

Exploring The World as A Global Family Instead of as A Global Marketplace: *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in The COVID-19 Environment

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**ABSTRACT**

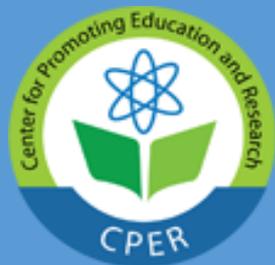
When our way of life is threatened, as in this COVID-19 environment, human beings should forget boundaries and competition and allow our innate spiritual values to lead. By allowing our priorities to align with placing people above power and the marketplace, we can adopt universal, spiritual concepts such as the Hindu philosophy, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*- the world is one family. The adoption and integration of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* into our values and morals creates a global community. By comparing several global organizations, World Central Kitchen, Grameen Bank, VF Corporation, and TikTok who exhibit each outlook, this paper examines the world as a global marketplace vs. the world as a family. The following comparisons demonstrate how allowing inner transformation and interconnectedness through spirituality and a global, familial mindset can positively change global exigencies' outcome.

**Keywords: global organizations, corporations, businesses, coronavirus, pandemic, spirituality**

**Introduction**

Compared to the concept of law and order, the sacredness and benefits of spirituality do not translate as easily in societies. For many, there is an immediate association between spirituality and religion. When diving into the conversation of religious practices, many people go into protection mode. However, over 80 percent of the people on this planet practice a form of religion (Hackett & Clendon, 2017). What if spirituality was revered and protected the same as religion? What if the idea that we are all connected in some fashion and behave as such was the expected standard of living? The reality is that, although there are many similarities between religion and spirituality, they are two separate entities,

and it is essential to note and define the differences. Religion is a "human being's relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of especial reverence" (Britannica, n.d). Whereas according to Singh, spirituality is our quest to "access the deepest and highest power" (Singh,2010, p.32). It breaks beyond barriers, allowing for shared similarities to be seen in all religions, races, ethnicities, and other demographics. Therefore, religions are susceptible to the overarching term of spirituality. Because individuality is comfortable and does not require active responsibilities such as caring for your neighbor, it is easy for societies to isolate and work for themselves. Amidst global exigencies, we recommend societies, especially those in the



Western World, forsake a marketplace-oriented consciousness and adopt *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* for sustainability.

Currently, the world is amid an international health crisis that knows no boundaries and does not discriminate. There have been tremendous global reactions related to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, ranging from public outcries to declarations of emergency states and quarantining. It is not something that isolated individuals, governments, and organizations can overcome alone. There can be an extreme amount of fear and trepidation as we investigate the future and try to pick up society's pieces and rebuild. However, with the global community mindset, we can overcome and persevere through the pandemic's challenges.

In the wake of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, one thing to highlight about its effects is how it has forced many people to reflect on their ideologies of what is important and how to maintain the things considered important. The reality is that people are what is important. People (of every race, religion, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender) should be prioritized. Although some regions and groups have been torn apart by the virus, many people are unifying and turning to each other for support. We have seen not just people but whole communities and countries put forth a fierce, valiant effort to rebuild. We have seen people sacrificing for the good of others. Although the virus left many hopeless, it inspired hope in so many more. It appears that people rebuilding people may have a more significant positive impact globally than people rebuilding the "machine," and it reflects innate characteristics and concepts of spirituality. A common theme across both religions and forms of spirituality is the concept of "Do not do to others what you would not have done to you." It demands that people act out of not just compassion but out of service to the greater good. When our way of life is threatened, human beings must forget boundaries and competition and allow our innate spiritual values to lead.

By allowing our priorities to align with placing people above power and the marketplace, we can adopt universal, spiritual concepts such as the Hindu philosophy, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The concept in its simplest form means "The world is one family." One could interpret it as the belief that no matter where a person ends up in this world, they will be ok because this whole world is one family. There are themes of perseverance through hard times and compassion that underline this concept. There is an idea that when we look outside of ourselves into the world for answers and comfort, we find out more about ourselves and appreciate the world more. Adapting the practice of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* demands a common understanding and acceptance of the universal concepts shared throughout different spirituality paths to allow the shared inner beliefs that are globally innate in each person to reveal themselves for practical implementation.

There are many positive attributes to viewing the world as a global marketplace; sometimes, business and production prioritizing allow for a more developed and well-organized nation. "Neo-classical economic thinking has equated economic growth with progress," but it comes at the cost of quality of life (Tucker, 2008, pg. 117). COVID-19 has shown us many facets of how we move and how we can grow from this experience. The adoption and integration of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* into our values and morals allows for inner transformation and interconnectedness through spirituality and a global, familial mindset, positively changing the outcome of global exigencies. Through the *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam lens*, this paper explores the differences between the world as a global market versus the world as a family. Since organizations drive most modern societies, we elaborate on positive and negative societal impact by comparing several global organizations that exhibit each outlook.

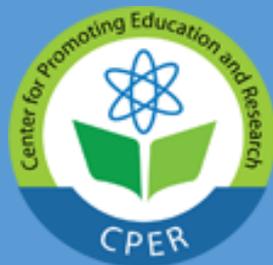
#### **Chef José Andrés and the World Central Kitchen**

José Andrés introduced the world to a concept he and his wife Patricia envisioned over ten years ago. Andrés does not describe his initial vision as one with an abundance of monetary awards, but merely as a world free of hunger. A seemingly simple concept but filled with so many complexities at the same time. Andrés turned his vision into an organization called World Central Kitchen. This non-governmental organization (NGO) has explored the concept and embodiment of the world represented as a family. Some critical elements to this familial idea include empathy, camaraderie, trust, unity, compassion, and a willingness to support. The term family has different meanings for different individuals. Hence, it is important to emphasize some of the broad definition similarities while discussing World Central Kitchen related to the world as a family.

#### **Background of José Andrés**

José Andrés comes from humble beginnings. At 15 years old, Andrés began working in a Barcelona restaurant (where he is originally from). Andrés learned the foundation of what would become his famous craft (Docter-Loeb, 2020). Fired from the Barcelona restaurant, Andrés migrated to the United States searching for work. Andrés received superior culinary training from El Bulli, a renowned Spanish restaurant, and eventually moved to New York City. It was not until he moved to Washington D. C. that he began to take on leadership roles in the restaurant industry, which spearheaded his restaurants' multiple launches. He did not come to the US with much. However, he let his passion for food and philanthropy propel him to become an international chef and help over 20 million people suffering from food shortages (Docter-Loeb, 2020).

#### **Philanthropy**



In response to the major earthquakes in Haiti, World Central Kitchen debuted in 2010. These earthquakes left many Haitians homeless, injured, and depleted of many vital resources. With all the displacement and deaths, there was a point when 70% of Haiti's population lived on less than 2 dollars a day (Brown et al., 2012). Chef Andrés went to Haiti and brought a hands-on approach to nourishing people who had lost so much. Andrés' goal was to feed people and implement efficient ways of ending hunger (Vora, 2015). Andrés used business expertise and developed a method to teach others how to create a sustainable food environment with minimal resources. World Central Kitchen has had a significant global impact. It has helped many countries, including the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Zambia, Peru, Cuba, Uganda, the Bahamas, Cambodia, Puerto Rico, and the United States (Docter-Loeb, 2020). Chef Andrés' concept of education comes from his understanding that one person cannot end world hunger. However, with education and advocacy, there can be a significant impact left that can lead to the lessening and hopefully demolishing world hunger.

#### **Global Familial Practices during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

World Central Kitchen originated from Chef Andrés' background and knowledge of how the food industry works and some of the Spanish influences he gained in his early career (PBS). In the context of family, World Central Kitchen's vast global reach encompasses many aspects of a family's unifying elements. World Central Kitchen had helped feed more people after the 2010 Haiti earthquakes than the Red Cross at one point. World Central Kitchen also employed hundreds of people in many different regions, not including the restaurants that Chef Andrés' created before the start of World Central Kitchen. World Central Kitchen has been backed and endorsed by many celebrities, political figures, and organizations globally, further expanding its influence (Coleman, 2020). With its extensive global reach, it is not surprising how far World Central Kitchen has come from its 2010 beginning.

Since the coronavirus's initial siege of the world, World Central Kitchen has played a major role in aiding many people in need. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Andrés and his team administered over 25 million meals throughout 400 cities (WCK, 2020). His program, "Restaurants for the People," raised over 90 million dollars to donate to independently owned restaurants. Daily, the organization doles out 100,000 meals across America. It is the World Central Kitchen's spiritual foundation that it can adapt collectivism and work toward supporting our society through these troubling times (WCK, 2020). Andrés and his team have impacted millions of people over the years, resulting in positive outcomes for every outreach they do. The concept of "the world is one family" is deeply rooted in World Central Kitchen's foundation. We

predict that the World Central Kitchen will never stray from *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. However, this commitment to *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is not the case for every organization.

#### **From a Family to an Influenced Marketplace**

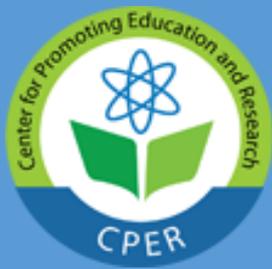
José Andrés took monumental steps to create a supportive foundation and places humans before profit, capturing the fundamental ideals of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Since the establishment of the World Central Kitchen, Chef Andrés and his staff have served millions of meals to those affected by natural disasters (WCK, 2020). Andrés ignores the individualistic Western mindset and refuses to allow his NGO to transition into a monetary focused organization. However, not all companies that begin with the global familial mindset can maintain the spiritual principle. Grameen Bank, originally a micro-lending organization that sought to reduce poverty, may have allowed outside influences to shift their focus to commercialization. Now they may balance on the edge of adapting the global marketplace mindset (Tucker, 1995).

#### **Grameen Bank and Micro-lending**

"In the Politics of Microfinance," Hossein (2012) wrote, "microfinance was touted as a tool which would revolutionize the business future of the poor" (Hossein, 2012). The lending organization "Fonkoze," which allocates microloans to Haitian women groups, was founded in 1995 as a Haitian non-governmental organization. Fonkoze is the largest microfinance institution in Haiti, supporting thousands of female-run micro, small, and mid-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Fonkoze's goal is to target the "very poor" and create different training and lending levels according to the participants' educational modules. The Fonkoze website states, "the program's goals are for participants to achieve food security, literacy, accumulate wealth, enroll kids in school and improve existing home structures" (FONKOZE-About Us, 2020). Once the Haitian woman business owner graduates from the previous Fonkoze program (Staircase out of Poverty, 2020), she can join the next group lending program called "ti credit" (small credit). This group's developmental levels create a community of lenders and exude a global familial mindset. The lending concepts and processes espoused by the Fonkoze organization are hybrids found in the global Grameen Bank lending organization. Fonkoze has been a Grameen Foundation partner since 2005. The Grameen Foundation provided \$50,000 to Fonkoze to finance the establishment of Fonkoze Financial Services, expand a literacy program, and education activities on health care, the environment, human rights, and basic literacy (FONKOZE-About Us, 2020).

#### **Grameen Bank-A global lending community partner or player in the global marketplace?**

In 1974, Economist Muhammad Yunus came across a group of village women in Bangladesh who paid off a loan by paying exorbitant interest rates to a local loan shark. When he



asked the women how much the loan was, he was stunned at the amount, \$27.00 US dollars. He decided to fund the women himself and lent the above sum to 42 women. What began as an act of kindness grew to a village bank, the Grameen Bank? Grameen Bank's goal was to contest the exclusion of the entrepreneurial poor from formal financial institutions, which tended to cater to the elite rather than to lower socioeconomic groups (Yunus 2007a, 205; 1994; Schreiner 2002, 591). Yunus also noted that when he exclusively lent to women, the repayment rate was as high as 90-95% (Muhammad Yunus-2006 Nobel Prize Winner, 2013). In 1982, the bank collaborated with the Bangladesh government on a research project utilizing the microloan concept as an economic development strategy. In 1986, the government-owned only 10% of the organization whose borrowers were 90% women. By 2006, the year Yunus was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Grameen Bank had served 100 million families worldwide with a 2% default rate (Murdoch, 2009).

Despite the global accolades bestowed on Grameen and Yunus, Tucker, in the journal *The Free Market* (1995), argued Grameen Bank was not a lending bank but a conduit for exorbitant government and international agencies (UN, IMF, and World Bank) grants. Tucker (1995) further contended if Grameen Bank was indeed as profitable as claimed, why weren't other global banks participating in the global micro-credit/financing business?

### Microlending in the 21st century

In the 1990s, Grameen bank and others in microfinance shifted their focus from poverty reduction to commercialization; many lenders raised loan interest rates. Hossein (2012) found this lending focus shift generated a fierce debate on how global marketplace concerns overtook the original concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Since 2010, billions have been spent in the microfinance environment by foundations such as eBay, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (Block, 2010). According to *fivetalents.org* (2017), some microcredit programs produce over-indebtedness-microcredit equals micro debt (*Fivetalents.org*, 2017). Global microcredit institutions introduce external debt into a community eliminating existing informal safety nets and adversely affect communal cohesion (Yunus, 2011).

In "A critique of Yunus and his micro-finance" (2010), Block argued Grameen's focus on lending exclusively to women and excluding men adds to the disintegration of the family and traditional communities. Block maintained the type of microcredit championed by Grameen Bank and other micro-lending institutions embodies a cultish feminist, leftist philosophy instead of a pure platonic lending philosophy (Block, 2010, p. 67). Microlending detractors often argue that lending institutions perpetuate poverty by creating and

enabling vicious lending and debt cycles for the poor (Klein, 2005).

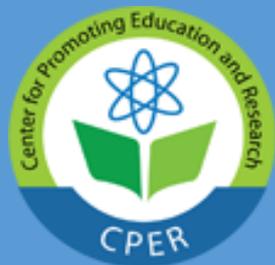
### Post-2010 Haiti Earthquake- The microloan environment

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, acquiring micro-loans for Haitian women developed into a laborious one. The once informal community-based micro-loan system, now formalized, required the borrower to have a birth certificate. In Haiti, documents and document warehousing is an inconsistent process. Many rural inhabitants do not have access to birth certificates, so this Haitian government banking mandate became a borrowing impediment. Unbeknownst to Yunus, the Grameen Bank concept was already embedded in Haitian women's economic livelihood systems. In April of 2011, the Grameen Bank, Grameen Creative Lab, and founder/Director Yunus created Yunus and You Haiti.org. to address Haiti's many economic and social issues after the earthquake. An integral part of this organization's mission was creating sustainable and long-term social business solutions. According to the Clinton Global Initiative (2015), the "Commitment by Yunus Social Business Global Initiatives" had an estimated five-year length with only a guaranteed 4.9 million dollars (Grameen Creative Lab, 2011; Clinton Foundation, 2015). The last progress report was made in 2015, citing only three business investments and a total of 1.8 million dollars pipelined in "below-market long term loans or equity participation."

The evidence provided supports the claims by critics such as J. Tucker and W. Block (1995; 2010), deducing that over time, even organizations with the best interests may have an innate global marketplace mindset. Therefore, the question posed is, "Does Grameen Bank and micro-loans serve as a profitable means to ending poverty by kickstarting local businesses, reflecting the original mission of Fonkoze, or are they contributing to the formal belief that all supposed nonprofit micro-lending organizations are exploitative and cyclic loan institutions?"

### From a Slow Transition away from *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* to a Quick Desertion

Unfortunately, businesses, nonprofit organizations, companies that start with good intentions are susceptible to falling away from the practices of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Grameen Bank, unfortunately, succumbed to outside influences and lost its path of exuding *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Their original plan to end poverty and support others through microloans has now turned into detrimental predatory loans that aid in poverty growth. Grameen may have prioritized commercialization and profit to trump their desire to help. When organizations lose their commitment to *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, positive global contributions are lost. Organizations have the choice to direct their efforts toward making the world a better place. Some will gradually shy away from philanthropic missions. Fonkoze and the



original Haitian micro-lending businesses, with *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in mind, brought many villages success and profit without discrimination or abandoning their promised investments.

Conversely, Grameen Bank painted an outward picture of spirituality, covering its long-term plan to become commercialized. However, not all changes take years to complete. When faced with challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic, unbeknownst to the public, a company's innate profit-driven characteristics may be revealed. VF Corporation, a globally known company, quickly turned their backs on the millions of middle to lower class workers they employ, forsaking them and their families when they need the company's support the most, unveiling their intrinsic global marketplace values.

#### VF Corporation

According to the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply, global supply chains are networks that can span across multiple continents and countries for sourcing and supplying goods and services (CIPS, n.d.). Global supply chains involve the flow of information, processes, and resources across continental boundaries. A corporation must incorporate ethical and virtue-based spiritual concepts, especially during these troubling times (CIPS, n.d.). The dependent relationship between workers and their employers is at the forefront of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. Without adequately funding their employees throughout times of no production, global corporations forsake millions that rely on the dependent relationship between worker and employer.

Initially founded in Pennsylvania by John Barbey in 1899, VF Corporation began as the "Reading Glove and Mitten Company" (Pisano & Adams, 2009). In 1969 after acquiring their first business, Lee Company, VF began their global expansion and goal to diversify its productions. The procurement of businesses specializing in jeans manufacturing resulted in VF purchasing Blue Bell Holding Company, including the following global brands: Rustler, Jantzen, Jansport, Red Cap, and Wrangler. This purchase further diversified and expanded VF into manufacturing sportswear and occupational clothing (Pisano & Adams, 2009). Currently, VF Corporation owns more than 20 global brands, accumulates over ten billion dollars every year, and employs more than 75,000 to 75,000 people (Forbes, n.d.).

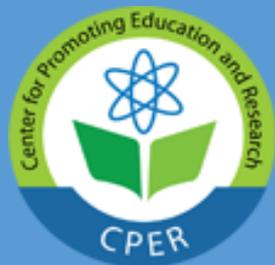
To manage the extensive and global supply chain that VF accumulated throughout the 120 years of operations, its management team initiated different strategies for an efficient supply chain. They have a combination of outsourcing their products and internal manufacturing. Initially, according to VF Brands: Global Supply Chain Strategy, "supply chain strategy in apparel was focused on chasing low-cost labor from one country to the next." (Pisano & Adams, 2009); however, VF Corporations wanted to fix their efforts toward creating long-

lasting partnerships by using an outsourcing strategy that focuses on short-term contracts of a couple of months for suppliers for specific garments and specific volumes. The strategy helps "shift production among suppliers in different locations to optimize costs and respond to changes in exchange rates, tariffs, and other cost factors" (Pisano & Adams, 2009 pg.4). The above strategy incentivizes future global partnerships and contracts (Pisano & Adams, 2009).

#### Global Strategies

In 2004, Chris Fraser, the President of VF's Supply Chain International department, acknowledged VF's production lines' diversity and suggested revisions to their manufacturing strategies (Pisano & Adams, 2009). VF Corporation originally had two types of relationships between its parent company and the suppliers. One type was known as "cut and make" (CM) contracts," which allowed VF to make separate contracts for suppliers at each stage of the production process (Pisano & Adams, 2009). VF owned the inventory, and suppliers were paid for the value-added of their step and were responsible for coordinating the product's flow from one supplier to the next (Pisano & Adams, 2009). The second strategy was "package sourcing" (Pisano & Adams, 2009). The strategy created a contract between VF and a single supplier. It gave the supplier the full responsibility for producing the full product, beginning with acquiring raw materials to shipping the final orders. The "package sourcing" strategy would give the supplier ownership of the materials along the process and not V.F. Fraser implemented the "Third Way" sourcing strategy seeking efficiency, leverage, and "a greater degree of control" between VF and other suppliers (Pisano & Adams, 2009). Third Way developed a long-term relationship between the supplier and VF by developing a contract tying the supplier exclusively to VF and only one product type, for example, only backpacks. VF provided beneficial information regarding technology and engineering to improve efficiency; however, the supplier would remain the sole owner of their factory. Finally, VF promised to purchase any unused materials and pay on a "cost-plus basis" (Pisano & Adams, 2009).

In a "2020 Factory Disclosure List," VF has 694 factories located primarily in the United States, China, Vietnam, and Bangladesh; however, their "VF Responsible Sourcing" section on their website claims that VF has signed contracts "with more than 1,000 supplier factories" (VF, 2020; VF, n.d.). Multinational corporations (MNC) are important global players due to their large number of worldwide factories, international employees, and their hefty effects on the communities in which their factories are located (Mohan, 2006). Using the World Central Kitchen as an example, for businesses to have the same success, it would be crucial for the owners to adapt *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and maintain equity, equality, and transparency within each of their dependent relationships. Suppose companies, such as VF Corporation,



continually expand beyond borders. In that case, they become responsible for maintaining healthy international relationships between the local actors and their factories. Their stakeholders include “global customers, investors, creditors, [and] global employees” (Mohan, 2006). Therefore, if VF Corporation decided to make drastic changes and decisions in the wake of hardship, the consequences would ricochet through multiple levels of society, affecting all stakeholders along the way.

### Global Marketplace Practices during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Responding quickly to changes in the global market is essential, especially during a crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many manufacturing companies, such as companies in Bangladesh. According to Penn State University’s Center for Global Workers’ Rights, many businesses and workers who are considered to be at the “bottom of the global garment supply chain” were affected by a mass order cancellation that results in a loss of pay and job security (Anner, M. Ph.D., 2020). After the orders to cancel shipments were made, 72.1% of buyers refused to pay for the labor costs. As a result, 58% of Bangladesh’s factories shut down. On April 1, 2020, the research article was updated to display some of the primary buyers of the apparel made in Bangladesh and their current orders either in production or completed. The VF Corporation and other companies committed to “pay for all orders in production or completed” (Anner, M. Ph.D., 2020). However, in May 2020, many manufacturing countries like Bangladesh received an email saying, “Do not ship the goods” sent by countless retailers such as the “VF Corporation, PVH Corp, Levi’s, and Target. These products were already ready and led to deferred payment. Seven hundred thirty-eight factories received the order cancellation email. As a result, 2.4 billion dollars’ worth of products ordered have been canceled” (Kamruzzaman & Sakib, 2020). According to the Asian Development Bank (2020), it expected that in Bangladesh, “one of the largest apparel producers, 894,930 workers would be unemployed” because the factory owners would not have the money to pay its workers (Perera, 2020). When interviewed by *Vogue Business* on what the corporation was doing to support their supply chain workers, VF refused to give a satisfactory answer (Sen, Sen, Anarta, & Chowdhury, 2020).

It is evident that, despite the outward appearance of working and developing strategies as global families, many large corporations will withdraw their support from developing countries if the marketplace is threatened. COVID-19 has put organizations in an unprecedented position to find ways around the adverse pandemic outcomes. The apparel industry was one of the most impacted global industries due to increased online shopping (Sen, Sen, Anarta, & Chowdhury, 2020). During the 2020 pandemic, many corporations abandoned their outsourced factories and those employees

instead of subsidizing a dormant workforce and incurring hefty business losses. VF Corporations and the situation in Bangladesh is a primary example of an industry exemplifying characteristics of viewing the world as a global marketplace. By dropping multi-million-dollar projects during the pandemic, hundreds of factories were forced to close, leaving the workers without pay or compensation. It was not until they received backlash for their actions that VF Corporation decided to support their workers. We maintain if VF had upheld the principles of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, they would have never been placed in the position to receive criticism.

### From Past Decisions to Present Conflicts

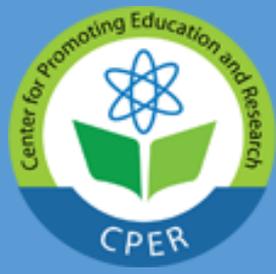
VF Corporation claims to be a global industry supporting millions of workers and actively tries to find the best global practices that benefit diverse communities. Still, in the face of adversity, profit trumped basic human rights. This paper moved from examples showing organizations that either adapted or rejected *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. A social media application, which has served as a temporary, global distraction for 800 million users during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, faces the internal decision of whether they will continue to practice *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* or fall susceptible to outside governmental influence and invade the rights and privacy of their community.

### TikTok and Moving Forward

Within two years, the application TikTok has become a global phenomenon. As of July 2020, TikTok, owned by ByteDance, an internet technology company based in Beijing, China, worth almost US\$100 billion, had an estimated 800 million accounts. According to Sensor Tower’s Store Intelligence, TikTok content has been downloaded almost two billion times across Apple’s App Store and Google Play (Clement, 2020; Mohsin, 2020; Chapple, 2020). TikTok is available in thirty-nine languages throughout 150 global markets. However, despite its global presence and possible positive attributes, including connecting people across the world during the coronavirus pandemic and creating a sense of unity for an entire generation, the TikTok app has received backlash from US governmental authorities and users due to data harvesting, possible privacy violations, and political propaganda censorship (Iqbal, 2020).

### Global Marketplace-Data Harvesting

Businesses use surveillance capitalism to “produce revenue by predicting and modifying user behavior (Zuboff, 2019). Platforms collect personal data from social media applications to enhance your engagement through algorithms that alter the content users see based on past searches (Zuboff, 2019). Personal data leaves a digital footprint on the application’s servers forever, allowing the companies to store and manipulate the user’s harvested data (Starbird, 2020). To have a competitive position in the global marketplace, a company must understand stakeholders’ orientations and find



ways to satisfy their needs and concerns (Zafarani, Abbasi, & Liu, 2014). For example, ByteDance knew Musical.ly, an American based company, was their primary competition; therefore, they bought them and boosted their presence in America's digital market (TikTok, 2020). However, the main way applications grow and maintain their audience is through data collection (Zafarani, Abbasi, & Liu, 2014). Also known as social media data harvesting or mining, the process allows servers to analyze and predict user patterns from the data provided on the platform (Zafarani, Abbasi, & Liu, 2014). Recently, users of numerous social media platforms have expressed discontent, claiming an invasion of privacy. According to an article in the Journal of Education for Business, the legality for data mining "lies in the absence of an overarching federal statute or common law principle that uniformly protects the informational privacy rights of users in the digital marketplace" (Callanan, Perri, & Tomkowicz, 2018). The action is beneficial for producer/consumer relationships. However, certain sensitive data can overstep privacy boundaries and result in security concerns (Callanan, Perri, & Tomkowicz, 2018). TikTok, as a global competitor, has taken full advantage of data harvesting means.

#### **Current Political Situation**

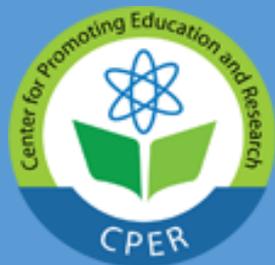
Data harvesting is not a new technique used by online platforms; however, TikTok has recently come under scrutiny from international governments due to national security concerns regarding the claims that TikTok is harvesting data and giving it to the Chinese government (Pham, 2020). Earlier in 2019, India's government banned TikTok in fear that the app exposes underaged children to "predators, pornographic content, and cyberbullying." Still, since TikTok promised to enhance security measures through increased data supervision, India lifted the ban (Pham, 2020). India's government, amid a border dispute with China, banned TikTok and sixty other Chinese mobile apps again in June 2020 (Iqbal, 2020). According to the *Business of Apps*, an application statistic recording website, in 2019, India led the global digital markets for the most TikTok downloads at 323 million (Iqbal, 2020). India's government cited TikTok as a "threat to sovereignty and integrity" (Pham, 2020). TikTok representatives continuously deny selling data to China and report that their data is now stored outside of the country; however, despite releasing a transparency report, TikTok's privacy policy claims they regularly collect "information you [users] share with us from third-party social network providers, and technical and behavioral information about your use of the Platform... and information about the device you use to access the Platform, including your IP address, unique device identifiers..." (Tidy, 2020; Privacy Policy, 2020). The claims that TikTok censors posts and information about the Hong Kong protests and political opposition toward the Chinese

Communist Party do not support the case's sensitivity and possible repercussions.

Based on the claims that TikTok is censoring political information in China, President Trump released a statement in August 2020, saying that he will ban TikTok and any Chinese based applications which pose a threat to national security and user privacy (Koleson, 2020). The ban could be lifted if an American company bought the application from ByteDance and moved the data to American servers; however, even though Microsoft showed interest in purchasing the app, Oracle, a database, and cloud system provider, now invests in TikTok, progressing the situation and allowing TikTok to remain on America's markets (Koleson, 2020; Criddle, 2020; Novet, Kimball, & Sherman, 2020). TikTok's creator Leo Scheck spoke out against President Trump, claiming that the US President seeks to ban TikTok in fear of its influence on his re-election campaign (Koleson, 2020). The overall debate on TikTok's data harvesting, relationship with China, and position in global markets opens the conversation about how the government and powerful companies can control how and why citizens use the internet and manipulate users' activities for profit. TikTok filed a federal transgression against the United States and alleged they do not pose "an unusual and extraordinary threat." TikTok's position on the global market is controversial; however, amid threatening bans and court cases, its platform has continuously connected a generation of users, creating a sense of unity throughout the coronavirus pandemic (Koleson, 2020).

#### **Global Familial Practices during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

A study by Yang & Zilberg (2020) from the University of California, San Diego titled "Understanding Young Adults' TikTok Usage" compiled interview data from young adults on why they choose to use TikTok. Their main reasons include the following: to help their boredom, to uplift their mood, to express their true self, and to help with their dissatisfaction with reality (Yang & Zilberg, 2020). Most users in the study followed the same "micro-celebrities" and actively shared exciting videos with their peers outside of the app's platform. Yang (2020) noted through TikTok's easily accessible and shared information; each creator contributes to a community that enthusiastically seeks to engage with one another and create content that receives the most views (Yang & Zilberg, 2020). Coupled with a study found in the *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health* by Basch, Hillyer, and Jaime on how users have "harnessed" TikTok to spread awareness through the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, TikTok's positive global familial attributes can be connected to exposure and awareness during uncertain times (2020). In the study by Basch et al. (2020), they found that, in April 2020, videos featuring the hashtag #Coronavirus had an estimated 68 billion views, followed by #COVID19 with 20 billion. These videos



“focused largely on prevention, symptoms, information delivery, and feelings related to COVID-19.” By having a growing platform that features users primarily between the ages of 13-24, TikTok, despite their controversy, can be used for entertainment, consoling those who are affected by isolation during the quarantine, and informational awareness, global connecting users with health guidance, ultimately creating a sense of unity and spreading awareness for protecting yourself and your neighbor (Basch, Hillyer, & Jaime, 2020).

### Discussion

This paper examined three global entities that vary in promoting *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* between the World Central Kitchen, Grameen Bank, and VF Brands. TikTok, the fourth entity, as of November 12, 2020, has been given another chance to prove itself to the world as a global familial, social media platform (Lerman, 2020). A judge in Pennsylvania halted the ban set in place by the Trump Administration that would go into effect on the twelfth if a deal was not made due to a group of creators filing a suit against the case. Until the Justice Department decides its next move, TikTok remains in all United States markets (Fung & Pham, 2020). Originally, ByteDance had 90 days to move their assets, but after four submitted proposals, a deal was not finalized (Shepardson, 2020). TikTok provides millions with a platform to build and promote their business, and if it is banned, more people would be without a job during this pandemic. TikTok still has to uphold the United States’ demands and move their databases to American servers, which has not been done as of December 2020. TikTok and its parent company recognize their platform’s importance to their 800 million users; however, their efforts to solve this issue have not reflected it (Lerman, 2020). Suppose TikTok decides to keep their databases outside of the United States and hypothetically under another government’s control. In that case, they will add America to their list of “banned from countries” and deprive their users of connection and a virtual family.

Reprioritization is crucial if an organization loses sight of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Grameen Bank provided a global example of this. It continued to move away from fostering and providing means for global familial partnerships and practices. It failed to stop and reprioritize their actions, resulting in the predatory lending business. To keep its users, TikTok should provide them with security and assurance. TikTok, in the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, can mend their relationship with the United States’ government by adhering to their users’ transparency requests. If TikTok places business gains over people, this tactic may cause their demise.

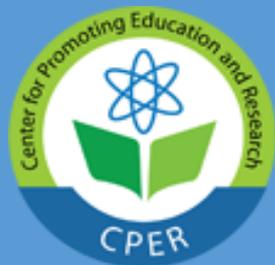
In Tischler’s “The growing interest in spirituality in business: A long-term socioeconomic explanation” (1999), Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is applied to the correlation of spirituality in businesses to society with the growing

movement of globalization and sustainability. It concluded that when the economy falters in its ability to provide for the individual and when the wealthy refuse to allocate resources, these conditions lead society away from focusing on the higher-order concerns to focusing their efforts on short term survival (Tischler, 1999). The short-term survival mode results in the “machine, marketplace mindset” and is not profitable for anyone’s long term sustainability. Especially in a climate such as the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, long term sustainability is crucial for society’s well-being. The importance for businesses, applications, nonprofit organizations, and governments to place people above power and personal gain is indescribable (Tischler, 1999). Unfortunately, VF Corporation gave a prime example of the detrimental effects of abandoning *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. TikTok digitally resembles VF in its global reach to millions of individuals; therefore, similar to how one decision made by VF caused many to lose their jobs and livelihoods, TikTok’s final decision regarding moving their database may result in the loss of comfort, connection, and revenue for its users. Even though some may not think TikTok brings “profit” to society’s higher-order concerns, they should be reminded that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs includes “security and social needs.” With the type of community and family TikTok built globally through the pandemic, if ByteDance forsakes negotiating a deal and allows the application to be banned in America, millions will lose their daily escape and connection to others, resulting in a loss of security and comfort throughout the remainder of the pandemic (Tischler, 1999).

*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is not only an individualistic philosophical practice; it is also a mindset that should be adopted at all levels of society. From local to national, businesses, organizations, and governments should practice *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* to foster a sustainable, loving, and compassionate society (Tilak, 2015). We have seen how one person’s decision to create a global nonprofit has benefited millions of people in the wake of a crisis. Imagine the humane society we could build if every form of business would run based on the harmonious, familial nature of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Pandemics would not be politicized. The safety, security, and needs of the people would be prioritized above all else, resulting in strides toward sustainability and a realignment of societal morals (Tilak, 2015). These values of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* are already integrated into some communities and mainly all nonprofit organizations; however, the world cannot function as a “global family” without the full cooperation and reprioritization of governments, businesses, and corporations.

### Conclusion

By comparing several global organizations, we have seen the benefits of upholding *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. When practiced by global organizations, its global familial outlook



results in multidirectional, beneficial partnerships, and relationships. José Andrés' World Central Kitchen embodies the benefits derived from practicing the spirituality principles of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Grameen Bank showcased a slow movement away from a seemingly familial NGO founded in the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. to a profit-driven organization promoting cyclical, perhaps predatory loans. Finally, VF Corporations, a global business with millions of employees, cut off worker benefits in the middle of a global pandemic and only claimed to practice essential qualities of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* once they received global

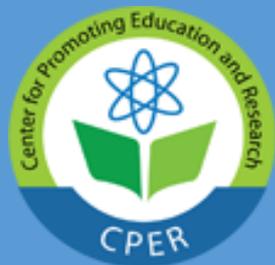
backlash, VF's global marketplace mindset overtook its initial global family mission. Finally, to remain a platform for millions of people to connect amidst the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, ByteDance's application, TikTok, needs to make monumental strides to secure a deal between Oracle and the United States government; otherwise, it will follow in the footsteps of VF, forsaking millions and reflecting a global marketplace mindset.

#### Acknowledgments

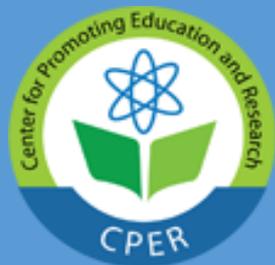
We would like to thank Dr. Sunita Singh-Sengupta and Kristen Broxton for their creative contribution.

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