

Keynote Address by H.E. Anshuman Gaur, Ambassador of India to Hungary

'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam': An Indian Perspective on Global Engagement

Bhakti Vedanta College, Budapest, Hungary

His Excellency the Rector, esteemed faculty and staff of the Bhakti Vedanta College, dedicated scholars, cherished students, ladies, and gentlemen.

It's a profound honour and a moment of deep cultural connection to stand here today, on Hungarian soil, in this unique institution. This college, a state-accredited European hub for **Vaishnava Theology and Yoga Studies**, stands as a living testament to the powerful, enduring, and borderless relationship between India and Hungary. I thank you for your warm reception and for the opportunity to share some thoughts on an idea central to India's ethos and the operating principle of our foreign policy: **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**—"The World Is One Family."

To speak on this campus is particularly significant. This institution embodies the spirit of cultural synthesis, demonstrating how the timeless wisdom of India finds fertile ground in the heart of Europe. My effort today is to examine how this ancient civilisational concept has been seamlessly woven into the tapestry of modern India's **global engagement**, informing our domestic priorities, our diplomatic strategies, and our commitment to building a more resilient and equitable global order; and how this spiritual heritage provides the bedrock for a confident, rising, and democratic India to offer practical, human-centric solutions to the world's most pressing problems.

To fully grasp India's external perspective, one must first appreciate the depth of its internal journey. India is a **civilisation-state** with an uninterrupted history spanning over five millennia. Our cultural and spiritual heritage provides the perennial framework for our identity and our action.

At the heart of this heritage are the concepts of **Dharma** (righteous conduct), **Karma** (action and consequence), and the deep-seated spiritual pluralism encapsulated in the Rig Vedic saying: "***Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti***"—"Truth is one, though the wise call it by many names." This philosophical pluralism naturally leads to an external policy of non-aggression and cooperation, since diversity is viewed not as a threat, but as the very essence of existence.

From these flows the time cherished concept of '**Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam**'- the whole world is a family. This phrase, drawn from the ancient *Maha Upanishad*, is more than a motto; it's a profound description of the world. It's a philosophy that sees humanity, the planet, and the cosmos as an interconnected, indivisible unit, and informs our concepts of development, succinctly captured in an aphorism enunciated in the Rigveda- '**bahujan hitaay, bahujan sukhaay**'— for the welfare and happiness of all, and the Puranic injunction- '**Sarve Bhawantu Sukhina**' – let all be happy.

The Indian heritage has a deep reverence for the feminine, exemplified by the worship of **Shakti**, - the feminine manifestation of universal energy and the inherent value placed on nature, encapsulated in the concept of **Prakriti**, underpin India's contemporary commitment to women-led development and environmental protection. Our traditions are not relics; they are living, evolving guidelines for modern life.

Central to this essential Indian spiritual framework is the **Bhagavad Gita**. This cherished text is not just a religious book; it is a profound philosophical discourse on *Dharma*- duty, *Karma*- action, and *Bhakti*- devotion, delivered on the battlefield of life. It provides a timeless manual for navigating moral dilemmas and achieving inner peace through selfless action. The Gita's message of working without attachment to the results—the **Karma Yoga**—has inspired thinkers and leaders across the globe, from Mahatma Gandhi to Ralph Waldo Emerson. For India, the Gita is a foundational tenet; for the world, it is India's greatest philosophical gift, offering universal wisdom applicable to every challenge of the human experience.

The Geeta encapsulates a collection of practical principles applicable to life and governance, offering a moral compass for India's engagement with the world. India has consistently prioritised peace, restraint and cooperation in its foreign policy, making judicious and decisive choices in times of crisis. As a rising power in the 21st century, India continues to incorporate these ethical principles into its diplomatic practices.

The Bhagwad Gita tells us the importance of doing the right thing- the path of **Dharma**- and of being impartial and equanimous in one's views—the verse *samo 'haṁ sarva-bhūteṣhu na me dveṣhyo 'sti na priyaḥ ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣhu chāpyaham* (Geeta 9.29) says that I am equal to all beings; no one is my enemy, no one is dear to me. I am with those who worship me with devotion. This again flows into the principle is based on *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

But the Gita also talks of not only accepting Dharma- but also acting to protect it- by action or **Karma**. The verse- *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham* (Geeta 4.7) - whenever there is a decline in Dharma and an increase in

Adharma, then I create myself. India is firm on this principle. Whenever injustice has been done to any nation, India has proved to be helpful.

Dear friends,

The continuous flow of India's cultural traditions is perhaps its greatest strength. Unlike civilisations that fractured and disappeared, India's core values—from the Vedic texts to the teachings of the Bhakti Saints—have been continuously adapted and reinterpreted.

The **Bhakti** movement, which is central to your studies here, rejected rigid ritualism, offering a direct, personal, and ecstatic path of devotion accessible to everyone, regardless of social status or intellectual background. This represented a powerful democratic revolution in spiritual practice.

India is called the "Mother of Democracy" due to its deep-rooted history of democratic ideals and participatory governance that predate modern Western democracies. Concepts of collective decision-making, debate, and consensus can be traced back to ancient institutions like the **Sabha and Samiti** mentioned in the Vedic texts, as well as the republican states, or **Janasanghas**. These ancient traditions emphasize inclusivity, equality, and welfare of the people, which are fundamental to the democratic ethos.

As the world's largest democracy today, India's successful sustainment of a vibrant, pluralistic, and constitutional republic since its independence in 1947, based on universal adult suffrage, showcases democracy's enduring resilience on its soil.

Our recent general elections, the largest exercise in determining a popular mandate ever conducted, showcased not just the mechanical efficiency of our election commission but the fundamental faith of over 950 million voters in the democratic

process. This vast, diverse electorate, speaking tens of languages and practicing all the world's major faiths, votes with conviction. This faith in democratic dialogue is a crucial ingredient in the "New India" story. It proves that democracy can thrive in any soil, provided the roots are deep in civilisational values like pluralism and mutual respect.

Since 2014, under the visionary leadership of **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi**, India has undergone a profound transformation in both domestic policy and external outreach. This period marks a decisive shift from a state of post-colonial hesitation to a position of civilisational self-assurance. The governing philosophy behind this transformation is the seamless integration of our ancient wisdom with modern governance imperatives. This confident engagement is characterized by four key actions: ***One***, leading by example at home; ***two***, providing global public goods; ***three***, championing the cause of the developing world; and ***four***, connecting our digital and physical infrastructures to the world.

Dear friends, let me illustrate, by a few examples, of how these tenets – based on observing the **Dharma** and of doing the **Karma**, in the spirit of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**, translate into practical and real-world action- as India engages the world today-

Domestically, the scale of transformation is unprecedented. Initiatives focusing on financial inclusion, such as the **Jan Dhan Yojana** (opening bank accounts for the previously unbanked), sanitation with **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**, and housing for all, have lifted hundreds of millions of people out of multi-dimensional poverty. These domestic successes are not just statistics; they are the foundation upon which India builds its global legitimacy. A nation that solves problems at the scale

of 1.4 billion people has the institutional capacity and moral authority to offer solutions to the world.

This renewed confidence translates directly into a foreign policy that is now proactive, principled, and purpose-driven, perfectly encapsulated by the theme of our G20 Presidency.

India's 2023 G20 Presidency embodied the spirit of "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**" in its motto- "One Earth, One Family, One Future", marking a paradigm shift in global governance. The most impactful triumph was securing 100% **consensus** on the **New Delhi Leaders' Declaration** despite a polarized world. Key outcomes demonstrated this global family vision: the **historic permanent induction of the African Union (AU) into the G20**, elevating the voice of 55 nations. There was a **global push for Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**, leveraging India's "India Stack" for worldwide financial inclusion. Climate action was renewed with the **Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA)**, and the announcement of the transformative **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** **enhanced connectivity** across three continents.

The concept of 'One Family' mandates that when one member is in distress, the rest must respond unconditionally. India's role as a reliable security and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief or **HADR** provider in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond is a practical application of this principle, demonstrating our capability and character as a **First Responder**.

In 2023, for instance, India launched **Operation Dost** to provide comprehensive relief to Turkey and Syria following the devastating earthquake, deploying specialist search and rescue teams, field hospitals, and massive consignments of medical

supplies. Similarly, **Operation Karuna** delivered critical aid to Myanmar in the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha.

Perhaps the most challenging and immediate displays of our commitment were the large-scale evacuation missions, such as **Operation Ganga** (Ukraine) and **Operation Kaveri** (Sudan). In Sudan, India evacuated not only its own citizens but also individuals from many other nations, without regard for their background. This consistent, prompt, and non-reciprocal approach defines India's role as a net security provider—one that does not seek to profit from the misfortune of others but stands ready to lend a helping hand.

India's renewed global engagement is inextricably linked to its determination to be a powerful **Voice of the Global South**. India believes that true multipolarity requires the inclusion and empowerment of nations that have historically been sidelined.

India's global commitment is institutional. The **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, for example, co-founded by India and France, seeks to mobilize \$1 trillion in investments by 2030 for solar energy projects in developing countries, offering a global public good to combat climate change and ensure energy access. We are delighted that Hungary has joined the ISA, further cementing our shared commitment to a sustainable "One Earth." Similarly, the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**, launched by India, brings together governments, UN agencies, and banks to promote resilience in new and existing infrastructure systems against climate and disaster risks, safeguarding development gains for vulnerable nations.

The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation, or the ITEC Program, has, for decades, provided development assistance by offering short-term and long-term training courses

across various sectors to thousands of professionals from developing nations building human capacity and friendship.

These multilateral and bilateral initiatives embody the conviction that global challenges require global solutions based on mutual benefit, not domination.

India's vision translates into a demand for a truly equitable and representative international system. This commitment fuels its efforts to democratize global governance, particularly by advocating for reformed multilateralism that is reflective of contemporary economic and demographic realities. India champions more inclusion in global decision-making forums including by persistently pushing for the expansion of the UN Security Council.

India's technological journey is characterized by building open, accessible, and interoperable digital platforms. The **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is a world-class example. UPI has democratized digital transactions, processing over **15 billion transactions a month**, making it responsible for nearly half of all global real-time digital payments. From street vendors to major retailers, UPI enables instant, zero-cost, interoperable bank-to-bank transfers. This is **digital democracy** in action—a state-of-the-art payment system that prioritizes inclusion over profit. India is actively sharing this DPI model with partner countries to help them leapfrog traditional financial barriers, proving that technology can be a force for equitable development.

Our growing scientific and technological profile is a source of national pride and global service. The successful landing of **Chandrayaan-3** on the lunar South Pole was not just an Indian triumph but a human one, demonstrating advanced capability achieved with cost-effectiveness. Our space programs are often

collaborative, providing satellite communication and weather data to partner nations, particularly in the Global South, reinforcing our commitment to using science for the benefit of all.

Yet India's greatest offering to the world remains its spiritual knowledge. The declaration of the **International Day of Yoga** by the United Nations demonstrates the global acceptance for the peace and wellness traditions rooted in India. Yoga, which originated from the same philosophical soil that nourishes this college, is now practiced by millions worldwide, making it perhaps the most successful spiritual export of the 21st century.

Let us now anchor this philosophical discussion in the cherished bilateral relationship between India and Hungary—a relationship that shines brightly here at the Bhakti Vedanta College.

The relationship between our two nations isn't just transactional; it's a **historical and spiritual kinship** that runs deeper than any diplomatic timeline. Hungarians have long felt a profound attraction to India's ancient culture. They remember the supportive role India played in the **1956 Hungarian uprising**, a moment of principled diplomacy that forged an unbreakable bond of trust.

This deep connection is visible in **Academic Exchange with scholars** like **Sándor Kőrösi Csoma**, the pioneer of Tibetology who compiled the first Tibetan-English dictionary in India, and the Hungarian-Indian painter **Amrita Sher-Gil**, whose artistic legacy is celebrated in both nations. The academic and cultural exchanges continue through the Hungarian Stipendium programme that brings meritorious Indian students to Hungarian institutions or the Mahatma Gandhi school for disadvantaged children in Hungary.

We shall always be grateful for the Hungarian government's prompt assistance in evacuating and accommodating Indian students during the Ukraine crisis.

This college, Bhakti Vedanta College, is a glowing symbol of this unique India-Hungary bond. It is not merely a center for Indology; it is a state-accredited European higher educational institution dedicated to preserving and propagating the sophisticated theology and spiritual culture of **Vaishnavism**.

Here, in the heart of Europe, students pursue degrees in Vaishnava Theology and Yoga Mastery, studying the **Bhagavad Gita** and other sacred texts, mastering the intricacies of **Bhakti-Yoga**, and becoming living bridges between the Danube and the Ganga.

You, the students and faculty, are the true cultural ambassadors. Your scholarly work, your pursuit of spiritual truth, and your commitment to the ethos of compassion and self-realization are the very embodiment of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** in practice. You prove that the search for meaning, the quest for a higher purpose, and the commitment to an ethical life transcend all geopolitical boundaries.

Friends, the global environment today is marked by complexity, conflict, and uncertainty. But within this environment, India offers a voice of stability, a message of dialogue, and a template for inclusive growth. Our approach is not derived from temporary political expediency but from the enduring wisdom of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**.

We believe the path forward for the world is to stop seeing global affairs as a zero-sum game of competition and to start viewing it as a collaborative effort of one large family. India is moving forward as a confident, capable, and democratic global

power—a power committed to multilateralism, technological inclusion, climate action, and equitable development.

From sharing our digital blueprints with the world, to delivering life-saving assistance across continents, to leading the global discourse at the G20, India's actions are motivated by the fundamental belief that we are, truly, one family.

Your commitment to the timeless principles of the Bhakti tradition here in Budapest is a powerful vote of confidence in India's spiritual heritage. May your efforts continue to illuminate the path of unity, scholarship, and peace.

Thank you. Dhanyavaad. Köszönöm.