



**Across Cultures**  
**The Tibetan Art of Mandala**

# Tibetan Religion

The people of Tibet are primarily Tibetan Buddhists. They believe in looking within oneself to reach enlightenment.

Their religious leader, the Dalai Lama, is a chosen reincarnate at birth.

Compassion and acts of kindness to other living creatures is essential to Tibetan Buddhism, as it improves one's karma and brings them closer to enlightenment, where they are able to help others with no limitations.

# The Four Marks of Existence

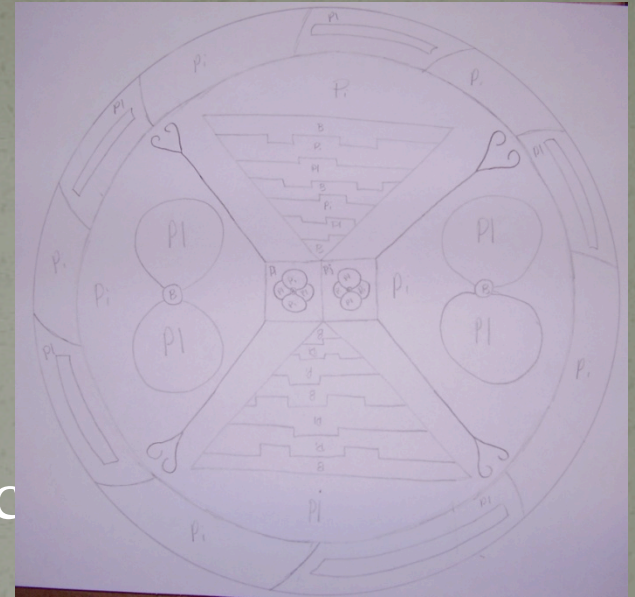
- Annica (impermanence): All things are constantly changes. Nothing ceases to exists, it only exists in new and different forms.
- Dukkha (suffering): The physical world cannot bring ultimate happiness or enlightenment.
- Anatta (non-self): There is not permanent self, all things are made from other things, whether big or small.
- Nirvana: Peace.

# Mandalas in Tibetan Buddhism

Mandalas are more than a work of art. To Tibetans, they are a profound religious symbol. During the creation of the Mandala, monks chant and meditate. Each line and color represent parts of their ancient scripture. The five by five sand art works can take up to five days to make. The sand is funneled through a tool called a chakpur to make colorful and detailed works of art. After the mandala is completed, it is destroyed during the closing ceremony. This represents one of the four marks of existence, impermanence. The mandala still exists but in a changed form. The sand is put in to bags and given away as blessings.

# My Mandala

I studied some various forms of mandala sand art and drew a very simplified version of their geometric patterns. I tried to include shapes that have a universal meaning, such as triangles for balance and circles for cycle of life and the seasons.



# The Sand

I made a chakpur out of rolled up paper. Instead of scraping across ridges with a stick, like the Tibetan monks do with their copper chakpur, I tapped my paper with a pencil to force the sand out. I only had three colors to use, instead of the traditional fourteen colors used in the traditional art form.



# Time

The Tibetan monks spend from 3 to 5 days on a 5 ft. by 5 ft. mandala. It took me 2 and a half hours to make one less than 1 ft. by 1 ft!







# Impermanence

Already it was easy to see one of the differences between our cultures and learn something from it. I really wanted to keep it! However, the Tibetan's idea of impermanence was beautiful. The current physical form of the sand on the paper was destroyed, but it still existed in a new form! Another tenant of the Tibetan Buddhist believe was also wonderful. The idea that all acts should be done for reasons of love and compassion. I had fun making the mandala and I really loved doing it! It wasn't just for a grade. Somewhat like the Tibetan monks I was able to share a blessing with people that I care about!



# Sources

- “Sand Mandala.” *The Art Network*. October 28, 2009.  
<[www.artnetwork.com/mandala/gallery.html](http://www.artnetwork.com/mandala/gallery.html)>