

THE SAND MANDALA AS SACRED PHILOSOPHY



Compassion

Compassion is a fundamental virtue and a guiding principle in the practice of Tibetan Buddhism. It is deeply rooted in the understanding that all beings, including oneself, share a common desire to be free from suffering and to experience happiness. At its core, compassion is the genuine concern for the well-being and happiness of all living beings.

In the context of Buddhism, compassion goes beyond mere sympathy. It is an active engagement that involves a sincere desire to alleviate the suffering of others. Compassion is an expression of love and care that extends to all sentient beings, transcending differences in backgrounds, beliefs, or circumstances.

Cultivating compassion has profound benefits not only for others but also for ourselves. By cultivating mindfulness and engaging in self-reflection, we gain a deeper understanding of our own suffering and the suffering of others. This self-awareness allows us to develop self-compassion and extend genuine compassion to those around us.

“Love is the only cause of happiness. Its nature is all-pervasive like space. Love is the sunlight of the mind”

–H.E. Garchen Rinpoche



INTERDEPENDENCE

At its essence, interdependence is the recognition that everything in the world is connected and arises in dependence upon multiple causes and conditions.

Interdependence goes beyond the surface-level understanding that things are interconnected. It reveals that nothing exists in isolation or independently of other phenomena. Every aspect of our existence, including ourselves and our sense of identity, is shaped by a vast network of interconnections.

To illustrate this, let's take the example of a flower. The flower's very existence depends on a multitude of factors coming together. Sunlight, water, soil, pollinators, and countless other elements play a role in its growth and blossoming. In the same way, our thoughts, emotions, actions, and experiences are influenced by numerous causes and conditions, including our upbringing, relationships, environment, and societal factors. In turn, our actions and choices have consequences that ripple out and affect the world around us.

“Interdependence is a fundamental law of nature. Even tiny insects survive by cooperating with each other. Our own survival is so dependent on the help of others that a need for love lies at the very core of our existence. This is why we need to cultivate a genuine sense of responsibility and a sincere concern for the welfare of others.”

*–H.H.the Dalai Lama
b. 1935*



IMPERMANENCE

Impermanence refers to the understanding that all things and experiences in the universe are constantly changing and have no fixed or lasting nature.

Imagine looking at a flowing river. The water is continuously moving and changing, with no moment being exactly the same as the next. Similarly, in Tibetan Buddhism, everything in the world, including ourselves, is subject to this constant flux and transformation.

Just as the seasons change, the flowers bloom and wither, and our thoughts and emotions come and go. All phenomena arise, exist for a time, and eventually pass away. This applies to both tangible objects and intangible experiences.

Understanding impermanence helps us recognize that clinging or grasping onto things or trying to hold onto experiences that bring us pleasure or avoid those that bring us pain is ultimately futile. This understanding encourages us to develop a more flexible and accepting attitude towards life.

In the Nirvana Sutra, it is said:

*Of all plantings, the autumn planting
is most important; of all footprints, the
elephant's tracks are most reliable; of all
thoughts, the thought of impermanence
is most sacred.*

*-the Buddha
563-483 B.C.E.*



WISDOM MIND

In Tibetan Buddhism, the concept of wisdom mind refers to a state of profound understanding and insight that goes beyond ordinary knowledge and thinking. It is considered a fundamental aspect of spiritual development and enlightenment.

Wisdom mind is associated with the realization of emptiness, which is the understanding that all phenomena lack inherent existence or a fixed self-nature. It involves recognizing that things are interdependent and constantly changing, and that their existence is influenced by causes and conditions.

In Tibetan Buddhism, wisdom mind is cultivated through practices such as meditation, contemplation, and studying Buddhist teachings. These practices help individuals develop a deep level of introspection and clarity of mind by helping us see through the misconceptions and delusions that often cloud our understanding.

*Devoid of all real entities;
Utterly discarding all objects and subjects,*

*Such as aggregates, elements
and sense-fields;*

*Due to sameness of selflessness of all
phenomena,*

*One's mind is primordially unborn;
It is in the nature of emptiness.*

*–Arya Nagarjuna
c 150–250 C.E.*

from “A Commentary on the Awakening Mind”



THE SAND MANDALA AS SACRED ART



MANDALA OF COMPASSION



*In the center of the mandala resides Chenrezig.
“The One Who Looks with an Unwavering Eye”
The Bodhisattva of Compassion*

The sacred art of Tibetan sand mandalas can be referred to as visual scripture; filled with remarkable layers of meaning, intricate designs and teachings to help overcome suffering. Dating back to the time of the living Buddha, about 2,500 years ago, mandala can be translated as “World In Harmony.”

THE PALACE

of the Deity

Mandalas can be understood, from one perspective, to be a floor plan for a 3D palace in which enlightened beings reside in a universe completely purified of negativities. The mandala represents the mind of the Buddha of Enlightened Wisdom, naturally permeated by an unconditional, all-pervasive love with kindness and compassion for all beings everywhere.

The sincere meditation practitioner enters the palace with the motivation to purify all obscurations, internally as well as in the external environment, in order to benefit others. With this awareness, and perspective, the mandala and all of its intricate complexity and blessings, is to be understood as not separate from ones own mindstream, from ones heart.

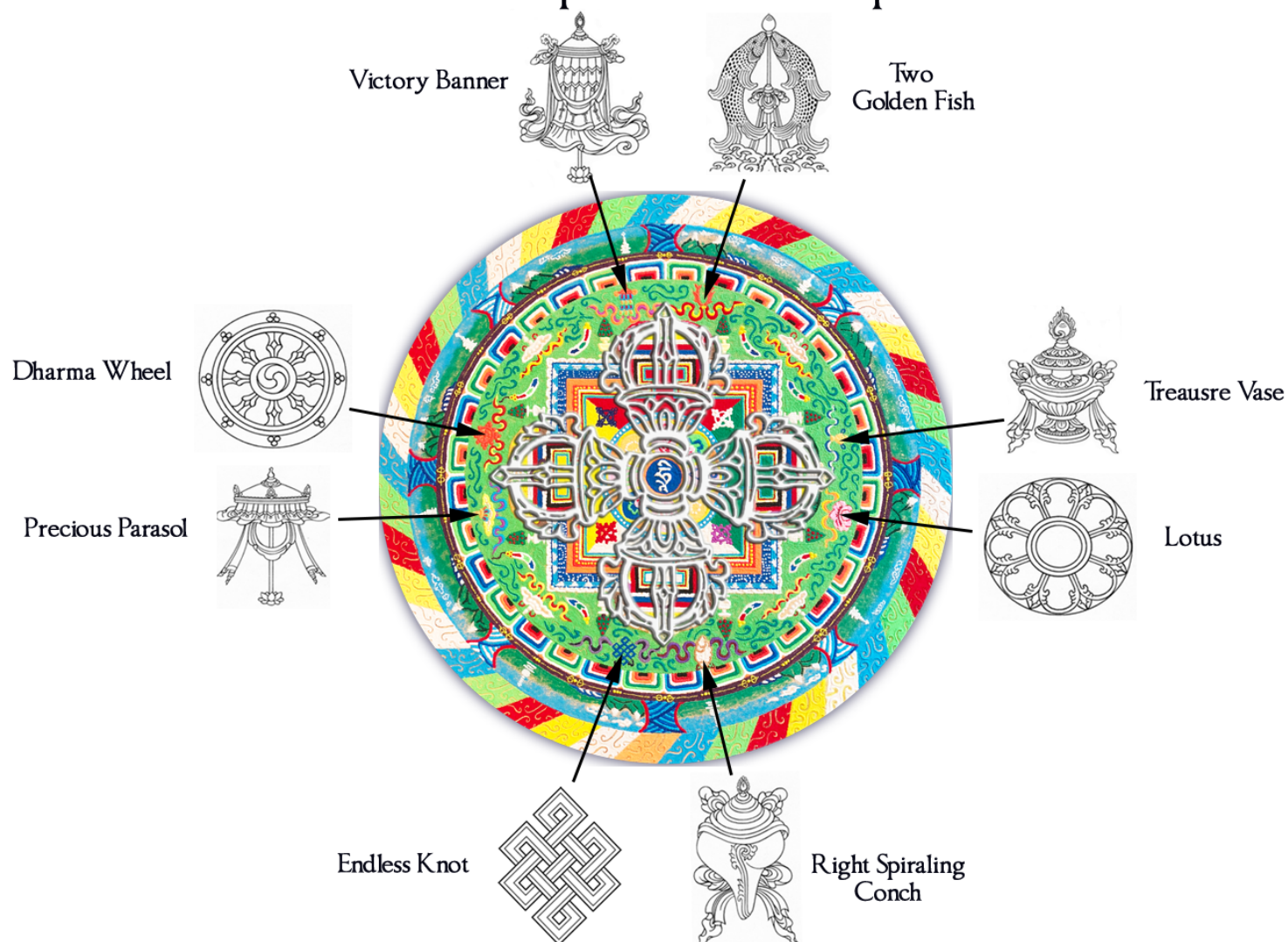
Every possible protection, tool, positive arising and blessing is present within the universe of the mandala to support the practitioner on their spiritual journey of purification, kindness, compassion and joy.

EIGHT AUSPICIOUS

symbols

The 8 Auspicious Symbols

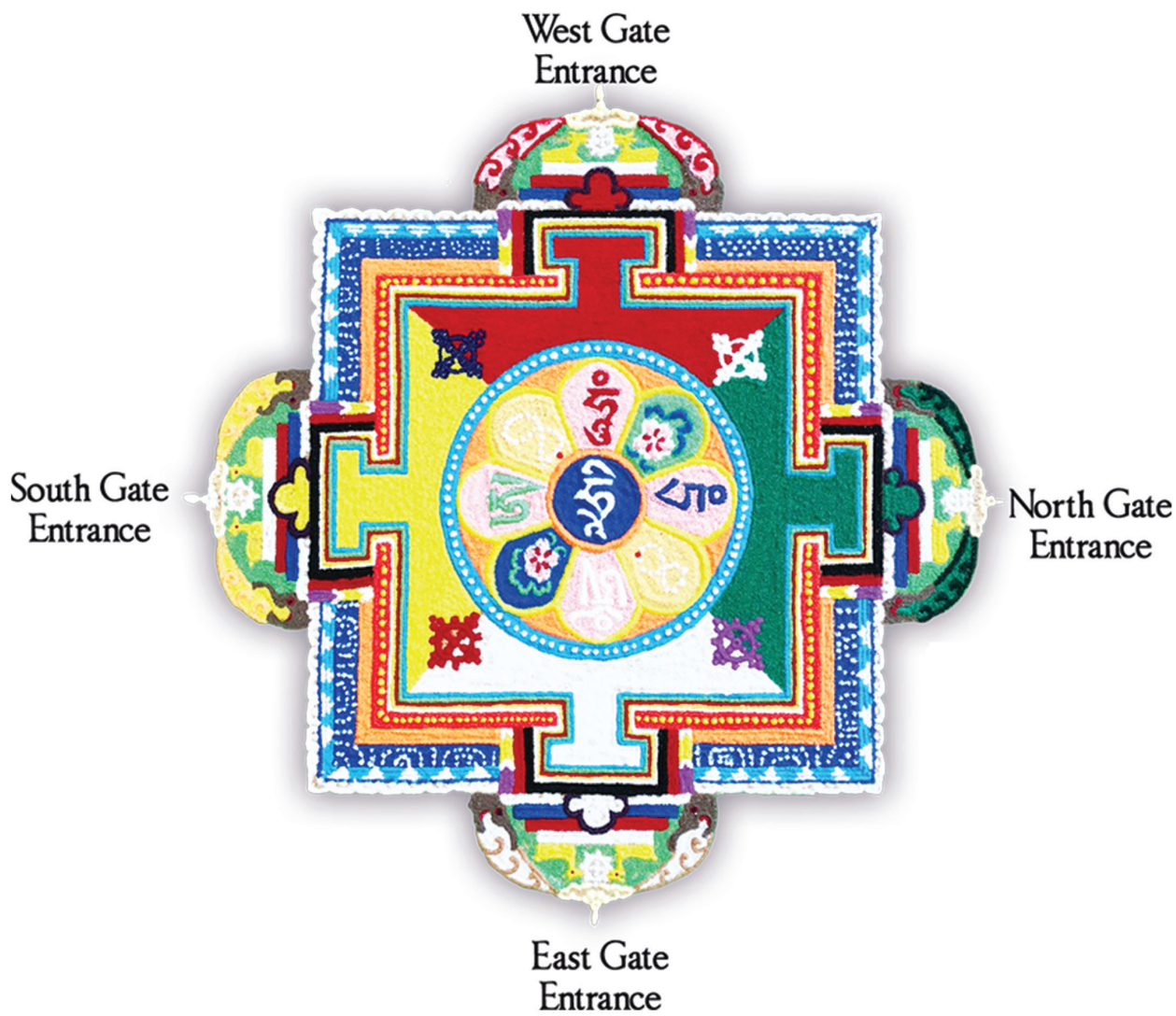
reside in the Offering Gardens surrounding the palace; radiating their blessings into the hearts and minds of all beings, seen and unseen, near and far. These symbols represent different aspects of enlightened wisdom along with supports for the sincere practitioner on the path.



The Five Buddha Families

are represented by the central colors

White-Faith
Yellow-Effort
Red-Memory
Green-Meditation
Blue-Wisdom



The Four Immeasurables
are represented by the four gates
LOVE
COMPASSION
JOY
EQUANIMITY

The Five Buddha Families

Chenrezig

aka Avalokiteshvara in Sanskrit
LOTUS FAMILY

"Buddha of Boundless Light"
purifies attachment into
discriminating wisdom
is represented by

HRI

Vairocana Buddha
BUDDHA FAMILY

"The Illuminator"
purifies anger into
mirror-like wisdom
is represented by

HUNG

Ratnasambhava Buddha
RATNA FAMILY

"The Jewel Producing"
purifies jealousy into
all-accomplishing wisdom
is represented by

AH



Amogasiddhi Buddha
KARMA FAMILY

"Unobstructed Success"
purifies pride into
equalizing wisdom
is represented by

TAM

Akshobya Buddha
VAJRA FAMILY

"The Imperturbable"
purifies ignorance into
primordially pure wisdom
is represented by

OM

Chenrezig
holds a
flower
in his
left hand

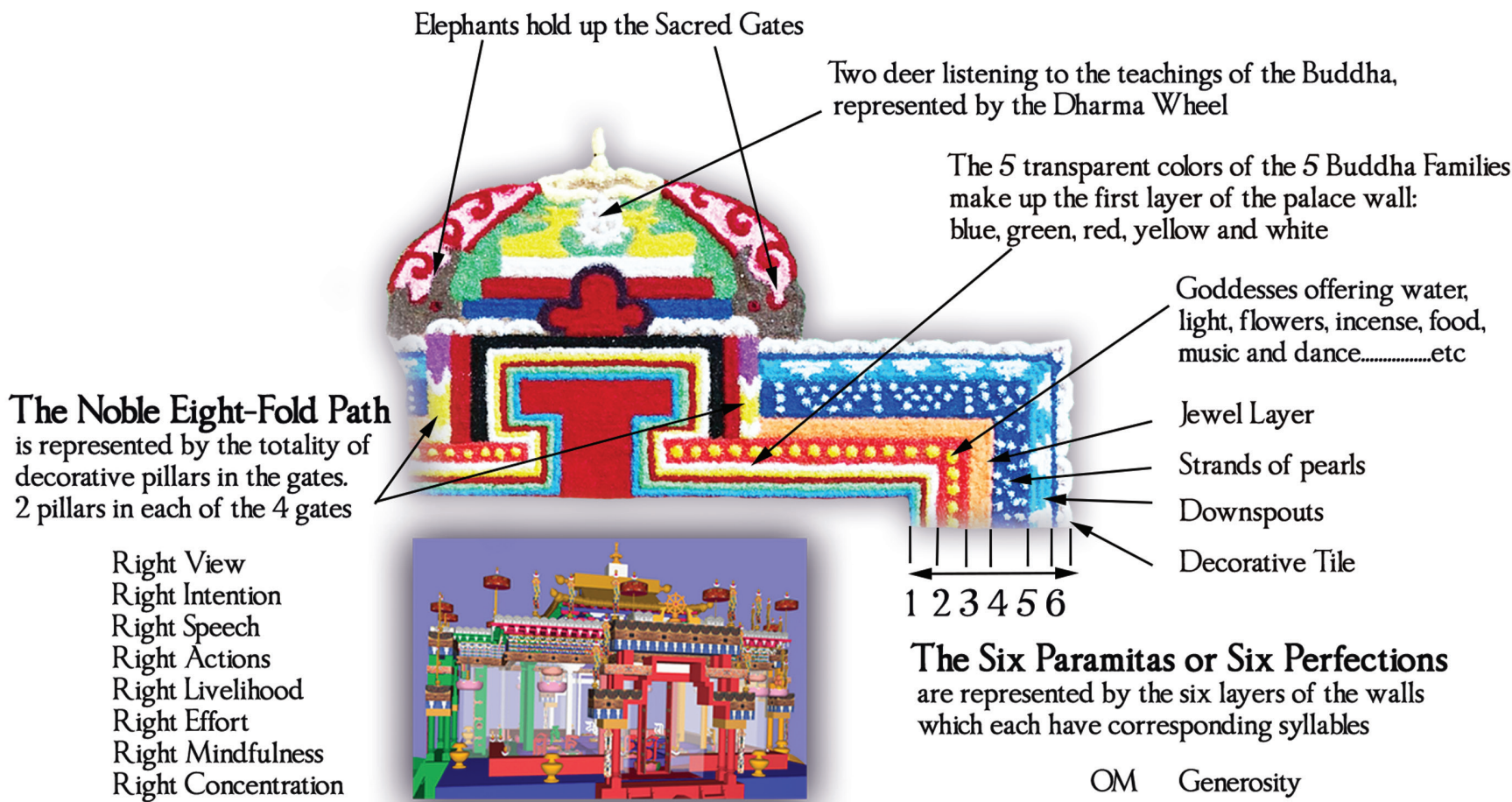
Chenrezig
holds a
crystal mala
in his
right hand

This circular area which houses this 8-petaled Lotus
is similar to a dome.

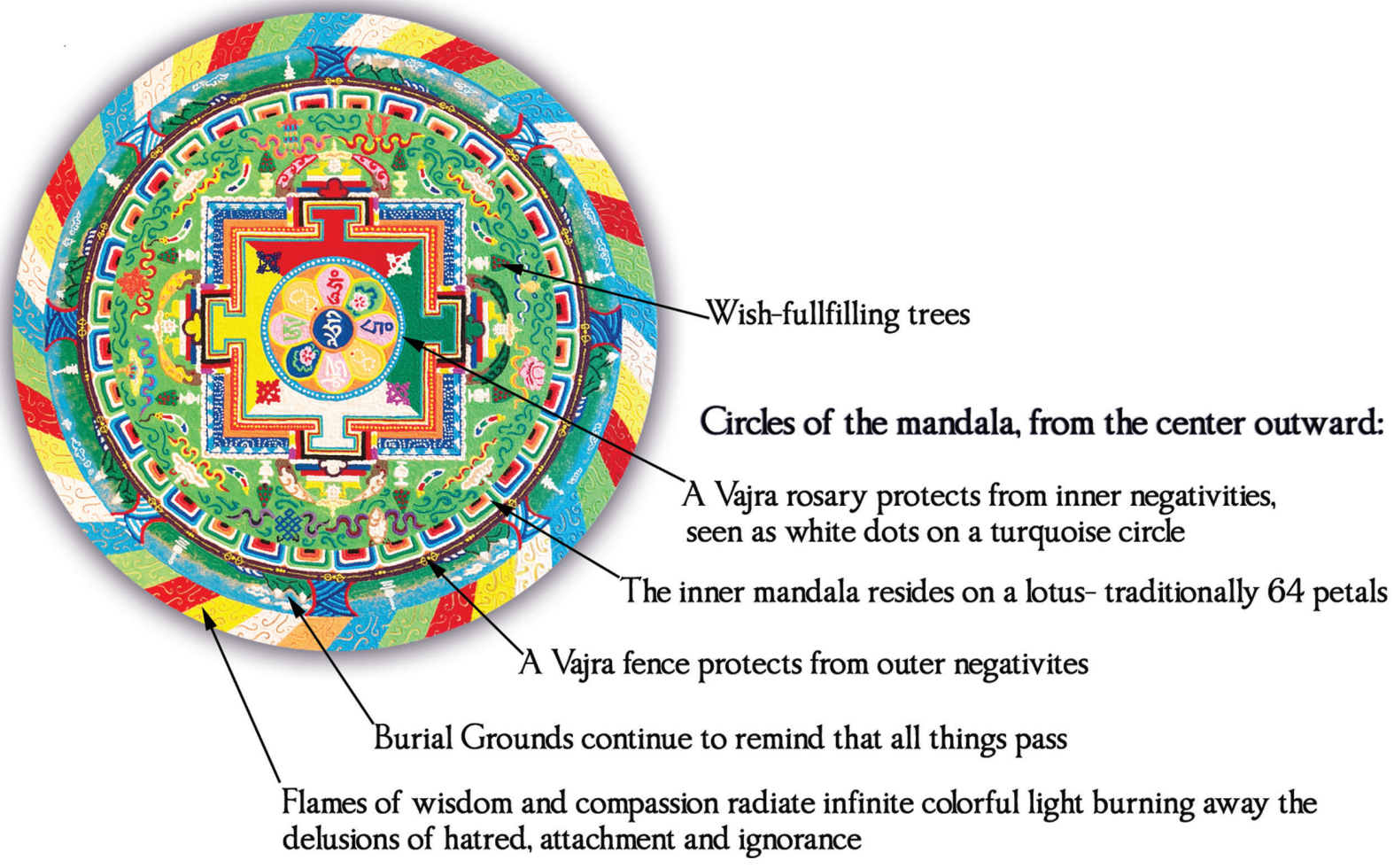
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- OM Generosity
- MA Patience
- NI Morality
- PAD Joyful Effort
- ME Concentration
- HUM Wisdom

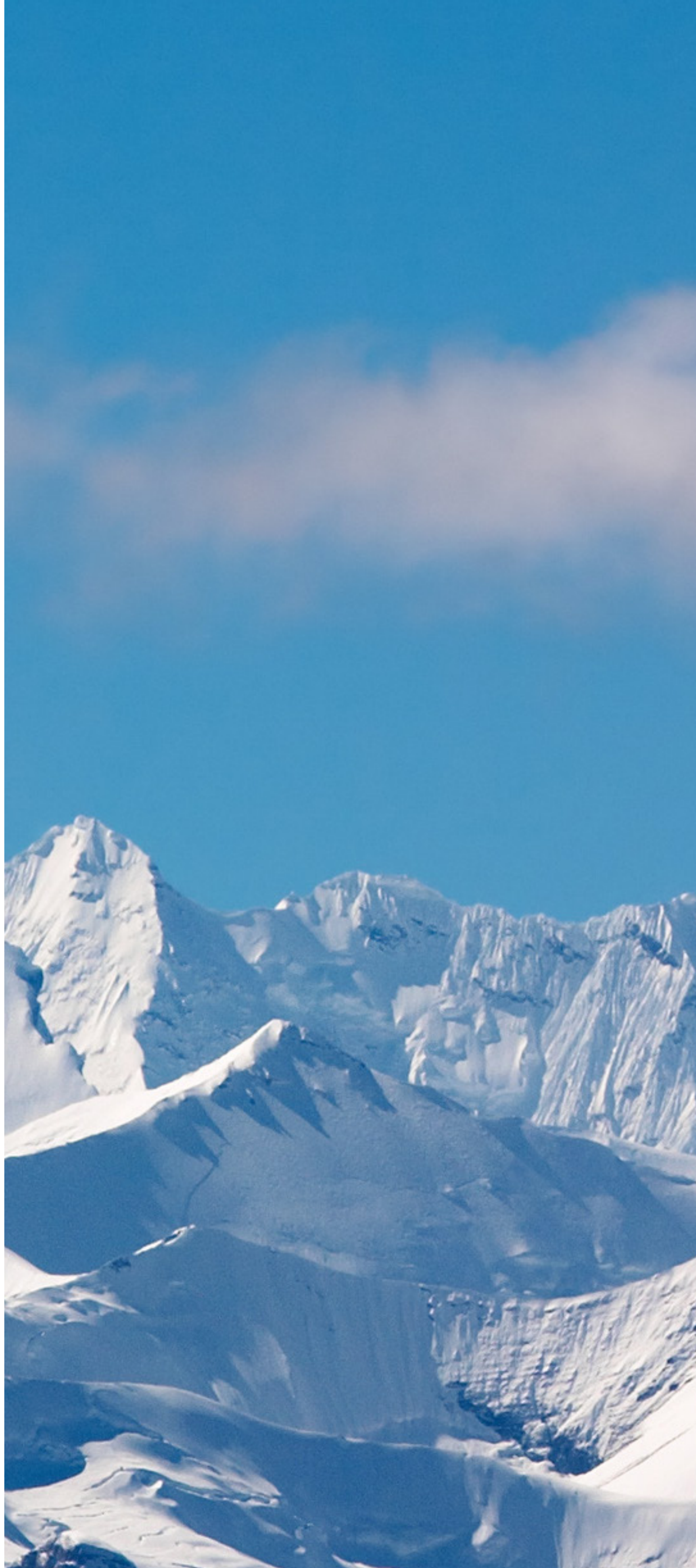


The six syllables comprise Chenrezig's mantra

OM MANI PADME HUM
"Praise the Jewel in the Lotus"

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ།

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Drupon Rinpoche, Lama Kalsang and Virginia Blum are all practicing within the Drikung Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The Drikung Kagyu lineage was founded by Lord Jigten Sumgon, the reincarnation of Nagarjuna, in 1179. It is known as a practice lineage, meaning that it seeks true meaning, rather than literal meaning, wisdom rather than conceptual thought, and ultimate truth rather than relative method.

Drupon Thinley Ningpo Rinpoche

Drupon Thinley Ningpo Rinpoche was born in 1962 into a nomadic family in the region of Nagchu in Eastern Tibet at the height of religious and cultural persecution during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. At the age of seventeen he became a school teacher and soon after studied to become a veterinarian. Following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 there was a Buddhist revival that spread throughout Tibet and a period in which many of the destroyed monasteries and holy sites were reconstructed. Tibetans, while still under tight political control, were allowed to practice their spirituality openly and freely to some extent for the first time since the invasion of 1959.

During this time Drupon Rinpoche became very inspired to devote his life to the spiritual path. He was very involved in the work of rebuilding the monastery in his local community and soon took monastic ordination. In 1988 he went on a year-long pilgrimage, visiting holy places throughout Tibet which culminated in his dramatic escape, a perilous journey on foot, across the Himalayas from Tibet to India. Once safely in India, he entered Janchubling Monastery in Dehradun where he studied Buddhist philosophy and served as a disciplinarian for six years. In 1996 he entered a rigorous period of solitary meditation and contemplation known as the traditional Three-Year Retreat. Soon after he was given the title “Drupon,” which means “master of spiritual attainment.”

Motivated by his deep and constant desire to help others to attain liberation, Drupon Rinpoche traveled to America where he served as resident teacher and retreat master of the Tibetan Meditation Center in Frederick, MD. He now travels extensively with the blessing of HH Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang, teaching the precious Dharma and leading Dharma students in retreat. In 2012 Drupon Rinpoche relocated to Wesley Chapel, Florida, where he now performs his work as a lay teacher and has established a Dharma center for study, practice and retreat.

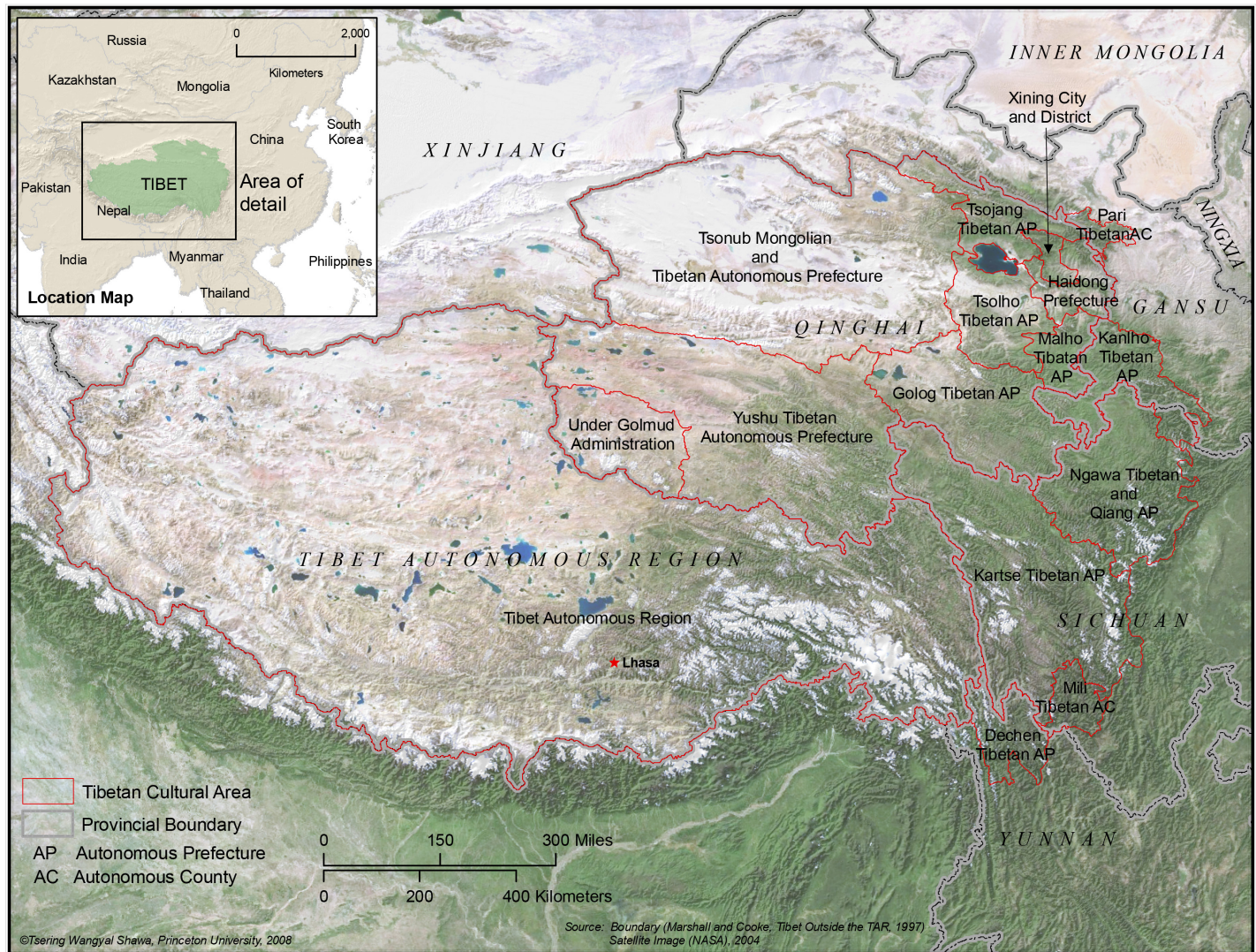
Venerable Lama Kalsang

Venerable Lama Kalsang received full monastic ordination in 1992 from Nubpa Rinpoche and Drubwang Rinpoche at Rinchen Ling Monastery in Nepal. He studied under and received transmission from many masters, including Nubpa Rinpoche, GeLong Tsongdru, Drubwang Tenzin Nyima Rinpoche, Khenchen Konchog Gyaltshen Rinpoche and His Holiness Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche and received higher trainings in ritual practices at Jangchub Ling in India. In 2008 he accomplished the Shastri degree, which included higher trainings in Pramana, Madhyama, Abhidharma, Prajnaparamita, Tanying, Gonchik, Uttarantra, and Buddhist Ritual Tradition. Lama Kalsang is also an accomplished artist in traditional Tibetan ritual art. Lama Kalsang came to the United States in 2017 and became the resident teacher of Three Rivers Dharma Center in Pittsburg in 2019.

Virginia Blum

Virginia Blum is the resident translator at Drong Ngur Jangchubling Buddhist Center in Wesley Chapel Florida. She has been translating and interpreting the Dharma since 2006, assisting Buddhist teachers around the world. Virginia is fluent in both Tibetan and Spanish and has been engaged in Buddhist meditation and study since 1999. She has studied Tibetan language in a number of immersive programs, including a two-year translation training program at Songsten Library in Dehradun, India, the Tibetan Summer Intensive Training at Rangjung Yeshe in Kathmandu, Nepal, as well as the Tibetan Language Intensive Training Course at the University of Virginia.

WHERE IS TIBET?



Tibet was a unique country with its own government, religion, language, laws and customs. Tibet's history begins in 127 BC, and it was subsequently ruled by different dynasties and eventually under the Dalai Lamas from the 17th century until 2011. At different times, nations like China, Britain and Mongolia sought to exert control over Tibet, but with limited success.

International scholars agree that from 1911 until China's invasion in 1949, Tibet was a fully independent state even by modern standards. Since then, China has illegally ruled Tibet with an iron fist, and today, the survival of Tibetan culture is at risk.

DRUPON'S *homeland*



Drong Ngur Monastery, Tibet



Drikung Thil Monastery, Tibet

DEDICATION

Shantideva's prayer (translated by the Dalai Lama)

May all beings everywhere
Plagued by sufferings of body and mind
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of my merits

May no living creatures suffer,
Commit evil or ever fall ill
May no one be afraid or belittled
With a mind weighed down by depression

May the blind see forms
And the deaf hear sounds
May those whose bodies are worn with toil
Be restored in finding repose

May the naked find clothing
The hungry find food
May the thirsty find water
And delicious drinks

May the poor find wealth
Those weak with sorrow find joy
May the forlorn find hope
Constant happiness and prosperity

May there be timely rains
And bountiful harvests
May all medicines be effective
And wholesome prayers bear fruit

May all who are sick or ill
Quickly be freed from their ailments
Whatever diseases there are in the world
May they never occur again

May the frightened cease to be afraid
And those bound be freed
May the powerless find power
And may people think of benefitting each other.

For as long as space remains,
For as long as sentient beings remain,
Until then may I too remain
To dispel the miseries of the world.