Buddhist monks create sand painting at Sac State

Photo: [http://bit.ly/1AoPd6Y](http://bit.ly/1AoPd6Y). Caption: Buddhist monks will create a sand painting at Sac State. Credit: Sierra Friends of Tibet

Ever so slowly, Buddhist monks move grains of sand, employing precise movements based on a meditative state of mind, to create a sand mandala – a brightly colored painting that is beautiful and yet impermanent.

Sacramento State’s Asian Studies Program, and Humanities and Religious Studies will host a group of monks from southern India’s historic Gaden Shartse Monastery from Feb. 10 through 14 as they create their painting from a palette of colorful sands at the Library Gallery Annex. Visitors can view the work during gallery hours, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The monks also will present an evening of traditional chanting, sacred music and a singing bowl from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 11, at Solano Hall’s Dancespace. The program is free; doors open at 6.

Beginning at 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 14, the mandala will be disassembled, and those present each will receive a little bag of the sand. The remaining sand will be taken to the American River for dispersal.

“In Buddhist teaching, our life is compared with a single piece of sand in the ocean,” says Pat Chirapravati, vice director of the Asian Studies Program. “The sand mandala is an ancient Tibetan art form that creates an intricate diagram of the enlightened mind and the ideal world.”

Highlights of the five-day schedule:

- 10:15 a.m. Feb. 10 – The monks start an opening chant and begin the drawing of the mandala diagram for five hours.
- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Feb. 11-13 – Work continues on the mandala.
- 1 to 4 p.m. Feb. 14 – The sand is scraped from the mandala, distributed to visitors and taken to the river.

The monks are touring the United States to build a new Khangtsen – house or dormitory – at their monastery, where the center’s 1,500 monks study Buddhist texts, the sutras and cosmology, and learn to speak Tibetan, Hindi and English.

The Gaden Shartse Monastery is a monastery in exile from Tibet, which is controlled by China. It was established in 1970 by 85 refugee monks. Sponsors for this event include Sierra Friends of Tibet and Sac State’s Department of Theatre & Dance.

More information on the monastery is available at [www.gadenshartse.net](http://www.gadenshartse.net). For information on the mandala event, contact Chirapravati at patchira@saclink.csus.edu. For media assistance, call the University’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Craig Koscho