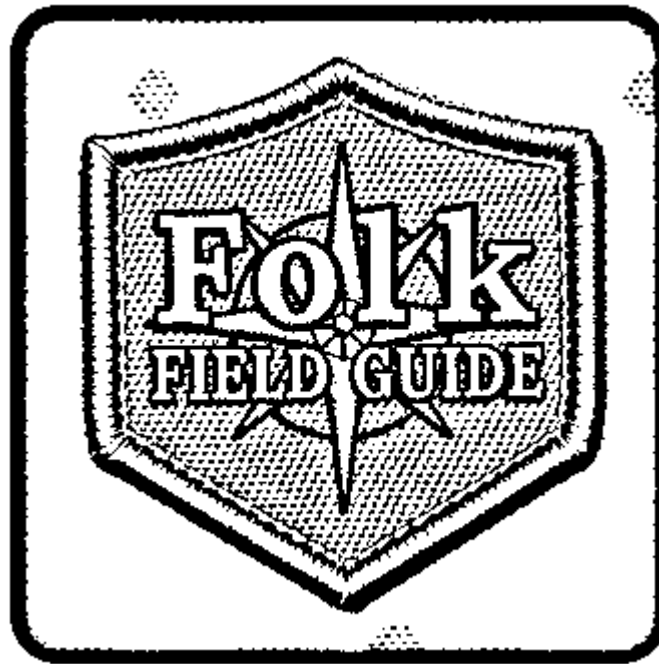


Folk Field Guide

For Folk Practice



Issue: 6

Offering Practice During a Hurricane

Curated & Compiled by Bub

Folk Field Guide for Folk Practice is devoted to the living heart of folk practice. My aim is not only to preserve stories, but to practice with them—to listen to and practice with our family, the land, and the magic in our own homes. In these field guides, you'll find the stories, the prayers, offerings, and practices that have shaped our own folk practice for generations.

May these stories nourish your imagination, connect you to the land and lineage they arise from, and remind us all that folk practice is not just a record of the past, but a practice still relevant for our lives and relationships today.

What is Folk Practice?

There is a path that doesn't belong to any belief system, any special religion, or any one tradition. It's not an "ism" nor does it have an official name. It's a path we can call folk practice, the practice of the people, the sacred threads that weave through ordinary life.

At its heart, folk practice is deeply rooted and shaped across generations by countless ordinary lives: bakers, farmers, tailors, fishers, lantern-makers, cooks, and builders. These weren't people detached from their world. They lived in intimate conversation with it. They shaped it, and it shaped them. The practices that came from this intimacy weren't rigid or static. They adapted and evolved alongside the communities that held them. They were shaped by countless influences, threads of old ways and new ideas spun together over time.

And one of the most vital truths about folk practice is this: it belongs to everyone. You can be Floridian, Vietnamese, Tongan, Greek, Scottish, or from anywhere else. Because folk isn't something outside or other that you have to be or become. You already are folk. It's who you are, and it's the people who surround you, and the people you come from. It is all of us. It requires no identity or label, it's simply you and your life however that manifests.

Folk practice belongs to everyone. It doesn't ask for a specific belief. It doesn't require allegiance to a particular god, religion, or dogma. You can be a Buddhist, a Christian, a Bonpo, or someone who simply feels the sacred threads of life. Folk practice is syncretic, drawing from many sources, shaped by time, place, and person. Its strength lies in its openness and its ability to evolve.

The old stories may tell of realms of spirits, of ancestors and unseen beings, but this is not some far-off place. It is closer than we imagine, just a subtle shift of perception away.

Importantly, this is not a path apart from life. It is life. In every era, across countless villages and families, it was woven seamlessly into the everyday. It was a technology of belonging and connection, a way to respond to life's needs, a way to support, heal, and protect a community. The folk practitioner was shaped by their people and place. They weren't set apart from the world. They worked within it, lived within it, and drew strength from belonging to the full catastrophe of life.

Folk practice teaches us that sacredness is not something you have to travel far to find. It's right here. It's how we speak to our neighbors. How we thank the plants that feed us. How we hold space for grief and joy, side by side.

In a time when the world feels increasingly disconnected, when so much of life is filtered through screens or systems that separate us from the source, there is deep medicine in turning toward the old ways; not to escape the present, but to meet it more fully.

In the end, folk practice reminds us of a profound truth. Spirituality is not about perfection, dogma, or rigid orthodoxy. It is about relationship. It is about respect. It is about responsiveness to the world around us. It reminds us that the sacred is always present, always available, because it lives within and around us every moment. Sometimes messy, but alive.

Folk Practice is an inheritance we can reclaim every time we open ourselves to the wonder of this life. In this way, folk practice is not a relic of the past, but a living, breathing path for now and for generations to come.

Offering Practice During a Hurricane

Imbalance Inside and Outside

Often we may think there is a division between what is going on inside of us and what appears to us as going on outside of us, but that is not the case. The inside and the outside are not as separate as we think they are. In the world, the elements are out of balance. There are hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, flooding, storm surge, violence, disease, and pandemics. Inside of us, the elements are out of balance. When we experience this imbalance internally, it's out of control unnamable emotionalities. It's the five poisons which arise from the five elements, arising out of balance all over the place. Too much of one, not enough of another and in the wrong places. So anger arises in places where there is no need for anger. Fear arises in things that are not dangerous. Jealousy arises where we wouldn't expect it. Depression arises randomly. Desire arises for all the things we cannot do these days.

So first we may wish to deal with this imbalance inside. Because we cannot effectively deal with it outside. We cannot see clearly what we are able to do to help the world while we are rolling around in confusion. So this practice helps bring balance and clarity so that we can see what can be done in the world.

Recognizing the Nature of Mind

At the highest level, to rebalance within the mind, the method in which to practice is recognizing the nature of mind. Recognizing the nature of mind in which all the emotions arise in their pure forms as the immaculate dance of the five Dhyani Buddhas; of the five elements in harmony and balance. Recognizing this as our own true nature. The imbalance arises in thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Recognizing those for what they really are; the play of the Dharmakaya nature of mind; the sparkle of the clear light nature of emptiness. Seeing for ourselves the inherent and absolute balance of the unmoving immutable nature of mind which is who/what we really are. Seeing the arising of inner and outer phenomena (thoughts, feelings, and perceptions) arising in mind, as mind, never becoming other than mind, dissolving in mind. Leaving no trace in the infinite empty sky. This activity of non-activity, this natural resting of mind is the fastest and purest way of bringing all of it into balance. From a point of natural balance all doing arise spontaneously and appropriately without me needing to figure it out using thoughts.

But when we are not able to see the emptiness of inner and outer phenomena as it arises, then we simply step back and relax into an offering ceremony. For ceremony does the same thing, but with a bit of doing instead of non-doing.

The Hurricane Zemís

In the Taino tradition of the Caribbean, the most powerful hurricanes are said to be controlled by four zemís. Zemís are the gods of the Taino people in the Caribbean.

These zemís are **Guabancex** (goddess of wind and chaos), **Hu-Rakan** (the lord of spinning winds), **Coatrischie** (the lord of rain), & **Guatauva** (the lord of thunder & lightning), who individually are pretty scary but when they come together are a whole new level of terrifying. Together they whip up the most powerful hurricanes and send them to the Taino people, destroying villages, wrecking harvests, killing people, and even altering the very landscape itself.

Guabancex is the ruler of the land of Aumatex and she holds the title of “Tribal Chief (Cacique) of the Wind.” She is an emanation of the supreme goddess Atabey. She is said to have a volatile temper, and is easily enraged unleashing hurricanes by gathering together the other three zemís. By rotating her arms in a spiral, Guabancex would pick up the water of the ocean and land, placing it under the command of Coatrisquie, who violently forced it back over the Taino settlements destroying their crops. She was always preceded by Guataubá, who heralded her eventual arrival with clouds, lightning and thunder.

Guabancex manifests to help us see impermanence, death & dying, and the ever changing nature of phenomena and the world. She helps us see the insubstantial nature of material things, and to shake us up out of our self-centered ideas of being in control. She challenges us to examine how much control we really have in the world. To help check our egos and bring people together as a community, having reverence for this precious human life. Guabancex is the outward manifestation of the four thoughts. Guiding us to turn and reflect on each of them sincerely. She shows us our world and all the beings within are all subject to the vagaries of endless causes and conditions and we can never expect for endless permanence and stability in life. She shines a light on what we misperceive as our refuge in material things and controlling the situation, and points to a true refuge that is beyond control and non-control.

And in this way, offering practice generates great merit through the practice of generosity and making offerings to Guabancex in order to bring the world back into balance. Thus it's a way for individuals to help out with hurricanes and climate change; to help out with disease and pandemics, to praise the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, and to make offerings to help all beings in the six realms. In a very short time we can

collectively generate a lot of merit in which we can offer to the world and all its beings near or far away.

The Offering Practice

It is important to realize the basis on which offerings are made: *by making illusory offerings through illusory practice you gather illusory accumulations*. You cause illusory geywa (that which leads to good karma). From that the illusory result which is the perfection of wisdom arises. There are many kinds of illusory visualized offerings. They are used to pacify obstacles. There are obstacles that keep the Dharma from awakening in this lifetime. Obstacles can be a hurricane itself, or all of the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that arise as stress and panic during a hurricane, or even binge watching the Weather Channel. Obstacles can be from our daily life too such as poverty, distraction, compulsion to go play with our devices, to watch strange YouTube, or never ending podcasts. All sorts of obstacles do arise.

It's important to make the offering as gracefully as you are capable. You coordinate body, speech, and mind. You pay attention in the moment. This practice is keyrim (the path of accumulation). It accumulates geywa. It creates geywa. You create geywa and it changes the world. It begins with taking refuge and arising Bodhichitta, as should any practice that you do. Wishing that as a result of the geywa created all beings attain perfect awakening. You do it visualizing yourself in the form of your Yidam. If you do not have a Yidam it is good to use Chenrezig. There is a lot of visualization in offering practice, it is not just the words.

How to Make the Offering

First, you need a bumpa or a teapot. A bumpa is simply a Tibetan ritual vase. However any teapot will work. You put pure drinking water in it with saffron if you have any. And you can put blessed medicine if you have any. If you're using a teapot in the top of it you place a non-poisonous local flower. Take off the lid and stand a non-poisonous local flower in it. When it's time to use the bumpa or the teapot, you pick up the flower or your peacock feather from the top, and you sprinkle the water offering over the food offerings.

As for the food offering, just a little thing like a beverage and some nice crackers, cheese, and fruit can be arranged. You can put on it whatever you think your land spirits might like. If you are in the middle of nature you might want four plates and little saucers with little tiny beverages to offer in each of the four directions. Some

may only have nature in one direction, so one plate is fine in that direction. So you can place one to four depending on your environment.

Then you recite prayers, using a bell if you have one. You can also use any prayers of local spirits that you may know. The offering prayer to Ong Dia (Mr. Land) or even to the Five Elemental Ladies, who personify the five essential elements that govern the universe: air, fire, earth, space, and water.

Next, you would complete the offering by taking the offerings outside to the natural place around your home and toss the contents of the cup and the plate up in the air towards the nature spirits. Then you would return inside with your empty cup and plate and continue with your life and daily practices.

The Symbolic Meaning of Making Offerings

Which is the antidote to miserliness

What are the objects of offering?

Pure objects are the offering objects of the five types, sometimes called the five daily offerings, and the eight offerings. All of these objects of offerings should be very clean and arranged in a balanced and beautiful manner in our homes. There is a way to arrange all of this but the most important thing is that they are cleaned and arranged beautifully, in your perception. Offerings should not be accrued through non-virtue. The five offerings are the butter lamp, incense, water, torma (food), and flowers. If you have these, then you can arrange them on your altar. If you have nothing, you can offer them through hand gestures - five gestures, one for each offering. The eight types of offering: butter lamp, drum and bell, incense, cloth, food/torma, flowers, dancing movement, jewels. If you have them, you can put them on the altar. Otherwise, you can make them through gestures.

Five Types of Offerings

What are the five kinds of offerings?

Butter lamp, incense, water, food/torma, and flowers. Each purifies the two experiences of the five paths.

What are the five paths?

1. hell being path
2. hungry ghost path
3. animal path
4. human path
5. god path

There is no demigod path as they are included in the god path and hungry ghost path. The upper part of the path of the demi-gods is the path of the gods and the lower part of the path of the demi-gods is the harm bringers, which is the path of the hungry ghosts. Each of the five paths have two experiences which are purified by the five offerings.

What are the two experiences?

For those beings who are continuing on the five paths, there are the six or twelve deluded experiences.

For hell beings, there are the experiences of heat and cold.

For hungry ghosts, there are the experiences of hunger and thirst.

For animals, there is the experiences of stupidity and being mute.

For humans, there are the experiences of constant toil and poverty.

For demi-gods, there are the experience of conflict and fighting.

For the gods, there are the experiences of defeat and downfall.

Now, in what way do the five offerings purify the deluded experiences of the five paths?

Butter lamps purify the suffering of the hell realm. The melted butter cools the heat of the hell realm and the wick warms the cold of the hell realm. The flame of the butter subdues the hatred of the hell realm. The clear light of the butter shows the expanse of great love which leads to enlightenment in the Pure Realm of Buddha Limitless Light.

The **incense** offering purifies the suffering of the hungry ghosts realm. The collection of the incense ingredients satisfies the hunger. The pleasant smell satisfies the thirst. The light of the burning incense dries up the ocean of desire and attachment.

The smoke shows the expanse of great generosity, which leads to enlightenment in the western Blissful Pure Realm.

The **pure water** offering purifies the suffering of the animal realm. By the water, stupidity becomes clear and clean. When we offer the water, we put in some amrita ritual medicine inside. The added medicinal ingredients make speech come from the beings that are mute. The cleanness of the water clears the darkness of ignorance. The continuous stream of water shows the expanse of primordial wisdom, which leads to enlightenment in the eastern Pure Realms of manifest joy.

You can offer these everyday. You can use seven bowls. Ideally gold, silver, copper, or whatever you can use. Keep them very clean. There are six for the six realms and the seventh for the bardo beings. Bardo beings are all of the six realms.

The **food** offering - also called the **torma** offering - purifies the suffering of the human realms. When the grains of the torma are mixed with the water, the desire of humans is satisfied. For example, when Tibetans eat tsampa, we usually mix it with tea or water, satisfying the desire of humans. There are decorations on torma that have different meanings. The butter decoration of torma clears sickness. The good taste destroys the prison of jealousy. There are often tormas with many heads of the individuals or multiple deities. The horn shows the extensive expanse which leads to enlightenment in the southern realms of pure glory.

The **flower** offering purifies the suffering of demi-gods and gods. By the lack of any stains, the flowers benefit the gods to be free from the suffering of defeat and downfall. By the radiant light of the blossom, the demi-god sufferings of conflict and fighting is purified. By the pedals, there is overcoming of pride and laziness. By space in the stem, it shows the great peaceful expanse of the northern pure land of fulfilled action. There are five realms, five poisons, and twelve deluded experiences all purified by the five offerings.

How do we offer these?

First, there is the general way of offering - the offering of the actual objects. If you have these five things, you can offer them. Second, is the contemplation offering. This

is the visualized offering of countless objects imagined. The five offering goddesses are holding the five offerings. Imagine all sentient beings offering all of the objects to limitless retinues. You can do the five gestures/mudras of the five offerings.

Eight Kinds of Offerings

What are the eight kinds of offerings?

Beautiful forms, melodious sounds, fragrant smells, delicious tastes, soft touch, supreme teachings, elegant dance, and precious minerals. Each purifies the eight consciousness. The eight consciousnesses are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mental, afflictive mind, and universal ground consciousness.

Beautiful forms are offered like the lights that appear from the butter lamp, the lights of mirrors, the light of the crystal balls, light of the sun and moon, and so forth. Beautiful forms purify the eye consciousness.

Melodious sound offerings are offered like the sound of drums, bells, conch, flute, lute, tambura, small bell, and songs. Melodious sounds purify the ear consciousness.

Fragrant smells offered are like sandalwood, camper, incense, medicinal herbs, aromatic substances from rocks, and so forth. Fragrant smells purify the nose consciousness.

Delicious tastes are offered like the three white offerings (yogurt, milk, and butter), sweet offering (sugar, honey, and molasses), fruits, sweet cheese, cottage cheese, the nine types of grains of torma. Delicious tastes purify the tongue consciousness.

Soft touch offerings are offered like silk clothing, cotton (usually orange), and rainbow silk brocades. Soft touch purifies the body consciousness.

The **supreme teaching** offerings are things like volumes of scriptures with the magical letters, the four doors of Bön, and the treasures of the Buddhas and their commentaries. Offerings of teachings purify the mind consciousness.

The **flexible elegant dance**, soft, coiling, flowing, joyful, smiling, etc. are the elegant dance offerings. Offerings of dance purify the afflictive emotions consciousness.

Precious mineral offerings are like gold, crystal, coral, iron, sapphire, lapis lazuli, etc. Precious minerals purify the karmic traces in the universal ground consciousness.

Alternative eight kinds of offerings:

In some traditions and texts, other similar eight offerings are used. For example, another set of eight offerings are **water to drink, water to wash, flowers, incense, light, perfume/massage oil, food/torma, and music**. The symbolic meaning for these are the same as listed above. Also specific Bodhisattvas and Yidams may have their own unique offerings as well. For instance, Kurukulle favors offerings of honey and flowers, for her entourage are bees.

Bringing Offerings Into Our Relationships

We can also turn our offering practice to our loved ones, friends, and community. We can offer up the ingredients to unconditional nonjudgmental loving relationships to others in a time of need like a hurricane. The stress and emotions during a hurricane can feel as strong as the storm itself. We can be the calm person on the boat setting the example of and shining a light of being calm. But we can also offer the ingredients that create unconditional loving relationships to the people around us. And when we need a loving relationship within ourselves we can offer these good ingredients to ourselves too. Often we may need to start with offering to ourselves before we can offer them to others.

What are the good ingredients to create unconditional loving relationships with myself as well as others?

- **Security:** Felt sense of safety. Everything is okay.
- **Attention:** Feeling seen. Giving someone genuine attention. Showing up and being present to them. Everyone wants to feel seen.
- **True Presence:** Feeling known more deeply. I see you suffering, and I am here for you. The six mantras of True Presence by Thich Nhat Hanh are good example.

- **Agency:** Feeling valued and capable. Responding to the other person and allowing them to receive what they need. Encouraging them to experience the full expression of what is arising. Encouraging to be their best self, without trying to fix it or manipulate the situation.

What are the Six Mantras of True Presence?

The Six Mantras are ways to express love and compassion. They can be very effective in transforming suffering and producing happiness in a relationship with a loved one, a friend, or a colleague. Children can practice them too. You may start by first practicing the Six Mantras with yourself, because you can only love and understand another when you have practiced love and understanding for yourself.

A mantra is a magic formula. Every time you pronounce a mantra you can transform the situation right away; you don't have to wait. Learn it so you can recite it when the time is appropriate. What makes the mantra effective is your mindfulness and concentration. If you aren't mindful and concentrated when you recite the mantra, it won't work. We are all capable of being mindful and concentrated.

Mantra	Description
I am here for you.	This mantra is a practice, not a declaration. To love someone means to be there for that person. But first you have to be there for yourself. The practice is to produce your true presence.
I know you are there, and it makes me very happy.	This mantra is to acknowledge the presence of the person you love and to say that you are very happy that he or she is still alive and available to you. Everyone wants to be embraced by the mindful attention of the one they love. This mantra will make the other person happy right away.
I know you suffer, and that is why I am here for you.	This mantra is for you to practice when you see that the other person suffers. If you are a lover, you need to know what is happening to the person you love. If you are there for that person, you will notice when he or she suffers.
I suffer. Please help.	This mantra is for you to practice when you yourself suffer, and you believe the other person has caused your suffering. Go to that person with mindfulness and concentration and say the mantra. It may be a little bit difficult because you feel hurt. It takes a little training, but you can do it.
This is a happy moment.	The fifth mantra is for us to remember how lucky we are that we have so many conditions of happiness available in the here and the now.
You are partly right.	This mantra is to remind us that as human beings we have both positive and negative traits. Our head shouldn't be turned by praise, nor should we despair when we're criticized.

Being the Calm White Ibis in the Storm

The white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), is a long-beaked wading bird found in Florida. White ibises are social birds, living in large colonies along with many other species of birds. Florida folklore maintains that the white ibis is a symbol of knowledge to the people of the Everglades. The white ibis is the last sign of wildlife to take shelter before a hurricane and the first to reappear after the storm. The white ibis is a symbol of resilience, fearlessness, stability and calmness during a hurricane. The white ibis wisdom allows them to remain calm and still even through a hurricane when most birds flee. And after the storm, they are the first birds to return exemplifying being a calming and grounded presence for the other birds. Inspired by the white ibis, we too can practice this fearlessness, stability, and resilience by being living exemplars grounded in wisdom of these qualities when the people around us might be tossed around

by the emotional winds of the storm. We can stay grounded in mindfulness like a white ibis to support all those around us.

After the Storm

After the storm, there might be much work to be done. Many people might be suffering and need help. You might feel the energy to start making calls and getting to work. But it's important not to rush at this time. After the storm, Mother Nature has been pacified. This is a very auspicious time. Take some time to connect with the space that arises after the storm. Go outside and see if you can notice and connect with the signs of Mother Nature. See if you can recognize and connect with the stillness, the silence, and the spaciousness of nature after the storm. Perhaps you have been indoors for many hours if not days. Use this chance to touch the five natural elements of water, wind, fire, earth, and space. Let the natural elements wash over and heal you.

Spend about 1 minute consciously experiencing each of these aspects of awareness:

Five Senses

- 1. Look:** Become aware of what you see: notice the richly varied and vivid impressions—shapes, colors, movement, dimensionality, the entire visible world.
- 2. Listen:** Become aware of what you hear: register the various sounds taken in by your ears—a diverse range of intensities, pitches, and tonal qualities, perhaps including the commonplace miracle of speech or the wonder of music.
- 3. Feel:** Become aware of what you touch: texture, weight, temperature, etc. Also note how your body feels right now and compare that to the many other ways it feels at other times, tired or energetic, stiff or limber, painful or pleasant, etc.
- 4. Taste:** Become aware of what it is like to taste: taste a food or beverage, or remember and vividly imagine one. Taste the inside of your mouth at rest.
- 5. Smell:** Become aware of what you smell around you or vividly remember and imagine a smell you have encountered.

Five Elements

1. **Earth:** Become aware of the solid support of the ground beneath you, the solidity of your body, or natural earth elements you can see and touch.
2. **Air:** Become aware of the feeling of the wind on your skin, blowing your hair, or simply the sound of the wind. Become aware of your natural breathing.
3. **Water:** Become aware of any sources of water you may see, hear, taste, or feel - from the sound of the rain, to sipping a cup of tea.
4. **Fire:** Become aware of the warmth from the sun, candle light, fire, or any other source of heat and light.
5. **Space:** Become aware of the spaciousness all around you, in which all other elements and stuff arise within.

Inner Awareness

1. **Thoughts:** Become aware of your thoughts. What have you been thinking while doing this exercise? What are you thinking right now? How real do thoughts seem?
2. **Emotions:** Become aware of your feelings. Is there anger or joy, serenity or excitement? Are there a mix of emotions? Are there ones you cannot name? How real do emotions feel?
3. **Perceptions:** Become aware of your perceptions. Not just the objects you see, but the lens of perception that the objects are being seen through. No matter what we are looking at there is an object, subject, and the lens of perception filtering the whole experience.
4. **"I, Me, Mine":** Become aware that your experience always includes you, the experiencer of experience. "You" are who is aware, always at the center of your private universe of experience, but you are not always consciously aware of yourself. Briefly repeat the exercise, but this time, as you attend to each aspect of experience, be aware of the "I" that is noticing these things ("I am smelling rain", "I feel soft fabric")

5. Awareness of awareness: Finally, become aware of your awareness. Normally, awareness focuses on objects outside ourselves, but it can itself be an object of awareness... Here, experience cannot be adequately expressed by language.

