

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

A year has passed since the terrorists struck in the Baisaran Valley of Pahalgam and left 25 tourists and one local ponywallah dead, and a nation stunned in grief and shock. As the Indian army rightly put it out on the anniversary of the Pahalgam massacre, the terrorists (Read Pakistan) crossed the limit here. Firstly, they blatantly picked their victims for their religion and secondly they killed men and left their wives to see the gruesome killings and grieve for life. Killings happened in a split second. This massacre was about the hate of a religion and a country. The massacre ended unprecedented footfall of tourists for three consecutive seasons in Kashmir. The industry has never quite recovered from that setback even though a lot of confidence building measures has been undertaken and security tightened further.

However, India did not take this assault lying low. Operation Sindoor shocked Pakistan, which, as usual, tried to push a narrative of its victory. That is nothing new for us as according to Pakistanis they have won all wars against India including the one that split their country. Pakistanis love to live in illusions. Operation Sindoor set a new benchmark for threshold of India's tolerance; It showed to Pakistan that it not only has to pay the cost of sending terrorists into India through covert operations but India will not hesitate to hit its terror factory directly. The world saw India in the new light after this operation. So far Pakistan had been sending terrorists to India and engineering major attacks without any repercussions. The decisive retaliation to the Uri attack and Now Pahalgam massacre has sent a message to Islamabad that India will not be a sitting duck to its machinations. Let's hope that the sacrifices of 26 Indians in Baisaran a year ago will not go in vain but bring a lasting solution to ending Pakistan sponsored terrorism.

Bhopinder Singh

Last year, the United States Department of State had released a contested post on the social media of President Donald Trump, claiming that he had ended 7 wars in 7 months. The list had included the wars in Rwanda-Congo, Kosovo-Serbia, Egypt-Ethiopia, India-Pakistan, etc. They later issued a dramatically revised list of 8 wars in 8 months to include what they claimed was the end of the Israel-Hamas war (it is still on). Recently, Trump continued his unsubstantiated claims by announcing that he had previously solved 9 wars (he did not clarify which 9th war) across the world, and now had just ended the Israel-Lebanon war as his 10th peace deal.

Not known for his sense of history, facts, or even nuance in what he keeps claiming, the historically wounded and deeply fractured land of Lebanon becomes the latest "trophy" in Trump's make-believe accomplishments. Besides the fact that Delhi has explicitly denied any hand of the United States of America in ending the Indo-Pak war, Serbia has clarified that it had no intention of going to war with Kosovo, and meanwhile, the violence in Congo and the Israeli war with Hamas continues unabated. Going by the credibility of Trump's claims, the missing 9th war that he is supposed to have ended could only be speculated to be the US-Israeli war on Iran, but that too is far from over.

So far, the invading Israeli military has killed more than 2,100 people in Lebanon, including nearly 200 children, and displaced over 1.3 million people (one-fifth of the country's population). This Israeli invasion was in reaction to the firing of rockets at a military site (importantly, not on a civilian area) in the Israeli city of Haifa by Iran's co-sectarian Hezbollah, immediately after the US-Israeli attack on Iran. Implicit in the weak Israeli argument for invading

Lebanon and Trump's imaginary peace deal



Lebanon by the Benjamin Netanyahu dispensation is the untenable logic that while it can attack a sovereign like Iran, it cannot allow any force (read, Hezbollah) to attack Israel in the name of standing up for Iranians. The Hezbollah rocket attack had led to two Israeli deaths, and the subsequent Israeli reprisals were reminiscent of the gross disproportional-ity à la Gaza Strip (where 70,000 Palestinians have been killed), with the same flattening of townships and razing of villages on the Lebanese side. As always, Trump has chosen to remain selectively mealy-mouthed about Israeli excesses on the Lebanese front, just as he chose to look away whilst the Gaza Strip was reduced to rubble, with utter impunity and immunity.

Trump may never know that the Lebanese war with Israel predates Hezbollah. Beirut had joined Arab states in opposing the creation of Israel in 1948. The Israel-Lebanon border has never really been peaceful, with earlier Israeli invasions of Lebanon (1978 and 1982) setting the stage for the creation of Hezbollah. Today, with Iran busy

warding off the challenge from American attacks, Israel realises that Hezbollah is essentially without the usual Iranian support, and hence the opportunity to push on, whatever the human consequences. This is despite the fact that Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif had clarified that Lebanon was part of the ceasefire and any strikes from Israel would be a violation.

Israel did invade Lebanon nonetheless, and the seemingly hapless Trump administration was left meekly stating that it was a "legitimate misunderstanding", thereby giving the Israelis a clean chit yet again. American allies in the European Union have openly leaned in favour of Lebanon by calling upon "all sides to implement the ceasefire, including in Lebanon". Like the unheeded warning in the Gaza Strip earlier, the World Food Programme has warned of a similar food insecurity crisis in Lebanon, but the Trump-Netanyahu duo remains unrepentant and unconcerned.

There are good political reasons for Netanyahu to keep the pot boiling with

Hezbollah in order to retain a state of emergency, which distracts from his unpopularity on the domestic front and serious charges against him personally. He instinctively favours brute force over diplomacy, and in Hezbollah, he has a convenient handle. The history of invasions of Lebanon (including 2006) is instructive: angst against Israel can never be clamped down by force. The current invasion, if not pulled back by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), will lead to an even bloodier and existential war for survival. Hezbollah will go flat-out to counter the occupation in its own limited way, and perhaps that bloodshed is exactly what Netanyahu seeks to prolong his own relevance. Meanwhile, Donald Trump is busy singing hosannas in his own favour on account of some mythic peace that he supposedly brokered between the Israelis and Hezbollah, when Israeli soldiers continue to occupy Lebanese land. Serendipitously, Trump has a like-minded and shifty Lebanese President in Michel Aoun, who is known to shift loyalties.

As a Christian leader, Aoun has very limited say in the affairs of Shiite Hezbollah, and therefore any talks of peace with the Lebanese government are not the same as talks with Hezbollah directly. Ultimately, peace in Lebanon is dependent on how Trump ends his own ill-advised war on Iran, and the outcomes of the same will have the only tangible impact on ending the war in Lebanon. Short of that, history repeats itself, and Nero in Washington, DC dances as Lebanon burns.

As a Christian leader, Aoun has very limited say in the affairs of Shiite Hezbollah, and therefore any talks of peace with the Lebanese government are not the same as talks with Hezbollah directly.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry; Views presented are personal.)

PLEASURES AND COMFORTS BUT NO PEACE

Ajit Kumar Bishnoi

Pleasure is defined as a short-lived sensory experience requiring efforts, while comfort is a soothing state of ease and rest. Lots of people live very comfortably. Similarly, almost everyone has some pleasures, like being able to eat tasty meals regularly. However, not many are either peaceful or happy in spite of living comfortably or having many pleasures of senses.

Why is it so? Seeking peace or happiness by being comfortable is not possible, because, as defined, it is only a state of ease and rest. Increasing comforts, as many do in search of peace and happiness, brings only disappointment, because being peaceful or happy requires control over the mind. And the mind is full of desires; it has many fears; is troubled by something or other; is obsessed with many problems; etc. Similarly, people seek more pleasures of the sensory types, and only compromise health, etc, and are a dissatisfied lot. The answer is in limiting the comforts and pleasures to what is appropriate, as instructed by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita. They should be 'yukta' (just right) only. For example, I eat



only 'sattvik' (in goodness) meals, and keep good health. I also limit my comforts to what is just right, that is, comfortable living quarters, etc. But the most important need is to have a peaceful mind. Again, Lord Krishna has instructed in great detail how to become peaceful and, yes, happy also.

There are many requirements, as there

must be for such an important objective of peace and happiness. We have to start with the right choices of the modes we associate with. Goodness, which is to choose what is good, is required. We all know generally what is good. Passion is fine as long as we don't allow it to overpower us. For example, we can watch sports as long as it does not

become all-consuming. Darkness, which is driven by what all is wrong, like being controlled by lust, greed, anger, hate, etc., must be strictly avoided. Then, one must be dutiful at all times, that is guided by time, place and circumstances. Dharma (righteousness) must be the guiding principle of life. If we follow all of the above, purity is bound to be achieved.

Next requirement is that of detachment. Mind can be controlled by two means, which are practice and detachment. I have explained what practices are required. Additionally, there is need to be detached with everything material, including one's body and profession, etc.

These are again to be yukta only, which is just right, like a mother must love her child, but without too many expectations from him, when he grows up. The last and the biggest requirement is to add 'brahmananda' (spiritual bliss) to one's life. This is obtained by a good connection with God and total surrender to Him. It appears like a tough task, but is not till one gets started, because God begins to help. Then, pleasures and comforts contribute to well-being and great satisfaction.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: India's civilisational path to global peace and harmony

Kunwar Pushpendra Pratap Singh

In an era marked by persistent conflicts, geopolitical rivalries, climate crises, economic inequalities, and cultural tensions, the quest for global peace and harmony has become more urgent than ever before. The modern world, despite its technological advancements and interconnectedness, continues to struggle with divisions and distrust among nations and communities. In such a scenario, India's ancient philosophical principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — meaning "the world is one family" — emerges as a powerful and timeless framework for fostering global unity, peace, and cooperation.

The concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam originates from the Maha Upanishad, an ancient Indian text that emphasises the universality of human existence. It states that narrow-minded individuals discriminate between "mine" and "others", while those with a noble outlook consider the entire world as one family. This profound idea reflects

the inclusive and holistic worldview of Indian civilisation, which transcends boundaries of nation, religion, language, and culture. It promotes a sense of shared responsibility and mutual respect among all human beings.

Unlike many modern political ideologies that prioritise national interest above all else, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam advocates for a balance between self-interest and collective welfare. It calls for empathy, compassion, and cooperation as guiding principles of human interaction. In doing so, it provides a moral and ethical foundation for addressing global challenges that cannot be solved by any single nation alone.

Historically, India has embodied this principle through its commitment to peace and non-violence. The teachings of Lord Buddha and Mahavira emphasised compassion and non-harm towards all living beings. In the modern era, Mahatma Gandhi brought global attention to the power of non-violence (Ahimsa) as a tool for political and social transformation. His philosophy not only played a crucial role in India's free-

dom struggle but also inspired civil rights movements across the world. Gandhi's vision was rooted in the belief that humanity is interconnected, and that true peace can only be achieved through understanding and non-violent coexistence.

In contemporary times, the relevance of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has only grown stronger. The challenges facing the world today—such as climate change, pandemics, terrorism, and economic instability—are inherently global in nature. They demand collective action, shared responsibility, and a spirit of cooperation among nations. India has consistently advocated this approach on international platforms by promoting the idea of "One Earth, One Family, One Future", which reflects the essence of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in a modern context.

India's actions on the global stage further reinforce its commitment to this principle. During the COVID-19 pandemic, India launched the "Vaccine Maitri" initiative, supplying vaccines to numerous countries, especially developing nations that lacked access to medical resources.

This humanitarian effort demonstrated that India prioritises global well-being over narrow national interests. Similarly, India has actively participated in United Nations peacekeeping missions and has provided aid to countries affected by natural disasters, reflecting its role as a responsible and compassionate global actor.

Furthermore, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is not limited to diplomatic or political spheres; it also has profound implications for social and cultural interactions. In a world increasingly divided by identity politics, religious extremism, and cultural misunderstandings, this principle encourages dialogue, tolerance, and mutual respect. It reminds us that diversity is not a source of conflict, but a strength that enriches human civilisation.

Education plays a crucial role in promoting the values of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. By instilling a sense of global citizenship and ethical responsibility in younger generations, societies can cultivate individuals who are more empathetic, inclusive, and cooperative. Cultural exchange

programmes, international collaborations, and people-to-people connections can further strengthen this sense of global unity.

India's soft power also contributes significantly to spreading this philosophy worldwide. Practices such as yoga, Ayurveda, meditation, and Indian classical arts have gained global recognition and acceptance. The celebration of International Yoga Day across countries is a testament to how India's cultural heritage can unite people beyond geographical and ideological boundaries. These traditions not only promote physical and mental well-being but also foster a sense of inner peace and harmony, which are essential for building a peaceful world.

However, the path of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is not without challenges. The current global order is heavily influenced by power politics, economic competition, and strategic interests. Many nations prioritise short-term gains over long-term collective benefits, leading to conflicts and mistrust. Bridging these differences requires strong leadership, moral courage, and a willingness to

embrace a broader vision of humanity.

Despite these challenges, the principle remains a viable and necessary path forward. It does not demand the erasure of national identities or interests, but rather encourages their alignment with global welfare. It calls for a shift in perspective—from competition to cooperation, from division to unity, and from self-centredness to shared responsibility.

In conclusion, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is not merely an ancient Indian ideal; it is a universal philosophy with profound relevance in today's world. It offers a roadmap for building a more peaceful, just, and harmonious global society. By embracing this principle, nations can move beyond conflict and rivalry towards collaboration and mutual growth.

As the world stands at a crossroads, grappling with complex challenges, India's civilisational wisdom provides a beacon of hope — reminding us that we are all part of one global family, and that our collective future depends on our ability to live together in peace and harmony.