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The Philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: A Path to Tranquility in Times of Turbulence

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ABSTRACT

We are living in a scenario where we are seeing brutal wars happening, and the ones who are suffering the most are the citizens living in these conflict zones. The agony of suffering is attached to the idea of human rights exploitation, seen in recent wars like that of Russia- Ukraine where innocent citizens are living in adversity and are denied the inalienable rights, which were meant essentially for their protection, but have rather aggravated perils for them. And in such a turmoil, the philosophy preached by India that of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' reminds the entire world that it is essential to see each other as a part of a global world, thus not bound us to the parochial territories, and rise above the cross-cutting differences existing all across. This also relates to the idea of Immanuel Kant, who talks about universal solidarity in cases of suffering and how the ramifications of violations of rights are also felt in other regions as well, and not just restricted to the idea of fixed territories, highlighting how we all are interconnected in this cosmopolitan world.¹ The idea of unification was also seen in how women of the entire world, irrespective of their differences, came together and led to their emancipation by organizing themselves under the feminist movement, representative of the diverse viewpoints and identities. Thus, the idea is to keep 'human' in the center and not create the notion of 'us vs. they' when thinking of human emancipation. This relates to the idea even mentioned in our 'Vedas' that "the world is a nest."

Keywords: Atrocities; Cohesion; Conflicts; Human Rights; Security; Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The proposed study aims to explore how the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' can be realized in practice in resolving the global humanitarian crisis and how India is preaching the same also at an international level, reflected in Indian diplomatic efforts to stand for human rights and in its values inherited by constitutional fathers and different philosophies preached by India.

In trying to address this, the following set of questions are to be further explored:

How conflicts and crises can be reduced by imbibing the core principles of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' in conflict management? How crucial is it to keep 'humans' as a referent object while talking about non-traditional security threats? Can the nations strive towards a common future and stand by each other in times of adversity? How could people's lived experiences bind them together without feeling limited by

territorial fixations?

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The research would be undertaken by mixed methodology using descriptive and analytical methodological tools. The interpretative method would be followed in order to show different perspectives and inclusion of different voices within the dominant paradigm for highlighting gendered perspective and how there is a need to move behind the appearances and to show the need to expand the knowledge production via inclusion of such concepts of Indian thought. The research would also include content analysis, giving examples to support the proposed research. Sources will include articles, journals, internet sources, and books in order to examine how this normative notion of cosmopolitanism could be realized in practice.



INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD OF CATASTROPHE

The world cannot be incognizant of the turbulence that is created in the entire world by certain global humanitarian crises, due to which the 'people' living in the regions are in agony and are the ones who are affected the most due to the callous attitude of those people in power. In a world torn by conflicts, the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' when realized in principle, could bring a ray of hope in the lives of people ravaged by wars, and subsumed by darkness. This reminds of a Pulitzer-winning photograph showing the 'little girl and vulture,' followed by the death of the photographer, Kevin Carter. This photograph captures one of the most devastating famines in South Sudan and how people were in such desperate times out of hunger, which reminded the entire world of a corner of the world crying for help, thus instilling in people of other parts of the world to forget the idea of separate territorialities and leaving indelible marks on the entire world to collaborate for greater solidarity. This gruesome incident highlights one of the gravest problems that the world is going through, which is that of poverty, which goes much beyond just dearth of resources and continues to be associated with exploitation of human rights, and thus global poverty is becoming a huge concern, especially for third-world countries with inadequate resources available for them, thereby increasing the wealth gap, especially in South Africa and Sub Saharan Africa. Thus, there shall be no differentiation in serving an immediate neighbor or people living miles away from us since we ought to morally help those people in spite of geographical proximity if that is not leading to sacrifice of our own principles². Hence, it becomes imperative for us to show altruism since globalization has the potential to facilitate adoption of technology to help each other in times of need in varied ways, rather than thinking of ourselves as atomistic individuals.

Also, as Pogge argues, it is the moral obligation of developed societies to be benevolent towards developing nations and contribute in giving them wealth since they are the ones who are responsible for their deprived conditions by creation of an international order; hence it becomes imperative for them to eradicate global poverty in these areas, and he talks about 'Global Resource Dividend' for the creation of an egalitarian society by distribution of income.³ What binds all the people all across the world is the idea of 'common humanity,' and thus it is imperative for humans to come ahead in the name of solidarity⁴. There are numerous global humanitarian crises that have shook the entire world, such as, the Horn of Africa in Somalia, is suffering from one of the most gruesome hunger crises, thereby leading to displacement of people, and also exploitation of 'Right to Life' whereby children are living in abysmal conditions without even the basic necessities of life. It is shattering to see how one corner of the world seems to be so prosperous,

while the other is living in shackles of darkness, thereby also leading to their 'social exclusion'. Poverty hence becomes a multidimensional issue, and this further leads to deprivation of opportunities in the social and political arena as well. And this situation is further aggravated by the Ukraine crisis, cutting off supplies for this region. Ukraine has itself become a region of contestation, and this has led to large-scale displacement of the citizens. Thus, the citizens on both sides are the ones who are facing the brutal ramifications of war. In Ukraine, this has led to gross violations of human rights, apparently visible in the destruction of infrastructure, thus exploiting their right to health and education and thus facing the tribulations of food insecurity because of disruption in global food supply chains. The civilians are living in a state of 'fear' in their own countries which is meant to be the 'protector' of these inalienable rights, thus instilling psychological impacts of the brutality on even the generation to come.

In such a scenario, the contested idea of 'humanitarian intervention' comes into play, which refers to the use of armed forces inside the territory of another state to reduce the atrocities inflicted on the people. The practice of human intervention does carry with itself the potential to alleviate the sufferings of people, if done in the case of legitimate and extreme situations, under the mandate of the United Nations. However, the idea of humanitarian intervention is a complex idea itself since it is questionable to ponder over how much force can be considered 'legitimate' and whether the 'intention' of the intervener is purely on the basis of moral imperatives, without any latent agendas. One can also not forget the persistent international order where one cannot belittle factors like the North-South divide, aversion towards particular identities, national interest, etc.

Some states in the Global South have been apprehensive about the humanitarian intervention in the name of protecting the human dignity can also be used as a weapon by the strong players for disrupting the sovereignty of the weak nations, thereby exacerbating the north-south divide⁵. Another point of contestation is seen in the inherent binaries between morality and national interest; thus, the governments become selective about when they choose to intervene, since at one time they might choose to intervene, while at other instances they might refuse to. Thus, the states are not guided by their moral imperatives in order to save people from mass atrocities; rather this intervention is based primarily on their national interests, and hence ethical considerations seem to be tokenistic in nature⁶. Thus, the idea of 'human intervention' can be seen as legitimate only if under international mandate since 'humans' are considered to be the primary locus point who have the right to be bestowed with freedom, and it is their emancipation which has to be the ultimate goal, and not be glossed by the cross-cutting identities existing all across, and thus considering ourselves under the ambit of one family, which is premised



in the idea of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', which would be examined further.

ROLE OF VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM

As we have seen, the current world scenario is characterized by dichotomies and conflicts, and thus there is a greater need to move towards tranquility in such a geopolitical scenario. Here, the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' becomes pertinent to not aggravate wars further and move towards greater cohesion, and thus this philosophy has to be realized in practice. This is mentioned in the Maha-Upanishad (VI. 71), imbibing the values of seeing the world as an 'extended family'. Ideals of 'oneness' have been an inherent principle of our core values, and one of the philosophies is that of 'Vedanta', which has no roots for parochial thinking and provides an all-encompassing idea of solidarity by inclusion of elements like, one soul prevailing in all humans, which helps us to overlook the binaries based on color, gender, caste, etc. and also moving beyond the idea of borders, which can sustain us together in times of turmoil. This focuses on conflict management through 'interfaith dialogue' and negotiations, making it a holistic philosophy.⁷ India has the potential to lead the world if it goes back to its ancient knowledge system; thus, Vedanta could bring about transformation in the world by transcending the dichotomies existing marred by the cross-cutting differences.⁸ Thus, by expanding existing knowledge production, one can become inclusive and find principles of 'relationality' which could help us to bind by shared experiences. Inclusion of such principles would ultimately help in coming out of the eurocentric view, and thus expand the existing knowledge system via inclusion of Indian knowledge system, which has great potential for creating an alternative perspective of the post-colonial world and also for the creation of peaceful abode. This ultimately results in reducing apprehensions towards the global south as well, by giving voices to those who are marginalized and do not adequately represent their perspectives within conventional international relations.

One of the practical implications of cohesiveness is seen in how the feminist movement becomes an all-inclusive movement, trying to counter challenges of the intersectional ties existing like that of caste, race, etc. This is also evident in how the 'feminist international' has been using 'gender' as an inclusive category and included within its ambit even other identities like that of homosexuals and masculinity, which becomes a 'reconstructive' theory, challenging the conventional mainstream international theorists who were only giving an impartial view of the world. Thus, feminist international does not represent 'I' but rather speaks for those humans whose voices are not heard and bringing forth the identities of those who have been marginalized by inclusion of the lived experiences of various identities and engaging in 'dialogic' conversations, which could bring

forth variegated opinions of different identities and how different narratives are contextualized, thereby leading to emancipation of 'human' as a category itself.⁹ Thus, the feminist movement is an epitome of the struggles of each category of gender in itself and also how it is intermingled with other identities as well. By questioning the already existing narratives, the status quo is challenged which is inherently creating dichotomies within the existing arena and making it a distorted reality. The inclusiveness could usher in greater diversity, varied stories with multiple contexts, and understanding of all these narratives could thereby help in the creation of a complete picture, thus breaking free from parochial boundaries created by people themselves. Thus, the notion in contemporary times is to move away from the binaries existing with the conception of 'us versus them' and move towards human emancipation.

As mentioned in the 'Bhagavad Gita':

"Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings" (Bhagavad Gita, 10.20). The Vedas also remind the world that we all are all not bounded by cartographic limitations and helping to bind with each other by giving importance to human dignity, which could further resolve tribulations encountered during gross violations of human rights.

The pandemic, which grappled within itself the entire humanity, is another example of how separate units came together for protection of their units, thus not adopting a boundary-based approach for the same. The idea of 'vaccine nationalism' gained prominence during that time, and it carried adverse consequences, since this approach of procuring the vaccines before making them supplied to other parts of the world would result in an escalation of price of vaccines, whereas only 'global coordination' was a way out to end the pandemic.¹⁰ Thus, the world is interconnected and the health of one person is dependent on the health of others, and thus only a 'cosmopolitan' approach could help resolve the global crisis, as Held argues that the contemporary challenges cannot be solved by the use of power alone since the issues have become more complex, like that of resource depletion, environmental degradation, global warming, etc., and there exists a relationship between all the nation-states in this cosmopolitan world.¹¹

The philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' further entails the creation of a pluralistic framework whereby there exists tolerance of other beliefs as well, thereby augmenting the values of fraternity. These ideals further perpetuate an optimistic image of India of its 'Soft Power' in foreign policy, which makes it a legitimate player in world politics, which have roots in its core values and believe in conflict resolution via pacifist measures. This philosophy is to bring the broken elements in the world together which have been shattered, to come together, consolidate, and be reflexive in our approach to understand even those people's suffering living miles away. One such attempt that ultimately resulted in social fabrication of the society was how India used 'Yoga



diplomacy' to move beyond borders and further instilled the idea to connect to the divine power, which becomes a common ground by which people would see themselves as a part of one humanity, despite territorial demarcations. Thus, this principle could be solidified if every person would consider that they all are living on the same planet Earth, under the same universe and thus efforts would be required on the part of state, non-state actors, to instil in this feeling of oneness, and work towards the greater cause of humanity, thereby reducing the human rights abuses.

Now that we have seen how this philosophy is crucial in a turbulent world, and how it can be realized in practice. The idea is to further legitimize human rights at an international level by the inclusion of human rights within the ambit of security, which would be discussed in the next section.

HUMAN SECURITY

The conception of security has widened in the post-cold war era, and it is not just restricted to the traditional notion of security, called 'guns and bullets' with a focus on increasing military capabilities; rather, it has broadened to even include non-traditional security threats, with a primary focus on the idea of 'Human Security'. Buzan expanded the scope of security by including political, economic, and social issues of security and not just restricted to military security. Also, there is a problem with securitizing every threat since that could even perpetuate more threats.¹² Also, he talks about how the idea of societal security is more important in which protection of language, culture, tradition, etc. becomes central.¹³ There are primarily two notions of security: Objective security which deals with arms and weapons, and it is state centric. Whereas subjective security is a normative notion that is created in itself, and thus threat is in subjective form. With the end of the Cold War, the scope of security widened as the concept was re-defined along the lines of inclusion of environmental issues, as when there is no concern for the environment and population increases, deforestation occurs on a large scale, thereby leading to soil being barren, which ultimately affects agricultural productivity and thus leads to insecurity among people, which could perhaps result in conditions like famine and economic insecurity. Thus, a cycle is being created of impoverishment and dearth of resources.¹⁴ Since, even when the states are protected at their borders, the concern is mainly about the people living under the state, and they must be bestowed with rights and not dwell in fear.¹⁵ Security has become an all-encompassing construct with giving recognition to environmental degradation and natural disasters as equivalent conducive threats as military disasters.¹⁶ Another view pertains to that of security concerns within the third-world countries where Mohammad Ayoob talked about the security issues of these countries in a different context since these were mostly post-colonial countries which were dominated by the western world. And underdevelopment

of the issue of security is the threat for third world nations since the state itself is responsible for killing its own people. And that the 'state kills its own people'.¹⁷ Thus, economic security is just not about fulfilling the bare minimum but has a direct relation with the worth of humans, and when it is not fulfilled, human security also contracts since there exists a nexus between human and economic security. The idea is thus to keep humans as a referent object, which could reduce the apprehensions towards one another if emancipation that comes with freedom is considered to be equivalent to security.¹⁸ However, this idea was contested by Shaw that whatever security issues come up in people's life revolves around the social relationships, and hence it should be understood in a sociological perspective.¹⁹ Hence, there is no consensus on the idea of security and has been a contested topic, seen at an individual, societal, and international level differently with multiple referent objects and varied threats.

India has tremendously worked on the idea to propagate the idea of integral human rights and security; thus reflecting how it is also preaching the principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' at an international level, which could result in welfare-oriented strategies adopted for entire humanity and thus becoming as cohesive unit to fight against global issues in promoting concepts of universal peace and respect, thereby moving away from the idea of an alienated self.²⁰ There are many multilateral engagements done by India at an international level, reflected in its efforts to support the anti-apartheid regime in South Africa, representative of the concerns of third world countries at various international forums, standing against war crimes, involvement in the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions, and being a democratic country talking about concerns related to gender inequality and human rights at a global level. It has been imbibing the constitutional values of equality, justice in its practices, which makes the projection of our country as a pacifist country, which would first resolve conflicts by negotiations and diplomatic effort. India's constitution is an exemplary document inclusive of all shades of opinions from different arenas, and it also includes voices of those who had to face historical injustice for a very long period of time. Its principle of 'Non-reciprocity' is seen with neighboring countries like that of Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. This was seen in how it provided humanitarian aid during the natural calamities in Nepal, Sri Lanka, thus reflecting how it is practically reflecting the values of benevolence by keeping humans at the centre. India was also involved in inclusion of 'gender equality' into the first multilateral treaty on human rights of the UDHR. The recent G20 meeting hosted by India also discussed various non-traditional threats by making agendas on certain global crises, affecting the entire humanity, as Held argues that ramifications of one event occurring in any part of the world are also felt in other parts of the world, like global warming as a tribulation is not just bounded within



territorial demarcations.¹¹ Therefore, it can be seen that human rights have become transnational issues, and India has been putting in sincere efforts to resolve these atrocities at a global level, thus reflecting the values of 'forbearance' and propagating the idea of multiculturalism, with tolerance of varied opinions and beliefs.

MAJOR FINDINGS

It can be inferred that there is so much potential for such a utopic idea to be realized in application for the creation of a world where there is no darkness and people of the world are interconnected by imbibing the values of compassion towards all humans and not glossed by territorial fixations. 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' as a core principle could lead to appreciation of varied perspectives, thus reflective of greater solidarity even at a global level by contributing to conflict resolutions and engaging those who are at the suffering end while making human-centric policies. There is a greater propensity for sufferings to attenuate if leaders of the countries keep 'citizens' as the referent object while execution of their plans. The idea of 'one family' comes with a lot of challenges and does carry with itself the danger of creating a homogenized identity, but the challenge that remains is to give equal standing to every identity as a whole, keeping in mind the idea of relationality, which could further perpetuate the idea of cohesiveness and cosmopolitanism. Also, the inclusion of such principles could also question the western language and concepts being dominant in international relations, and tenets like 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' could project India's strength and also make international relations more inclusive by including the vocabulary and inherent meanings of Indic thought that are associated with the same.

CONCLUSION

The idea is to transcend the parochial thinking, and bring a paradigm shift in the current scenario. Thus, the catastrophe created in the world by consistent brutalities and wars can be reduced if the entire humanity considers themselves in relation to each other and believes in the idea of oneness. This is not to say that one identity can be subsumed under another in the idea of creation of solidarity, but the idea is the belief to tie individuals on certain common grounds, thus making a path towards tranquillity in case of human rights violations. Thus, when the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is realized in practice, it can transcend the parochial thinking and bring a paradigm shift in the status quo from turbulence towards tranquillity.

The idea is to understand the global world in terms of pluralistic identities, with each having their own experiences, but to make this plurality a source of strength, which could further result in greater understanding of each other and thus believe in the notion of the entire world being our

family. This is not to say that one has to desist the aspects of their national interests, but rather to combine the elements of Indian principles as reflected in our ancient texts along with the complex realities existing within the current geopolitical scenario. Thus, by inclusion of our indigenous values, there can be the creation of a novel approach to perceive human rights challenges from different viewpoints, and the idea is not to create an eco-chamber of incorporation of certain normalized and dominant opinions, but rather the creation of a framework that could be representative of variegated views. And by inclusion of the Indic thought, one breaks down the normalization of dominant narratives, thereby increasing the knowledge production. These mass atrocities can be reduced through Track 1 and Track 2 diplomacy and by direct involvement of those who have been suffering so that policies could be made through incorporation of their struggles through their ethnographic accounts. Civil society and grass-roots level engagements can also work in order to resolve their concerns since they are the ones who are directly involved with those people so that legitimate laws could be made in order to create an abode of peace for people living in pitiable conditions. The Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' can create a space if all of us together rise above the differences and create a safe space where people could flourish.

Thus, development would take place when a person is not grappled with their circumstances to undertake even those work that could be a blow to their dignity, which would then lead to human rights abuses; thus the focus should be on the creation of a conducive atmosphere that would help them to transcend their lives; hence the idea is to rise above these harsh circumstances that could create a deterrence for them. As Amartya Sen talks about 'capability approach', wherein giving people legitimacy through certain rights is not enough, but rather it is the idea to work on their capability to improve their situations, which would unbind them from shackles of fixations created for them, and by them through focusing on substantive freedom.²¹ Thus, even though it appears to be a far-fetched reality, we are taking steps towards that to awaken from deep slumber and establish tranquillity. Therefore, the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' carries within itself the idea of development of all and creation of an intact world where humans could flourish once the impediments regarding their human rights exploitations are resolved.

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