Cemetery Services: Nirvana Stupa

by James Holman, *Director of Cemetery Sales*

Mount Auburn's recently erected stupa, a memorial for a local Tibetan family, has quickly become a source of inspiration and gathering for New England's Buddhist community.

Sonam Yudon' s five children, led by her two two eldest sons Lama Migmar Tseten and Trinley Tsewang, dedicated the memorial on November 24th, 2012 on the anniversary of their mother's death. The Nirvana Stupa, with its characteristic dome-like structure, is the first of its kind in this region and embodies the Cemetery's commitment to serving a diverse community.

Located along Mount Auburn's Story Road, the stupa's scale deliberately captures as much of the viewer's attention as possible, establishing a landmark for the Cemetery's southwest corner. The careful siting of additional large-scale monuments like the Nirvana Stupa to add new focal elements and more diversity to selected locations within the Cemetery landscape follows one of the recommendations of Mount Auburn's award-winning 1993 Master Plan. In addition, the installation of a wooden bench near the Stupa for meditation and rest reflects the goal to preserve the contemplative nature of the Cemetery.

With a sixteen-part stepped configuration, the Nirvana Stupa presents not one, but a series of stone planes directly opposite the end of Ilex Path. Its sacred and traditional form carved in New England granite reiterates the desired function as a terminus. Two Tibetan mantras repeat on all four sides: the Mother Tara mantra is to receive healing to overcome suffering, and the Buddha of Compassion mantra is to cultivate loving kindness, wisdom, and compassion. Lama Migmar Tseten says of the memorial, "May whoever comes into contact with this Nirvana Stupa further develop these inner qualities of love, compassion, and wisdom."

In addition to being a family memorial, the monument is an object for prayer, meditation, and mantra recitation for the Buddhist community. The Nirvana Stupa is both memorable and suited to its surroundings in Mount Auburn. It represents the vitality of a truly diverse, non-sectarian, and non-denominational cemetery.

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