

Light of the Path: The Quintessential FPMT Lam-Rim Program

By Merry Colony

In the 11th century, Lama Atisha (Shri Dipankara) was invited from India to Tibet for the purpose of transmitting the complete teachings of Lord Buddha to the Tibetan people, and presenting them in a way that was clear, precise and easy to practice. To that purpose, Lord Atisha wrote and taught the *Light of the Path to Enlightenment* (*jangchhub lam gyi drönma*), which became the cornerstone of teaching and practice for thousands of Tibetans and provided a foundation for understanding and realizing Lord Buddha's teachings.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has now kindly offered to give a modern-day commentary on this profound and ancient text over a number of years, beginning in September of 2009. We envision that the upcoming *Light of the Path* program will become FPMT's quintessential experiential lam-rim program. While FPMT now has seven standard programs, none of them highlight the teachings of our Founder, Lama Thubten Yeshe, or our Spiritual Director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche. *Light of the Path* is exactly what FPMT education has needed.

This new program, rooted in a two-week live teaching event, will be given annually by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and hosted by Kadampa Center in North Carolina, USA. Following this annual teaching event, an ongoing online component of the program will provide further teachings and follow-up material by both Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Thubten Yeshe.

It is our hope that as many students and FPMT teachers as possible will attend the live event with Rinpoche, and that following the teachings, students and centers without resident teachers will continue the program by following the online teachings in the interim between the live teaching events. Additional audio and video materials of both Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe that until now have not been released will be made available online, augmented by discussions with senior FPMT teachers and an online forum.

With the addition of the *Light of the Path* program, FPMT's education curriculum becomes very full and well-rounded. Students will now have a choice of study and practice programs that range from the introductory (*Buddhism in a Nutshell* and *Meditation 101*), to two-year homestudy courses that provide a solid foundation on the path (*Discovering Buddhism* and *Foundation of Buddhist Thought*),

to in-depth philosophical study offered in the *Basic* and *Masters Programs*, to the Master's Degree in Buddhist Studies offered by Maitripa College.

Where does *Light of the Path* fit in with this lineup? Ideally, any committed FPMT student will engage with the *Light of the Path* program, either as an annual teaching event with our Spiritual Director or as an ongoing course of study online. While we cannot predict at this stage all that the *Light of the Path* teachings will include, we can be sure that it will be comprehensive, experiential and life-changing. Initiated personally by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, we can guarantee that the live teaching event will cover lam-rim topics as well as many purification and accumulation practices.

For more information on the program please visit: www.fpmt.org/education/lp/
To register for the teaching event, please go to: www.kadampa-center.org

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STATUS REPORT: Essential Education

A happier and more peaceful world is the goal of Essential Education (EE), a cornerstone affiliate of FPMT's education initiatives that grew from Lama Yeshe's vision of Universal Education outlined four decades ago. A key current focus of EE is *16 Guidelines*, a program they describe as "a simple, practical, but profound tool for living in a way that benefits oneself and others."

In May 2008, EE launched the first of three different *16 Guidelines* training programs. These have been attended by more than 170 people in seven different countries, from the Netherlands to Mexico. Training continues in 2009 with the first *16 Guidelines* course in the USA (scheduled for April 4-5 in Portland, Oregon, and led by EE Director Alison Murdoch and veteran teacher Pam Cayton).

Lama Zopa Rinpoche, honorary President of Essential Education, has asked EE to provide training for people all over the world. A new *Train the Trainers* course in 2009 will equip more people with the skills to achieve that goal.

On the resources side, EE has produced a variety of books and materials (even playing cards) to present and supplement *16 Guidelines* education. EE will soon launch a revised edition of *16 Guidelines: The Basics*. Beautifully

redesigned and including new quotes, exercises and meditations, the new edition will be available in March. The EE team is working to produce translations of *The Basics* in as many languages as possible.

Also much anticipated is the upcoming launch of the first EE book in Spanish, called *Preparados Listos*, published in partnership with Asociación Educación Universal of Barcelona. This text is based on EE's English-language book *Ready, Set, Happy*, a children's resource for exploring the *16 Guidelines*.

Stay tuned for more on Essential Education in upcoming issues of *Mandala*. 🌀

See www.freewebs.com/16guidelines/eventsworldwide.htm to read about upcoming events, and visit www.essential-education.org to sign up for regular updates.

FPMT Online Learning Launch

FPMT Education Services is pleased to announce the launch of both the *Discovering Buddhism* and *Basic Program* online!

Discovering Buddhism is a two-year course that offers students an experiential taste of Buddha's teachings, retreat and practice experience, and the skills needed to make life more meaningful.

The *Basic Program* is a five-year, twelve-subject course of studies designed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche that provides a practice-oriented transmission of the Dharma to committed students ready to progress beyond introductory-level study and practice.

Discovering Buddhism will be the first program to be available in Spring 2009. When all 13 of the *Discovering Buddhism* modules are online, the *Basic Program* study materials will follow. We will also be augmenting both the existing *Discovering Buddhism* and *Basic Program* with new materials, making the online courses a dynamic and growing body of educational materials from which to draw. Both of these programs will be available to all Foundation Members at the "Dharma Wheel" level or higher (for information on membership levels please see page 77) and on a course by course basis through the Foundation Store (stay tuned to the FPMT website for details).

FPMT Translation Work on the Rise

As the Dharma takes root in the West, clear and accurate translations of the classic texts are essential. To best accomplish this task, FPMT Education Services has appointed a Translation and Editorial Committee whose work will be overseen by newly-appointed English Translation Coordinator, Ven. Joan Nicell. Ven. Joan is based at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in Italy where she has served as the Masters Program Coordinator since 1998. Joan's attendance at an international translation conference in March, hosted by Khyentse Foundation in India, kicks off the work of this group whose initial task will be to set up the guidelines and glossary of terms for future FPMT translations. Translation Coordinators in France, Spain, Italy, Germany and Brazil are responsible for managing translations of curriculum texts, commentaries, practice materials and other FPMT documents.

A great deal of translation work into English has already been done for the Basic and Masters Programs including:

- Lama Tsongkhapa's *Middling Lam-rim*
- Gyaltsab Je's *Tathagata Essence: A Commentary to the First Chapter of Sublime Continuum*
- The fourth chapter of Jetsün Chogyi Gyeltsen's *Ocean of Sport* (a commentary on *Abhisamayalamkara*)
- Yeshe Gyeltsen's *A Necklace for Those of Clear Awareness Clearly Revealing the Modes of Minds and Mental Factors*
- Ngawang Palden's *Illumination of the Texts of Tantra: The Principles of the Grounds and Paths of the Four Great Secret Classes of Tantra*
- Gyaltsab Je's *Ornament of the Essence* (a commentary on *Abhisamayalamkara*)
- Much of Lama Tsongkhapa's *Illumination of the Thought* (a commentary on *Madhyamakavatara*)
- The First Dalai Lama's *Clarifying the Path to Liberation* (a commentary on *Abhidharmakosha*)
- Kirti Losang Trinle's *Condensed Meaning of the Path of the Vajra Vehicle: The Essence of the Nectar of the Great Secret*
- Aku Sherab Gyatso's *A Memorandum to the Expository Commentary on the Five Stages of the Completion Stage of Glorious Gubhasamaja Called "Nectar From the Mouth of Akshobhya"*

Additionally, a tremendous amount of work has been done on the translation of specific sutras. For instance, the *Sutra of Golden Light* and the *Vajra Cutter Sutra* have both been translated into nine languages, and the *Sanghata Sutra* into twelve!

Other major commentaries requested by Lama Zopa Rinpoche are being diligently worked on, including a commentary on *Gyalwa Gyatso* and a three-volume series on the pilgrimage sites of Tibet, India and China. Finally, we're pleased to announce significant accomplishments in the Mandarin translation of Tsongkhapa's *Lam-rim Chenmo* and the publication of the German translation of his *Middling Lam-rim*.

To learn about all of the translation projects of FPMT Education Services or to find out how you can help support this work, please go to: www.fpmt.org/projects/translations/default.asp