

MAKING OFFERINGS TO AIR, EARTH, AND WATER SPIRITS

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I wrote a blog recently about the Tibetan concept of the Earth Lords, the protectors of the land and the environment. There is no question that some natural spots have power and a life of their own. I know Americans love nature, but we don't tend to personify natural beauty with beings other than we humans. The Tibetans Buddhists do. In Tibet, places have energy-beings, protectors of the power and beauty that holds them together, that makes them what they are. I know, some will say that beauty is just in the eye of the beholder, but here I am talking about beholding beauty a little deeper than what our eye takes in. I am talking about a shock and awe factor a little larger than just ourselves.

As we become more aware, we can begin to feel the vitality of places. There are creeks and streams and then there are Creeks and Streams, water where life runs through it. Some of us are sensitive to the nature of these power spots, or can learn to be.

Perhaps you live in an area that has natural beauty, or is somehow auspicious as a power spot and you might like to make a stronger connection with the energy there, to make friends with it.

What follows here is a little practice you can do to honor natural places with your good wishes and to establish a bond with them and whatever energies reside there. This is something that Tibetans do a lot, make an offering with a pure heart.

The idea here is that you are going to offer something either at the natural site (spring, mountain, etc.) itself, or on your personal home shrine. It could be as simple as a flower or cookie, cracker, or no food at all, but some few mantras, such as "OM Mani Padme Hum," and so on. Remember it is not the offering-item that is the offering, but rather the intention. The act and ceremony of offering is the actual offering, not the item that is offered. And it is simple.

Before making the offering you are going to address and gather together all the nature or energy spirits in the area, and get their attention. The process is as real as you are in making the offering. These earth lords are not enlightened beings like Buddha or some of the Tibetan deities, etc., but rather nature spirits, spirits of the earth, wind, and water that have been tamed long ago and bound to oath by great beings like Guru Rinpoche. These nature spirits are by nature not necessarily kind or friendly, especially to those who violate their areas, such as pollute the water and air, or disturb the earth in destructive ways.

They are not your friends, but can be friendly and protective if you are protecting the same things they protect, such as the air, land, and water. Of course, you had best not be violating their domains and your intent should be only to help them protect the environment.

Since they are 'bound' spirits or energies, in this practice you remind them not to be malicious or jealous, but to support in kind those who share their intentions, like yourselves. You ask all other harmful beings to go elsewhere, and remind those who might not pay attention and wish to cause harm that they will be destroyed by the ten wrathful wisdom deities if they do not cooperate.

Once this is said, you then make your offering, either of food, flower, etc., or mantra. Even if you offer food on your shrine or at the site, some prayers or mantras should also be recited.

And last, this kind of offering should only be done when you feel gratitude for the earth, water, and air that is being protected, and not just because you feel obligated to make an offering or think it is cool to do so. The success of the offering will always be a perfect reflection of your intention, so it is best not to make an offering out of a sense of obligation or to get something for yourself. Wait until you can offer with joy and a good heart just for the beauty of it, and you will strengthen the bond between these spirits and your own actions. And don't forget to dedicate the merit from your offering, which will be explained below. Here is the short practice:

THE OFFERING PRACTICE

Imagine that this offering,
Within a precious jeweled container,
Instantly becomes amrita [pure nectar or ambrosia] and recite:

OM AH HUNG

Then assemble the spirits:

Local lords,
Spirits of the air, land, and water,
Including harmful spirits,
Gather here and partake of this offering,
So that I may accomplish,
the Secret Mantra in this place.

Do not act maliciously or be jealous.

Befriend those beings of virtue,
And establish productive conditions.

All negative entities,
And classes of obstructers,
Go elsewhere.

If perhaps you do not listen,

And intend to cause harm,
You will be destroyed by
The natural radiation of the,
Wrathful Wisdom Beings.

Therefore,
Listen to this command.

[Here recite the mantras and make any offerings]

When you are finished, be sure to dedicate the merit of this practice, saying something like this:

“Whatever merit arises from this offering, I dedicate that all sentient beings in the three times and ten directions may become more aware and find true happiness.”

You can also say any personal prayers here.

This short practice has been modified a little bit from a general traditional practice, but should be correct and helpful.