Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Ubuntu: Ideational Treasures of G20

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The G20 Forum comprises emerging and emerged powers, representing the active energy of the global community for humane purposes. Together, the forum accounts for almost two-thirds of the global population, 75 percent of global trade, and 85 percent of the world's GDP. Formed in 1999, the G20 entered into a crucial stage in 2022–23, when its presidency came to the world's largest democracy and the fastest-growing economy. Conveying a responsible response, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared, "India's G20 Presidency will work to promote this universal sense of oneness." Hence our theme: "One Earth, One Family, One Future.'"The earlier resonation of this culturally sensitive proclamation came during Modi's visit to South Africa in 2016, "Through the spirit of Vasudaiva Kutumbakum and Ubuntu...Our relationship has been a story of resolve, determination, justice, and the excellence of human endeavour." The cultural quest for globally inclusive ideas and effective humane actions inspired the Indian leadership to its recent proposal of granting full membership to the African Union (AU) at the G20 Summit, recognising Africa's significance in shaping the world's future. The AU's aspiration for a collective self-reliant Africa and Modi's identification of Vikashit Aur Adhyatmik Bharat (developed and spiritual India) define the cultural and civilizational milestones of the G20 Forum.The expression Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is a family), written prominently on the entry point of Indian Parliament, comes from an illuminating Sanskrit verse of the ancient Hindu philosophical text Mahopanishad, saying, "Ayam nijah paroveti ganana Laghuchetasam, Udaara Charitanam tu vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." One may attribute a near meaning to the translated words, "Division between ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ is a small and narrow way of looking at reality, indulged in by people with narrow minds. For those of greater consciousness, the entire world is a family." The idea of a global community emanating from the civilisational land of India is ideationally rooted in its ancient ethos of manifested diversity and intrinsic unity. The Rig Veda chants, "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti," meaning that truth is one, but the wise speak it differently. The cultural liberal tradition of India is inspired by her contemplation of the organic, integral essence of plurality. Illustratively, the Hindu text Ishavasya Upanishad says, "Ishavasyam idam sarvam, yat kinchit Jagtyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunjithah maa grudhah kasya svidh dhanam," meaning: as the divine principle pervades every atom in this universe, enjoy the bliss of being a part of this universe and share the joy of living on this bountiful, beautiful earth with all your fellow beings and other objects without excessive greed and avarice. Such a holistic idea of cosmic life remains at the core of the Indian approach to the global community.Likewise, the philosophy of Ubuntu remains deeply rooted in indigenous cultures of Africa and is interpreted by its many people, more specifically those of Southern Africa, as a phenomenon of human interconnectedness. Denoting a cultural worldview of trying to capture the essence of humanity, it is found in diverse forms in many societies throughout Africa, in particular among the Bantu languages of East, Central, and Southern Africa. Clearly articulated in Southern Africa’s Nguni group of languages, it reflects the African idea of community: "I am human because I belong." Pertinently, the ancient ethic of Ubuntu inspires a remarkable

experiment of Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) in post-apartheid South Africa to reverse the systemically inflicted dehumanising process of racial exclusion. Manifestly, the TRC experiment has gained traction as an innovative conflict resolution approach in many countries in Africa and beyond, signifying the relevance of Ubuntu, an African vision of global peace, security, and prosperity.

Increasing recognition of dominant ideas and practices as inadequate for unleashing effective humane responses creates an imperative quest for globally inclusive roots of well-meaning endeavours, underscoring the exploratory worth of Indic-African templates of organic existence and integral progress, exemplified in the world views of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakamand Ubuntu. The spatial presupposition of family is that its members stay together under the same roof, sharing their feelings with each other. The Indian wisdom of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has enormous transformative potential in shaping a mechanically interconnected world that owes its origin to the Indian discovery of zero into a humanely shared space. Equally, the African notion of Ubuntu has immense actionable relevance for nurturing a mutually secure and peaceful global habitat. The subsequent integration of the ancient plural ethos underpinning Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Ubuntu philosophy into the analytical construct of the G20 Forum increases the likelihood of community actions becoming global in scope and humane in substance.

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