



Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: An Indian Framework for Global Peace Communication

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Abstract. The contemporary global landscape is increasingly characterised by escalating conflicts, deepening inequalities, and multifaceted crises, ranging from geopolitical tensions to protracted wars between countries. In this turbulent context, the ancient Indian philosophical concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (“The world is one family”) emerges as a holistic, potent and timely framework for fostering global peace and harmony. This paper examines how India has mobilised this philosophy not only as a civilisational value but also as a deliberate communication and public relations strategy on the world stage, advocating for interconnectedness, universal kinship, and collective responsibility. Drawing from its philosophical origins in the Mahopanishad, the study highlights the principle’s translation into practice through India’s cultural diplomacy, multilateral engagements such as the G20 presidency, humanitarian interventions including Vaccine Maitri and the consistent messaging of successive Indian leaders. The analysis demonstrates that Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, rooted in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), functions as a unique model of peace communication. The paper argues that by linking cultural wisdom with actionable policy, India presents a compelling framework for sustainable coexistence, empathy, and global cooperation in the 21st century.

Keywords. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Communication, Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Cultural Diplomacy, Global Peace Framework, International Public Relations

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Introduction

The modern world finds itself at a critical juncture, encircled by unprecedented global conflicts, severe humanitarian crises, and a surge in wealth and power disparities across societies and nations [1, 3]. Brutal wars, exemplified by the Russia-Ukraine and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, highlight the devastating impact on civilians and the exploitation of human rights [1, 4, 5]. In a world often "marred by division, conflict, and animosity," there is a clear imperative for a new paradigm for peace and cooperation [3]. Grasping the gravity of the present global situation requires a close examination of Samuel P. Huntington's groundbreaking work, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* [6], which introduced a revolutionary thesis on the role of cultural identities in shaping world order. Huntington contended that in the post-cold war era, ideological and economic rivalries would give way to conflicts primarily rooted in cultural and religious identities. He argued that "the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural" [6]. According to his thesis, future wars would not be fought between nation-states but rather between major cultural groupings or civilizations [6].

Against this backdrop, the ancient Indian philosophical concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, meaning "The world is one family," stands out as a profound and enduring solution [3, 5]. This paper argues that India has consistently employed Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as a central communication framework to promote global peace, unity, and shared responsibility. It aims to analyze the philosophical underpinnings of this concept, examine its practical application in India's diplomatic and cultural engagements, and highlight its significance in addressing contemporary global challenges.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

The core philosophy Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is a Sanskrit phrase that profoundly encapsulates the idea that the entire world is one family [3, 7-9]. This renowned expression, translating to "The entire cosmos is one family," is deeply rooted in ancient Indian texts, primarily the Mahopanishad [3, 7, 8]. *ayam nijaḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam* (Maha Upanishad, pp. 71-73)

It means that those who constantly think in terms of "mine" and "yours" are narrow-minded. In contrast, people who do not cling to material possessions and do not emphasize ownership have big hearts. For such individuals, the world is one family. There is no

difference between myself and others.

The Sanskrit phrase "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" can be broken down into three constituent words — Vasudha meaning "The Earth" or "The World," Iva translating to "Is Thus" or "Like," and Kutumbakam signifying "Family" or "Large/Extended Family." Thus, the literal translation is "The Earth is one family" or "The world is one family."

It also finds mention in other Hindu scriptures like the Hitopadesha, a collection of Sanskrit fables, which aims to instruct young minds on the philosophy of life in an easy way [2, 3, 7]. The concept is also integrated into the broader Vedic tradition and Hindu philosophy, representing a universalist vision that transcends individual and societal boundaries [7]. The core philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam revolves around the principles of oneness, interconnectedness, and universal kinship among all living beings and the natural world [3, 7, 8]. It promotes an understanding that all humanity shares a common life energy, fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility towards everyone, irrespective of differences [3, 9]. This ethos extends beyond human relationships to encompass animals, plants, and the entire natural environment, recognizing nature not merely as a resource but as a sacred entity deserving protection and care [3, 8]. The concept encourages the cultivation of compassion and empathy, motivating collective action to alleviate suffering and promote well-being [3, 10].

In essence, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam contrasts sharply with Western notions of "World Orders" that often define minimum conditions for coexistence, instead advocating for a spiritual unity and promoting respect for diversity and the veracity of all religions [11]. It inspires individuals and nations to overcome narrow-mindedness and focus on their shared humanity rather than divisions based on race, nationality, or religion [11, 12]. When projected in contemporary diplomacy, these philosophical roots become tools of cultural public relations, where India communicates its identity through ethical narratives.

The Imperative for Global Peace Communication

The current global environment underscores an urgent need for effective peace communication. As nations remain divided by wealth, power, and cultural differences, leading to persistent conflicts, wars and geopolitical tension [2]. In a postmodern landscape where truth is contested and ideologies are fragmented, establishing a universal framework for unity becomes increasingly difficult [2]. The failure of peace

paradigms solely reliant on political agreements or economic transactions is evident, as wars continue despite treaties, and fragmentation persists even in economically developed cultures [13].

Addressing these complex challenges necessitates a paradigm shift from approaches based on "us vs. they" to those centered on shared existence and collective well-being [1, 11]. The philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam offers this logical resolution, putting into perspective the questions of national existence and separate identities by promoting acceptance of difference and diversity [11]. It champions conflict management through "interfaith dialogue" and negotiations, making it a holistic philosophy [1]. This communication framework emphasizes that peace is not merely the absence of war but a state of long-term harmony encompassing inclusive development, social justice, and respect among all [13].

India's Communication Framework: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in Practice

India has consistently projected Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as a guiding principle in its foreign policy and international relations, transforming an ancient ideal into a practical communication framework for global peace [7, 14].

Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power

India's rich cultural heritage, diversity, and universal values are significant assets in its cultural diplomacy, encapsulated by the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam [7, 14]. The nation actively utilizes its "soft power" to promote this vision, encouraging cultural exchanges, collaborations in art, music, dance, and literature to strengthen relationships and foster a sense of shared humanity [14]. India regularly organizes and promotes cultural festivals like the International Yoga Day to showcase its heritage and promote values of peace and unity globally [1, 14].

Multilateral Engagement: The G20 and Beyond

India's commitment to multilateralism is deeply influenced by the civilisational ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam [15, 16]. This commitment is prominently displayed in its engagement with various international organizations. During its G20 presidency, India adopted "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth, One Family, One Future" as its overarching theme [4, 7, 16]. By placing this philosophy at the heart of global platforms, India used Public Relations

at the multilateral level to craft a consistent narrative of inclusivity and cooperation [16, 17]. This theme, inspired by the Mahopanishad, aimed to unify global efforts to address critical challenges and global conflicts [16–18]. Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi emphasized that countries must work together to rebuild trust and foster cooperation to address pressing global challenges [2]. India's constitution, embodying values of equality and justice, guides its peaceful approach to conflict resolution through negotiations and diplomatic efforts guided by the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam [1].

Indian Leaderships and Their Messaging

Several Indian leaders have drawn upon the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam to guide India's global vision and diplomatic engagements. Former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi in 1989 used the term to challenge the concept of dividing the world into "first, second, and third" categories, promoting the idea of "One World" and an "Earth Citizen" for a more inclusive approach to international relations [2, 19]. In 2002, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, India's former Prime Minister—widely remembered as one of the finest communicators in Indian politics—employed the phrase at an Asia Pacific Forum meeting of national human rights institutions, asserting India's universal understanding of human rights rooted in ancient traditions and extending beyond its borders [2, 19].

Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh used Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam to articulate India's commitment to addressing climate change and global warming, emphasizing India's willingness to take on global responsibilities at the Heiligendamm G8 summit [2, 19]. Currently, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi frequently highlights ancient Indian wisdom as relevant for fostering global harmony [9]. He described Indian culture as rich, inculcating great values, and evolving "from Aham Brahmasmi (I am divine) to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (One Earth, One Family, One Future)" [4].

In his maiden address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2014, Modi described it as India's civilizational ethos that informs its approach to peace and cooperation [20]. Later, at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2018, he reiterated that India's vision for globalization rests on integration, inclusivity, and the unity of humanity [21]. In 2020, India's participation in the ITER project in France was also framed as a living example of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam by India's envoy [22]. During his Sydney address in 2023, Modi again emphasized that India per-

ceives “the whole world as a family” in the context of humanitarian cooperation [23]. Most recently, in his joint press conference with U.S. President Donald Trump in 2025, he underscored India’s democratic culture and global outlook through the same philosophy [24]. These consistent references illustrate how India leverages civilizational wisdom as a soft-power tool in contemporary diplomacy. Such discourses positively function as Public Relations strategies, reinforcing India’s image as a nation guided by universal brotherhood.

Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in Action

India’s response to global crises consistently reflects the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. During the COVID-19 pandemic, India supplied vaccines and emergency medical aid to numerous nations, demonstrating a practical application of universal brotherhood [16, 25]. India’s “Vaccine Maitri” initiative supplied over 160 million vaccine doses to nearly 100 countries, showcasing its global health partnership [16, 25, 26].

India’s foreign policy is deeply rooted in the ancient philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which consistently guides its global humanitarian and diplomatic efforts [27–30]. This principle positions India as a “first responder” in crises, both within its immediate neighborhood and internationally [27–31]. Over the past two decades, India has significantly transitioned from an aid recipient to a major HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) provider, supported by its expanding economic and military capabilities [30, 31].

Operating under “Neighbourhood First” and “Act East” policies, India has conducted numerous HADR operations [27, 28]. Notable responses include the Indian Ocean Tsunami, assisting Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Indonesia [31]. In 2015, Operation Maitri delivered critical relief after the Nepal earthquake, earning international praise [27, 31]. Operation Dost in 2023 provided extensive medical and disaster relief to Turkey and Syria following a major earthquake [27, 30]. India has extended aid even to countries with strained relations, such as \$25 million to Pakistan for flood relief in 2010 [27, 32].

In 2024, Operation Sadbhav assisted Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam after Typhoon Yagi [27, 28]. Most recently, Operation Brahma was launched in March 2025 to aid earthquake-hit Myanmar, deploying medical and rescue teams and delivering hundreds of tonnes of relief material [31]. India also provided medical aid to Cuba in 2025 and disaster relief to Honduras in 2025 [33]. Coordinated by the Ministry

of External Affairs’ Development Partnership Administration, these efforts bolster India’s soft power and solidify its role as a reliable and compassionate global actor [28, 34]. These actions underscore India’s diplomatic efforts to stand for human rights and to be a “pacifist country” that seeks to resolve conflicts through negotiations and diplomatic means [1].

Conclusion

The persistent global challenges of dispute, war, and geopolitical conflict underscore the urgent need for a transformative approach to international relations. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, as an ancient Indian philosophical concept, provides a profound and holistic framework for global peace communication. India has consistently championed this ideal, integrating it into its cultural diplomacy, multilateral engagements, and leadership messaging on the world stage. From the consistent invocations by its Prime Ministers across different eras to its prominent role in the G20 presidency and its humanitarian efforts, India demonstrates a commitment to translating this vision into practical action. This also underlines the potential of public relations and media communication as a vehicle for peace communication, extending its scope beyond informing and entertaining to ethical global diplomacy.

By advocating for the interconnectedness of all life including human, animal, and nature, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam encourages a shift from narrow self-interest to universal kinship, compassion, and shared responsibility. While the journey towards a world truly embodying “one family” is fraught with geopolitical complexities and the risk of rhetorical appropriation, India’s sustained efforts offer a potent model for fostering dialogue, cooperation, and ethical coexistence. Embracing the essence of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the principle of “share and care” is not just an idealistic aspiration but an imperative for navigating the uncertainties of the 21st century and building a more compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable world for future generations. The full potential of this Indian framework lies in continuous commitment and collective action to make its timeless wisdom a lived reality. [10, 11, 19].

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