUSMRITI: Chapters on Governance: (200 BCE -200 CE)

The Manu smriti Codifies law and moral conduct, emphasising justice tempered by compassion. It provides guidelines for kings on justice and punishment, including defeated foes. It is phrased under Chapter 7, as

“The king shall punish criminals and enemies, but he shall not act out of hatred. Punishment should be measured, and rehabilitation should be sought wherever possible.”

(Verse 90–92): The king must punish with restraint, avoiding cruelty driven by hatred.

(Verse 94–95): Defeated enemies must not be subjected to disproportionate or degrading punishment.¹⁵

The king’s dharmic responsibility extends to ensuring that punishment is fair and not driven by personal animosity. Prisoners should be safeguarded against excessive cruelty. This learning of proportionate punishment is also aligns with the modern concept of due process and natural justice.

ARTHASHASTRA: Kautilya’s manual of statecraft: (13th to 14th Century BCE)

¹⁴ Vālmīki, The Ramayana, Yuddha Kāṇḍa, sarga 36, vv. 24–26 (G.H. Bhatt & U.P. Shah eds., Baroda Oriental Institute 1960) (orig. Sanskrit text).

¹⁵ Manusmṛti, ch. 7, vv. 90–92 (G. Bühler trans., Sacred Books of the East vol. 25, Oxford Univ. Press 1886).

Kautilya's Arthashastra is a treatise on governance, emphasising pragmatic administration; and provides strategic advice for rulers regarding warfare, prisoners, and maintaining political stability.

(Arthashastra (Kautilya), Book 13) Chapter 5 (Conquest of Forts)

bandigrahaṇam vinayena kāryam

“Prisoners of war should be segregated, watched, and sometimes rehabilitated rather than executed”.

Book 4, Chapter 8 (Suppression of Criminals and Rebels)

“Prisoners should be treated firmly but humanely; harsh treatment may provoke rebellion.”

Book 1, Chapter 4 (King's Duties) Emphasizes that kingly duty involves welfare of all subjects, including those subdued in conflict.¹⁶

Though pragmatic and politically focused, the Arthashastra recognises that humane treatment is not only ethical but necessary for long-term governance and peace. These learnings of welfare and rehabilitation are significant in today's times as prisoners' rights and rehabilitation programs conducted by International Red Cross Society.

JATAKA TALES: From Buddhist Literature: (300 BC – 400 AD)

Jataka Tales are stories from Buddhist traditions highlighting compassion, forgiveness, and moral leadership. It's key teaching is:

“The king who forgives his enemy and cares for him earns merit and peace of mind. The cycle of hatred ends when compassion prevails”¹⁷

Chulla-Sutasom Jataka (JatakaNo. 525): A king forgives captured enemies, showing compassion as a path to merit.

Khantivadi Jataka (JatakaNo. 313): Non-retaliation and humane treatment of enemies are portrayed as virtues.¹⁸

Sama Jataka (Jataka No. 540): Compassion shown even to adversaries enhances dharmic leadership.¹⁹

¹⁶ Kautilya, The Arthashastra, Book 13, ch. 5 (R. Shamasastri trans., Mysore Printing & Publishing House 1915).

¹⁷ Chulla-Sutasoma Jataka (No. 525), in The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births vol. 5, at 179 (E.B. Cowell ed., Cambridge Univ. Press 1897) (orig. Pali text).

¹⁸ Khantivadi Jataka (No. 313), in The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births vol. 3, at 39 (E.B. Cowell ed., Cambridge Univ. Press 1897).

¹⁹ Sama Jataka (No. 540), in The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births vol. 6, at 40 (E.B. Cowell ed., Cambridge Univ. Press 1897).

These stories teach that mercy toward prisoners leads to spiritual rewards and societal harmony, reinforcing the Buddhist ideals of compassion and non-violence. These teachings of stability through fairness is integrated in the post-conflict framework of humanitarian laws.

VEDIC PERSPECTIVE OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT INTEGRATED INTO RED CROSS FRAMEWORKS

The concept of “management,” while popularized in modern times, has roots in ancient India, particularly the Vedic period. Ancient texts describe “disaster management” in the sense of handling calamities (*duḥkha*, *nipata*, *pidana*, *apatti/vipatti*, *vyasana*). Disasters are classified in the Sāṅkhya system as:

- ***Adhyatmika*** (originating within the self, e.g. disease, epidemics)
- ***Adhidaivika*** (caused by nature, e.g. floods, fire, storms)
- ***Adhibhautika*** (due to human causes, e.g. accidents)²⁰

Kauṭilya in his Arthasastra simplifies this into two major types: ***Daivam*** (natural) and ***Manuṣyam*** (man-made or due to human fault), which are further classified as follows:

1. **Fire (Agni):** Preventive measures (fire-fighting implements, standby water provisions), guidelines (e.g. cook outdoors under supervision), and punishments for negligence.
2. **Water floods:** Habitats sited away from flood levels; readiness to evacuate; rescue materials (boats, ropes, planks) and rescue teams; punishments for those who fail to assist.
3. **Epidemics/Disease (Vyadhi):** Availability of physicians and medicines; environmental sanitization (*yajnas*); cleansing rituals involving herbs.
4. **Famine (Durbhikṣa):** State stockpiles of seeds or food; infrastructure like dams; sharing of provisions; migration or resettlement; encouraging agriculture.
5. **Rats (Muṣaka):** Seen as major agricultural threat; use of natural predators (cats, mongooses); deterrents; fines for those contributing to infestation; control measures similar to those for insects, birds.

The Vedas also emphasize harmony with nature and an interdependent relationship between humans, animals, plants, and the cosmos. Actions harmful to nature are seen as

²⁰ Ravi Prakash Arya, *Disaster Management: A Vedic Perspective*, 1 *Philosophy of Nature* 59 (2024),

causes of many disasters. Ancient texts do not mention modern problems like global warming or melting glaciers, but the principle of ecological balance is central (e.g. via Yajna and Vedic mantras extolling peace and harmony). On man-made disasters, Kautilya categorizes internal and external threats, including sedition, external support to enemies, internal agitation. Measures include surveillance (spies), village officers, maintaining strong army and economy, diplomatic alliances, etc.

Thus, these learnings and ideas from Vedic and epic texts are incorporated in the frameworks of the Red Cross societies across the globe.²¹

INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY:

The Indian Red Cross Society is a voluntary humanitarian organisation with over 1,200 branches across India. Its mission is to bring relief during disasters and emergencies, promote health and care for the most vulnerable individuals and communities. IRCS is a member of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) was established in 1920 under the *Indian Red Cross Society act (Act XV of 1920)*. The Act was last amended in 1992, with rules formed in 1994. The President of India is the President of IRCS and the Union Health Minister serves as the Chairman. The managing body comprises of 18 members; 6 plus chairman appointed by the President, and 12 elected via an electoral college from State or Union Territory. The Secretary General is the Chief Executive. There are 36 states and union territories with more than 1,100 districts and sub-district branches.

It provides humanitarian and charitable services like medical relief, healthcare, blood services, first aid, disaster risk reduction, and related services without discrimination based on nationality, race, caste, sex, religion, language, or political opinions.

²¹ Ravi Prakash Arya, *Disaster Management: A Vedic Perspective*, 1 *Philosophy of Nature* 59 (2024),

CASE STUDIES:

- **Disaster relief:**

During 2001 Gujarat Earthquakes, the IRCS mobilised volunteers, distributed relief, and set up shelters. This reflects seva in action; service to distressed communities without expectations of return.²²

- **Blood Donation:**

India faces recurring shortage of safe blood. The IRCS runs blood banks and donation drives. In the spirit of ahimsa and karuna, such actions preserve life and reduce sufferings.

- **Refugee Assistance:**

The IRCS has supported Tibetan refugees Sri Lankan Tamils and Rohingya communities in India. This humanitarian outreach embodies Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam, by extending care and help beyond political and ethnic boundaries.

- **COVID 19 Pandemic Response:**

The IRCS distributed protective equipment, oxygen concentrators, food, masks, and medicines during the pandemic. This modern example shows the principle of Sarvodaya, by ensuring collective survival and welfare.

OBSERVATION

- The Red Cross principles align with Indian Knowledge System values like Ahimsa, Dharma, Seva, Sarvodaya, Karuna and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.
- Ancient Indian texts emphasize restraint, compassion, and humane treatment, resonating with humanitarian law.
- The Indian Red Cross Society reflects these principles in disaster relief, healthcare, and social services.
- The Vedic disaster management highlights ecological balance and preventive measures

²² Gareth Price & Mihir Bhatt, The Role of the Affected State in Humanitarian Action: A Case Study on India, HPG Working Paper (Overseas Development Institute), Apr. 2009.

SUGGESTIONS

- Integrating Indian Knowledge System values into Red Cross training and practice.
- Using Vedic ecological wisdom in disaster management policies.
- Strengthen community trust by showcasing Indian Knowledge System alignment in International Red Cross Society activities.
- Promoting interdisciplinary research linking Indian Knowledge System with global humanitarianism.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that the humanitarian ethos of the Red Cross resonates deeply with the Indian Knowledge System, where principles like Ahimsa, Dharma, Seva, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, and Sarvodaya reflect universal compassion, duty, and welfare. Ancient Indian texts provide ethical guidance that parallels modern humanitarian law, while Vedic insights on disaster management emphasize sustainability and prevention. The Indian Red Cross Society exemplifies these shared values through its relief work, healthcare, and community services. Integrating Indian knowledge Systems perspectives with Red Cross principles not only strengthens humanitarian practices in India but also offers a culturally rooted framework for global humanitarianism.

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