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— by Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor

"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" is a Sanskrit phrase from ancient Indian scriptures that means *the whole world is one (my) family*.

I grew up in India in a multigenerational household and had many aunts and uncles living in my neighborhood. It is hard to remember even a day when we did not have a relative or a friend stopping by and having a snack or meal with us. My concept and definition of a family was framed with these childhood visions, and went well beyond the typical legal definition of a family. It included relatives, family friends, and friends of friends. This vast familial network took care of each other and was vested in the success of every member. I could not be where I am today without the unconditional support of my family. Effective professional organizations are not different – they function like strong families.

"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" encapsulates a deep philosophy that is so relevant to the *human resources frame*: one of the four frameworks of leadership presented by Bolman and Deal in their book [Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership](#). The book is one that I use as a foundational text for [UAF's Academic Leadership Institute](#).

Bolman and Deal emphasize that to understand and effectively lead an organization, you have to view it from different frames: Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic. Metaphors used to describe these frames are Factory, Family, Jungle, and Carnival, respectively. An effective leader is one who is not limited to looking at issues through just one frame of reference. Many websites present simple summaries of the 4-frames of leadership ([site1](#); [site 2](#); [site3](#)).

The human resource framework has its disciplinary roots in social and organizational psychology and focuses on the individual employee, their needs, and their value within an organization. In the context of this frame, a good leader is one who invests and supports the personal growth of the employee and empowers them to succeed. They ensure that a specific job aligns well to the strengths of an employee. A good leader views their team as a family, ensures that the needs of every member of the team are met, and leads with love and care. Who you consider as a part of your team or family thus becomes critically important.

The phrase "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" stretches the boundaries of that human resource frame to universality. It asks us to go beyond our homes, beyond our communities, beyond our countries, beyond our planet and consider the whole universe as a family. When we meet this threshold, then will we be in complete harmony with each other and with everything around us.

As hard as it is, I find this philosophy very insightful and thought provoking. It inspires me to expand my vision, and my circle of care and influence. It also helps me receive love and care from others around me. I encourage you too to reflect on this philosophy and explore what it brings up for you.

Friday Focus is a column written by a different member of UAF's leadership team every week.



UAF photo by Eric Engman
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