

them, which makes these pujas performed exceptionally powerful. These pujas always include Lama Zopa Rinpoche's own dedication prayers for world peace, the long and stable life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the fulfillment of all his wishes, and towards removing all obstacles to benefactors and students and all the FPMT Dharma activities, including its many projects.

While the monasteries and nunneries which perform the pujas benefit financially, we benefit too – because ordained people are living in higher vows, their prayers have a lot of power.

Rinpoche himself responds to incredible sufferings, such

as the recent events in China and Burma, by immediately doing Medicine Buddha Puja and reciting King of Prayers.

So many times students have contacted Rinpoche when they are about to have an operation or are suffering from a major sickness, and Rinpoche will recommend a certain puja for them.

These pujas have the potential to change the person's karma and there have been many recorded cases of recovery to full health (see the picture on page 30 of a healthy, grateful student with Rinpoche).

Remember, FPMT is united by the prayers and practices that we share. ☸

FPMT Puja Fund

Why do obstacles arise? Lama Zopa Rinpoche often explains how important it is to create merit and purify past negative karma: this is the only way conditions can be changed. Supporting the continual practice of pujas in the way Rinpoche explains below is an incredible and easy way to create merit, and to purify and change your karma.

For the last thirteen years Lama Zopa Rinpoche has sponsored many different pujas and virtuous actions on auspicious days. On these days, virtuous karma is increased many times – as much as 100 million times! With this in mind, Rinpoche has put in place permanent arrangements to have pujas and other activities performed by various Gelug monasteries in Nepal and India.

In Sera, Ganden and Drepung alone (three of the main Gelug monasteries) there are more than 15,000 monks. In addition to pujas, other virtuous activities are carried out at the famous Boudhanath Stupa in Nepal, where the stupa is whitewashed, offered saffron color, cleaned, and decorated with new umbrellas and lights each month.

Lunch is offered to each of Rinpoche's gurus, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and offerings are made to the various Sangha communities within FPMT.

Whenever these pujas are performed, the Sangha read a two-page dedication prepared by Rinpoche, so that the merit is dedicated to the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as well as to the removal of obstacles to all the FPMT Dharma activities, its 150 centers, and all its projects. Merit is also dedicated to all FPMT students; to those working, serving, and participating in the centers and projects; to all the benefactors of the centers and projects and all their

families; and to all those who make requests to Rinpoche for prayers for health, as well as to all who have passed away.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche said:

"The merit that is created from all these pujas that I have organized is also your merit. So you can dedicate all these merits to having realizations and to achieve enlightenment.

"All the offerings that I make to all the Sangha in the monasteries are in monasteries of my gurus; this is because it creates so much more merit. If by thinking of the guru you offer a cup of tea, a glass of water or even a candy to one of the pores of your guru, you collect more merit than if you had made offerings to all the numberless past, present and future buddhas, and to all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. This applies to making offerings to your guru's family (wife, husband or children), friend, neighbors or even animals (cat, dog or horse). The merit of making offerings to all the numberless past, present and future buddhas is small when compared to the merit of offering even a glass of water to one of the guru's pores with thought of the guru. The monks in these monasteries all have the same gurus, even Kopan has 300 monks and 300 nuns, and there are many thousands of monks in the other monasteries, all of whom have His Holiness the Dalai Lama as their guru.

“I’m just telling you this so you know how to collect extensive merit. Let’s say there is a monastery with a thousand monks and all of those monks are disciples of one of your gurus – His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for example. Even if you have only one rupee or one dollar, if you offer that rupee to all those monks, by thinking of your guru, as I mentioned before, in dependence upon each monk, you collect more merit than having made offerings to all the Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha and all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. Even if what you have to offer is just one tea bag, but you offer that that tea bag with thought of your guru to a monastery of a thousand monks, who are disciples of your guru, you collect unbelievable merit. (Of course, there is also more merit because you are offering to ordained people). You don’t have to make a huge offering. Even if you offer only one rupee, you can still collect unbelievable merit.

“So far, these offerings and pujas have not been publicized much, but I would like to make it available and known so that other people can participate in making these extensive offerings. Offerings to all these monasteries happen all the time, every year, every month, they are continually happening. My idea is for these offerings and pujas to continue forever, or as long as the monasteries exist.

“So please, if you make offerings, please think in this way and dedicate, and you can also remember on the actual day that the pujas are happening, to rejoice and dedicate. This is the best business, the best way to create the most extensive merit.”

The sponsorship of these pujas also financially benefits the monasteries and nunneries involved, as well as the Sangha that perform them. Also at each puja the Sangha are offered tea, bread and a small offering; in some cases lunch is also offered. Any money in this fund is used solely for the continuation of the pujas and offerings. The annual expense for the pujas is over \$64,000. To date Lama Zopa Rinpoche has happily covered nearly all these costs.

Rinpoche recently commented: “How is it possible for a day to go by without doing pujas? It is so extremely important.”

Here are the details of the Pujas performed throughout the year:

On the Four Special Buddhas days throughout the year (Losar, Saka Dawa, Buddha’s first teaching, Buddha’s Descent from Tushita), the Sangha at each of the monasteries are offered tea and a money offering:

From left:

Lama Zopa Rinpoche offers gold each month to the holy face of the Jowo Rinpoche statue in Lhasa

Rinpoche asks us to remember to rejoice and dedicate on the days that the pujas are happening
PHOTO: Rusty Stewart

Prayers at Maratika: From left, Frances Howland, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Tulku Tenzin Chogyal and Maratika Lama Karma Wangchuk.



Sera Lachi: Drukchumaⁱ, Namgyal Tongchuⁱⁱ, King of Prayersⁱⁱⁱ (puja is offered by approximately 5,200 monks).

Ganden Lachi: Drukchuma, Medicine Buddha Puja^{iv} and King of Prayers; (puja is offered by approximately 1,750 monks).

Ganden Lachi: Special puja done one week before Lha Bab Duchon (Buddha’s Descent from Tushita): a requesting puja for Buddha to descend from Tushita (puja is offered by approximately 1,750 monks).

Drepung Lachi: Drukchuma offering, Namgyal Tsechog^v Long Life Puja and King of Prayers; (puja is offered by approximately 2,500 monks).

ⁱ This puja is to Yamantaka in protector form; it is especially to eliminate obstacles for one’s activities or projects – especially projects that are bringing benefit to others.

ⁱⁱ This puja is performed to remove all obstacles for a long life. Namgyalma is one of the three Long life Deities (White Tara and Amitayus are the other two). This puja is making 1,000 sets of the seven offerings (light, water, etc.) to Namgyalma. This is especially performed to accumulate merit and to overcome obstacles. Making requests to this deity helps to remove obstacles to one’s life span. This puja is specifically dedicated to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and for all beings that are benefiting others and practicing virtue.

ⁱⁱⁱ This is very powerful prayer of Samantabhadra – this prayer of aspiration summarizes all the extraordinary activities of bodhisattvas, as well as both the profound and extensive paths.

^{iv} Medicine Buddha Puja is very powerful to bring success to all one’s activities. Also for long life and also when anyone has passed away.

^v This ritual is performed to the Buddha Namgyalma to remove all obstacles for one’s life and to have a long life. This puja is specifically dedicated to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and for all beings that are benefiting others and practicing virtue.



Kopan Monastery: Namgyal Tongchu or Lama Chöpa Tsog^{vi}, Drukchuma, King of Prayers, One-Thousand Light Offerings (puja is offered by approximately 600 monks and nuns).

A *khata* (long, white silk scarf) and lunch is offered to all of Rinpoche's gurus on the special days: **His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Denma Lochö Rinpoche, Choden Rinpoche, Dhakpa Rinpoche, His Holiness Sakya Trizin, Trulshik Rinpoche, Geshe Sopa Rinpoche and Khongla Rato Rinpoche.**

A \$10 offering is made to each **Sangha person** at Nalanda Monastery, Chenrezig Nunnery, Lama Tsong Khapa, Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery as well as the Sangha in Rinpoche's house each special day.

Monthly pujas and offerings:

Sera Me: Medicine Buddha Puja on the eighth of the Tibetan month in order to bring success to all the centers and projects, as well as for all who are sick or have passed away.

Sera Lachi: Hayagriva Puja, an all-day extensive puja with extensive offerings by forty monks. This is done monthly on behalf of the whole FPMT.

Boudhanath Stupa: White-washing, offering new umbrellas to the stupa's top and above its painted eyes,

^{vi} Very powerful offering practice to all one's Gurus, very powerful for purification, collecting merit and purifying *samaya* with one's guru.

replacing burned-out light bulbs used for light offerings. Also, flowers are offered in each direction.

A new **set of robes** with meditation practice is offered each month to the **Buddha** inside the **Bodhgaya Mahabodhi** temple.

A new **set of robes** is offered monthly to the **Jowo Buddha** in Lhasa's Jokhang. Gold is also offered to its face.

Each year, **100,000 Praises to Tara** are done with strong dedication for all His Holiness's wishes to be fulfilled, and for the success of all the projects in FPMT, its students and its benefactors.

Each year, the **recitation of the entire Kangyur** is done, including the recitation of the **Prajnaparamita**.

Other pujas and special activities:

Sera Je: A complete set of robes is offered at the end of each year to any monk able to memorize certain rare texts and the commentary on Je Tsongkhapa's *Lekshe Nyingpo*; this is used at Sera to teach *Madhyamaka*. In 2007, one hundred forty-one monks at Sera successfully memorized these texts.

Gaden Monastery: Tsog is offered on the **anniversary of Trijang Rinpoche's** passing. Ten thousand rupees are offered for light offerings on **Lama Tsongkhapa Day**.

On **solar and lunar eclipses, Sera Lachi, Gaden Lachi and Kopan Monastery** preform pujas and also 1,000 Light

“How is it possible for a day to go by without doing pujas?
It is so extremely important.”

— LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Offerings for two days (so as to definitely cover the actual time of eclipse).

Kopan Monlam: For the first fifteen days of Losar an offering is made each day, as well as tea and lunch offered to all the monks and nuns participating in the annual Monlam festival (more than 2,000 monks and nuns).

Potawa Nunnery: Offering is made to the nuns to perform **sixteen nung nä retreats** over Saka Dawa.

Chenrezig Institute: every Saka Dawa, volunteers' lunch is sponsored and the material is sponsored for the **making of stupas** for one day.

A **full set of robes** is offered to all **FPMT Geshes and resident teachers**. In 2007, there were fifty-eight sets of robes offered.

Each year FPMT checks with one of Rinpoche's gurus to see if there are obstacles for **FPMT and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's health**, and then the pujas are accordingly preformed. For instance, in 2008, it was advised that 10,000 Tara recitations plus White Tara puja is to be done as well as 1,000 Trukchumas.

Throughout the year Rinpoche checks for specific projects, students, benefactors and other matters, and other pujas are accordingly arranged.

For more information on how to support the FPMT Puja Fund, go to www.fpmt.org/projects/puja/default.asp

Grateful thanks to Ven. Holly Ansett for compiling this information. ☸

THE MONKS at Nalanda Monastery in France

By Ven. Lobsang Jinpa

Performing pujas is a vital part of monastery life. The prayers and dedications of those keeping pure vows, especially monastic vows, are considerable, and so when a lay practitioner needs help when someone is dying, is sick, or has obstacles in their practice/daily life, the Sangha are very pleased to perform pujas to help.

The monks at Nalanda receive requests, mostly by email, to perform a puja for a specific person, family or animal. The person requesting usually offers a donation which is given to the monks performing the puja. The monks meet in the evening to recite the puja and offer strong dedications for the benefactor and their particular obstacle. Our website www.nalanda-monastery.eu lists the pujas we recommend for different circumstances, together with a brief explanation of the different types of pujas performed at the monastery.

As monks and nuns cannot always offer much in the way of material goods, performing pujas becomes an important method for the Sangha to directly help the lay community,

repay their kindness and to further the goals of our precious teachers. We're not saying lay people shouldn't do pujas themselves: as Sangha, we're here for added support. However, monks and nuns do remember how demanding a lay life can be, and are very happy to offer help when needed.

Ven. Losang Nyinje organizes the requests for pujas at Nalanda, so I asked him about his experiences:

Q. How many requests does Nalanda get in a week?

A. We have a box in our lobby where we receive about six or eight requests with money offerings. We also get regular emails from FPMT about those recently deceased and from others we receive about three or four sponsored puja requests by email a week.

Geshe Jamphel (Nalanda's Abbot) also suggests pujas for the monks. For example, we did a series of four Tara Pujas to help purchase some land next to the monastery. We also recently received a request from Lama Zopa Rinpoche for all the monks to read certain sutras for an FPMT student.