



Prayers of the Ancient Ones

This film takes us on a journey to Bodh Gaya, India, the holiest site of Buddhism where the Buddha attained supreme enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. Each year, over 10,000 Tibetan monks, nuns and lay pilgrims travel here from all across the Himalayan region to pray for world peace and affirm their heritage in the face of overwhelming challenge and loss.

The film chronicles the story of the World Peace Ceremony founded by Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche in 1989, an annual event that has united the Tibetan Nyingma community, the most ancient of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Here at the ceremony, Tarthang Tulku has led one of the world's largest efforts to preserve the Tibetan culture through his monumental offerings of Tibetan sacred texts and art. And through their unceasing prayers for peace at the very source of their spiritual

tradition, the Tibetans have helped revitalise a long dormant place of worship and reinvigorated their culture in the most critical time of their history.

This is the story of a sacred place, an exiled people and a Tibetan lama's immense efforts to restore Tibetan culture. The film is a majestic testament to the beauty and power of working from one's highest aspirations for the benefit of all beings. To view a trailer go to www.gunafoundation.org.

The World Peace Ceremony

The Mahabodhi Temple, which marks the site of the Buddha's enlightenment is the holiest site of the Buddhist world. For centuries, pilgrims inspired by that sacred power have journeyed across Asia to make profound prayers and offerings beneath the Bodhi tree. And yet, this holiest site of one of the world's great religions faded into obscurity and was virtually aban-

doned for a period of 700 years.

Tibetans have returned to Bodh Gaya as pilgrims on a remarkable scale, starting in 1959 as refugees fleeing the sweeping destruction of their own ancient Buddhist civilization. Tibetan lama Tarthang Tulku was one of those refugee-pilgrims who came seeking blessings and solace at the site exalted in both the texts and collective imagination of Tibet.

In 1959, deeply moved by the stark and unattended state of the temple, Tarthang Tulku made a vow at the Bodhi tree to do whatever he could to revitalise the temple for the sake of all of Buddhist civilization. In 1989, he founded the annual ceremony known as the Nyingma Monlam Chenmo, which is held for 10 days in early spring at the Mahabodhi Temple.

To date, over 3.7 million texts have been given away beneath the Bodhi tree and their true flowering will continue to unfold in the decades to come. ☸

Picture: Screenshot from the film: Monks and nuns gathered on the west side of the temple complex at the Bodhi Tree at the annual World Peace Ceremony.

Guna Foundation

The Foundation is a non-profit, volunteer-based film studio located in Berkeley, California. Its mission is to present a window into the beauty, spirit and knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism. Its work supports the preservation of this wisdom tradition for the heritage of all humanity.

Prayers of the Ancient Ones is its second film; its first, *Light of the Valley: the 15th Renovation of Swayambhu*, completed in 2011, screened in six countries and has been accepted to the Jaipur and Ladakh Film Festivals.

Director Pema Gellek, also Co-Director of the Foundation, is the second of the three daughters of Tarthang Tulku, all of whom work to preserve Buddhist culture.

Producer Barry Schieber became Co-Director of the Guna Foundation in 2009, after becoming a student of Tarthang Tulku in the early '70s.

Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, who acted as advisor, is the founder and Head Lama of the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center in California (p15). He was born in 1935 in eastern Tibet, where he studied with many of the greatest Tibetan Buddhist masters of the 20th century. After leaving Tibet, he taught from 1962–1968 at Sanskrit University in Varanasi, India, where he also established one of the first presses to print sacred Tibetan texts.

The first lama of the Nyingma lineage to settle in the USA, Rinpoche founded a network of Tibetan Buddhist groups in Berkeley, through which he actualised a vision of preserving Tibetan Buddhist culture and transmitting Buddhism to the modern world. In 2009, he founded the Guna Foundation to document these accomplishments and share the wisdom tradition of Tibet with the world.