

TARA

Known as Drol-ma in Tibetan, Tara is one of the widest worshipped deity in Tibet.

Legend says that She was born from a lotus which appeared from the tears shed by Avalokiteshvara, (Bodhisatva of Compassion) when He realized the number of beings suffering in Samsara. As an expression of the feminine essence of Compassion, She is said to have made the vow : “Until Samsara is empty I shall work for the benefit of all sentient beings in a woman’s body”.

Tara’s main attributes are trifold :

❖ “Mother of all Buddhas”: She is regarded as the embodiment of all the Buddhas’ activity.

❖ “The Saviouress” : Tara’s name meaning “Star” is often interpreted as “She who leads across”. Tara is reputed to have rescued many from imminent dangers.

To Her devotees, Tara helps with the eight inner fears of pride, delusion, anger, envy, wrong views, avarice, attachment and doubt.

❖ “Tantric deity”: Tara is a deity of Vajrayana (Buddhist Tantra); this implies that She is potentially latent within every sentient being’s mind.

During the retreat the monks will invoke the 21 aspects of Tara as they recite mantra verses while they build up the sand mandala .This practice is called “the 21 Praises of Tara”. Each form of Tara has a specific mantra and accomplishes a special activity.

ॐ त्ररे तु त्ररे तु रे सु हा

OM TA-RE TU-TA-RE TU-RE SO-HA
(Tara's Mantra)

THE MANDALA

The making of a sand mandala is a Tantric spiritual practice in the Tibetan tradition. A mandala is a representation of the deities described in the Tantric texts, representing their celestial mansion. The Buddhist practitioner uses the image of the mandala to identify the enlightened qualities of the particular meditational deity. Mandalas are created for rituals of initiation, serving as supports for meditation and visualisation, mandalas are ultimately the tools for the attainment of enlightenment.



Millions of grains of coloured sand are painstakingly laid in place over a period of days or weeks.

When the prayer is completed, the deities are respectfully requested to leave the Mandala. In the spirit of impermanence and non-attachment the mandala is ritualistically dismantled. The sand which is thought to be very blessed is usually poured into running waters to carry the healing energies throughout the world and spread blessings to as many sentient beings as possible. Small quantities of sand are often offered to people who have attended the ceremony. These, when scattered onto fields and gardens increase fertility and improve growth.



THE 21 TARA SAND MANDALA

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In the centre of the mandala is the green syllable of Tara on a blue background seated on a lotus flower and representing the main deity of Tara.. Around the centre lay the twenty aspects of Tara represented by the implements each carries : four in the petals of the inner lotus; eight in the outer lotus flower; one in each corner of the courtyard and one in each of the four gateways. By meditating on them one is protected from the eight and sixteen fears which will be explained during the retreat.

To enter the mandala the practitioner must pass through the Eastern gate. At the top of each of the four gates is the “wheel of Dharma” with, seated on each side the two deer as seen on the roof of every Tibetan temple. Around the central courtyard five walls mark the boundaries of the palace which is set within a garden planted with trees and lotuses. The inner ring of the mandala is made of lotus petals. The final ring is a rainbow-coloured ring of fire.



THE RETREAT

PRINCIPLES

Hazel Hill Wood is a spiritual retreat centre located near Salisbury. It is a mixed woodland of 70 acres with eco-friendly living facilities. The aim is to maintain the environment as naturally and sensitively as possible and protect the many aspects of its diversity.

The tradition of giving and receiving in balance and harmony is now well established as one of the main principles at Hazel Hill Wood, and the retreat will be a wonderful opportunity to receive the great blessings of Tara during the making of the mandala, while supporting the monks in their tireless commitment to spread healing of environment and people.

Although the retreat is not strictly silent the temple where the monks will build the mandala will be a place of prayer and meditation and mindfulness of speech.

There will be opportunities for workshops, information and teachings with the monks during the day (please contact Agatha* for further information).

Donations: the monks offer tirelessly and generously the blessings from their prayers to those who attend those healing and inspiring ceremonies; all proceeds go to support their monastery. We will ask a minimum of £5 per session and £10 per day per person.

TIMETABLE

The Monks will build up the mandala from the 7th to 12th September 2010. Daily sessions will be approximately : 9am to 1pm and 2.30 to 5pm

The ceremony of destruction of the mandala and release of the sand into the stream will take place on Sunday 12th September at 3pm (please book your place).

Practicalities : You are welcome to come for an hour, a session, a day (bring your own food if necessary). There are limited sleeping opportunities at the Oak House or possibilities to camp in designated areas of the wood. The buildings are equipped with showers and cooking facilities for those staying for a night. (£20 per night self catering) **Important :** Please apply for residential accommodation and let us know well in advance of your dates, numbers and requirements.

For bookings, further information and how to get there

Contact : * Agatha : Tel 07973 280 943

Email : agathanouche@hotmail.com

No pets, alcohol or recreational drugs.

TASHI LHUNPO MONASTERY

Tashi Lhunpo monastery was founded in Tibet by His Holiness the 1st Dalai Lama in the 15th century, and became one of the Great Six centres of the Gelugpa tradition. In the 16th century its Abbot was recognised by the Fifth Dalai Lama as an incarnation of Amitabha, the spiritual teacher of Chenrezig and the patron saint of Tibet. He was given the title 'Panchen Lama', and became - together with the Dalai Lama - the most important religious leader in Tibet.

After the Chinese invasion of Tibet, and the destruction of the Cultural Revolution a few monks made the journey to India. In 1972, under the guidance of His Holiness, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery was established in Bylakuppe, Karnataka State, South India. Here just over 300 monks now continue to follow the same tradition and principles in exile as in their monastery in Tibet. Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in exile is once again becoming one of the major centres of Buddhist study, best known for its artistic tradition and sacred music.

The 11th Panchen Lama, born in 1989, is still held in secret custody by the Chinese police.



IN PRAISE OF THE 21 TARA RETREAT

HAZEL HILL WOOD
7-12 SEP 2010



THE MAKING OF
A TIBETAN SAND
MANDALA