

# Tibetan Sand Painting

## Compassion Buddha Mandala

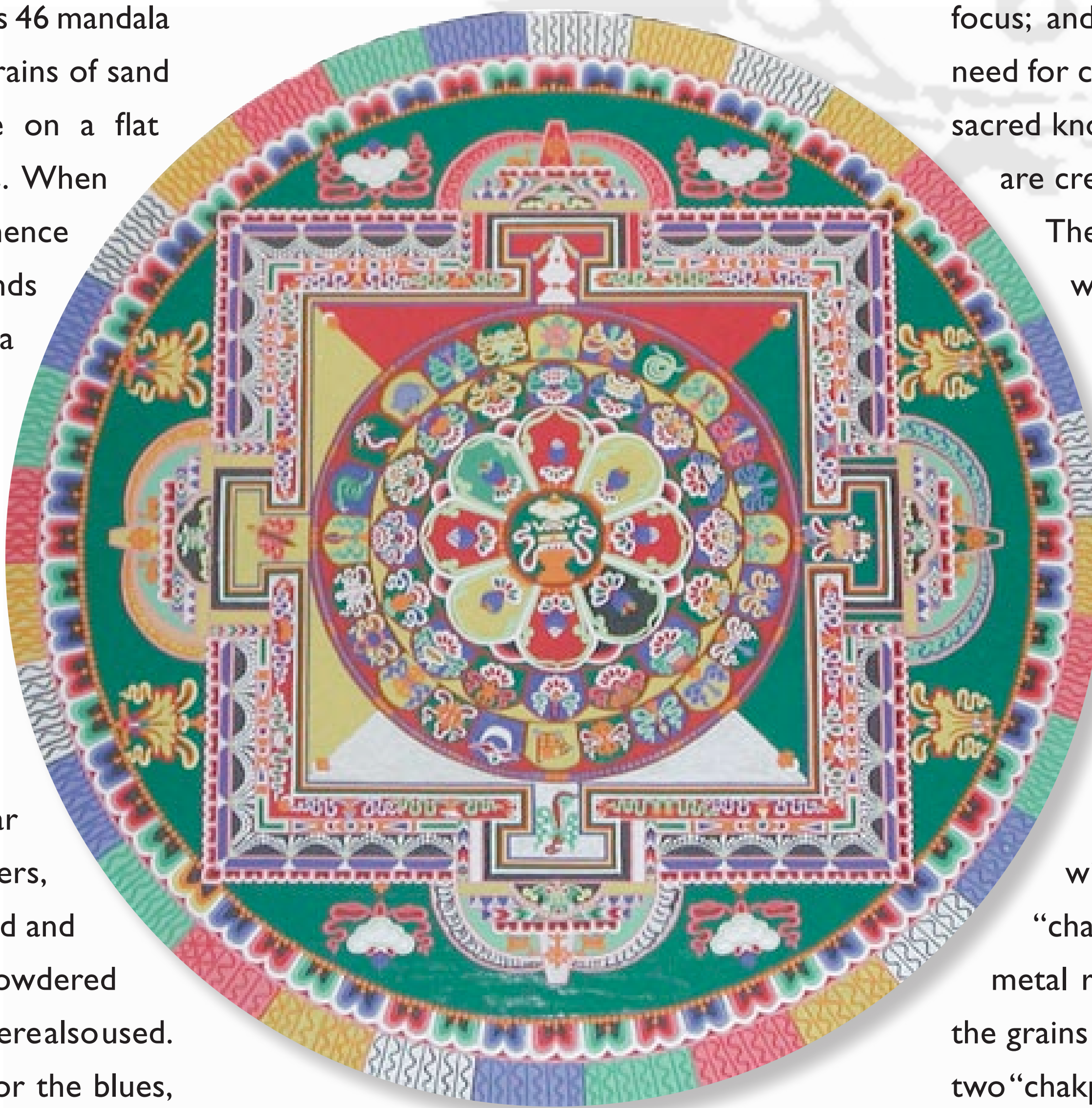


The Mandala, (Sanskrit for Circle), is an ancient form of Tibetan Buddhism. Mandalas are drawings in three dimensional form that is made of sand. In Tibetan, this art is called “dul-tson-kyil-khor”, which means 46 mandala of colored powder”. Millions of grains of sand are painstakingly laid into place on a flat platform over a period of days. When finished, to symbolize the impermanence of all that exists, the colored sands are swept up and poured into a nearby river or stream where the waters carry healing energies throughout the world. When requested, the monks arrange to preserve a mandala, though this is not traditional.

The most common substance used in the creation of dul-tson-kyil-khor is colored sand. Other popular substances are powdered flowers, herbs or grains, and also powdered and colored stone. In ancient times, powdered precious and semi-precious gems were also used. Thus, lapis lazuli would be used for the blues, rubies for the reds, and so forth.

The subject for a Tibetan sand painting is known in Sanskrit as a mandala or cosmogram. In general, all mandalas have outer, inner, and secret meaning. On the outer level they represent the world in its divine form; on the inner level, they represent a map by which the

ordinary human mind is transformed into the enlightened mind; and on the secret level, they predict the primordially perfect balance



of the subtle energies of the body and the clear light dimension of the mind. The creation of a sand painting is said to effect a purification and healing on these three levels.

Every tantric system has its own mandala, and thus each one symbolizes an existential and

spiritual approach. For example, that of Lord Avalokiteshvara symbolizes compassion as a central focus of the spiritual experience; that of Lord Manjushri takes wisdom as the central focus; and that of Vajrapani emphasizes the need for courage and strength in the quest for sacred knowledge. Medicine Buddha mandalas are created to generate healing powers.

The creation of a sand mandala begins with an opening ceremony. Monks consecrate the site and call forth the forces of goodness through chanting mantras accompanied by flutes, drums and symbols. An outline of the mandala on the wooden platform is then drawn. The following days see the laying of the colors. The sand, colored with vegetable dyes or opaque temper, is poured to the mandala platform with a narrow metal funnel called a “chakpur” which is scraped by another metal rod to cause sufficient vibration for the grains of sand to trickle out if its end. The two “chakpurs” are said to symbolize the union of wisdom and compassion.

The mandalas are created whenever a need for healing of the environment and living beings is felt. The monks consider our present age to be one of great need in this respect, and therefore are creating these mandalas where requested throughout their world tours.

**Sand Mandala Constructed by Emaho Foundation**  
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