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## The Shaman's Dream Newsletter

### February 2009 - vol #2

*An offering of thoughts, meditations, visualizations and other musings.*

**Quick Links**  
Related web sites:

- [ShamanDreaming.org](#)
- [ImageMaya.org](#)
- [ImageMaya.org](#)
- [markg.org](#)
- [Hearts of Light](#)

**About the Author**

Mark Gilliland is a visual artist, graphic designer, landscape designer, shaman, plant lover and healer. To contact him directly, email [mg@markg.org](mailto:mg@markg.org).

**About Our Sponsor**

Lindsey Sass is a clairvoyant healer, spiritual teacher, Nationally Certified Hypnotist and a Licensed Massage Therapist with a Bachelors degree in Social Services and Psychology. Visit her [website](#) for more information.

The Healing Center  
142 Main Street  
Bloomington, NJ  
07403

973-714-0765

**Greetings!**

You are receiving this newsletter as a service of **Hearts of Light Institute** and **The Healing Center**. You are currently a subscriber to my email list. If you no longer wish to receive mailings from me, including this Shaman's Dream newsletter, please unsubscribe below (at bottom of newsletter).

Blessings and Best Regards,

Lindsey Sass-Aurand

**About this Issue**

**OFFERINGS**

In the last issue of my newsletter, I covered the concept of an altar, how to build one and the meaning of its various forms. In this issue, I will talk about the care and feeding of your altar - presenting daily offerings.

You'll note there will be a lot of emphasis (below) as to approaching your altar with gratitude and joy. I focus on this because in daily practice it is important to generate uplifting energy, with your altar serving as an amplifier / resonator of such energy back into your life. Let us always remember that each lifetime is a gift of new experience and of Divine love.

Finally, I also present a few other forms of offerings such as Prayer Flags and Sand Mandalas.

**QUICK LINKS**

A quick rundown on what you will find at the various sites listed under Quick Links (above, left column):

**Shaman Dreaming.org** - My newest site is a collection of shamanic related art, meditations, visualizations, links and reading materials.

**Image Maya.org** - My original online sacred & visionary art portfolio.

**ImageMaya.org** - My art blog, which gets updated more frequently than the other sites. Has the latest samples of art work, musings about the sky signs, about specific journeys and visualizations, and a special section on Ecstatic Body Postures, RSS feed enabled.

**markg.org** - my online portal with resumes, and links to my business sites (landscape design and graphic/web design).

**Hearts of Light Institute.com** - Lindsey's web site.

Thank-you for sharing your time with me. I trust you will find this newsletter useful and inspiring!

Please feel free to email me at [mg@markg.org](mailto:mg@markg.org). I look forward to hearing from you.

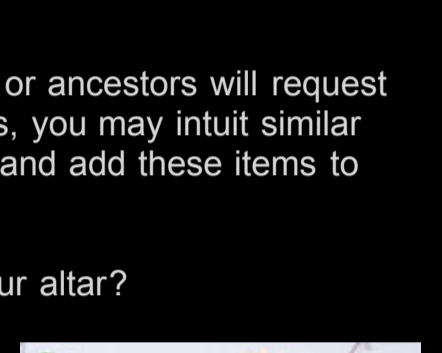
- Mark Gilliland

## Care and Feeding of Your Altar

My previous newsletter (January 2009 - vol. #1) mentioned the importance of ritual "care and feeding" of your altar on a daily basis (or as frequently as possible). As part of your practice, altar offerings are small gifts of gratitude and remembrance for your spiritual guides and protectors, for your totem animals and plant spirit helpers, for your ancestors. The altar serves a place of energetic focus for your conscious offerings and prayers, thus empowering and strengthening your altar's chakra connection to the omnipresent Divine. As you feed the altar, as you feed your spirit guides and ancestors, so too will they "feed" you in return.



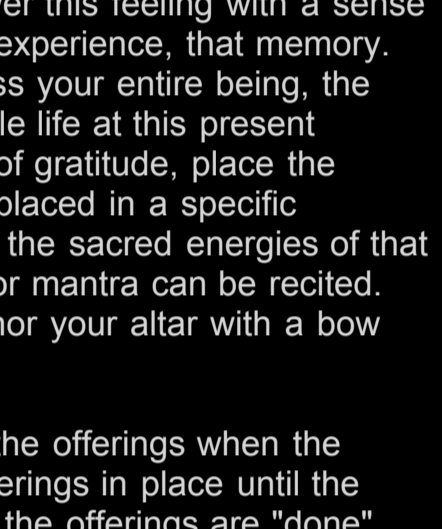
Offerings can become a way of life, a "gratitude yoga" directed at the world around you. A wonderful example of this can be witnessed on the island of Bali: daily offerings in small hand-woven palm leaf baskets, filled with a colorful arrangement of flowers, rice, seeds, herbs and incense, are placed at the family shrine, at altars around the house, on the doorstep, at the entry to the home compound, at the base of a special tree or other spirit abode. Such offerings can be seen everywhere in public places. On the street corners, along footpaths and floating in streams, throughout local temple compounds.



For the Balinese, the landscape is full of nature spirits, ancestor spirits and local gods & goddesses who must be propitiated and thanked daily. By this energy of gratitude, remembrance and thanks, the delicate balance between humans and the spirit world is maintained. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and other natural or personal calamities can thus be avoided.

Many practitioners discover that their guides or ancestors will request specific offerings. For plant or animal helpers, you may intuit similar requests. Obviously, listen to such intuitions and add these items to your offerings!

- What sort of offerings might you place on your altar?
- A lit candle.
  - Fragrant incense.
  - Flowers.
  - Food and drink such as blue corn, rice, fruit, chocolate, baked goods, water, beer or other alcohol, tobacco.
  - A special stone or crystal.
  - A photo, drawing, artwork.
  - A written prayer (to be placed into the flame?)
  - Prayer, chanting, song, bells and chimes.



Before making an offering, first smudge or energetically clear (with chants, bells, tingshas) yourself and the area around the altar. Next, gather the materials for the offering and clear these, as well. Finally, clear your mind and slow your breath. Now you are ready.

Always present your offerings in gratitude: begin by opening your heart, by recalling a joyous / happy event. Recall the details of this event and let the wave of emotions flush through you (your endocrine system will work its wonders automatically). Then, answer this feeling with a sense of gratitude for that moment, for that joyous experience, that memory. Expand the warmth of gratitude to encompass your entire being, the offerings in front of you, your altar, your whole life at this present moment. Consciously, holding the full intent of gratitude, place the offerings on the altar. Each offering may be placed in a specific direction - as in a medicine wheel - invoking the sacred energies of that direction. With each offering, a short prayer or mantra can be recited. Once all offerings have been completed, honor your altar with a bow and a moment of silent dedication.

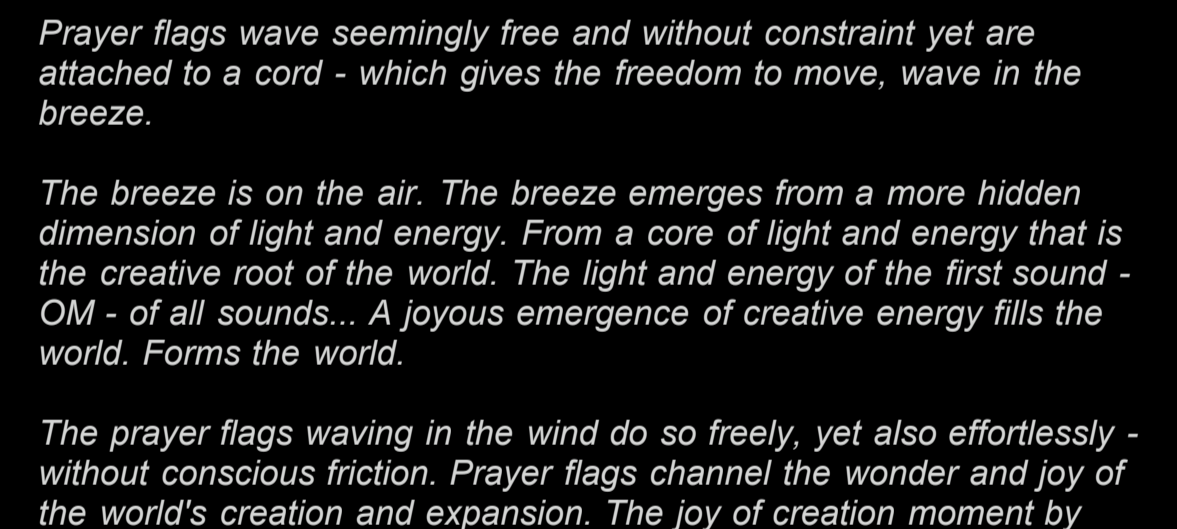
You might wonder what should you do with the offerings when the ceremony is complete? If possible, leave offerings in place until the next offering ceremony. Whenever you intuit the offerings are "done", remove old flowers, seeds, alcohol (etc.). Used offerings may be burnt in a fire or buried in the ground. In some cultures, food offerings are considered blessed by the spirit and are shared amongst family and friends in a special meal. Offerings such as flowers can be used to create an energized bath for spiritual bathing. Another way to dispose of the offerings is to simply leave them outside in the "wild" environment - for example; left under a tree in the woods, the offerings will naturally decay or will be taken away by an animal. If set upon a stream, the used offerings will float away to naturally decay.

Like the Balinese, you may feel a strong connection to a special place, a stream, a tree, a garden, a boulder or rock outcropping, a place where birds congregated... You may feel a strong desire to celebrate and honor the spirit of that place or object. You can do this by making an offering to the nature spirit(s), the deities (of the stream, waterfall, lake, field, tree, flower, totem animal, clouds, hill). Such offerings may be simple, such as some loose tobacco or freshly gathered flowers. (Always ask permission to pick or gather!)

Or, following the lead of the Balinese, you may wish to offer something handmade, an aesthetically pleasing "offering sculpture" of sorts, created with intention.

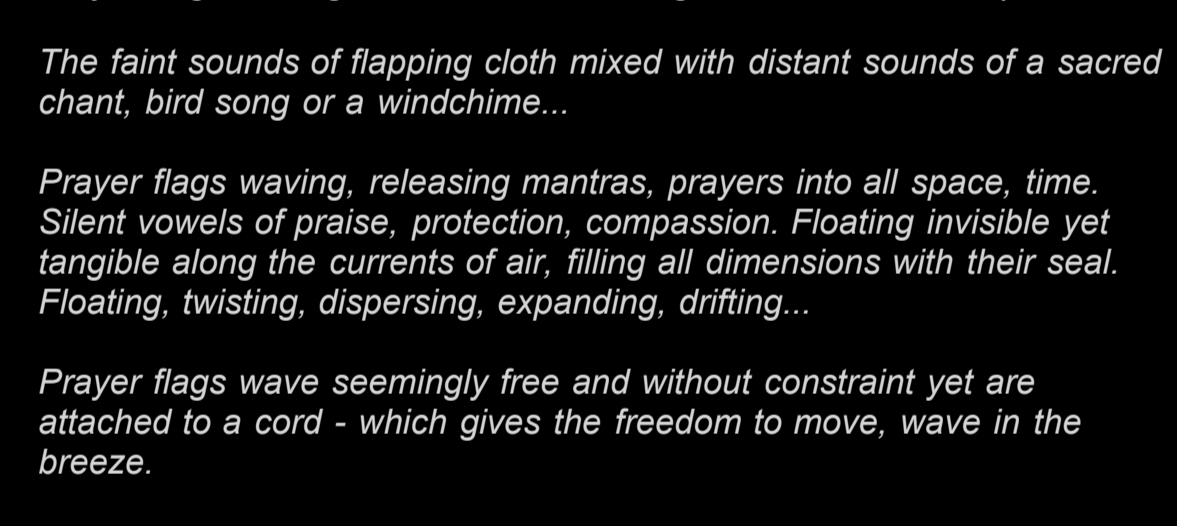
For example, I made a collection of offering packets during the Fall to honor local tree spirits (around my yard) before they went into hibernation. The construction process is simple, but the results are exquisite: First select a fresh large leaf to be the carrier or wrapper - in this case, I used a tobacco leaf.

Next, fill the leaf with seeds, herbs, flowers, incense and/or other gifts of your choosing. Then, fold the leaf up like an envelope to enclose the various loose materials; tie shut (using a nice natural twine or colorful embroidery thread). Finally, decorate the tied package with another colorful leaf, twig or flower. Once made, be sure to smudge the offerings and offer a dedication prayer. Outside, present these offerings to each nature spirit with a prayer of thanks, honoring them for their services, their role in the natural order. You'll be happy to notice that the offering packets which were left out will magically disappear over the next few days.



## Prayer Flags

Prayer flags are another form of offering. Each flag is printed with a special set of mantras and prayers which call upon specific protectors, Buddhas or deities (such as Tara) to provide protection and well being. Prayers may also call for the rapid enlightenment of all sentient beings, the dissolution of delusion, the balancing of Karma and the embodiment of the Pure Lands. As the prayer flags flap in the breeze, the written prayers and mantras are released into the auric field of the world.



## A channeled message

*Prayer flags waving in the breeze. Red, green, blue, white, aqua.*

*The faint sounds of flapping cloth mixed with distant sounds of a sacred chant, bird song or a windchime...*

*Prayer flags waving, releasing mantras, prayers into all space, time. Silent vows of praise, protection, compassion. Flapping invisibly yet tangible along the currents of air, filling all dimensions with their seal. Floating, twisting, dispersing, expanding, drifting...*

*Prayer flags wave seemingly free and without constraint yet are attached to a cord - which gives the freedom to move, wave in the breeze.*

*The breeze is on the air. The breeze emerges from a more hidden dimension of light and energy. From a core of light and energy that is the creative root of the world. The light and energy of the first sound - OM - of all sounds... A joyous emergence of creative energy fills the world. Forms the world.*

*The prayer flags waving in the wind do so freely, yet also effortlessly - without conscious friction. Prayer flags channel the wonder and joy of the world's creation and expansion. The joy of creation moment by moment.*

*The white light at the center of the world, the core of the world.*

*Do not feel the need to control, do not judge or fear. The creative joy always flows, emerging into all the dimensions of the world. Be like the prayer flag - flap gently in a light breeze, whip wildly in a strong wind. Without effort, thought, follow the energy, creation flow. Always act in joy, centered on the light and energy flow without reason or expectation. Simply reflect the wonder of the world making itself anew every moment. Perception as a prayer and salutation. Let the new flow thru you.*

## Offering Prayers for Raising Prayer Flags

Traditional smoke offering ceremonies can be used when putting up new prayer flags. Ceremonies are not mandatory, of course, but they make a special event out of the raising of the flags and help to put one in the proper altruistic state of mind.

Smoke offering prayers are recited while burning incense substances. Tibetans often build wood fires on which they place green juniper and other aromatic medicinal saps, resins and herbs while chanting the prayers. (You may wish to recite either the Tibetan or the English translation of the prayer.) When repeating the syllables "OM AH HUM" visualize the smoke filling all of space. Toward the end of the prayer pass the folded up prayer flags through the smoke (careful not to touch them to the ground) and then put them up.

**OM AH HUNG**  
**OM AH HUNG**  
**OM AH HUNG**

**CHHOE KYONG NOR LHA TER DAK SOK** *(To the Dharma protectors, gods of wealth, treasure holders and so forth.)*

**DAK LA SUNG SHING KYOB NAM SANG** *(To all those who guard and protect me, accept this incense offering. )*

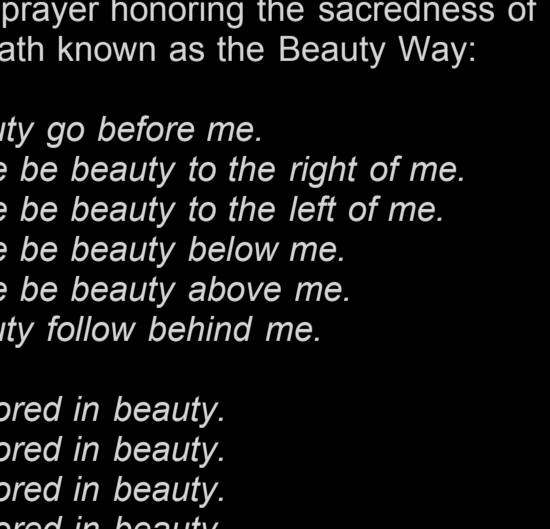
**LUNG TA DAR WAI DONG DOK ZOD** *( Please help to increase my good fortune, health and well being.)*

**AH HUM**

Note: Each month, there are several inauspicious days for hanging new prayer flags. This information changes each year. Check online to find the list of current "unlucky" days and plan your ceremony accordingly. <http://www.prayerflags.com/prayerflagsubsub.php>

## Sand Mandalas

Sand Mandalas are another form of offering created and shared by specially trained and empowered Tibetan Buddhist monks.



Creating a sand mandala, like an altar, generates a sacred space wherein the energies of the associated deity (Buddha, Protector, Dakini or Bodhisatva) can be made manifest in the physical world for the benefit of all.

Here is a link to a short [video clip](#) which shows a sand mandala being built, then destroyed, recently at RMA (Rubin Museum of Art) in NYC.

## Navajo Beauty Way Prayer

The glory of the Earth and our privilege to live here are some of our great blessings as humans. The Navajo people saw this and saw that all life as sacred. The Navajo have a prayer honoring the sacredness of the Earth and all life. It honors the Path known as the Beauty Way.

*May beauty go before me.*  
*May there be beauty to the right of me.*  
*May there be beauty to the left of me.*  
*May there be beauty below me.*  
*May there be beauty above me.*  
*May beauty follow behind me.*

*I am restored in beauty.*  
*I am restored in beauty.*  
*I am restored in beauty.*  
*I am restored in beauty.*

There is a ceremony that may be performed to pledge yourself to this Path of Beauty. It is called the **Blessed Beauty Way Vow**.

Build an altar to ceremonially honor the Earth and your Sacred Self. Put upon that Altar something of the Four Worlds: something from the Rock People, something from the Sacred World of the Plants, something from the Sacred World of the Animals, and one of your own power objects (to represent the World of Sacred Humans). You may also want to create a Medicine Wheel mandala (using colored sand, pebbles and so forth) upon the altar to bring the powers of the Universe to witness your ceremony.

Note: blue corn flour (corn paho) used in this ceremony is available from most natural foods grocery stores. Be certain to properly cleanse and bless it before use.

Sit quietly before the altar when you are ready to do this ceremony.

First, smudge yourself, the altar, the offerings and the surrounding area.

Then, take a small pinch of blue corn flour (corn paho) and hold it between your forefinger and thumb.

Begin by touching the pinch of corn paho to your lips and saying:

"Earth Mother, I thank you for the nourishment and blessings I receive from you each day. I accept your Beauty. May all my communication with others also carry this gift of Beauty."

Touch the pinch of corn paho to the top of your head. Then speak:

"Father Sky, may I hear the Voice of your Greater Dream so that my dream and your dream become one Dance of Beauty."

Touch the pinch of corn paho to your heart and say:

"Great Spirit, I fill my heart with the joy of your Beauty so that I might touch self, life and others with Beauty. Great Spirit, may I walk in Beauty."

Finally, sprinkle the pinch of corn paho into the center of your altar as your giveaway back to Grandmother Earth.

Note: this ceremony is documented by an unknown source. I offer thanks for using it here.

All images (except Lindsey in Field of Flowers and the RMA Sand Mandala) Copyright M. Gilliland 2001-2008