



VasudhaivaKutumbakam – India’s Global Responsibility: A Vedic and Non-Vedic Perspective

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Abstract

The ancient Indian ideal VasudhaivaKutumbakam—“the world is one family”—articulates a universal vision of unity, compassion, and shared destiny. Rooted in Vedic literature and elaborated in non-Vedic traditions such as Buddhist, Jain, and classical Sanskrit sources, this concept represents not merely a philosophical statement but a civilizational ethos. In the contemporary globalized yet fragmented world, marked by conflict, ecological crisis, economic disparity, and moral uncertainty, this Indian worldview offers a powerful ethical framework for global harmony. This research article explores the textual origins of VasudhaivaKutumbakam through Vedic and non-Vedic references, analyzes its philosophical foundations, and evaluates India’s global responsibility in embodying and spreading this ideal. Further, it discusses strategic pathways—cultural diplomacy, education, sustainability initiatives, digital outreach, spiritual leadership, and global partnerships—through which India can effectively disseminate this timeless wisdom to the world.

Keywords: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Vedic literature, Upanishads, Buddhism, Jainism, global ethics, Indian Knowledge System, cultural diplomacy, global harmony.

1. Introduction

The phrase VasudhaivaKutumbakam has recently gained renewed prominence, especially during India’s presidency of the G20 in 2023, where the theme “One Earth, One Family, One Future” echoed its essence. Yet the concept is far older than modern diplomacy. It emerges from ancient Indian scriptures and represents the soul of Indian civilization.

In Sanskrit:

“अयं निजः परो वेत्ति गणना लघुचेतसाम् ।

उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥”

(Mahā Upanishad, 6.72)



Translation: “This is mine, that is yours—such thinking is for the narrow-minded; for the noble-hearted, the entire earth is one family.”

This shloka is found in the Mahā Upanishad and forms the foundational textual source of the expression.

The research question guiding this article is:

How can India reinterpret and operationalize VasudhaivaKutumbakam as a global ethical responsibility in the 21st century?

2. Vedic Foundations of Universal Brotherhood

2.1 Rigvedic Vision of Unity

The Rigveda repeatedly emphasizes collective harmony:

“संगच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम्”

(Rigveda 10.191.2)

Translation: “Move together, speak together, let your minds be in harmony.”

This mantra encourages social cohesion and collective consciousness—principles central to global cooperation.

2.2 Yajurvedic Universal Welfare

The Yajurveda presents the famous peace mantra:

“सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग्भवेत् ॥”

Though often associated with later texts, the spirit of this mantra reflects Vedic aspiration: universal happiness and freedom from suffering.

This ideal extends beyond tribe, caste, or geography—envisioning humanity as one moral community.

2.3 Upanishadic Universalism

The Isha Upanishad declares:

“ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्”

“All this—whatever moves in this world—is pervaded by the Divine.”

If the entire cosmos is sacred, exploitation and domination become ethically unacceptable. This metaphysical unity provides the philosophical base for global ethics.



2.4 Bhagavad Gita and Equality of Vision

The Bhagavad Gita teaches:

“विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।

शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥” (5.18)

The wise see all beings equally—regardless of social identity. This spiritual egalitarianism dissolves discrimination and promotes universal respect.

3. Non-Vedic Sources Supporting Universalism

Indian civilization’s inclusive ethos is not limited to Vedic texts.

3.1 Buddhist Compassion

The teachings of Gautama Buddha emphasize universal compassion (karuṇā).

From the Dhammapada:

“न हि वेरेन वेरानि सम्मन्ति इध कुदाचनम्।

अवेरेन च सम्मन्ति एष धम्मो सनन्तनो॥”

“Hatred is never appeased by hatred; by non-hatred alone is hatred appeased.”

Buddhist thought universalizes suffering and compassion beyond cultural boundaries.

3.2 Jain Philosophy of Anekantavada

Mahavira propounded Ahimsa and Anekantavada (multiplicity of viewpoints).

Jain Agamas emphasize:

“अहिंसा परमो धर्मः”

Non-violence is the highest duty.

Anekantavada fosters intellectual humility—critical for intercultural dialogue in global politics.

3.3 Classical Sanskrit Literature

Kalidasa in the Raghuvamsha portrays ideal kings as protectors of all beings, not merely rulers of territory.

Similarly, the Arthashastra by Kautilya promotes welfare-oriented governance.

4. Philosophical Dimensions of VasudhaivaKutumbakam

4.1 Ontological Unity

Advaita Vedanta asserts non-duality: the same consciousness pervades all existence.



4.2 Ethical Universalism

Moral duties extend to all beings—not limited by nationality.

4.3 Ecological Consciousness

Ancient texts view Earth as mother:

“माता भूमिः पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः”

(Atharva Veda 12.1.12)

This ecological reverence is urgently relevant today.

5. India’s Civilizational Practice of Universalism

5.1 Historical Hospitality

India historically welcomed Parsis, Jews, Tibetans, and others.

5.2 Ashokan Edicts

Emperor Ashoka promoted religious tolerance and welfare after the Kalinga war.

5.3 Non-Violent Freedom Movement

Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy of Ahimsa globalized Indian ethics, influencing Martin Luther King Jr..

6. Contemporary Global Relevance

6.1 Climate Crisis

The principle of shared responsibility aligns with global climate agreements.

6.2 Conflict Resolution

Dialogue-based approaches reflect Anekantavada.

6.3 Pandemic Solidarity

India’s “Vaccine Maitri” initiative embodied global family ethics.

7. How Can India Spread VasudhaivaKutumbakam Globally?

7.1 Cultural Diplomacy

Promote Yoga through United Nations International Day of Yoga.

Expand Indian cultural centers abroad.

7.2 Education and Curriculum

Integrate Indian Knowledge Systems in global academic partnerships.

Establish Sanskrit chairs internationally.



7.3 Digital Outreach

Create multilingual digital platforms explaining Vedic wisdom.

Use AI, MOOCs, podcasts for dissemination.

7.4 Sustainable Development Leadership

Promote lifestyle for environment (LiFE initiative).

Share traditional ecological knowledge.

7.5 Interfaith Dialogue

India can host global spiritual summits fostering pluralism.

7.6 Humanitarian Leadership

Disaster relief, peacekeeping, and development partnerships.

8. Challenges in Globalizing the Concept

Misinterpretation as cultural nationalism.

Political misuse.

Need for consistent domestic application.

India must embody the principle internally—social harmony, environmental ethics, and inclusive growth.

9. Critical Evaluation

VasudhaivaKutumbakam is not naïve idealism; it is pragmatic idealism. However, practical geopolitics requires balance between national interest and universal ethics.

The doctrine must evolve into actionable frameworks—climate cooperation, digital ethics, economic justice.

10. Conclusion

From the Mahā Upanishad to modern global forums, VasudhaivaKutumbakam remains India's timeless message. It represents spiritual cosmopolitanism rooted in metaphysical unity and ethical compassion.

India's global responsibility is not domination but illumination—not control but cooperation.

As the Rigveda says:

“संगच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं” — **Let us move together.**



In a fractured world, India's civilizational wisdom offers a pathway toward unity without uniformity, diversity without division, and progress without exploitation.

The world indeed is one family—and India carries the ancient torch reminding humanity of this eternal truth.

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