

## DHARMAPALAS

**In Brief-** Demons bound to an oath to be good.

These are malevolent spirits who were bound (using powerful mantras) to an oath to protect the teachings and followers of Buddhism or Bön.

The most powerful dharmapalas were great demon kings and queens bound by Gautama Buddha or the great Buddhist teachers. The weakest were simple malevolent spirits before being bound by monks and exorcists. Buddhist teacher Padmasambhava and Bön teacher Shenrab Mido are credited with the most bindings.

Dharmapalas are usually looked upon as benevolent beings, protectors from spiritual and physical enemies and imparters of wisdom. On the other hand, they constantly need to be reminded of their oath lest they go back to their old ways of causing damage and suffering. Whenever they can justify it (as part of their vows), they like to hunt down and kill other beings. Dharmapalas are known to destroy human enemies of Buddhism. Some even hunt down monks who have broken their vows. They are generally seen as monstrous beings with wrathful faces and multiple arms brandishing weapons (swords, knives, lances, tridents, bows and snares). See p.189 for a description of a powerful demon.

The most powerful dharmapalas, who were worshiped as deities before being bound, live in palaces in the metaphysical world. These palaces are filled with innumerable horrors. These dharmapalas have a whole court of servants who are emanations that the dharmapalas created from their own being. Some, but not all, also have a peaceful, benevolent aspect. The wrathful dharmapalas are given offerings of bone, blood, bile and skulls. Monks, who are opposed to killing, make vegetable or mineral facsimiles of these offerings. Raucous, discordant notes are played on thighbone trumpets to please the wrathful emanations. The peaceful emanations are offered medicines, sweet foods, incense and silk.

Dharmapalas are not stagnant beings. Many are progressing towards enlightenment just as some humans are. Some acquire enough good karma to pass out of the worldly realm. Among the most powerful Dharmapalas still in the plane of existence are Pehar and Dorje Shugden (see p.81).

## DAKINIS

**In Brief-** Naked blue female angels.

This race of female beings travel through space and live in their own heavenly realm where men are not allowed. They appear to humans as beautiful naked blue women, some have wings. Dakinis delight in perpetual dancing. The Dakinis are keepers of their own secret "twilight language" which many terma (p.7) are written in. Dakinis can teach people to read this language, and thus interpret terma. Many men seek out sexual tantras in which the female embodies a Dakini so they can learn the language. Dakinis are also known to travel to this world to help Buddhist practitioners overcome obstacles to the achievement of enlightenment and to comfort those who have suffered great losses (much like angels in the west).

## GODS

**In Brief-** Mostly benevolent, though can be dangerous.

The word God, in Tibet, can refer to any number of beings that are benevolent or useful to humans. These beings range in power from petty minor-spirits to powerful entities that live in the heavens.

**Heavenly Gods:** These are beings who were worshipped before Buddhism came to Tibet. They live on Mount Meru but take occasional interest in human affairs.



*dharmapala*

**Dakini-** A race of beautiful, blue female heavenly beings, similar to angels in the west.

**Dharmapala-** A demon or native deity which has been bound by an oath to do good and to

protect Buddhism and its practitioners.

**Pehar-** One of the most powerful dharmapalas, his oracle is the most powerful oracle in Tibet and advises the Tibetan government.