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My Five Great Offerings for Cosmic Harmony

by

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My Five Great Offerings

for

Cosmic Harmony

-By Swamini Pramananda

India has always been addressed by the west as the “Mother civilization or cradle civilization”. The Vedic wisdom of “We are all one” has existed for centuries in the Hindu society and we have this vision integrated in our culture. The attitude of reverence and gratitude towards the universe is a natural disposition for the natives of the indigenous culture of India.

The Hindu sees the universe as an organic whole, functioning as one organism having a cosmic body! The universe is a live body and has intelligence which is the fabric of harmony. The *Bhagavad Gītā* says – “*sūtre maṇigaṇā iva*” – “like the thread which is invisible, holding the pearls together”, the Intelligent being – the Cosmic Being is the unifying principle or the life-force of the universe.

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The entire infrastructure called the cosmos extends basically - from one’s family to the five elements. Living in harmony with the cosmos at all levels is the responsibility of humanity! The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.16, presents the five great daily offerings that is required of a human being for cosmic harmony and even today, this attitude is seen in the social consciousness of the Hindu society. The five-fold great daily offerings are in terms of:

- 1) Preservation of family
- 2) Preservation of the teaching tradition
- 3) Sharing with humanity
- 4) Reverence to the other living beings including the plant kingdom
- 5) The spirit of gratitude and reverence towards the Lord as the Cosmic Form

1) Preservation of family

It is important to understand that the life of a householder is the greatest opportunity for the soul to understand that relationships are not about establishing who is right and who is

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wrong, but about yielding to the other, and putting aside one’s ego for the sake of harmony. “I am right” has consistently created wars at the family level, country level, and global level all through the centuries. We are ready to destroy a home, just to prove “I am right”.

We need to address our own inner conflicts and divisions, and free our energies to enjoy meaningful relationship with the other. Our purpose of relationships is to create opportunities for our growth and full Self-expression. We are given a family, not to have the other members to complete you, but to have the other members with whom you share your completeness.

In India, God is looked upon as *Ardhanārīśvara*, One who includes both the male and the female, although God has no gender being formless. The Divine *Śakti*, is looked upon as the love energy that manifests through both men and women. Each one of us, irrespective of our gender, can become that Universal Mother, so that

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through us, she can uplift and transform the world. Her forces of healing, love and compassion can help us move from separation and division to greater unity. The qualities of the Divine as the Universal Father is also within us as the Divine Justice that is free from judgment of right and wrong, and accommodates all equally. He also abides as the protector of his creation, and thus frees his creation from any form of fear. In this manner, the Divine within us, can be experienced as the vehicle for inner and outer transformation.

In the Hindu culture, daily prostrating to parents, and other elders of the family, and living for the family and one’s extended family, reveals the reverential attitude of the individual toward the family.

Globally, this reverential attitude can be created in families by consciously spending time with the family, dining together, and praying together. Offering gratitude to one’s ancestors, seeking their blessings is also essential for family preservation.

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What can I do daily?

At the altar, place a photo of Lord *Gaṇeśa* and

- Start the daily prayers with the following chant:

oṃ gaṇeśāya namaḥ

My salutations to Lord *Gaṇeśa*

oṃ sarvamaṅgalamāṅgalye

śive sarvārtha sādḥake

śaraṇye trayāmbake devi

nārāyaṇi namostu te

Salutations to you O Goddess, who is the auspiciousness of all that is auspicious, who is the consort of Lord *Śiva*, who is the means of accomplishing all desires, who is the refuge of all, who is the three-eyed one and who is the fair-complexioned one.

At the altar, place a photo of one's parents or a caretaker and

- Offer a prayer at the altar by placing flowers, and making a salutation, chant the following prayer:

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mātāpitṛbhyāṃ vapuso

janakābhyāṃ mudanvahaṃ

namaskaromi vijñānanakābhyāṃ

śivāptaye

Daily with joy I offer my salutations to my parents, who have generated this body and who have educated me for the sake of my well-being.

- Listen to their wisdom, and do what they say, for they seek your welfare.
- Let your thoughts, words, and actions be expressed to seek their welfare.

2) Preservation of the teaching tradition.

The preservation of one's culture and religion through education is essential. It is necessary to support the dharmic educators or teachers who help create an awareness of non-violence and a mutual respect of each others' traditions and beliefs. Their message should never be "I am holier than thou" but "You are as holy as I am". "Namaste" itself means "the God in me honors the God in you".

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Today, the superiority paradigm operates most of our worldwide institutions – not just religion, but politics, economics, education and the social consciousness of our society. Many religions believe that there is only one way to God – and that their way is this one way! And they believe that they must convince others to believe as they do, and if they don't get convinced, then they are enemies, and so must be converted or eliminated.

In the Hindu culture we have a statement "*vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*" – the whole world is our family. This means that "We are one with the whole world" and we do whatever it takes to treat each other as oneself.

The Hindu society has been always looked upon by the West for its spiritual wisdom for centuries and we are committed to sharing with the world community, our teachings of Non-duality and techniques of meditation and *yoga*. These are important tools to spread the message of "We are All One" to the grassroots of our global family and such messengers of this wisdom are to be supported throughout our planet.

Globally, we need to make each one of us responsible for creating and participating in

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programmes and teachings that share the theme "We are all one", a theme that reminds us of who we truly are, so that we can live joyfully and allow the others the same privilege.

What can I do daily?

At the altar, place a photo of sage *Vyāsa* and

- Offer a prayer to the sages who have given us our culture by placing flowers at the altar and making a salutation, chant the following prayer:

vyāsāya viṣṇurūpāya

vyāsarūpāya viṣṇave

namovai brahmanidhaye

vāsiṣṭhāya namo namaḥ

To sage *Vyāsā* who is an incarnation of Lord *Viṣṇu*, and Lord *Viṣṇu* who is sage *Vyāsā* incarnated, who is a repository of the *Vedas*, and who is the great grandson of Sage *Vasiṣṭha*, I offer my *namaskāra*.

- Support temples, *āśrams* and monks who are dedicated to the preservation of the sacred culture.

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3) Sharing with humanity

One of the most difficult challenges of humanity today is elimination of poverty. As someone said 'Where there is a will, there is a way'. If the people of the world had the will, then 400 humans would not die on the planet every hour from starvation. We would get food to them. Whatever be the corruption of the governance, or the blocks created by the rebels stopping the food trucks, we would get the job done. It is absurd to accept the excuse that the world which could send men to the moon, could not join hands with sufficient will power to get food to everyone who needs it.

The world survey shows that there is enough food for all, enough abundance in the world – but we do not distribute equally. We have become competitors to each other, and so with the survivor mentality, we cannot work with the vision "We are all one". Our hoarding and fighting with each other will continue, unless we are committed to sharing with humanity as individuals and collectively.

Furthermore, as nations, we must work to share with humanity and not work for profit alone. Different nations have their abundance in different resources such as oil, food, people, etc. Wherever there is lack of any of the above for any of us, the resourceful countries should come forward and share their resources, if necessary, at even the cost price! For it is not the lack of resources which is the problem, but the lack of the will to share which is the problem. Only then we can say that "We work for our global family".

At the same time, our neediness and requirements also have to be re-questioned. Our current philosophy that "We can be happy only when all our limitless needs and desires are met with" has to change! Our behavior of seeking short-term gratifications and being blind to long-term consequences, has to change! Infact, happiness is not about how much we have, but it is about how we perceive ourselves with reference to what we have! Abundance and happiness follow as a natural consequence of spiritual wisdom and clarity.

The Hindu culture has always believed in sharing or giving away possessions. Beginning with *vidyādānam*, giving the gift of knowledge, we have various forms of gifts such as giving away of land, food, wealth, etc. to the needy, without even the cost price attached to it. Living in simplicity with high ideals of sharing our abundance is the epitome of the Hindu philosophy.

In creating the global awareness, we must create a new paradigm of human society wherein we share our resources with the world, so that there is enough for all and a proper balance on earth.

What can I do daily?

Place a photo of *Annapūrṇā Devī* at the altar and

- Offer a prayer to the Goddess by placing flowers at the altar and making a salutation, chant the following prayer:

*annadaḥ prāṇado loke
prāṇadaḥ sarvado bhavet
tasmāt annaṃ viśeṣeṇa
dātavyaṃ bhūtiṃ icchatā*

In the world, the giver of food is the giver of the life-force, the giver of the life-force is the giver of everything. Therefore, food must be distributed (with devotion) by the one who is desirous of his or her prosperity.

- Regularly give food, clothing, monies to the needy souls in orphanages, old age homes, hospitals and individuals known to you in your neighbourhood.

4) Reverence to other living beings including the plant kingdom

Globally, we need to become sensitive to the existence of other animals and not work toward their extinction like the DODO, which was the national bird of Mauritius.

We have lost reverence toward the animals to such a poor level that we have no quams in killing 100 billion animals a year for the consumption of a mere 6 billion human beings on our planet. This means each human being is eating a minimum of 16 animals

a year. I know that I do not eat animals – therefore someone else is eating my 16!

Thus, it is important to have reverence for life which will cause us to honour all life forms – including plants, trees, and animals. We need to consciously choose not to terminate any particular life, nor change any life energy from one form to another, without the most sacred justification.

Let us see every animal as just wanting to live with its species as much as we do. Let us see every tree as just crying for its silent existence for which it has worked for centuries, as much as I seek my existence. We must stop cutting down the trees and destroying the flora and fauna of our earth. The *R̥g Veda* 10.101.11 says, “*vanaspatiṃ vana āsthāpayadhvam*” whose meaning: is ‘you must plant trees on earth’. But it does not say, you may cut the existing trees and replace the cut ones by planting new ones. We need to understand that it would take 300 years for those trees to grow in size and strength to give us the O₂ that the old trees are giving us today.

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The Hindu culture has integrated into its practices reverence to other forms of life as seen in the cultural form of honoring the cow, feeding the crow, offering water to the *Tulasī* plant at home. The highest value that has ever been spoken of is “*ahimsā paramo dharmah*” meaning that nonviolence is the most exalted *dharmā*.

What can I do daily?

At the altar, place a photo of a *Tulasī* Plant and a Cow, and

- Offer a prayer to the plants and animals by placing flowers at the altar, making a salutation and chanting the following prayer:

*tulasī śrīśaktisudhe
pāpahāriṇī puṇyade
namaste nārādanute
nārāyaṇa maṇḥ priye*

O *Tulasī Devī* who is the companion of Goddess *Lakṣmī*, the Auspicious one, the remover of *pāpa*, the giver of *puṇya*, the one who is

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worshipped by sage *Nārada*, one who is pleasing to the mind of Lord *Nārāyaṇa*, unto you, my salutations!

*sarvakāmadughedevi
sarvatīrthābhīṣechani
pāvane surabhiśreṣṭhe
devi tubhyaṃ namostu te*

O Goddess who is the yielder of all desires, one who purifies all the holy waters, the pure one, one who is exalted among cows, O Goddess, salutations to you.

Observe your eating habits and see that you do not kill or injure other living beings for your sustenance.

- Plant saplings, and take care of them by offering water and nutrition to them.
- Feed birds and animals.

5) The spirit of gratitude and reverence towards the Lord as the Cosmic Form.

The prayerful attitude of gratitude to the five elements for supporting our lives, reveals connectedness to

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the Cosmic Form of the Lord. This attitude of reverence is seen in the social consciousness of the Hindu society. Through its various forms of honoring the divine nature, such as Sun worship, worship of the five elements, etc. we integrate the spirit of oneness with the universe.

Globally, we need to become sensitive and respect our five great elements, such as Space, Air, Fire, Water, Earth and not denigrate or abuse them.

We need to take care of the gases we release into the air, causing environmental pollution, overdrawing the energy source of petroleum, polluting the water through chemical waste, depleting the earth of our natural resources, destroying the plant kingdom by introducing inorganic fertilizers, etc. are all inhuman acts of the humankind toward the universe that serves our lives! The ‘climate change crisis’ on our planet reveals the absence of balance between technology and the cosmology of all life.

Time has come for us to change our ideas about who we are in relationship with our environment and everything in it. We need to understand that if

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the system itself is destroyed, no species within the system, dominant or small can survive.

What can I do daily?

Place a photo of the Divine Sun-energy at the altar and

- Offer a prayer by placing flowers at the altar and making a salutation, chant the following prayer:

*bhāno bhāskara mārthāṇḍa
cāṇḍaraśme divākara
āyurārogyamaiśvaryaṃ
vidheyaṃ dehi namostu te*

O Effulgent one, O one with effulgent rays,
O *mārthāṇḍa*, O one with Powerful rays,
O Lord of the Day! My salutations to You! Give me
a long life, good-health, abundance and
knowledge!

- Participate in environmental protection schemes and donate to causes that protect nature such as river cleaning, greening land, preventing pollutions, etc.

In this manner, living in harmony with the Universe at all levels of our relationship is the most important aspect of the Hindu life. It is in this relationship with God, with each other, with every person, place or thing on this planet, that we must position ourselves as citizens of the universe. Only then can we truly own up our global family as our own, and look after our family members as we look after ourselves.

What can I do daily?

- Conclude your daily prayers with the following prayer:

*sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ /
sarve santu nirāmayāḥ
sarve bhadraṇi paśyantū /
mā kaścid duḥkhabhāg bhavet*

*asato mā sadgamaya /
tamaso mā jyotirgamaya
mṛtyormā amṛtaṃ gamaya /
oṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ*

May all be happy. May all be free from disease.
May all enjoy prosperity. May none experience
sorrow.

Lead me from the unreal to the real, from
darkness to light, from death to immortality.
Om! May there be peace, peace, peace.