

Green Tara



Green Tara (Sanskrit: Syamatara; Tibetan: Sgrol-ljang), filled with youthful vigor, is a goddess of activity. She is the fiercer form of Tara, but is still a savior-goddess of compassion. She is the consort of Avalokiteshvara and considered by some to be the original Tara. Like Avalokiteshvara, the Green Tara is believed to be an emanation of the "self-born" Buddha Amitabha, and an image of Amitabha is sometimes depicted in Tara's headdress.

Green Tara is believed to have been incarnated as the Nepali wife of the Tibetan king Srong-brtsan-sgam-po. In Buddhism, the color green signifies activity and accomplishment. Thus Amoghasiddhi, the Lord of Action, is also associated with the color green.

Green Tara is iconographically depicted in a posture of ease and readiness for action. While her left leg is folded in the contemplative position, her right leg is outstretched, ready to spring into action. Green Tara's left hand is in the refuge-granting mudra (gesture); her right hand makes the boon-granting gesture. In her hands she also holds closed blue lotuses (utpalas), which symbolize purity and power. She is adorned with the rich jewels of a bodhisattva.

In Buddhist religious practice, Green Tara's primary role is saviouress. She is believed to help her followers overcome dangers, fears and anxieties, and she is especially worshipped for her ability to overcome the most difficult of situations. Green Tara is intensely compassionate and acts quickly to help those who call upon her.

The iconography and role of Green Tara is illustrated in this medieval devotional hymn:

On a lotus seat, standing for realization of voidness,
(You are) the emerald-colored, one-faced, two-armed Lady
In youth's full bloom, right leg out, left drawn in,
Showing the union of wisdom and art - homage to you!

Like the outstretched branch of the heavenly turquoise tree,
Your supple right hand makes the boon- granting gesture,
Inviting the wise to a feast of supreme accomplishments,
As if to an entertainment-homage to you!

Your left hand gives us refuge, showing the Three Jewels;
It says, "You people who see a hundred dangers,
Don't be frightened-I shall swiftly save you!"
Homage to you!<

Both hands signal with blue utpala flowers,
"Samsaric beings! Cling not to worldly pleasures.
Enter the great city of liberation!"
Flower-goads prodding us to effort-homage to you!

---First Dalai Lama (1391-1474)

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