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# VIKSIT BHARAT

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GOVERNANCE TRANSFORMED

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# Viksit Bharat @2047

## Governance Transformed

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# Chapter 6. Vishwa Guru and Vishwa Mitra: Relations with the World

Amb. Anil Trigunayat<sup>16</sup>

*Vishwa Guru* or the “Teacher of the World” also includes the idea of the Knowledge Giver of the world. This is what distinguished India, which had excelled in science, mathematics, astronomy, surgery, ayurveda, and *sanskriti* (culture) with profound philosophical schools of thought. She achieved the unique distinction of being a fountain of knowledge, the knowledge which was carried by the Arabs, Chinese, and other travellers to the West and the East. India’s gift of “zero” and other numerals is easily the basis of modern-day software programming and scientific developments. Hence, the aspiration of Indians to once again achieve and retrieve that status, especially during this Amrit Kaal (when independent India becomes 100 years old), is unquestionably legitimate and justified. However, this journey is passing through yet another major landmark of being a *Vishwa Mitra* (A Friend of the World) or *Vishwa Bandhu* (Brother of the World), both concepts which are obviously more acceptable, since a friend in need is a friend indeed. This is apparent, given India’s rise as a benign power always working for global welfare and solidarity, be it through the *Vaccine Maitri* (Vaccine Friendship) during the COVID-19 pandemic, or being a First Responder during emergencies and natural and man-made disasters, or for that matter becoming the “Voice of the Global South” so strikingly evident during her Presidency of the G20

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(2022–2023). While India is developing her comprehensive power as the largest democracy in the world with aspirations to be the second or third largest economy by 2047 as *Viksit Bharat* (Developed India), she is already an integral and indispensable part of the high table in this currently fractious global order. India is fast emerging as a “Rule Maker” or “Rule Shaper” rather than a “Rule Taker.”

At the beginning of his third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing National Democratic Alliance (NDA) members after the general elections of 2024, rightly reiterated that what India had done in the last 10 years has enabled her to be trusted by the world as a *Vishwa Bandhu*. He added that NDA for him means New India, Developed India, and an Aspirational India (India TV, 2024, June 7). Bharat, or India, is perhaps the only living civilisation which has finely blended tradition with modernity in her domestic and international discourse. Despite onslaughts by nearly all kinds of aggressors through the millennia, she maintained her value systems for societal cohesion. Unity in diversity became the dictum. These also became her inherent strength, with ingrained qualities which became her currency for conversation with the world. Mahatma Gandhi followed the principles of Truth and Non-violence, and by combining these with Bharat’s civilisational heritage, he was able to defeat the mighty colonial power of Great Britain. India may have been ruled by foreigners of all hues and colours, but until the advent of British colonialism, most of them had become absorbed in Indian culture and its civilisational ethos and expanse, while also contributing to her growth.

Overtime, her cultural heft and civilisational heritage turned into a credible instrument for soft power projection and cultural diplomacy. The declaration of June 21 as the “International Day of Yoga” by the United Nations, with the largest number of sponsoring countries across continents, is a testament to India’s cultural depth and expanse. The concepts and epithets of *Vishwa Guru* and *Vishwa Mitra* are organic derivatives of cultural diplomacy, enhancing her leadership role in a non-

intrusive yet long-lasting manner through assimilation and osmosis. Therefore, cultural diplomacy has become an integral part of foreign and public diplomacy. India has recognised the importance of cultural diplomacy as a part of its soft power strategy in promoting its national interest and establishing herself as a dominant regional and global power (Pratap, 2015).

## A Dive into the Past and Swimming into the Future

Not many people are aware that India gave birth to at least four religions and several sects. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism all taught universal brotherhood. Again, few people would attribute to the fact that Christianity came to India before it went to many parts of the world and thrives here. Likewise, Islam came to India way before it was adopted by many now Islamic countries, and consequently, India has emerged as the third-largest Muslim nation in the world. Persecuted Persians and Jews sought shelter in India and became Indianised. All these are important indicators which inform the inclusivity aspect of the Indian approach to humanity, which is assiduously practiced by the current political dispensation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his global interactions under the rubric of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”—the world is one family. This was most recently underscored in India’s Presidency of G20 (2022–2023), whose underlying theme was “One World, One Future, One Family,” which was witnessed by the world in precept as well as in practice.

Post-Independence, India, once colonised, made a conscious choice to stay non-aligned and away from the bloc politics amidst the rabid Cold War era, when one bloc was led by the United States and the other by the Soviet Union. She crafted her own path and committed trajectory for the cause of decolonisation, an unfettered stand against racism and for the development of the newly liberated, under-developed, and over-

exploited countries as she embarked on the path to progress herself. “Share and Care” became the mantra for developmental assistance which was marked by India’s capacity-building programmes under the ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation) initiative, where more than 160 developing countries from across the continents receive training and assistance through over 200 institutions and specialised courses, training more than 200,000 officials from 160+ countries in both the civilian and defence sectors (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation, no date). Not a capital-exporting country herself, India also began to offer Lines of Credit on concessional terms, as well as Grants in Aid, to the tune of billions of dollars, thereby creating an exceptional sympathetic constituency in the host countries which appreciated and continue to benefit from these gestures and initiatives a great deal in their developmental aspirations in accordance with their own priorities. This contrasts with several other countries like China, or even the erstwhile colonial powers, who either indulged in neo-colonial practices or debt trap and wolf warrior diplomacy. In this regard, one may simply look at India’s Africa policy crafted and announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi while addressing the Ugandan Parliament in 2018, where he highlighted the fundamental tenet of “Africa for Africans” through the “Ten Guiding Principles” (Padmanabhan, 2024).

Therefore, the history of India as a major civilisation, a pre-eminent economy, and a disseminator of ideas, values, knowledge, and religions provides credence to why India matters, or should matter, as it no longer wishes to stay as a rule taker but wants to be part of the rule-making process for the global good and universal welfare while pursuing an “India First” approach.

## A First Responder

India has also emerged as the first responder in natural or man-made disasters and challenges not only for our region but

anywhere in the world. The earthquake and devastation in Nepal and Turkey are examples where India was the first to reach with help and humanitarian assistance. Moreover, these also cover anti-piracy campaigns by the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, or the Red Sea to protect the maritime domain for international shipping. Very recently, when the Houthis of Yemen started attacking commercial vessels, New Delhi marshalled her highly professional naval assets to protect global shipping and maritime routes and secured the release of a large number of sailors and others. Currently, 21 naval ships are providing succour, security, and sustenance to safe shipping in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean (Ahmed, 2024). Evacuating Indians and other nationalities safely from conflict zones, even during the pandemic, is a feat few could achieve, the most recent being “Operation Ajay” when Indians were brought back from the conflict zone of Gaza and Israel (Express Web Desk, 2023).

Dr. S. Jaishankar, in the Rajya Sabha, while giving a report card on foreign policy in 2022, underscored the intent, achievements, and direction of our foreign policy (Ministry of External Affairs, 2022):

*Chairman Sir, foreign policy today is no longer just an exercise of a Ministry or even simply that of the Government. It has a direct impact on the daily lives of all Indians. This may be in ensuring that our products have market access or that our talent gets into the global work place. But it is equally an effort to ensure that technology, best practices and capital flow into India. Our endeavour in a difficult global situation is that the welfare of the Indian people is ensured, however challenging the circumstances. This may be in exceptional situations like Operation Ganga in Ukraine or the ability to access key necessities like energy and fertilizers on affordable terms. Or indeed in concluding Migration and Mobility Partnerships as we have just done with Germany. Indian foreign policy is there to serve the Indian people; we will do whatever it takes to discharge that responsibility. It could be*

*in ensuring international support for our policies or in the acceptance globally of our interests and objectives. These may be difficult times but it is also an occasion to display our leadership and make a strong contribution to global peace, stability, growth and security.*

## Diaspora Diplomacy

Diaspora can be a great asset and an exceptional tool of diplomacy. India has one of the largest diasporas which is also possibly the most successful one. More than 35 million people, comprising Non-Resident Indians (NRI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), have become the living bridge with India and have begun to connect even more strongly given the current dispensation's tremendous outreach and policies. In 2023, they remitted over US\$125 billion to India (Rahim, 2023). The late Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister had become the people's minister and had converted Indian embassies abroad to "a Home away from Home." PM Modi's personal outreach from New York to Texas to UAE to Europe and Africa has been exemplary in connecting the diaspora with India and making them partners in India's "Viksit Bharat" journey. Leveraging their talent pool, enterprise, and cultural connect for mutually beneficial interactions has become a reality as they also are looking at India with greater pride and interest. They can play an even bigger role in times to come by being ambassadors of a rising India. The 18th Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas (PBD) has been organised from January 8 to 10, 2025, at Bhubaneswar where the contributions of the diaspora were celebrated. PBD provides an important platform to connect and engage with the Indian diaspora and enable them to interact with each other. PM Modi acknowledged the role of the diaspora played in the freedom struggle in the run up to independence in 1947 and sought their partnership and contributions for making India a Viksit Bharat by 2047. He reiterated and underscored the role of Indian values

in global respect for the diaspora (*The Hans India*, 2025, January 9):

*In the last ten years, I met several leaders of the country. Every leader of the world lauds the Indian diaspora. One of the main reasons for this is the social values that you embed in the societies of the world. We are not just the “mother of democracy,” but democracy is a part of our life, our way of living. We do not have to teach diversity, but our life goes along with diversity.*

## A Strong Leadership Is a Prerequisite

Today, diplomacy is mostly conducted at the highest level of leadership. Personal chemistry often plays a critical role which was so clearly evident even during the recently held G7 Summit in Puglia, Italy, where PM Modi was a special guest. He himself represented India for the sixth time at the G7 (Ministry of External Affairs, 2024). It is an established fact that a strong, motivated, and nationally loved leader with a sound vision and clarity of mind can lead the country to newer heights both domestically and in the international domain. India has been blessed with good leaders and statesmen with a nation-centric vision, a global outlook, exemplary following, and resolve. But if one were to objectively assess Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 10 years at the helm of affairs, he has proved to be unlike any other leader in the world today. No wonder, US President Joe Biden in Tokyo called him the most popular person and said he would like to have his autograph. It was already displayed during former President Trump's era when PM Modi took him around the stadium in Texas in front of the largest possible jubilant crowd to the chant of “Modi-Modi.” This is not lost upon leaders of powerful countries and conveys a very strong message about a people, their leader, their country, and a unique civilisation, that is, BHARAT. It is no coincidence that

the Australian Prime Minister, witnessing the same in Sydney, referred to PM Modi as “The Boss” (*The Times of India*, 2023, May 24).

In 2014, in the Middle East, there were some apprehensions and reservations about PM Modi due to his connection and friendship with Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu. On Modi’s assumption of power, they feared India would be abdicating its ties with the Arab world and the cause of Palestine. But they were proved wrong, and their apprehensions were dispelled in no time as he undertook his first visit to the UAE in the region. The rest is history as the relationship has transcended to a strategic partnership with several regional powers from a transactional matrix. In fact, after the late PM Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s tenure, we have had no high-level visits to such important neighbours. This has been bridged effectively across countries and continents from Africa to Asia to the Americas. More importantly, many of these countries conferred their highest titles and honours upon PM Modi, which is unprecedented. The Act West policy has turned out to be a great success. This trust and direction from transactional to a truly strategic partnership is indeed unusual and certainly provides a mutually beneficial relationship. This is good for the country’s prestige and development since we depend a great deal on West Asia, especially on the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries for our energy security, economic engagement, diaspora welfare, and remittances. Moreover, the Pakistan factor, which has long decided our low-key relations with the West Asian countries, is now no longer relevant.

PM Modi’s popularity in India and abroad is too well known to be reiterated, as he led the country with the strongest majority for the ruling party. Even in the international discourse, it makes a lot of difference as the most popular and powerful leader is now taken more seriously the world over, especially when he represents the largest democracy with one-sixth of the world’s population. He can convey and convince the world leaders rather easily of the Indian approaches and stands

on matters of global importance. When Modi said at Samarkand that “the era of war is over,” Russian President Putin and the rest of the world took note of it. India’s quest for dialogue and diplomacy for peace and progress was clearly evident during the G7 Summit in Italy.

## Living with Nature to Fight Climate Change

Renewable energy is India’s necessity for green growth in times to come. PM Modi thought of a global initiative, the “International Solar Alliance,” and today hundreds of countries across continents are part of this enterprise. At home, he embarked on a target of renewable energy of 450 GW which has been further enhanced as the efforts for energy transition move along with several other initiatives. He also advocated for “One Earth One Grid.” There is no Plan or Planet B, at least not for now. India’s plans for a World Solar Bank that will mobilise US\$1 trillion of investments in solar projects over the coming decade have been widely appreciated. Likewise, at the Climate Action Summit in 2019, New Delhi and Sweden launched the Leadership Group for Industry Transition. India is on the verge of surprising the world by completing, and even advancing, climate goals due to sheer sincerity and commitment and to set an example. India demonstrates this by example while standing up for the developing world, for whom concessional green finance, green technologies, and “spatial and differential treatment” can make a significant difference (Trigunayat, 2023). Another major initiative which was announced on the sidelines of the G20 summit was the “Global Biofuels Alliance.” After NAM (Non-Aligned Movement), this was perhaps the first time that India embarked on such global multilateral initiatives, which confirms India’s universalistic approach to confronting global challenges.

India's National Hydrogen Mission and expanding international partnerships from Africa to the Middle East to Europe to Scandinavia tell their own story. Over the years, India has emerged as a part of the solution and not the problem as it diversifies its energy resources through green practices and technology across sectors. Since the transport sector is one of the major polluters, New Delhi aims to replace at least 30% of its vehicles with electric vehicles by 2030. Likewise, the country has expanded its targets of blending ethanol with standard fuel after completing the 10% blending target well ahead of time. Similarly, after achieving its voluntary target of reducing the carbon emissions intensity of GDP by 21% in 2020 compared to 2005, India has undertaken to reduce the emissions intensity of GDP—the volume of carbon emissions emitted for every unit of GDP—by around 35% by 2030 over the 2005 levels. India has also nearly achieved its target of reducing fossil fuel usage for power generation by 40% through the use of non-fossil fuels, almost 7 years ahead of schedule. Even at the household level, the Ujjwala scheme and clean cooking have led the way in reducing carbon intensity. It is also expanding its carbon sink capacity and incentivised carbon trading to expedite its goals. According to Dr. Jitender Singh, Minister of Earth Sciences, India's strategic approach is to establish a bio-based economy, projected to reach US\$150 billion by 2025, by bolstering the bio-manufacturing of low-carbon bio-based products. All this needs to be contextualised in the fact that for an energy-poor country like India, whose per capita energy use is one-third of the global average (680 kilogram of oil equivalent [kgoe] against 1,800 kgoe), it could be unrealistic to expect a virtual flattening of emissions during the initial years of the longer-term trajectory. But the sincerity of the mission is evident by efforts being made by India. India's goal of carbon neutrality by 2070 might be advanced given this pace of progress. According to the 2023 Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), India is the only G20 country on track to achieve its climate targets (Press Information Bureau, 2022, November 22). At the same time, in

this fight against climate change, India remains committed to the interests, security, and development of the Global South at every forum.

## G20 Was a Game Changer

India's G20 presidency in 2023 is a case in point which began with India defining the most apt theme of "One World, One Family, and One Future," and where it was able to bridge the super power differences while making the G20 the People's G20, hosting over 200 events across India. The purpose was to involve every Indian in this *maha yagna* for the nation and its well-being. This major congregation also strategically enabled India to showcase her Craft, Cuisine, and Culture to the world community. The issuance of the Delhi Declaration was an eventual achievement where consensus prevailed for the larger good. Inclusivity was demonstrated by India holding three Voice of Global South Summits, where the views of the developing world were not only ascertained but mainstreamed. More importantly, it was able to create a consensus to include the African Union—representing 55 countries—as a permanent member which would provide them a voice and capacity to flag their issues directly from within. What can be more telling about India's commitment to inclusivity!

## Neighbourhood First

Neighbours are a gift of geography but sometimes can also be the pains of history. The Sino-Pak nexus has become a major challenge despite India's best intentions and efforts to normalise ties with them in keeping with a good neighbourly spirit. India wants good neighbourly relations with all its neighbours including in the extended vicinity of East Asia and West Asia, let alone South Asia, based on mutual respect, mutual interests, and mutual benefit. With her immediate

neighbours, she follows a non-reciprocal policy of “Neighbourhood First” which is again in the spirit of “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, and Sabka Samman.” To counter the Chinese “String of Pearls Strategy,” India devised a more comprehensive and inclusive policy of “SAGAR”—Security and Growth for All in the Region. But she also follows a “zero tolerance” policy and advocates a global solidarity and response to fight the universal challenge.

PM Modi tried hard to improve relations even with Islamabad, but when they would not give up cross-border terrorism, there was no way but to respond decisively. We have witnessed the Uri and Balakot surgical strikes against terror outfits across the border. Likewise, when India witnessed that Pakistan would not desist from terrorism and held SAARC hostage, New Delhi devised alternative strategies. India is on the move, and no institution or country can stunt her pace. Hence, new institutionalised sub-regional mechanisms were created, revived, and recharged, like the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) which blended its Neighbourhood First and Act East policies, while also focusing on the development of India’s Northeast which had hitherto been ignored. Such initiatives require a clear vision, a roadmap, and political resolve, which have been assiduously and smartly worked out and are being implemented.

## A Principled Foreign Policy

India follows a value-based, principled foreign policy in her international discourse which was evident during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars. Hence, the position that India took on the Russia-Ukraine conflict was a principled position for the sake of sanity and peace. She propagated dialogue and diplomacy and immediate cessation of hostilities while supplying provisions and medicines for the hapless

Eurasian and Ukrainian refugees when others were pumping in arms and ammunition to fan the war. Many of the Western friends took time to understand India's position, but they realised that the largest democracy, biggest dynamic market, largest youth dividend—which PM Modi calls a “talent factory”—fastest growing major economy despite the pandemic and war, and a nuclear and space power of consequence, cannot be bullied. Her strategic autonomy is not merely a choice but a well-thought-out and crafted policy to serve her own national interests and larger humanity. This was clearly evident when India, calling out the hypocrisy of the West, increased her crude oil purchases from Russia. This was a bold move by a bold leadership to keep the price of oil and its impact at acceptable levels for the ordinary citizens as well as the industry and economy and overall cost of living. This step also added to the heft that the country enjoyed especially among the countries of the Global South, whose interests are often commensurate with that of India's own. Strategic autonomy and multi-alignment have become the drivers of an independent foreign policy of India in this fractious global order.

## Voice of the Global South

The decade 2014-2024 saw India increasingly becoming an assertive voice for countries of the Global South. India navigated her own rise in the global order while speaking for the aspirations of developing countries. In 2015, the Paris Agreement adopted a bottom-up approach where contributions from developing countries were “nationally determined” and not imposed by the Global North (Pant, 2024). Even under India's presidency of the G20, PM Modi was mindful of the difficulties that the developing world was facing due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Eurasian war. He, therefore, called for the “Voice of the Global South” Summit to confer with them about their own problems and

issues so that these could be mainstreamed with other G19 members in order to take cognisance of the severity and proposed solutions, be it for accelerating SDGs, containing climate change through Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), or depoliticisation of food, fuel, fertiliser, and medicines as has been evidenced during the Russia-Ukraine conflict. “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam” (One Tree in the Name of Mother, an initiative launched on June 5, 2024) on the World Environment Day carried the focus on saving the planet in our own civilisational way. On the domestic front, Modi’s mantra of “Reform, Perform, and Transform,” and “Local for Global,” became the bedrock drivers for the Make in India, Stand up India, Digital India, Innovate India, Swachh Bharat schemes which are engineering the Atmanirbhar Bharat enterprise. This is a Mission Possible during the Amrit Kaal, where an approach for the whole country and the whole of society is needed to make India into a developed nation and US\$30 trillion economy by 2047. Some, like JP Morgan, even estimated that India could reach to US\$50 trillion, almost equal to that of China in terms of GDP by 2050. To drive that, strong inspirational and visionary leadership is a prerequisite with Governance 5.0 in the AI-driven IR 4.0 (Industrial Revolution). Besides, India’s soft power projection and its consistency and staying power are extremely important, which are being assiduously cultivated to interact with the world as a benign and caring power which surely will hold Bharat in high stead in the otherwise global dog-eat-dog spectrum. India’s biggest asset is its exceptional civilisational heritage and cultural diversity. Let us look at how some of these play out in our interactions with the world.

## Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has always been in the DNA of Indians. The underlying philosophical thought has remained universal. “Aham Brahmasmi” is the dictum for human

discourse with divine dispensation. When India talks of the “World as One Family,” she means it, which is evident in her actions, approaches, and deliberations. This was truly witnessed during the pandemic when COVID-19 struck the citizens of the world, from the poorest to the richest and from the weakest to the strongest countries, exposing their vulnerabilities in no uncertain terms. India, with her 1.4 billion people representing one-sixth of humanity, not only catered for them but also took it upon herself to reach out to the world, especially developing countries. She provided medicines and other humanitarian assistance early on to over 150 countries which was appreciated by one and all. And when she developed her own vaccine and started manufacturing for others, India became the “Vaccine Hub” of the world and embarked on an ambitious “Vaccine Maitri” programme providing hundreds of millions of doses to more than 100 countries bilaterally and under various schemes. This was contrasted with the hoarding spree by many Western countries who wanted to keep millions of doses of the vaccine they were not even going to use for their people. This was to be used as a geopolitical tool by those mighty powers. But the Indian approach called out their bluff and even forced them to yield. Not only that, it offered its “CoWIN” app as a digital public good to whoever wanted it, while training a large set of health workers in the developing world through a number of online training programmes. At the international level, India worked hard to waive the IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) on the vaccines to make them available to all freely. India’s approach stunted the “Vaccine Apartheid” practiced by some Western countries. Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro termed the Indian vaccine supply as the lifesaving legendary “Sanjeevani” drug of the epic Ramayana days. The fact that India, despite her own challenges, rose to the occasion when the Western world was indulging in the “vaccine apartheid,” as claimed by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Franco-African summit, says it all (Winning, 2021).

It has also been a fact of history for millennia that when India interacts with others in the international discourse or for a cause célèbre, she does so from the strategic position of peaceful coexistence and non-violence, which remain integral and have been the essence of teachings of the Lord Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi. Even though she claims to be the inventor of algebra and trigonometry or, for that matter, Kautilya's diplomacy and "zero" itself, she does not believe in the "zero-sum" game in international discourse. Instead, she wishes to work with everyone, believing in the global goods and commons that have most recently been witnessed in her Vaccine Diplomacy driven by the guiding principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." It is in this spirit that Indian ethos, value systems, and knowledge travelled to vast tracts of Asia and the world and remain vibrant in a transformed yet closely intertwined form, merging with the local belief systems. Having suffered the trauma of the quest for riches perpetrated by all kinds of invaders and colonial powers, India (Bharat Varsha) has learned the art of maintaining unity in diversity. She was thereby enriched further through osmosis and assimilation of ideas, ideals, and cultural nuances that have been reflected through myriads of achievements and expressions. All these cumulatively have impacted India's world view.

## Reclaiming Vishwa Guru by Being Vishwa Bandhu

It is important to identify some of the ancient Indian value systems and ethical approaches that are still relevant in today's fractured international discourse and the transitional world order. However, for these to continue to remain relevant and have legitimacy, modern-day India, which aims to become a "Vishwa Guru" once again, must remain a beacon of high moral standards and inclusivity in her domestic discourse. If not, she will be harshly judged by the eternal value systems and

standards she has created for herself and propagates to the world. Meanwhile, being a Vishwa Mitra (Friend of the World) is the preferred course of diplomacy and global interactions. India has been professing a sane foreign policy with dialogue, diplomacy, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity as enshrined in the UN Charter, with multilateralism as the most viable matrix of cooperation, peace, and security.

India has been a firm believer in global welfare through unfettered access to global commons and global goods. Unfortunately, certain powers have preferred to constrain this access through myopic policies and power play. One could have understood it during the era of colonialism when colonisers dictated the rules of the one-sided game, but it appears that neo-colonialism is as much to be blamed for it in the modern era during the past seven decades in the post-Second World War era. Apartheid of various kinds is still very much in play. The most recent examples have been the vaccine apartheid and green apartheid, where the developing world faced utter discrimination and therefore was denied access to the means to fight the pandemic and the problems of climate change which still remain a major challenge.

BHARAT, can be viewed during the Amrit Kaal, as follows:

- **B:** Biggest country by population means a large human resource, purchasing power and market; Benign yet assertive power; Bridge between East and West and North and South; Be atmanirbhar.
- **H:** Home of morality and spirituality.
- **A:** Action- and result-oriented foreign policy which is robust and resilient,
- **R:** Reform, Perform, and Transform is the mantra across the spectrum. Rule maker and no longer a rule taker or a shaper.
- **A:** Assumes responsibility and leadership abandoning the hesitations of history.
- **T:** Tackles engagement and entanglement adroitly.

India has conclusively shown that democracy delivers and has delivered effectively for Indians and the world.

Even in the area of critical technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), India believes in its humanitarian dimension while containing their harmful and insidious impact. Speaking at the G7 Summit in Italy in June 2024, PM Modi reiterated, “India will collaborate with all countries to make AI transparent, fair, secure, accessible, and responsible.” As a founding member and lead chair of the Global Partnership for AI, India is promoting global cooperation in AI. He highlighted India’s human-centric approach, noting it was one of the first countries to create a national AI strategy, leading to the launch of the “AI Mission” with the mantra “AI for All” (*Hindustan Times*, 2024, June 15).

## Critical Parameters of Indian Foreign Policy

In times to come, India’s foreign policy will remain world-centric and based on principles of equity, justice, and sanity in international discourse as India grows strongly on a robust economic path. This policy is followed through the 3M principles of Mutual Respect, Mutual Interests, and Mutual Sensitivities and Friendliness with all. The key drivers are 5Vs: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (World Is One Family); Vaccine Maitri (Vaccine Friendship); being the Voice of the Global south; Value-based foreign policy with strategic autonomy as a prime mover; and finally, to become a Vishwa Mitra or Vishwa Bandhu which will eventually lead to Bharat being recognised as Vishwa Guru. No doubt there will be many challenges, including from countries like China, which will attempt to undermine India’s claims through the Grey Zone Warfare strategy, for which a robust and proactive communication strategy needs to be devised.

India has been a founder member of most international organisations be it UN organisations, WTO, or for that matter WHO, and has always believed in them and worked towards strengthening these multilateral institutions. However, she has been advocating the idea of reforms to reflect the 21st-century reality of the global landscape. The biggest anomaly is the absence of India from the UN Security Council's "Horseshoe Table." Given her exceptional credentials as the largest functioning democracy, the fifth-largest and fastest-growing economy, the most populous country in the world, and the largest contributor to the peacekeeping operations, along with her overall track record as a first responder, she rightly deserves and expects to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council. For reformed multilateralism, India propagates some fundamental tenets that include *Samman* (Respect), *Samvad* (Dialogue), *Sahyog* (cooperation), *Shanti* (Peace), and *Samridhi* (Prosperity) for all. Isn't that the most plausible way out of the morass of defeatism and destruction? India believes in engagement and not entanglement. The world order appears to be heading towards a Cold War 2.0 kind of scenario, especially in the geo-political domain with several geo-economic centres of power emerging. India's leadership of the Global South, with more and more countries wanting to follow multi-alignments, is reflected in the growth of Mini laterals and a quest for a multilateral, multipolar world order with strategic autonomy. India, with its civilisational heritage and universalist approach, could take the lead to create a third alternative of Nations for Strategic Autonomy (NSA).

## Conclusion

It is apt to quote Dr. S. Jaishankar, the Indian Foreign Minister who, in his celebrated book *Why Bharat matters*, states that (Jaishankar, 2024)

*India can matter by just being there, as a market place, as a contested ground, a resource or a platform, as it did during colonial times or it can matter through the power of the ideas and actions as an engine of growth, a hub of innovation or a democracy that delivers.*

He further expostulates:

*the case of India is more than just of demography. For it is among the few civilizational states that has survived the ravages of history ... India takes a long view especially in regard to global issues. Many of their goals and objectives are built on traditions that are not readily shared by contemporary peers. Simply put there is not only a scale and history but an exceptionalism about India that makes it matter.*

The quintessential message emanating from the idea of India is that civilisational cultures travel from the past through the present and into the future. Bharat stands tall in the comity of nations and has become an integral part of a multitude of mini-lateral and plurilateral arrangements strewn across the global spectrum, from BRICS to QUAD to I2U2, G7, and G20, and at the multilateral organisations following its multi-alignment policy with the underlying principle of strategic autonomy. At the same time, she has rejected the alliance-ridden mindset and approaches of the super powers, wading efficiently through the transitional global order or disorder and carving out a unique place for herself. This is what PM Modi called a “Mix and Match” foreign policy. In a true sense, India has become a trusted Vishwa Bandhu to whom the world, especially the Global South, looks up to for reassurance and leadership, which hopefully BHARAT will provide in times to come as she becomes a developed country herself.

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