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Thank You for Thanksgiving

Intro: The festivities are an expression of gratitude by the society aimed at building a microclimate of caring, sharing and brotherhood, thereby ushering a universal ethos of peace, prosperity and harmony.

Body:

Great and Eternal Mystery of Life,

Creator of All Things,

I give thanks for the beauty

You put in every single one of Your creations.

– American Indian Prayer

Almost four centuries ago, a mixed congregation of early American settlers and local tribal Red Indians chose to thank the supernatural forces and almighty on surviving a long winter/drought of 1622/23. It had taken a heavy toll of the settlers of Plymouth (US), which was followed by a bumper harvest. And therefore the local Governor Bradford decided to celebrate 29th November 1623 as a “Thanksgiving Day” in the state. This tradition of thanking the powers that be, by sharing a common meal with friends and well-wishers across the strata of the society, continues till date in the US.

Nearer home in our country, we find number of festivals and rituals based on celebrations and gratitude, bonding delicate family and societal linkages. The “**Rakshabandhan**” and “**Bhau-beej**” are aimed at cementing the brother-sister linkage, while “**Dussera**” and **Chaitra HaldiKumkum** are aimed at fostering community linkages. With the growing cosmopolitan culture in urban areas, we often find mass participation in **Deepawali, Holi, Ganesh festival, Eid-e-Milad, Christmas, etc.** cutting across religious and communal barriers. The religious festivals are not only meant for sweets and merriment, but they have a deeper purpose.

If we attempt to reach out to the core of these rituals and find out the true intent, we find that universally across sects, religions and communities, there is a common theme. All these events are in synch with the natural bio-rhythm of the elements, though with minor solar and lunar variants. Many of them are related to the celebration of bio-diversity enveloping the flora and fauna in its ethos. There have been numerous instances the world over where the guns have fallen silent, to respect the crescent moon or the spruce tree – a rare instance of enemy respecting the rival’s beliefs.

But then, do these events mean anything more to the society, than occasions to display extravagance, wafer-thin culture or skin-deep sentiments? Are these celebrations being observed today to benchmark dominance of a majority community or are these meant to be a hapless target for senseless destructive elements? Unfortunately in the urban areas, on these occasions we witness a mass hysteria and law and order crisis, which drown the societal well-being, which it seeks to uphold.

Who are these devils and destroyers who manage to blacken the face of our tolerant and vibrant society? Barring exceptions, the perpetrators of these high crimes are locally rooted. Misguided by negative elements, they spread the venom of mistrust and vendetta, riding the fear psychosis of a handful of fanatics. A quick look at the global culprits will show that most of them are young and misguided youth. A deeper analysis of the family and cultural background often reflect a disturbed childhood or an identity crisis leading to doom.

Universally, the festivities are an expression of gratitude by the society. It is a celebration of awareness aimed at building a microclimate of caring, sharing and brotherhood, thus ushering us to a universal ethos of peace, prosperity and harmony. It is our humble contribution to shape the society in His likeness as Creation itself symbolizes harmony. As the poet says,

“From Harmony, from Heavenly Harmony this universal frame began!”
- J Dryden

This expression of gratitude is reflected in our traditions and rooted in inter-personal and family behaviour pattern. Paying respect to elders, offering reverential services and obeisance are some of the family traditions, which build up the sentiment of sacrifice and gratitude in the young minds. Truthfulness, obedience and self-discipline are some of the values, which last a lifetime. They also help in building maturity and emotional balance leading to smooth transition from childhood to adolescence, to youth and manhood. Such responsible and responsive youth not only form the core of the family and brethren but they are the vital building blocks of the community and societal pyramid.

Therefore, when a persistent mother teaches a bumbling child to say ‘Thank You’, ‘Please’ and ‘Bye Bye’, she is carrying the mantle of universal motherhood on her shoulders. The innocent blabber of the infant is the first step of humanity towards the Divine Ideal. Therefore, even in the modern fast-paced life, one must not forget to express his thankfulness or regret his inabilities. Undoubtedly, from families to nations, we are eternally linked and responsible for maintaining the biorhythm and harmony as ordained by our Creator.

Therefore pray, “Say Thank You to Thanksgiving.”