

“THE ROLE OF VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY”

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ABSTRACT: The philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is an ancient Indian belief system that promotes unity and interconnectedness among all people regardless of their cultural, religious, or geographical difference. It emphasizes a global perspective, prioritizing the collective well-being over individual or family interests. The theme affirms the value of all life - human, animals, plants, and micro-organisms - and their interconnectedness on the planet earth and in the wider universe. Embracing the principles of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam can lead to a more just and sustainable world where all people are valued and respected as members of a single family. One of the core values is that the well-being of the Mother Earth depends on the preservation and sustenance of the environment. This abstract explores the application of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in the context of environmental sustainability, highlighting its relevance in fostering a collective responsibility towards the well-being of the planet. It underscores the importance of solidarity, cooperation, and a shared responsibility to build a healthier and sustainable planet. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam can promote environmental sustainability by encouraging people to adopt a more holistic approach to nature and promoting the use of traditional knowledge and practices. It emphasizes the need to balance economic, social, and environmental considerations. This perspective can help to foster a more sustainable and equitable approach to development. It inspires individuals to develop a sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility towards the natural world. India's leadership of G20 is also a window of opportunity for a more sustainable worldview as the ideas are coming from a civilization with a long history of acceptance of the entire world as one family. G20 is expected to contribute significantly to a healthy, prosperous, and equitable world. The theme also spotlights LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), with its associated, environmentally sustainable and responsible choices, both at the level of individual lifestyles as well as national development, leading to globally transformative actions resulting in a cleaner, greener, and bluer future.

Keywords: Indian belief, interconnectedness, preservation, holistic approach, sustainability, life

INTRODUCTION:

The Sanskrit phrase “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” has been an imbibed and enduring understanding in the philosophical tapestry of India. This Sanskrit phrase is derived from the Maha Upanishad and traditionally translates to “the world is one family.” It captures the spirit of universal brotherhood and fraternity that forms part of the bedrock of ancient Hindu thought. This mutuality itself is in the form of family and society. This itself extends to become undivided society, wherein entire humankind is one unit. In this way, a family is recognized as a part of an undivided society and an individual is recognized as a part of a family.

English translation:

This is mine, that is his, say the small minded,
The wise believe that the entire world is a family.

The context of this verse is to describe as one of the attributes of an individual who has attained the highest level of spiritual progress, and one who is capable of performing his worldly duties without attachment to material possessions.

One world means all sentient beings are one single being, occupying one single Earth. If education is based on this single principle, the sustainability goals are automatically achieved. This principle highlights the importance of embracing diversity and promoting peace, unity, and cooperation among all nations and cultures. The paper focuses on the argument that in the face of present crisis of climate change the world must unite and different cultures and their respective knowledge systems should take part to the sustainability debate. These principles originate from a profound sense of unity and interconnectedness and lay a great emphasis on the importance of giving back to nature. The paper points out the need of creating a laboratory for sustainability based on the concept of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam“, that recognizes the differences and plurality and celebrates the oneness. A knowledge system which is created on the principles of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, would be a truly sustainable knowledge system.

Objectives:

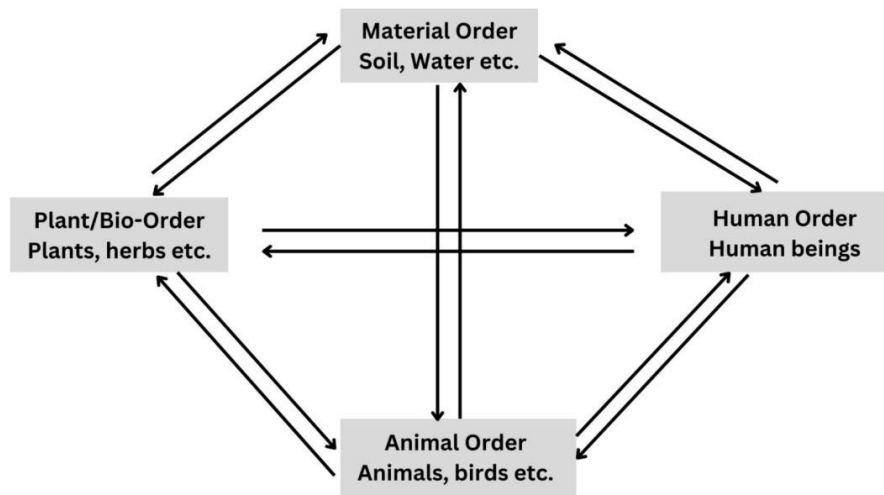
- Maintaining the cyclicity in natural grandeur.
- Under lying the reality of basic oneness
- The evidence of utilizing natural treasures in proportion of the regeneration.
- The evidence of being complementary in the balance of natural treasures.
- Emphasize the importance of **global peace** and understanding among different cultures and nations.

Harmonious relationship among Nature's four orders:

Everything that we see around us can be put into one of the four orders-

- Material order–this includes units like air, water, soil, metal and so on.
- Plant order–this includes grass, plants, trees, etc.
- Animal order–this includes animals and birds.
- Human (knowledge) order–this has human being only.

Human-centric philosophy 'Madhyatha Darshan Sahastitvavad' [10] elucidates Coexistence, i.e. existential/natural order among material-mineral order (padarthavastha), plants order (pranavastha) & animal order (jivavastha). The relationships among the material-mineral order, cells/plant order, and animal orders are mutually fulfilling and mutually enriching and this process is cyclic (avartansheel) in nature as shown in diagram-I. The right understanding between Human beings (gyanavastha) and Nature will be necessary to fulfill the relationship with all these orders. The ultimate desire of human beings is also to live in harmony with rest of the nature/cosmos /existence. It means that no one has to create harmony; it is already available, and it exists in the form of coexistential harmony with mutual fulfillment. One only needs to understand existence and align oneself with it. By understanding these internal activities/phenomena and processes of manifestation in nature, human beings can survive & flourish easily. All three orders i.e. (material-minerals, plants, and animal orders) are fulfilling their relationship with human beings. Subsequently, Human being must organize their lifestyle to fulfill the other three orders so that civilization can move towards this path. Harmony in the individual and harmony in human-human relationships (from family to world family) is only possible by understanding the relationship between humans and the rest of Nature/Cosmos.



Environmental Stewardship:

Environmental stewardship refers to the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through active participation in conservation efforts and sustainable practices by all human beings. Stewardship is the responsible use (including conservation) of natural resources in a way that takes full and balanced account of the interests of society, future generations, and other species, as well as of private needs and accepts significant answerability to society. The term environmental stewardship has been used to refer to such diverse actions as creating protected areas, replanting trees, limiting harvests, reducing harmful activities or pollution, creating community gardens, restoring degraded areas, or purchasing more sustainable products. It is applied to describe strict environmental conservation actions, active restoration activities and/or the sustainable use and management of resources. Stewardship actions can also be taken at diverse scales, from local to global efforts, and in both rural and urban contexts. The global scale of many current environmental issues might lead to the perception that local actions can no longer meet these challenges. However, one way through which people get involved in promoting sustainability and in responding to external drivers of change, using their own expertise and knowledge, is through engaging in local environmental stewardship actions and initiatives. Thus, implicit in our framing of environmental stewardship throughout this paper is a focus on the often-central role of local people in caring for the environment that they are proximal to, connected to and, in some contexts, that they depend on for subsistence needs and livelihoods.

Sustainable Development and Its Goals:

Sustainable development entails relationships among these key components: social, economic, and environmental factors. In other words, the only way development can be continual in perpetuity is if it creates a balance between the interests of different groups of people within the same generation and among generations. The increasing pressure on the earth's resources due to population growth requires that development and resource use be managed to maintain a sustainable environment so as to preserve or enhance human well-being. A practical approach for demonstrating the environmental sustainability of an action through ecosystem service analysis is presented.

The United Nations World Commission on Environment Development argues that development can only be considered sustainable if it addresses the needs of the present without endangering the capabilities of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. The 17 Goals are all interconnected, and in order to leave no one behind, it is important all that we achieve them all by 2030. These all goals are as follows:



The Theme of India's G20 Presidency:

“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” or “One Earth • One Family • One Future” - is drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text of the Maha Upanishad. Essentially, the theme affirms the value of all life – human, animal, plant, and micro-organisms – and their interconnectedness on the planet Earth and in the wider universe. The theme also spotlights Life (Lifestyle for Environment), with its associated, environmentally sustainable and responsible choices, both at the level of individual lifestyles as well as national development, leading to globally transformative actions resulting in a cleaner, greener, and bluer future..

Priorities of India's G20:

- **Green Development, Climate Finance & Life**

Climate change is a key priority for India's presidential Presidency, with a particular focus developing nations across the world. Understanding that the issue of climate change cuts across industry, society, and sectors, India offers the world Life (Lifestyle for Environment) -a behavior-based movement that draws from our nation's rich, ancient sustainable traditions to nudge consumers, and in-turn markets, to adopt environmentally-conscious practices. This ties closely with India's G20 theme: 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' or 'One Earth. One Family. One Future'.

- **Accelerated, Inclusive & Resilient Growth**

An accelerated, resilient and inclusive growth is a cornerstone for sustainable development. During G20 Presidency, India aims to focus on areas that have the potential to bring structural transformation. This includes an ambition to accelerate integration of MSMEs in global trade, bring in the spirit of trade for growth, promote labour rights and secure labour welfare, address global skills gap, and build inclusive agricultural value chains and food systems etc.

Outcomes:

As we consider our roles as individuals and community members, it may be helpful to think of six natural resource systems and desired outcomes for each one:

- Air: Sustain clean and healthy air
- Ecosystems: Protect and restore ecosystems functions, goods, and services
- Energy: Generate clean energy and use it efficiently
- Land: Support ecologically sensitive and management and development
- Materials: Consume less, reduce waste, and shift to environmentally preferable materials
- Water: Sustain water resources to ensure quality and availability for desired uses

We must take care not to degrade the resources that we do use, and whenever possible, restore and rehabilitate resources to their natural conditions.

CHALLENGES:

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is undoubtedly important and that is why it appears in so many ancient texts. But there are a few challenges we face when it comes to the use of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in international relations. Firstly, we have to encounter ideological approaches, which are by nature different from philosophical approaches. Secondly, the hard power of nation-states is a big challenge to the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which is based on the principle of self-restraint. India can provide the principle or the software of everlasting peace to the world, but the rest of the world has to accept this principle. If the principle of reciprocity is not kept in mind, then an ideal like Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which is our greatest strength, can turn into our greatest weakness. So, our education has to be such that inculcates a sanskar of oneness.

When it comes to achieving sustainable development, one of the biggest problems, possibly the biggest, is eradicating extreme poverty – both at the national and international level. This is because poverty is in itself an evil, plus it blocks or inhibits the achievement of most of the other goals of development, from personal freedom to a clean environment.

Suggestions:

India's recent G20 Presidency, centred around the theme of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, marked a historic milestone and echoed the message of One Earth, One Family, One Future. This is the message that India is sending us today. Big or small, Indian or Pacific, North or South, we are all facing the reality of multiple existential threats together – and only together will we persevere. As every family has its own support system, we need to build a global support system, together. As One Family, we must work on empowering each other – whether through women-led development, through adopting technology to bridge the digital divide, or through holistic healthcare systems. We must share our experiences, our technologies, our capacities, and resources. We must act as one family, working together for the sake of all.

CONCLUSION:

Now, the search for a new paradigm that can ensure economic development without jeopardizing environmental quality is being intensified. We need such a world view with a philosophical foundation where people think about nature before thinking about themselves, which can make us realize the deeper underlying reality of basic oneness. Heisenberg, about the relation between man and nature says that. “Natural Science” does not simply describe and explain nature; it is part of the interplay between nature and ourselves. We can never speak about nature without, at the same time, speaking about ourselves”. This ecological harmony is possible when the entire universe is seen as a single largest family including all the living beings of the world.

This is possible and practicable only when there is coherence in living from individual level until national and international level. The constitution of undivided society is in the form of orderliness with code of purposeful conduct of individuals with understanding. Individuals are connected with undivided society through relationships and associations.

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