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## ABSTRACT

The dissertation targets Hindu patterns of warfare for deeper examination in order to assess whether classical Hindu writings provide a model of Just War thinking that can inform and enrich contemporary interdisciplinary theorizing about the ethics of war. Traditional Hindu approaches to warfare are rooted in a corpus of textual materials encompassing politics, statecraft, law, criminology, ethics, religion, and military strategy, which offer complex insights into the nature of ‘Just Wars’ from Indic perspectives. To explore these insights, the Hindu doctrine of ‘Righteous Warfare’ (*dharma yuddha*) is examined through the theoretical lens of Michael Walzer—the preeminent contemporary theorist of Just War—whose own theory offers a template to probe Hindu assumptions, motives, and philosophical objectives on warfare.

The aims of this dissertation are threefold: 1) to test whether the normative Hindu rules of warfare are compatible with Walzer’s theory of Just War; 2) to investigate whether the codes of *dharma yuddha* fit with conventions of war based on human rights; and, finally, 3) to investigate whether Hindu Just War doctrine, and its underlying religio-ethical ideals, offer deeper insights into India’s military and strategic thinking.

It is argued that Hindu codes of warfare emerging from religious texts, chivalrous traditions, and political statecraft, provide unique criteria for understanding Just War theory beyond the classical western distinction between *jus ad bellum* (Latin: ‘when it is just to wage war’) and *jus in bello* (‘just conduct in war’). Hindu rules of ‘Righteous Warfare’ advance distinctive principles of compassion, deference, and respect for religious differences as intrinsic elements of Hindu Just War thinking. At the same time, however, Hindu notions of Just War involve non-Eurocentric assumptions about human agency, responsibility, free-will, the legitimate use of force, metaphysical struggle, and warranted suffering. In particular, Hindu notions of karma problematize cross-cultural models of Just War theory by forcing theorists to reevaluate standard assumptions about non-combatant immunity and innocence that inform much modern Just War discourse. Consequently, the research challenges conventional western assumptions about Just War theory and raises important ethical questions regarding the relationship between righteousness, justice, and sanctified violence in the context of classical Hindu thought and its military implications.

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*Amor patitur moras; omnia vincit amor.*

*“Love endures delay; Love conquers all.”*

Dr. Scott Daniel Dunbar,  
University of Saskatchewan,  
Saskatoon, 2011.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and three children who stood by my side during the busy years of writing and researching this manuscript. My family was always supportive in the completion of this time-consuming project. I am very grateful to each of them for their exemplary patience, encouragement, and sacrifice—especially my three beloved children whom did not see as much of their Dad as they would have liked. They have already developed an impressive level of patience at an early age.

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