



Original Article

AI Ethics Through the Lens of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*: Integrating Indian Philosophy with Green Technology and Sustainable Development

Gupta Dinesh Kumar NP.¹, Dr. Kiran Save²

¹Research Scholar, DTSS College of Commerce-Malad-Mumbai

²Guide, DTSS College of Commerce-Malad-Mumbai

Manuscript ID:

IBMIIRJ -2026-030519

Submitted: 10 Apr. 2026

Revised: 20 Apr. 2026

Accepted: 08 May 2026

Published: 31 May 2026

ISSN: 3065-7857

Volume-3

Issue-5

Pp. 107-111

May 2026

Correspondence Address:

Gupta Dinesh Kumar NP
Research Scholar, DTSS College of
Commerce-Malad-Mumbai
Email: dkdinesh228@gmail.com



Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://ibrj.us>



DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21696985

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21696985>



Creative Commons

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the world Technorapidly. But it brings serious ethical questions too. Who benefits from AI? Who gets harmed? Who controls it? Current global frameworks try to answer these questions. But they mostly come from Western thinking. They often miss the values of community, nature, and shared responsibility. This paper looks at an ancient Indian idea: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. It means 'the world is one family.' This paper argues that this idea can guide AI ethics in a powerful way. It can fill the gaps that current frameworks leave behind. The work of scholar Surendra Pathak on Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam forms an important part of this study. His book offers a detailed account of how this philosophy has been understood and applied across different historical periods. The paper connects Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam with Green AI and sustainable development. It shows how this ancient wisdom can shape responsible AI policies today. The method used is conceptual analysis, comparative ethics, and policy review.

Keywords: Ai Ethics, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Sustainable Development, Green Ai, Indian Philosophy, Technology Governance, Responsible Ai.

Introduction

AI is everywhere today and changing the definitions of world intellectual and intelligence Technorapidly. It helps doctors diagnose diseases. It powers electric grids. It fights climate change. It drives cars. It shapes what we read and watch online. But AI also causes harm. It can discriminate against people. It can invade privacy. It can spread false information. And it consumes enormous amounts of energy. This harms the very environment we are trying to protect. The world needs ethical guidance for AI. Many organizations have tried to provide this. UNESCO, the European Union, and the OECD have all created AI ethics frameworks. These are valuable efforts. But they share a common limitation. They are built mostly on Western ideas of individual rights and freedom. This is not enough. The world is diverse. Billions of people live by values of community, nature, and shared duty. These values are not properly reflected in current AI frameworks. India offers something important here. For thousands of years, Indian philosophy has asked deep questions about how we should live, with each other and with nature. One of its most powerful ideas is Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Scholar Surendra Pathak, in his book on Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, traces this idea across centuries of Indian thought and public life. He shows that this concept is not frozen in ancient texts. It has been a living guide for how Indian civilization has approached the idea of universal bel This paper explores what happens when we bring this ancient idea into the modern conversation about AI ethics. The connection is not forced. It is natural, deep, and urgently needed. ongoing. This paper builds on his work and brings it into conversation with modern AI ethics.

Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work noncommercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

How to cite this article:

Kumar NP., G. D.& Save, K. (2026). AI Ethics Through the Lens of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: Integrating Indian Philosophy with Green Technology and Sustainable Development. *Insight Bulletin: A Multidisciplinary Interlink International Research Journal*, 3(5), 107–111. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21696985>

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: What It Means and Where It Comes From? What it recommends?

1. The Source

The phrase comes from the Maha Upanishad Chapter 6 verse 71, written around 800 BCE. The original Sanskrit verse says:

*"Ayam nijah paro veti ganana laghuchetasam;
Udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam."*

Brief intro of all words.

- **Ayam** —this
- **Nijah** — one's own / mine
- **Paro** — the other / the stranger / the unknown
- **Veti** — thinks / considers / distinguishes
- **Ganana** — calculation / counting
- **Laghuchetasam** — of small/contracted minds/selfish character
- **Tu** — but (*the hinge of the verse*)
- **Udaracharitanam** — of those of noble character / conduct
- **Vasudha** — the earth / the sustainer
- **Eva** — indeed / truly
- **Kutumbakam** — family / household of mutual care and responsibility.

This means: 'This is mine, that is others. Such thinking belongs to the small-minded. For those with a noble heart, the whole world is one family.'

The idea also appears in the Hitopadesha, an ancient collection of wisdom stories. It is not just a quote. It is a philosophy of life.

Surendra Pathak, in his detailed study of this concept, shows how *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* moved from sacred texts into public discourse. He traces how it was used by leaders, educators, and reformers to build a sense of shared humanity. His work reminds us that this idea has always been relevant to real-world problems of inclusion and justice (Pathak, 2010).

2. The Philosophical Foundation

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam grows from the Advaita Vedanta tradition. Advaita means non-duality. It teaches that all living beings share one universal consciousness called Brahman.

If this is true, then separating us from them is an illusion. Harming others means harming yourself. The good of one is the good of all. This is not idealism. It is a practical moral compass. It tells us to expand our circle of care. Include the neighbour. Include strangers. Include animals. Include the earth itself.

3. Core Ethical Principles

Five key principles flow from *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*:

- **Sarva Hitaya (Universal Well-being):** The goal is the welfare of all beings. Not just one nation, class, or species.
 - **Ahimsa (Non-harm):** Avoid harm in all its forms: physical, social, psychological, and ecological.
 - **Dharma (Righteous Duty):** Every person and every institution has a duty to act for the common good.
- **Karma (Accountability):** Every action has consequences. Creators of AI bear full moral responsibility for what their systems do.
- **Prakriti Sambandh (Bond with Nature):** Humans are part of nature, not above it. We must protect the natural world, not exploit it.

AI Ethics: What the World Has Built So Far?

1. Global Frameworks: A Summary

Several major frameworks guide AI ethics today.

- UNESCO's Recommendation on AI Ethics (2021) is the first global agreement of its kind. It covers human dignity, fairness, transparency, privacy, accountability, and sustainability.
- The EU AI Act (2024) regulates AI based on its high-risk levels. High-risk AI systems faces strict rules. Banned AI systems include those that manipulate people or enable mass surveillance.
- The OECD Principles on AI (2019) promote inclusive growth, sustainable development, and human centric values.

These are serious implications and important efforts. They deserve due respect.

2. The Gaps: What Is Still Missing?

These frameworks have real limitations. Let us explore few.

- First, they focus on individual rights. Privacy, autonomy, and freedom are central. But they underplay collective values such as community, solidarity, and shared responsibility.
- Second, they are mostly reactive. They address harm after it happens. A deeper ethics must prevent harm by design.
- Third, they lack cultural diversity. The wisdom of India, Africa, and indigenous communities is largely absent.
- Fourth, the link between AI and the environment is weak in most frameworks. The carbon cost of AI is growing. This needs urgent ethical attention.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam speaks directly to all four of these gaps.

Bringing *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* into AI Ethics

1. From My Rights to Our Responsibilities

Most AI ethics focuses on the user. What does the user want? What are the user's rights? *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* asks a different question: What does the community need? What is good for all? This shift changes how AI is designed. Instead of asking 'Is the user satisfied?', we ask 'Is society benefited?' Instead of optimising for individual preference, we optimise for collective well-being. (Sarva Hitaya)

This is a small but powerful change. It makes AI accountable to communities, not just to consumers.

2. Ahimsa and AI Harm: A Broader View

The principle of Ahimsa says: do not cause harm to anyone.

- In AI ethics, harm is usually defined as bias, privacy violation, or physical danger. These matters a lot. But Ahimsa goes further.
- It includes psychological harm. In 2023, researchers documented how generative AI tools were being used to create non-consensual deepfake images of real women, causing severe psychological damage to victims. The harm was real, immediate, and personal. No current AI ethics framework fully prevented it.
- It includes social harm, when algorithms deepen inequality or discrimination. The EU AI Act (2024) specifically banned real-time biometric surveillance in public spaces precisely because AI-powered facial recognition had been shown to misidentify darker-skinned individuals at significantly higher error rates, causing wrongful stops and arrests.
- It includes economic harm, when automation destroys livelihoods without offering alternatives. In 2023, IBM announced it would pause hiring for roles it expected AI to replace an estimated 7,800 positions. No community consultation. No transition plans.
- It includes ecological harm, when AI systems consume water and energy without restraint. This is addressed further in Section 5.

A *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*-based AI ethics framework would require harm assessments across all these dimensions. For every community affected. At every stage of the AI lifecycle.

3. Dharma and Accountability

In Indian philosophy, Dharma means righteous duty. It is not just about following rules. It is about acting rightly, even when no one is watching. This is exactly what AI accountability needs. Legal compliance is not enough. A company can follow the law and still cause great harm. Dharmic accountability asks more. It says: you created this AI. You are responsible for what it does. You cannot hide behind algorithms or disclaimers.

This moral responsibility, embedded in the concept of Dharma, gives AI governance a deeper ethical backbone than regulation alone can provide.

4. The Family Metaphor in AI Design

When you think of the world as one family, AI design changes.

- You do not design AI only for the wealthy user with a fast internet connection. You design for the farmer in a village. For the elderly person without a smartphone. For the child in a conflict zone.
- Surendra Pathak emphasises that *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* was never meant to be a comfortable idea. It is a demanding one. It calls us to widen our sense of who matters. In AI, this means widening our sense of who the technology must serve (Pathak, 2010).

This is the design ethic of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Inclusive by default. Universal by intent.

Green AI and Sustainability: The *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* Connection

1. The Hidden Environmental Cost of AI

- AI has a very large carbon footprint. Training a single LLM AI model can emit high carbon dioxide which almost equals to five cars produced.
- The situation has grown sharply worse since large language models became mainstream. According to a 2024 report by the International Energy Agency (IEA), global data centres consumed approximately 460 terawatt-hours of electricity in 2022. That figure is projected to more than double by 2026, driven largely by the energy demands of AI.
- The water cost is equally alarming. Microsoft's own environmental report (2023) revealed that its data centres consumed 6.4 million cubic metres of water — primarily for cooling AI infrastructure. To put this plainly: every query to a large AI system draws on shared natural resources that communities around the world depend on for survival.
- Goldman Sachs (2024) estimated that a single ChatGPT query uses nearly ten times the electricity of a standard Google search. As billions of queries are processed daily, the cumulative ecological burden is enormous.

This is a moral problem. We cannot build AI to solve climate change while AI itself accelerates climate change. This contradiction demands an ethical response.

2. Why *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* Demands Green AI

Indian philosophy does not separate humans from nature. Rivers, forests, animals, and future generations are all part of the family. This eco-centric view, that nature is not a resource to exploit but a family to protect, provides a strong ethical basis for Green AI. Green AI means building AI systems that use minimal energy. It means powering data centres with renewable sources. It means prioritising AI applications that help the environment, not harm it.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam does not allow us to prosper at the cost of the earth. It demands that our technology serve life, all life.

3. Connecting to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. (SDGs)

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to build a fair and sustainable world by 2030.

- *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* aligns naturally with these goals. Universal well-being maps to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 3 (Good Health). Non-harm maps to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Collective responsibility maps to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
- India's G20 presidency used the theme 'One Earth, One Family, One Future', directly inspired by *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. This shows that this ancient idea is already shaping global policy today.
- AI can accelerate the SDGs if it is built on the right values. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* provides exactly those values.

Policy Recommendations

Based on this analysis, we recommend the following:

1. Include diverse philosophies in AI ethics frameworks. UNESCO and other bodies should actively incorporate Indian, African, and indigenous ethical traditions, not just Western liberal thought.
2. Mandate community impact assessments. Every major AI system should be evaluated for its impact on communities and ecosystems, not just individual users.
3. Develop Green AI standards. National and international bodies should create measurable standards for energy efficiency, carbon footprint, and ecological impact of AI systems.
4. Integrate AI ethics into education. Universities, especially in India, should teach AI ethics using both global frameworks and classical Indian philosophy side by side.
5. Build inclusive governance. AI governance bodies should include voices from rural communities, the Global South, civil society, and environmental advocates.
6. Prioritise AI for environment. Governments should fund AI applications in environmental monitoring, clean energy management, and climate adaptation. This aligns technology with sustainability.

Conclusion

AI is one of the most powerful tools humanities has ever created. But power without wisdom is dangerous. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* offers wisdom. It is simple: the world is one family. But its implications are profound. It tells us that AI must serve everyone, not just the wealthy or the powerful. It tells us that AI must not harm people, communities, or nature. It tells us that we are all responsible: developers, policymakers, users, and educators alike. Current AI ethics frameworks are good. But they are not complete. They need the depth of non-Western wisdom. They need the ecological awareness that Indian philosophy has always carried. Surendra Pathak's work on *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* shows us that this idea has guided human communities through many difficult periods. It can guide us through the age of AI as well. This paper argues that bringing *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* into AI ethics is not just an interesting idea. It is a necessity. It is the bridge between ancient wisdom and modern technology. Between individual rights and collective responsibility. Between innovation and sustainability. The world does not need AI that is merely smart. It needs AI that is also good. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* shows us what good means, for the whole family of the world.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Principal and Management of DTSS College of Commerce, Malad, Mumbai, for providing the academic environment and institutional support necessary to carry out this research.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

1. Pathak, S. (2010). *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
2. Maha Upanishad. (circa 800 BCE). Chapter 6, Verse 71. Sanskrit text with English translation.
3. UNESCO. (2021). Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. Paris: UNESCO.
4. European Parliament. (2024). EU Artificial Intelligence Act. Official Journal of the European Union.
5. OECD. (2019). OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence. Paris: OECD Publishing.
6. Strubell, E., Ganesh, A., and McCallum, A. (2019). Energy and policy considerations for deep learning in NLP. Proceedings of the 57th Annual Meeting of the ACL, 3645-3650.
7. Floridi, L., et al. (2018). AI4People: An ethical framework for a good AI society. *Minds and Machines*, 28(4), 689-707.
8. Jobin, A., Ienca, M., and Vayena, E. (2019). The global landscape of AI ethics guidelines. *Nature Machine Intelligence*, 1(9), 389-399.
9. Radhakrishnan, S. (1953). *The Principal Upanishads*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
10. Government of India. (2023). India's G20 Presidency: One Earth, One Family, One Future. New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs.
11. Vinuesa, R., et al. (2020). The role of artificial intelligence in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. *Nature Communications*, 11(1), 1-10.
12. Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. Yale University Press.
13. Coeckelbergh, M. (2020). *AI Ethics*. MIT Press.

14. Sharma, A. (2005). A Hindu Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion. Palgrave Macmillan.
15. Mittelstadt, B., and Floridi, L. (Eds.). (2016). The ethics of big data in biomedical contexts. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 22(2), 303-341.
16. Naess, A. (1973). The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. *Inquiry*, 16(1-4), 95-100.
17. International Energy Agency. (2024). Electricity 2024: Analysis and Forecast to 2026. IEA.
18. Microsoft. (2023). 2023 Environmental Sustainability Report. Microsoft Corporation.
19. Goldman Sachs. (2024). AI is Poised to Drive 160% Increase in Data Centre Power Demand. Goldman Sachs Equity Research.