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# HIMALAYAN BUDDHIST ART THANGKA PRINTS

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## **HIMALAYAN BUDDHIST ART**

Volume 3.

Himalayan Art is largely religious and expresses the faith and ideals of people. Art of the Himalayas has its origins along the 'Silk Route' northern India, Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, other parts of Central Asia including China and Iran. Himalayan Art and culture have in fact a blending of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Buddhism was founded in the 5th century BC by prince Gautama, the Buddha, born at the foothills of the Himalayas. After his death, charming stories of his life (often featuring animals) were illustrated, but Buddha himself was represented only symbolically. The Buddha image developed in the Ist century AD and soon there evolved a pantheon of other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, who were assigned symbols and characteristics as represented in their art.

Vajrayana, the most important school, of Buddhism was mainly responsible for Tantrism in the Himalayas, relying on magical formulae (Mantras) and magical ceremonies (Tantras). It also introduced pantheon of goddesses (Taras) and other Gods, demigods, Siddhas, Arhats etc.

Thangkas are traditional Buddhist scroll paintings drawn on cloth. Himalayan art is popularly expressed in these thangkas. They are wonderful compositions with geometrical arrangements (Mandalas) and are steeped in Oriental tradition. Yet they are full of colour and fantasy.

Buddhist Religious Thangkas generally depict Jataka tales which recount events in past lives of the Buddha. They also depict stories from lives of other Buddhist saints.

It has not been the practice with the Buddhist artist to create something new which expressed his own ideas, but to preserve the continuity of the old traditions. As a rule, there was no attempt to depart from the conventions. It would have been disrespectful to his religion to do so. Moreover it may also diminish the spiritual efficacy of the image. Craftsmen were trained as apprentices in monastries where they worked mainly by copying well known images of the deities and scenes. But they seldom signed their thangkas and bronzes. Therefore Buddhist art is almost always anonymous.

Some of the thangkas depict terrifying scenes - details portraying bodies disintegrating, ejecting blood, skeletons; dead creatures and various mutilations of the body. They represent mystical motifs and unearthly scenes.

Tantric thangkas depict siddhas, gods, godesses, demons, apsaras, yoginis in various asanas (poses).

Tantrism stands for Mahamudra, the esoteric doctrine propounded to free the living beings more quickly from Samsara (wordly ills).

In Hindu Tantrism, the female is regarded as the active element of the partnership and is called Shakti. In Buddhist Tantrism on the contrary, she is regarded as the passive partner, called prajna. When the Buddhist deities are pictured in union, the female symbolises the absolute while the male represents the upaya or the expedient by which beings are hiberated. Tantric thangkas are believed to ward off the "Evil Eye" maleficent influences, prevent disease like small pox, Cholera, plague and mental depression etc.

This selection is made to represent thangkas showing various aspects of their imagery and treatment, in Himalayan Buddhist Art. The selection has been made out of a large collection of thangkas so that details of the themes are reasonably discernable even after considerable reduction in size from the originals.

A brief description of the plates is given below. Original Tibetan text in calligraphy is printed above the English translation.

हार्याम्याय्वय्याय्ववर्ट्राहेरहेर्येषक्षान्द्रात्द्रा हेर्येहेन्द्राय स्वाका हेम् १ द्र हे वर्द्वा के ला वा दरग मयका मये वर्ष छा हेर र्दाः पह्यान्त्रद्यां गान्वान्त्रकेयुः स्वायम्यायास्यायाव्ययार्था

#### AVALOKESHVARA

Avalokeshvara with 8 arms, embodiment of compassion of Lord Buddha in blessing posture. Gods and goddesses are showering flowers from heaven.

यायार्यते देखा सुमबा छे सु तरे ये द र मार्य माया सरके मा אָריך אָקריריאראויזאייטיאיצאיזיאיזקקאויבויקנאזימימריניאראוזאייטיטי योग्द्या लेगाय लुगस्परेसा दूधनग्दर गर्द्ध गा

#### KALACHAKRA YAB-YUM

Mystical form of Divine body of the Yab with seventy four arms, embracing his Sakti with twelve arms. The practice (Sadhana) of the awakening of the Seed, making use of all activities of body, speech and mind in the process of transformation.

'The world is pervaded by Bliss, which pervades and is itself pervaded'.

र्द्रियास्य स्वर्म्स्या यह्ने या स्वर्थ्य स्टर्ग क्रेर्ग्ने र्द्रियास्य कुत्यादार्हेर्हे तकदाद्दा देवेग्रीम्वयाद्द्दायावर्षेर् त्यार्थ्वयाद्दाद्दा क्रेटा योग्यायस्थिन्द्रकुण्यन्त्र्याकेवग्यादेशाद्द्रा स्ट्रायायायायायायास्यायास्य हे अन्तरा रा हे मान्द्रा दे ते जा भवाद सा कु दा द्रा र जो जा से दा री केर गे के गर ग्रा केवर रे अहवरवर वर वर गर गर रो गरे लिय र हे रहे वर युग्यान्सान्दान्द्रमा त्रेगन्द्र गय्याया गय्या हु काया दा केवा दा स्वा क्रेयास्त्राद्रा रुद्धायाख्यातह्वाकवर्यासंगयात्वन्त्रास्त्रा

#### THANTRA TARA YAB-YUM

Divine body of the Yogi with four arms in complete union with Yogini. Entering into union, the seal of happiness is fixed, achieving the ultimate unions of cosmic consciousness and cosmic energy of the being-bliss - experience. The main theme is surrounded by animal-gods and bird-gods signifying harmony with nature.

तर्रा श्वार्यने यो दि स्वास्ता कर्ता के दि सा सा रहे हैं दि स यागमामेर्ग्स्रहेवा मेर्ग्रेकेमान्न्रमेव सुममान्त वरायासरसाम्सायारेसायोःवरावसासारोयाम्भामामेवायावा वामनादा द्वारा छेना दुर्धन दर्ग के त्या

#### A DEVI FROM TIBET

This figure is not commonly found in the land of the snowy ranges of Tibet. This female goddess was worshipped in the ancient religion of Tibet Bon pre Buddhist days.

नता मेरे देवा सुनमा हो तर सु तरे नवे देर र्गरयाक्त्रायते तदाक्षाण्येव वोवर्ट्यदायरात्र त्या

### DAKINI (RED)

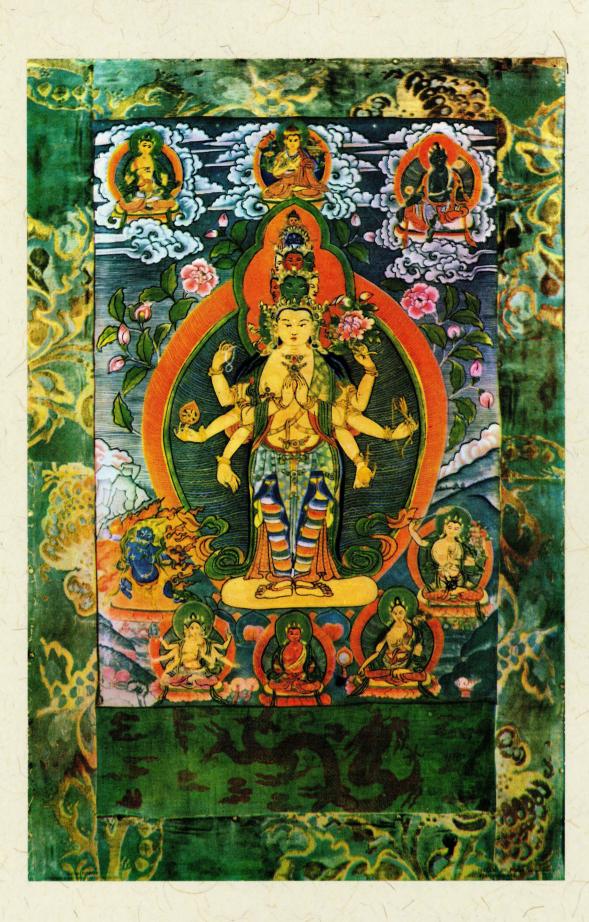
This figure is not commonly found. The 'dakinis' are exalted class of fairylike spiritual beings, themselves commonly chosen as tutelaries by neophytes in Tantric Buddhism. There are four chief Dakinis - Vajra (Divine) Dakini, associated with the eastern direction; the Ratna (Precious) Dakini, of the southern direction; Padma (Lotus) Dakini of the western; and Karma (Action) Dakini of the northern direction. This dakini is known as Padma (Lotus) Dakini.



Separate prints in genuine raw silk frames are also available. All prints are available in full size posters showing greater details - size 20"x30" app.

AVALOKESHVARA

तस्वम्यान्दाश्चन्त्राहेन्द्रेत्त्र म्युग्रहिना जित्या कुत्र रहा जात्रेनस्य



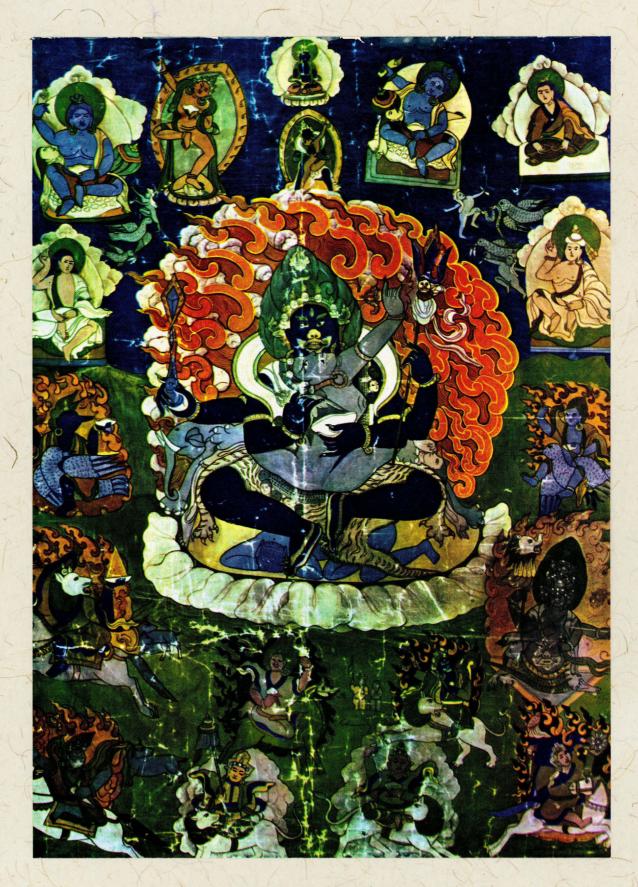
KALACHAKRA YAB-YUM

यतार्यति देशात्वनाक्ति खुर्वना



THANTRA TARA YAB-YUM

र्युतादाददार्हेलाय्युदायेलायर्द्धेमायले स्राह्मवाय्यायाया



A DEVI FROM TIBET

र्ड्सार्यर्भेर्न्न्य्येद्राज्यम्भावेद्रम्भा वद्रायायद्र्याक्रुया द्र्र्यवर्येग्वर्त्वेषाज्जीवद्राव्यायार्थ्येयेयवर्द्यद्राय्य्य्यक्राया





यता यति चेत्रा दिलामारी सिद्धा भयेत्य भार

DAKINI (RED)

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