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## मन्दरव

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coral tree

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مندرو

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# Mandarava



*Shrine to Mandarava in cave above Lake Rewalsar.*



*Flower in Kolkata, West Bengal, India.*

**Mandarava** is, along with Yeshe Tsogyal, one of the two principal consorts of Padmasambhava and is considered a female guru-deity in Buddhism. Mandarava, born a princess in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, India in the 8th Century CE, renounced her royal birthright in order to practice the Dharma, and became a fully realized spiritual adept and great teacher.

## 1 Origins and spiritual calling

Mandarava (Tib. *man da ra ba*), whose full name is Mandarava Flower (Tib. *man da ra ba me tog*) referring to *Erythrina Indica*, the coral tree, one of the five fabled trees that grow in paradise (or Sukhavati) and has brilliant scarlet flowers, was a princess of Zahor or Mandi.<sup>[1]</sup> in the 8th Century CE.

Mandarava was also known as the White Princess (Tib. *lha lcam dkar mo*) though the blooms of the coral tree are a brilliant scarlet. Mandarava is also the name of one of the Gandharvis, therefore, the name may also be considered that of an Indian devi.

Mandarava was born of Vihardhara, King of Zahor and Queen Mohauki.<sup>[2]</sup> Her birth was said to be accompanied by miraculous signs and her renunciation and spiritual inclination was marked from a young age. Due to her fabled beauty, many kings from India and China were said to number amongst her marriage suitors. Mandarava wishing to pursue her spiritual calling endeavored to re-

lease herself from regal trappings wherein she was intercepted by her father and incarcerated. There is a venerated petrosomatoglyph of Mandarava's footprints located near the dungeon where she was restrained.

## 2 Mandarava and Padmasambhava in Yab-Yum



*Mata Kuan Rani Temple shrine and attendant in Mandi, H.P., India.*

Mandarava and Padmasambhava were energetically drawn to one another. Vihardhara, fearful of the con-

tamination of the royal bloodline and what he perceived as Mandarava's apostasy, endeavoured to have Mandarava and Padmasambhava purified by immolation through the flames of a pyre. Instead of finding their corpses incensed and charred, Vihardhara finds that the fire of the pyre has been transformed into Lake Rewalsar near Mandi (Zahor) in Himachal Pradesh, India, out of which arises a blooming lotus that supports the unharmed Mandarava and Padmasambhava who through this manifestation of their realisation have achieved their secret names of Vajravarahi and Hayagriva, respectively, after which Vihardhara furnishes the union with his unreserved blessings.

Mandarava realises her calling to spread the Dharma with Padmasambhava, thereby fulfilling the prediction of her birth that she was a dakini. At 16 years of age, Mandarava became the first of Padmasambhava's five historical spiritual consorts in Maratika (known as Haleshi in the local dialect), the Cave of Bringing Death to an End. (Maratika Cave, and later Maratika Monastery, is located in Khotang District of Nepal, circa 185 kilometres south west of Mount Everest.) Both Mandarava and Padmasambhava achieved the unified vajra body on the vidyadhara level of mastery and realised some of the practices of long life or longevity that were concealed in the Maratika Cave as terma by 'Dakini Sangwa' (Wylie: mKha' 'gro gSang ba), the terma constituted the teachings of Buddha Amitabha and they were elementally encoded as terma at the behest of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Whilst Padmasambhava continued spreading teachings throughout the Himalaya, Mandarava remained in India.

Mandarava is said to have manifested her sambhogakaya form at the great Dharma Wheel of Tramdruk where she engaged in a dialogue of mantra and mudra with Padmasambhava. Extensive details of this are rendered in the *Padma Kathang*.

As Mandarava attained the vajra rainbow body (jalus), she is held to be present in the world now spreading and inspiring the Dharma.

### 3 Emanations and reincarnations

Mandarava is considered a wisdom, knowledge or awareness dakini among whose different names and manifestations are: the yogini Mirukyi Gyenchen "Adorned with Human Bone Ornaments" at the time of Marpa; Risulkyi Naljorma during the time of Nyen Lotsawa; and Drubpey Gyalmo during the time of Rechungpa. Chushingi Nyemachen, the spiritual consort Maitripa, is considered to be none other than Mandarava. The dakini Niguma is also considered to be Mandarava.

Through practice and diligence, Mandarava realised a degree of spiritual mastery equal to that of Padmasambhava her consort, evidenced in her honorific Machig Drupa Gyalmo (*ma gcig grub pa'i rgyal mo*), "Singular Queen

Mother of Attainment".

Mandarava was famed for her compassionate and loving nature and she saved the youthful Kalasiddhi from an untimely death, raising her to adulthood. Kalasiddhi later became another of Padmasambhava's consorts.

Jamgon Kongtrul relates the story of Mandarava within "In The Precious Garland of Lapis Lazuli". Another story of Mandarava is found in the 14th century Padma Thang Yig Sheldrang Ma terma of Orgyen Lingpa. There is a beautiful description of the inaugural meeting of Yeshe Tsogyal with Mandarava Flower in "Sky Dancer, the secret life and songs of the Lady Yeshe Tsogyel". Samten Lingpa (also known as Tagsham Nu Den Dorje), a tertön from the second half of the 17th century, consecrated six folios to Mandarava and Padmasambhava and their pastimes in Maratika Cave.

Jetsunma Ahkon Lhamo was recognized by Lama Orgyen Kusum Lingpa as an emanation of Mandarava.

## 4 Iconography



*Mandarava statue in Samye Ling, Scotland*

The iconography of Mandarava in her sambhogakaya form is often of her sporting white skin with a tinge of red, wearing regal bodhisattva ornamentation. In her right hand she often holds the dadar (or arrow) a teaching tool and ritual implement and a powerful polyvalent symbol of Dzogchen, disciplic succession, lineage and transmission, amongst others. Mandarava is often adorned with banners and a melong (or mirror)

which is another ritual implement, teaching tool and polyvalent symbol of Dzogchen representing the clear, reflective and void (or empty and ethereal) nature of mind. Mandarava's left hand often holds a *bumpa* or long-life vase or wisdom urn of the *ashtamangala*. Mandarava is sometimes depicted standing in an energetic dance which denotes her enlightened activity and *dakini* nature. When depicted with *Padmasambhava*, Mandarava is iconographically represented to his left.

## 5 Revelations related to Mandarava

The female *terton* 'Dechen Chökyi Wangmo' (Wylie: *bDe chen Chos kyi dBang mo*; 1868–1927) revealed a *terma* that included Mandarava.<sup>[3]</sup>

Rossi (2003: pp. 371–372) states that:

bDe chen Chos kyi dBang mo was a student of the famous Bon teacher Shar rdza bKra shis rGyal mtshan (1859-1934). When she was 51 years old (Earth-Horse Year/1918), near the hermitage of Nor bu phug, at dMu-rdo in rGyal mo rGya'i rong, she revealed a textual treasure (dBang mo'i rnam thar). This *gter ma* contains sixteen hagiographies of female saints, including those of Maṇḍarava and Ye shes mTsho rgyal, and seems to be one of the few Bonpo treasure texts revealed by a woman in recent times.<sup>[4]</sup>

The *terton*, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, has realized and transmitted *terma* as well as oral instructions specifying *thangka* depictions and iconography of Mandarava.

## 6 References

- Kunsang, Erik Pema (Trans.) (1994). *Advice from the Lotus-Born: A collection of Padmasambhava's advice to the Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal and other close disciples*. . . . Rangjung Yeshe Publications, Boudhanath, Århus & Hong Kong. ISBN 962-7341-20-7.

## 7 Footnotes

[1] Kunsang (1994), p. 169.

[2] Kunsang (1994), p. 169.

[3] Rossi, Donatella (2003). *Mkha' 'gro dbang mo'i rnam thar, The biography of the gter ston ma Bde chen chos kyi dbang mo (1868-1927?)*. Sapienza University Of Rome. Source: (accessed: January 28, 2009) pp.371-372

[4] Rossi, Donatella (2003). *Mkha' 'gro dbang mo'i rnam thar, The biography of the gter ston ma Bde chen chos kyi dbang mo (1868-1927?)*. Sapienza University Of Rome. Source: (accessed: January 28, 2009) pp.371-372

## 8 Further reading

- Samten Lingpa. (1998). *The Lives and Liberation of Princess Mandarava: The Indian Consort of Padmasambhava*. Translated by Lama Chonam & Sangye Khandro. Wisdom Publications, Boston. ISBN 0-86171-144-0 (pbk)

## 9 External links

- <http://www.yoniversum.nl/dakini/mandarava.html> (February 2, 2007)
- [http://www.thangka.ru/history/he\\_padmadsat\\_5.html](http://www.thangka.ru/history/he_padmadsat_5.html) (February 2, 2007)
- <http://www.rangjung.com/authors/Mandarava.htm> (February 2, 2007)
- [http://www.thangka.ru/gallery/ge\\_mand.html](http://www.thangka.ru/gallery/ge_mand.html) (February 2, 2007)
- <http://www.yoniversum.nl/bliss/mandarava.html> (February 2, 2007)
- <http://www.dharmafellowship.org/library/essays/women-buddhas.htm> (February 2, 2007)

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