

MANDALA – OFFERINGS THAT LAST
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By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

One of the qualities of mandala offerings is executing the offering skillfully in a “Zen Like” manner, with perfect mindfulness. This pertains to everything we do. We learn to make the things we do last by doing them carefully and mindfully. Great and lasting art is made so well that it lasts and fascinates us for a very long time, often far longer than the civilizations that produced it. We still read Homer’s “Iliad” and “Odyssey” thousands of years after the cities of the men he wrote about have turned to dust.

Shakespeare has defied the combined ears of centuries to fathom and to exhaust the ability of his words to last or hold our attention. They shine. Only absolutely ‘true actions’ hold together (cohere) long enough for us to see anything in them, for them to give off light. Real and lasting offerings are ones that endure.

Great art, poetry, or any true offering shines. Things done or made well emit light and are the solidified product of our actions. They shine and by their light we can see.

Proper offerings are like miniature suns shining. These sources of light, these offerings that we have learned to do well are one of the esoteric meanings of the fixed stars. We each have those actions and rituals that we perform that never fail us, but ever last, giving off light. If we act skillfully and carefully, our whole inner awareness is ablaze -- enlightened by the light of the true offerings we have made. It is recursive.

Collecting Light

As we become more mindful, we learn to make more and more gestures and offerings that last and which in turn emit yet more light. The things we do well shine and by their light we can see. Every well-executed action and offering enhances our awareness and becomes like a star shining within our mind. Once we have made or found one star shining, we can see to make more by its light, and the more light we have, the more offerings we can make, bringing still more light, until we have built an entire body of light. This is what is called in the esoteric texts the “Body of Light.” We literally light up our life by our actions, by what we do and how we do it.

When we succeed in making one part of life really well, that section of our life mandala no longer demands attention and we can turn our awareness to other things. It is like breathing; once we learn it, we repeat that ritual automatically. Mind training is the process of taking permanent or perpetual care of more and more of our loose ends, tying these down so well that they don't require further attention – simple maintenance.

Great meditators are master craftsmen who teach how to make proper offerings. Everything of lasting value that I have managed to learn (and I am a slow learner) has been through the kindness of my dharma teachers, men and women who cared enough to distract me from my endless distractions and point out the true nature of the mind.

Here is a poem I wrote years ago about the things that last. It is one of what I call my “mantra’ poems. If spoken out loud and with care, it actually means something and causes a concept to arise in the mind. Try it.

EVERLASTING LIFE

What will in words not wake,
Clear sleeps,
And clear, sleeps on.

What wakes stands watch to see that sleep as sound.
What wakes will serve to set asleep,
Inset a sleep with standing words,
That wake, if ever, last.
And on that last, in overlay, our life.

Yes, to lay at the last a life that ever lives,
To ever last that "last" of life,
And in ever 'lasting' life, everlasting,

We have a life that lives at last.

- Michael

