



"They have an amazing culture, which I would love to hear more about"
Louis

"I was totally surprised about the fact that some of the monks begin their training at age 6"
Angus



KEVICC students look into the land of the saffron robes

Religious Studies and Performing Arts students were given a fascinating insight into the culture of Tibetan monks from the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

The monks presented a moving and inspirational insight into their world of sacred music and monastic dance. Students were invited to participate, playing instruments that belong to an ancient Tantric tradition, including the majestic Dungchen (long horns) and joining in with Cham - dance, Taksel - the art of debate, and the learning of hand gestures, Mudras - that represent words in the chants. The monks also led 'hands-on' workshops where students learned about some of the occupations of the monks, and what the significance of each is in their life of worship and prayer.

In the evening KEVICC hosted a performance of sacred dances, chants and music by the monks which was enthusiastically received by the Totnes community.



Students enjoyed the 'Hands-on' workshops:

- **Butter Sculpture** . . . copying the art of making very decorative designs that are made for the New Year rituals in the monastery.
- **Sand Mandala Making** . . . seeing how sand mandalas are created with millions of grains of coloured sand used to draw intricate patterns as part of the major prayer ceremonies - and trying it for themselves. At the end of making a mandala, the students found it really disconcerting to be asked to destroy it, but they were, as a core belief of the monks is about not building security into possessions.
- **Tibetan Script and Language** . . . seeing beautiful Tibetan scripts with examples of some of the many different alphabets used in Tibetan writing and then learning some basic language and trying out the writing.
- **Prayer Flag Printing** . . . many students were familiar with prayer flags and had fun using an original wood block of a traditional prayer flag to print onto coloured paper using ink and roller.
- **Dukar Wheel Making** . . . creating protection wheels prepared and consecrated by the monks as part of the powerful Tantric practice of the deity Dukar. They are made by winding threads of coloured silk around a paper covered card which contains a prayer and the students found making them absorbing and intriguing. They were proud to wear them.



"It was a once in a lifetime experience to see how people with such different religions live."
Seb

"The discipline was inspiring!"
Solly

"Sitting in small groups, each learning spiritual hand gestures with one of the monks, was the most moving part of the afternoon. We really felt their spirituality; their dedication; their calm outlook - and their humour!"
Teacher

Founded by the first Dalai Lama in the 15th Century, Tashi Lhunpo is one of the most important monasteries in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Re-established in exile in South India, the monastery is becoming one of the major centres of Buddhist learning, best known for its artistic tradition of masked dances and sacred music.