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### Understanding “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” and Its Educational Significance

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#### Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes holistic education, ethical values, inclusivity, and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) within higher education. Rooted in ancient Indian philosophy, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*—the concept of the world as one family—offers a universal ethical framework aligned with these goals. This qualitative study explores teachers’ understanding of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, its relevance in contemporary higher education, and its educational significance under NEP 2020. Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire administered via Google Forms to teachers from various academic sections. Thematic analysis was used to derive codes and themes from the responses. Findings reveal strong conceptual acceptance of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* as a value-based philosophy promoting inclusivity, global responsibility, and holistic development, while also highlighting challenges in practical implementation. The study underscores the need for intentional pedagogical strategies and institutional support to meaningfully integrate philosophical values into higher education.

**Keywords:** Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, NEP 2020, Indian Knowledge Systems, Higher Education, Value-Based Education

#### Introduction

Higher education across the world is undergoing a paradigm shift from content-centric instruction to holistic, value-oriented learning that prepares students for ethical, social, and global responsibilities. In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reflects this transformation by emphasizing learner-centric education, inclusivity, cultural rootedness, and integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Central to Indian philosophical thought is *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, a concept derived from ancient Sanskrit texts, which conveys the idea that the entire world constitutes one family.

The philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* promotes universal brotherhood, empathy, mutual respect, and shared responsibility toward humanity and nature. In the context of higher education, this philosophy holds immense relevance for addressing contemporary challenges such as cultural diversity, social fragmentation, environmental crises, and ethical dilemmas. Teachers play a crucial role in translating philosophical ideals into educational practice. Therefore, understanding teachers' perceptions of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and its educational significance becomes vital in assessing its alignment with NEP 2020 and current issues in higher education.

### Review of Literature

Qualitative research in education has increasingly highlighted the importance of integrating indigenous philosophies and ethical frameworks into modern pedagogical practices. Studies on Indian Knowledge Systems emphasize that traditional wisdom contributes to holistic development by integrating intellectual, emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of learning (NCERT, 2021). Research exploring NEP 2020 identifies its strong emphasis on value-based education, ethical reasoning, global citizenship, and cultural continuity (Government of India, 2020).

Qualitative studies on value-based and holistic education indicate that philosophical concepts rooted in culture foster inclusivity, empathy, and social responsibility among learners (Noddings, 2013). Research on global citizenship education also aligns closely with the principles of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, emphasizing interconnectedness and shared human responsibility (UNESCO, 2015). Empirical qualitative studies in higher education suggest that experiential learning, reflective practices, and culturally responsive pedagogy are effective in transmitting values and ethical awareness.

However, literature also reveals persistent challenges in implementation, including exam-oriented curricula, limited teacher preparation, and superficial treatment of values in classrooms. While theoretical alignment between NEP 2020 and Indian philosophical traditions is well documented, there is limited qualitative research capturing teachers' lived experiences and perceptions regarding *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in higher education. This study addresses this gap by providing an in-depth qualitative analysis grounded in teachers' narratives.

### Research Objectives

To explore teachers' understanding of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

To examine the educational significance of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in higher education.

To analyze the alignment between *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, NEP 2020, and Indian Knowledge Systems.

To identify challenges in integrating philosophical values into contemporary classrooms.

To suggest strategies for strengthening value-based education in higher education.

### Research Questions

How do teachers conceptualize *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*?

What educational significance do teachers attribute to *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*?

How does *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* support the vision of NEP 2020 and Indian Knowledge Systems?

What challenges do teachers face in implementing this philosophy in higher education?

How can philosophical values be effectively integrated into everyday teaching practices?

### Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study is guided by a conceptual framework that examines the educational significance of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in higher education by integrating philosophical, theoretical, policy, and pedagogical dimensions. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* forms the central philosophical construct, highlighting universal interconnectedness, empathy, and ethical responsibility. The framework draws on humanistic and holistic education perspectives, which emphasize learner dignity and the integration of cognitive, emotional, and ethical aspects of learning. NEP 2020 provides the policy-operational context by translating these philosophical values into educational practice through value-based education and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems. Teachers' perceptions and instructional practices act as the mediating element, linking philosophy and policy with classroom enactment. Together, these dimensions shape educational outcomes such as holistic development, inclusivity, ethical awareness, and global responsibility, which are examined through qualitative thematic analysis.

### Research Methodology

A **qualitative research approach** was adopted to capture teachers' perceptions, interpretations, and experiences in depth. This approach was chosen as it allows exploration of meaning, values, and philosophical understanding within educational contexts.

### Research Design

The study employed a **descriptive qualitative research design**, focusing on narratively analyzing teachers' responses to open-ended questions. This design enabled identification of patterns and themes across diverse viewpoints.

### Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used.

### Sample

The sample consisted of teachers from various academic sections and disciplines in higher education institutions. Participants were selected based on their engagement in teaching and familiarity with educational reforms.

### Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a **self-constructed open-ended questionnaire** administered through **Google Forms**. The tool included qualitative questions related to: Understanding of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, Relevance to contemporary education, NEP 2020 and holistic learning, Indian Knowledge Systems, Inclusivity and diversity, Challenges and suggestions.

### Data Analysis

The qualitative data generated through open-ended questionnaire responses were analysed using thematic analysis following established qualitative research conventions. All responses were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity and to identify meaning units relevant to teachers' understanding of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and its educational significance. Initial open coding was conducted to capture recurring ideas related to universal unity, ethical values, inclusivity, holistic development, pedagogical practices, and implementation challenges. These codes were systematically compared and clustered into higher-order categories based on conceptual similarity. Through an iterative process of constant comparison and refinement, the categories were consolidated into overarching themes that represented shared patterns across participants' narratives. The analysis attended to both dominant and contrasting perspectives to enhance analytical depth and interpretive rigor. The final themes elucidated how teachers conceptualize *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, perceive its alignment with the value-oriented vision of NEP 2020 and Indian Knowledge Systems, and experience challenges in translating philosophical ideals into higher education practice. This analytic process ensured coherence, transparency, and trustworthiness in the interpretation of qualitative findings.

### Codes and Themes Emerged

Theme	Category	Codes
Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam	as Conceptual	World as one family, universal
Universal Philosophy	Understanding	unity
	Ethical Values	Empathy, compassion, responsibility

Theme	Category	Codes
Relevance to Higher Education	Value Orientation	Inclusivity, cooperation, respect for diversity
Alignment with NEP 2020	Holistic Development	Moral values, emotional intelligence
Indian Knowledge Systems	Cultural Integration	Yoga, meditation, traditional practices
Human-Centered Pedagogy	Teaching Approaches	Student-centric, experiential learning
Challenges in Implementation	Systemic Constraints	Exam orientation, digital distraction
Global Responsibility	Ethical Citizenship	Sustainability, social justice

### Findings and Discussion

The findings reveal that teachers predominantly view *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* as a timeless philosophical principle emphasizing unity, empathy, and shared responsibility. Participants strongly associated the concept with value-based education and holistic development, aligning it with the core vision of NEP 2020. Teachers recognized Indian Knowledge Systems as effective mediums for integrating philosophical values into higher education through practices such as yoga, meditation, and culturally rooted pedagogies.

However, participants also identified challenges such as exam-centric curricula, time constraints, technological distractions, and limited teacher training. These findings resonate with qualitative research highlighting the gap between policy ideals and classroom realities. The discussion underscores that while philosophical alignment exists, effective implementation requires pedagogical innovation and institutional commitment.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* holds significant educational relevance in contemporary higher education and aligns closely with the philosophical and pedagogical vision of NEP 2020. Teachers acknowledge its potential to foster inclusivity, ethical citizenship, and holistic development. Nevertheless, meaningful integration demands systematic efforts, teacher preparedness, and supportive educational structures.

### Recommendation

Teacher education programs should emphasize philosophical and value-based pedagogy.

NEP 2020 principles should be integrated into daily teaching practices through experiential learning.

Indian Knowledge Systems should be embedded across disciplines in higher education curricula.

Assessment systems should value ethical and social learning outcomes alongside academic achievement.

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