

## **India as Vishwaguru: Harnessing Heritage for a New Global Diplomacy**

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### ***Abstract***

*The main goal of this research paper is to examine the potential for India's rich cultural and philosophical heritage to provide new and innovative ideas in the formulation of foreign policy in the current state of world instability. In the current state of world crises, such as the presence of wars, civil disturbances, the degradation of human values, the presence of the world-wide coronavirus, environmental degradation, and the safety of women in society, it has been proposed that India's rich cultural and philosophical heritage has the potential to help the world find solutions to the problems it currently faces. The concept of India as a Vishwaguru or "world teacher" has its foundation in India's rich cultural and philosophical heritage and its role in the world. India's rich philosophical and cultural heritage has had a profound impact on its identity and the way in which the world perceives India. The Great Sage Aurobindo said India would lead the world with its spirituality. He thought that for the peace and progress of the world, an enlightened method of education and moral training is necessary. The 2023, G20 Summit in India is the biggest proof that India is going to implement its foreign policy based on its rich traditions and ideals. The theme of the G20 Summit held in India in the year 2023 under the presidency of India was "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: One Earth, One Family, One Future". This theme is inspired by ancient Indian philosophy, which focuses on the interrelation of all living beings on the globe. This theme focuses on the need for global cooperation, development, and oneness in dealing with global problems like climate change, economic inequality, and global health concerns. The declaration of International Yoga*

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*Day is the milestone achievement that India has been able to implement traditional ideals on the world stage. India has the potential to lead the world not only through economic or military power but through moral power and cultural power, thereby fulfilling the responsibility of being the guiding force for world harmony.*

**Keywords:** *India, cultural heritage, foreign policy, Vishwa guru, global harmony*

***"The true leader of mankind is the one who has reached the summit of spiritual wisdom and can bring the light of that wisdom to others." --  
Aurobindo***

## **Introduction**

India is not just a country; India is the great guru of the 'Knowledge of Spirituality,' 'Humanism,' 'Universalism,' 'Pluralism,' 'Peace,' 'Yoga,' 'Pranayam,' 'Ayurveda,' and the like to the rest of the world. The concept of India as Viswaguru or "world teacher" can be traced back to India's cultural, spiritual, and philosophical heritage and its changing role in world geopolitics. The possibility of India becoming the Viswaguru in the 21st century can be substantiated by the use of India's cultural and philosophical heritage, but this would be in sync with the foreign policy of India. India's rich philosophical and cultural traditions in the form of Vedanta philosophy, Buddhism, Yoga, and the ideals of 'Non-violence' or 'Ahimsa,' 'Pluralism,' 'Respect for all Religions,' and the like have had a profound impact on India's self-concept and the way India has been viewed by the world. The greatest folly would be to research India's ancient traditions and philosophy in the form of a research paper. Since this research paper is about foreign policy, in this discussion, we would be able to discuss two or four aspects of India's ancient traditions and ideals in the context of the world in the present day.

## **Spiritual Leadership**

India's legacy of spirituality and morality, from the days of the Buddha to Mahatma Gandhi and his ideas of non-violence, continues to have a tremendous resonance in the modern world. India has provided not only political and economic ideas but moral ideas that have been relevant over the ages. In an era characterized by turbulence and chaos, where the world is witnessing wars, climatic changes, and social and economic disparities, India's message of peaceful coexistence and sustainability is extremely relevant. Mahatma Gandhi's ideas of ahimsa (non-violence) and satyagraha (truth-force) have shown that moral authority and ethical integrity can challenge even the mightiest of regimes (Gandhi, 1940). Scholars like Harvey (2000) have shown how these ideas have gone beyond India and have inspired movements and ideas all over the world. At the heart of India's spiritual legacy is the idea given by Swami Vivekananda, a great saint and philosopher, who redefined spirituality not merely as an escape from the world but as an engagement with the world and with humanity. His ideas of spirituality were not merely about attaining self-realization but about working with others and with society. His ideas about spirituality and morality were based on the notion that spirituality was about realizing one's own divinity by working with others, by showing compassion and kindness to all. His ideas about leadership were not about dominating and controlling but about evoking the potential that was hidden inside every person. His very powerful statement, "You cannot believe in God until you believe in yourself" (Vivekananda, 1893/2009), is a very powerful statement about the link between self-confidence and spirituality.

Vivekananda also stressed the importance of education in the context of individual and social transformation. His famous claim that "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man" (Vivekananda, 1897/2013) represents a holistic view of education in which intellectual growth is linked to moral training and spiritual awareness. Such a view of education enables the individual to not only earn a living but also to grow in character, responsibility, and social awareness. If we apply the ideas of Vivekananda on education to the global arena, we can see how such a view would support the idea that a

foundation in peace and development must begin in the enlightened mind and heart, and not in technological or economic growth. Sri Aurobindo took the spiritual view of leadership a step further by suggesting that leadership represents a path to higher levels of consciousness. While acknowledging the importance of spiritual growth and the embodiment of the divine in action, Aurobindo was also dismissive of dogma and ritualism in favor of inner realization and the expression of spiritual truth in action (Aurobindo, 1922/1997). For Aurobindo, spiritual leaders must be exemplars to lead humanity to a new stage of evolution. This view of leadership is also in line with the contemporary view on ethical leadership in which the leader's authenticity and wisdom are valued over the leader's desire to attain quick economic or political gains. The intellectual contribution to world affairs by Indians is not restricted to spiritual philosophy. Ancient Indian scholars such as Kautilya provide practical lessons in statecraft and diplomacy, which remain surprisingly relevant today. Kautilya's theory of 'Mandal' described international relations as a constantly evolving web of alliances and rivalries, and advised rulers to change their approaches according to the situation. His six-fold policy on international relations, consisting of peace, war, neutrality, preparation, silence, and dual policy, demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of international relations and diplomacy, in which moral and ethical factors were kept in view. Today's international relations experts often find striking similarities between the application of such principles and the latest international diplomacy. Rabindranath Tagore's concept of internationalism was based on cultural exchange, international citizenship, and humanism. However, unlike other internationalism theories, Rabindranath's theory was based on a clear rejection of imperialism and nationalistic aggression. He believed that international harmony would only be possible when nations showed mutual respect, engaged in intellectual dialogue, and developed cultural understanding. (Tagore, 1921/2004) Institutions such as the Visva Bharati University and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) reflect the practical application of Rabindranath's theory on internationalism.

From the urbane culture of the Harappans to the inclusive visions of Vivekananda and Tagore, Indian culture has always been about harmony,

pluralism, and unity in diversity. Concepts like Vasudhaiva Kutumbakham the world is one family are part of an ethical universalism that is highly relevant in today's globalized world (Rig Veda, circa 1500 BCE). As argued by Joseph Nye (2004) and Shashi Tharoor (2012), India's soft power is precisely based on these civilizational values, which have global appeal for other nations in their search for cooperative, humane, and sustainable solutions to global problems. In this context, Indian spiritual and philosophical heritage is not just about the past; it is highly relevant for the future of global diplomacy and governance

## **Sustainable Development and Ecology**

The ancient traditions of Indian culture in revering nature, from the reverence for rivers like the Ganga, to the eco-centric wisdom of the Upanishads, have placed India in a unique position from which it can promote the cause of sustainable environmental practices at the global stage. In an age of global warming, India's commitment to Green Growth and its ancient traditions of understanding the relationship between humans and nature can help it position itself as a global leader in environmental responsibility. India has a significant role in raising global environmental consciousness due to its size, its large population, and its leadership in various global environmental initiatives. Some of the aspects of India's role in raising global environmental consciousness are:

- a) **Paris Agreement (2015):** India is a signatory to the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global warming to well below 2°C, and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. India committed to reducing its carbon emissions intensity (emissions per unit of GDP) by 33-35% by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.
- b) **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** India has pledged to expand its renewable energy capacity, reduce the intensity of emissions, and enhance carbon sinks through forests. India's approach to climate action is rooted in the principle of equity and

common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), emphasizing that developed countries must do more due to their historical emissions.

- c) **COP Leadership:** India has hosted and participated in various COP (Conference of Parties) negotiations. For instance, India hosted the 8th meeting of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2018. India also promote renewable energy sources at global stage.

The efforts are following-

- a) **National Mission on Solar Energy:** India has been at the forefront of the renewable energy revolution. The country set ambitious targets for renewable energy, with the goal of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based capacity by 2030.
- b) **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** India initiated the ISA in 2015 to promote solar energy across the globe, especially for solar-rich, developing nations. The ISA aims to reduce the cost of solar power, facilitate investments, and share technologies.
- c) **Wind and Biomass Energy:** India is also among the top countries for wind energy production and is expanding its biomass energy capacity.

The importance of the integration of environmental concerns and economic development has been stressed by India, and the concept of "Green Growth" has been promoted. Environmental policies in India also reflect the balance between social, economic, and environmental needs. An example of the same would be the "Swachh Bharat Mission." Launched in 2014, the mission has been a success in the context of waste management and urban sanitation, thus contributing to the reduction of pollution in urban areas. India's environmental awareness approach would be promoted on international forums such as the BRICS and G20. India has been pressing for financial aid to be provided to the developing nations in the context of the transition to a low-carbon economy. India has been pressing the developed world to fulfill their financial commitments to enable the emerging economies to transition to a green economy. India has been able to draw upon its traditional knowledge system,

which has been based on the concept of sustainability and harmony with nature. "Jal Vidya" or "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or the concept of "water wisdom" and "the world is one family" have been a part of the environmental policies in India.

## **The tradition of Yoga**

Yoga, as a spiritual practice and a physical discipline, has become a global phenomenon. India can leverage this tradition not only to improve health and well-being worldwide but also to foster a sense of global community, helping to heal divisions and promote holistic health. India's International Day of Yoga, now celebrated globally, is a symbolic and practical example of India using cultural diplomacy to engage with the world. In the age of globalization when civilization has improved a lot, but people's peace has almost disappeared. There is no substitute of yoga for the mental peace and physical strength that our forefathers have taught us. Yoga is the restraint of thought. The history of yoga was not associated with religion only. History and evidence proves that yoga was inextricably link with the way of life of the people during the Harappan civilization. At that time yoga was used as a solitary attempt to escape from the ravages of disease and death. People also practice yoga to enhance their physical ability in that time. *Pashupati* the old form of lord *Shiva*, was one of the revered deities of the Harappan civilization. Various archeological sites of the Harappan civilization have found meditating seals and statues of *Pashupati*. Archeological survey of India (ASI) found many meditating seals of women at that time. 'Sankhya' philosophy was popular at that time. *Yoga* and *non-violence* were incorporated into the character of the citizens at that time. Many Famous archeologists said that there was no such evidence found which proved the existence of king, queen or palaces in Harappan civilization. The people protected themselves from the external enemies by strengthening themselves from within. People of Harappan civilization practiced yoga to build a powerful body and fearless soul. '*Hothyoga*', which is a combination of many *asanas* was popular at that time to strengthens the body. Harappan civilization created a pattern in yoga teaching that has been followed throughout the world for centuries. In this

research paper I will try to highlight various artifacts of Harappan civilization as a source of yoga and try to understand its present significance. Yoga was inextricably linked with the lifestyle of the people during the Indus Civilization period is already clear from various archeological evidences. But the time period of Indus Valley Civilization is disputed. Indus civilization was destroyed but Yoga was not destroyed. It was further perfected later by the hands of Rishi **Patanjali**. Yoga was not only considered as a form of physical exercise only at that time but it was said to be a part of lifestyle. The immense importance of yoga in mental and physical development is an accepted fact today. A major research point is that yoga also plays a major role in maintaining the social status quo. Yoga not only develops mental and physical condition but also controls the mind. The human character is always lustful and fickle, always thinking of self-gratification, always running after possessions. But yoga is something that leads people towards spirituality and develops mental peace. In today's society, the conflict of power, conflict for property is a common thing where yoga may be an inspiration for the better development of society. The Indus Civilization, has been lost to the rules of the ages but some features of this civilization still inspire us today, one of which is Yoga. Yoga is an integral part of Indian culture that has been tested and used by various experts throughout the ages. Swami Vivekananda was the yogi who was able to elevate yoga to the status of a scripture. He elaborated on various types of yoga, their uses, and their benefits. Today, yoga is being practiced all over the world. But the traditional origin and source of yoga requiring need to special practice. Now is the time to open a new horizon of research on this subject. There is no doubt to say that yoga the ancient practice of Indian civilization now established worldwide for its larger impact upon society and human well begins. The recognition of International Yoga day proves the truth and established the success of India's foreign policy during the past years.

### **Crafting a Foreign Policy for the 21st Century**

For India to fulfill its potential as a Viswaguru in terms of its culture and philosophy in the modern world, its foreign policy must evolve in terms of its

interface with modern global issues. Some of the major features of its foreign policy in this regard could include:

- a) **Soft Power Diplomacy:** India's culture and philosophy have a great deal of potential for being used as a major component of its foreign policy. In today's world, it has been seen that soft power is more effective than hard power in global relations. India's culture and philosophy have a great deal of potential for being used in this regard.
- b) **Multilateralism and Global Governance:** India's foreign policy has always emphasized multilateralism and non-alignment in its approach. This has been evident in its leadership in various global organizations like the United Nations, BRICS, and the G20. This is in consonance with its culture and philosophy, which have always emphasized global cooperation, peace, and development.
- c) **Strategic Autonomy and Balanced Relations:** India's foreign policy has always been in consonance with global norms, but at the same time, it has managed to maintain its strategic autonomy in terms of its relations with different global powers. This has enabled it to maintain balanced relations with different world powers, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. This has also been enabled by its culture and philosophy, which have always emphasized flexibility in terms of responding to different situations.
- d) **Humanitarian Leadership:** The role and stand of India on international aid and humanitarian operations have changed for the better, especially through operations such as Operation Ganga and providing medical supplies and vaccines during the pandemic. The ethical standards based on Indian philosophies have placed the country in a position to take a leadership role in matters concerning humanitarian issues, promoting peace and prosperity globally while undertaking actions that are in line with their core values.
- e) **Technological and Economic Growth with Ethical Considerations:** The technological capabilities of India, especially in space exploration and digital services, can play a vital role in supporting their leadership role based on culture. However, there is a

need for consideration of the ethical aspects of technology as advocated for in their philosophies. This will make India a global leader in both technology and ethics.

## **"Pancha Prana Viksit Bharat 2047"**

The concept of "Pancha Prana Viksit Bharat 2047" is a vision for the development of India towards the year 2047, marking 100 years since it gained independence. The concept is based on five main aspects or principles, referred to as "Pancha Prana" (the five Pranas), which are meant to guide the development and transformation of the country in various areas:

### **Pancha Prana (Five Principles) for Viksit Bharat 2047:**

- a) **Pride in India's Heritage:** A strong sense of pride in India's rich cultural, historical, and traditional heritage, encouraging respect for its diversity, languages, art, and values.
- b) **Commitment to Unity and Integrity:** Fostering national unity and integrity, promoting a sense of oneness, and strengthening the bonds between various communities, regions, and religions.
- c) **Self-Reliance in Technology and Innovation:** Encouraging self-reliance and innovation in fields like science, technology, and industry. This principle aims for India to become a global leader in technological advancements while fostering domestic industries.
- d) **Economic Prosperity for All:** Ensuring economic growth that benefits every section of society, particularly focusing on inclusive development that empowers marginalized communities and provides quality education, healthcare, and opportunities for all.
- e) **Environmental Sustainability:** Promoting sustainable development practices that protect the environment for future generations. This includes focusing on green energy, reducing pollution, and preserving natural resources.

## **Key Goals for India in 2047:**

- **Technological Leadership:** India aims to become a global leader in technology, space exploration, and digital innovation.
- **Social and Economic Equality:** Achieving equality in access to resources, education, and healthcare, ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to thrive.
- **Global Influence:** Enhancing India's geopolitical position as a leading nation in international affairs, contributing positively to global peace, security, and sustainability.

"Pancha Prana Viksit Bharat 2047" encapsulates the vision for a self-reliant, prosperous, and globally influential India, rooted in its cultural heritage while embracing innovation and sustainability. The principles guide India's path towards becoming a developed nation by 2047, with a focus on national unity, economic growth, and environmental conservation.

## **Conclusion**

Since independence, the role that India has played in various fields such as non-alignment, Panchsheel, etc. has given India a unique position in terms of foreign policy. India has also made a special contribution to various peacekeeping programs of the United Nations in maintaining peace in the international arena. During the Corona pandemic, India has been distributing vaccines to the whole world, distributing medicines and even distributing food grains. India has come forward without hesitation in natural disasters like drought, flood and earthquake in neighboring countries. India has also played a special role in establishing peace in neighboring Sri Lanka, independent Bangladesh. But despite all this, India has still not been a permanent membership of the United Nations. Some thinkers believe that India should play a more diplomatic role in this regard. Despite various provocative comments made by Bangladesh on the Bangladesh issue recently, India is playing a conscious role as a major state. Even Russia-Ukraine or Palestine-

Israel crisis India has sent a message of peace .But India has never compromised its sovereignty. India's traditional ideals and philosophy can guide the in the implementation and formulation of India's foreign policy. During the period of Modi2.0 and Modi3.0 the fact has been already established. While the philosophical foundation is strong, there are certain challenges that India must navigate to truly fulfill its potential as a *Viswaguru*:

(a) India's diverse society and its internal challenges, such as religious tensions or socio-economic inequalities, must be managed carefully. For India to lead globally, it must exemplify the values of unity in diversity domestically and abroad. Promoting social harmony and addressing internal disparities will strengthen its credibility as a global moral authority.

(b) India's position in the complex global order, especially in relation to China and its borders, can complicate its diplomatic efforts. India will need to balance its philosophical ideals with pragmatic defense and security concerns, navigating the global power dynamics carefully.

(c) India must actively engage in fostering dialogue between civilizations, encouraging interfaith dialogue, and promoting peace-oriented educational initiatives globally. This will involve not only emphasizing ancient wisdom but also addressing contemporary global issues such as conflict resolution, human rights, and economic justice.

(d) Despite playing an effective role in maintaining world peace and security, India is still not a permanent member of the Security Council. Due to not being a permanent member of the Security Council, India is not yet able to enjoy the power to implement various decisions. The foundation for India to become a *Viswaguru* in the 21st century lies in its ability to align its rich cultural and philosophical traditions with an evolving foreign policy that addresses modern global issues. By promoting values of peace, sustainability, inclusivity, and ethics, and by actively engaging in global dialogues, India has the potential to lead not just through economic or military power but through its moral authority and cultural influence, fulfilling its role as a guiding force for global

harmony. However, this vision requires both domestic and international efforts to ensure that its ideals are realized on the global stage.

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