

## ■ Teaching a GOOD HEART

# Teaching a Good Heart: FPMT REGISTERED TEACHERS



Lama Zopa Rinpoche teaching during the Fourth Meditation Course, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1973. Photo by Lynda Millspaugh, courtesy of Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.

Sincere and good hearted, this is an extremely important quality for teachers (so they can be) a very good model for students and an inspiration for their studies – inspiration to have deep, clear understanding of Dharma – and for inspiration to practice.

– LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE, TSE CHEN LING, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA, APRIL 2007

**In every practitioner's life**, there comes a moment when she knows that she has found her spiritual guide. It can look a lot of different ways. Some people have mystical visions or weep. Others simply find that one day, after many years of observation, they feel comfortable saying, "That person over there? Yes, he's my teacher." And although the look of this moment is as varied as there are people, a common emotional experience follows swiftly on its tail: a sense of purpose and inspiration, a feeling of coming home, a certainty of being on the right track. There is no doubt that a qualified spiritual teacher can change a person's life.

But how do we know when a teacher is capable of guiding us along the path, inspiring us with their discipline, helping us understand the teachings and promoting harmony in our communities? At FPMT, the label "teacher" indicates a person possessing several indispensable qualifications: academic success, solid meditation practice, an attitude of service, ethical behavior and loving kindness. Also FPMT teachers have an appreciation of the organization's history and unique teaching lineage, which helps build a sense of family and cohesion amongst their students. FPMT's teacher registration process seeks to ensure as much as possible that teachers at FPMT centers, projects and services meet these criteria.

# A System for Dharma Education

I do take the Dharma seriously and make sure (I know about the teachers) I take teachings from – always. That’s why I love FPMT. I know that if a lama or lay teacher is teaching in any FPMT center, they are fully approved to do so and I know what I hear there will be accurate and in line with my heart guru, Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

– VICTORIA RAINONE, *DISCOVERING BUDDHISM* ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM

**Meeting the instructional and inspirational needs** of the tens of thousands of students who visit FPMT centers requires care and consideration. While it’s true that the label “teacher” is a dependent arising and relies on a student considering an individual as a teacher, from the side of the FPMT organization, the teacher designation also demands that one works to maintain pure lineage instruction, provide a good example to students and foster harmony in centers.

At the 1980 Council for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (CPMT) meeting, Lama Yeshe said, “When we are organizing the education program we should choose the right teachers, ones who give good vibrations and do not create disorder and conflict.” Lama Zopa Rinpoche shared this sentiment when he advised that a teacher “always places the most emphasis on harmony amongst the students and the center, who considers that their main job is taking care of the students, helping the students in whatever way they can. If the teacher really pays attention to people, so that they can see the teacher has a strong wish to help people, this is highly beneficial for the center.”

The actual process of teacher registration in the FPMT has developed over the years as the organization has grown and matured. Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigsel, the former abbot of Kopan Monastery who passed away in September 2011, understood the need for an organized education system within FPMT and offered support for its development.

At the 2002 CPMT meeting held in Taos, New Mexico, USA, Lama Lhundrup advised, “Since our organization has become a very important one, we must establish a solid, well-disciplined and definite system to provide Dharma education to the students of the organization. If the different teachers and individuals who come to the centers to teach Dharma, express and set up their own systems, programs and rules, then we will not have anything to hold up as our own system and it is going to be a mess.

“Hence, a system has been set forth by the late, matchlessly kind Lama Thubten Yeshe, and followed and gradually developed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche over the past few decades,” Lama Lhundrup continued. “They have carried out careful observation on students’ situation and thorough investigation on what subjects are most suitable and beneficial for students to learn.”

In January 2011, FPMT International Office updated the teacher registration process in accordance with Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s advice and with input from senior teachers, center directors and spiritual program coordinators. The process is aligned with recognized good practice for teacher certification. Requirements include graduation from an FPMT standard education program or similar program – these programs all include the four aspects of academic study, meditation practice, service and ethical behavior. Also required are experience within the FPMT organization, appropriate references and a commitment to uphold the FPMT Ethical Policy (see page 24). In addition, registered teachers are expected to continue developing professionally and to keep up-to-date with the



Left to right: Lama Lhundrup, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe, Fourth Meditation Course, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1973. Photo courtesy of Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.

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From top:

FPMT geshes meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Sarnath, India, December 2006

Participants in the FPMT Education Conference, where the *Discovering Buddhism* program was conceived, Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Italy, April 2001.

Symposium at Maitripa College, Portland, Oregon, USA, December 2010. Photo by Marc Sakamoto.

organization's development, particularly as new advice comes from our spiritual director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Within the registered teacher classification system – which includes ordained and lay men and women – the designation of Foundational Buddhism teacher means that one is authorized to teach introductory programs such as *Foundations of Buddhist Thought*, *Discovering Buddhism* and *Living in the Path*. More than 135 non-Tibetan Sangha and lay people are categorized as Foundational Buddhism teachers. Their educational backgrounds include having a *Discovering Buddhism* or *Foundation of Buddhist Thought* certificate, studying in the *Masters Program*, or having graduated from the *Basic Program*, the *Masters Program* or Maitripa College's MA program.

An In-Depth Buddhism teacher is able to instruct additionally in some of the *Basic Program* modules and perhaps even *Masters Program* subjects. There are more than 60 non-Tibetans in this group. These teachers hold certificates from the *Basic Program* or *Masters Program*, or have studied at Tibetan monasteries, the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics or in a Ph.D. program. The Tibetan geshes who are resident in centers also teach In-Depth Buddhism. In addition, many teachers have authorization from Lama Zopa Rinpoche to give refuge and 20 non-Tibetan teachers are certified to lead retreats of one-month or longer depending on their experience.

With the process of registering teachers, FPMT International Office is working to help centers meet the diverse needs of students, while offering the assurance that only truly qualified teachers are invited to FPMT centers, projects and services around the world. Response to the updated policy has been positive. FPMT International Office maintains the ever-increasing list of more than 135 registered teachers.

“WOW! To all those involved in ascertaining the qualifications of this incredible list of current registered teachers across FPMT – thank you and well done,” wrote Ven. Lindy Mailhot, director at Chag-tong Chen-tong Centre in Tasmania, Australia. “It is such a clear indication of how far the organization has come in 30-odd years – to have such a huge list of qualified teachers bringing the Dharma to the world is truly amazing.”

The path of Dharma is progressive. Our instructional needs as beginning students are necessarily different than the guidance we will seek as advanced students. FPMT is also an organization with students of different ages

## Quotes from Students about Their Teachers

[The teacher] held my hand and I felt such an over-powering sense of protection, like I did when I was a very small child and my mother hugged me. ... Now I often hear his voice in my head when I am full of doubt or feel tired or make excuses. Very clearly his voice rings out: 'It's for all sentient beings.' – MICK DICKINSON, TOKYO, JAPAN

They give us the invaluable gift of Dharma teachings and are the epitome of control and moderation. They are so patient with our laziness and questions. They travel half-a-day each way every week just to give us teachings. They teach from their own experiences and give us such subtle, deep and authentic insights into the Dharma. In short, they are the buddhas who come to guide us so skillfully. May their teachings endure and many, many sentient beings be led by them.

– SHANTI YAJNIK, BANGALORE, INDIA



Lama Zopa Rinpoche with Ven. Roger Kunsang at Root Institute, Bodhgaya, India, January 2012. Photo by Kalleen Mortenson.

coming from a wide variety of cultural and educational backgrounds. Perhaps in recognition of the wide variety of experiences and spoken languages with which students arrive at FPMT centers, Lama Yeshe advised in 1983, “The spiritual leaders of the centers have to have some kind of sympathy for the feelings of the individuals in their daily life ... how to deal with them ... how to heal them.”

FPMT teachers include erudite scholars specialized in transmitting the main philosophical texts as well as plain-spoken practitioners skilled at bringing the teachings of the Buddha into our hyped-up-21st-century lives. Collectively these teachers along with spiritual director Lama Zopa Rinpoche are able to guide us from introductory topics through profound realizations, helping us make our lives truly beneficial.

## Visit *Mandala* Online to read more!

- Lama Zopa Rinpoche gives advice on the attitude to have when serving in a Dharma center
- *Discovering Buddhism* teacher Thubten Yeshe (T.Y.) discusses what you can do if you live far away from a Buddhist teacher
- Maitripa College's Prof. Jim Blumenthal introduces us to the Nalanda masters and their impact on the shape of Buddhism in Tibet
- Revisit *Mandala's* 2010 coverage of FPMT-registered teachers, including historical accounts of early FPMT teacher training and profiles of FPMT's Tibetan geshe
- Adele Hulse recounts her first encounters with Lama Yeshe in an excerpt from *Big Love*, the forthcoming biography of Lama Yeshe

Find these stories at [mandalamagazine.org](http://mandalamagazine.org).

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# Ethical Conduct

**Proper ethical conduct is a heart value** within all parts of FPMT. As one of the three higher trainings, ethical conduct is a key aspect of Dharma practice, but appropriate action also ensures the effectiveness and functionality of a Dharma center.

“A fundamental responsibility to ourselves and to the FPMT community is to create a supportive, harmonious and safe environment for Dharma practice,” states the FPMT Ethical Policy. “In this, we are caretakers of the community’s well-being and share a responsibility to foster an environment of integrity and respect.”

To meet these ends and to fully support compassionate service and spiritual development, all FPMT registered teachers and introductory class facilitators – as well as center, project and service directors, spiritual program coordinators, board members and other staff – are required to sign and uphold the FPMT Ethical Policy.

The five precepts form the basis of the FPMT Ethical Policy. (The five precepts are not to kill, steal, indulge in sexual misconduct, lie or take intoxicants.) The policy also covers relationships, right speech, finances and non-discrimination. In addition, there are specific policies for FPMT teachers’ behavior which cover confidentiality, qualification and appropriate relationships.

Actions contrary to these principles of conduct could lead to a person being suspended from facilitating classes or removed from the FPMT teacher registry. The Ethical Policy is displayed in all centers along with information on the center’s grievance procedures. The policy is also included in staff and volunteer trainings. The organization also offers further guidance to FPMT registered teachers on appropriate behavior.

The complete FPMT Ethical Policy is available on the FPMT website: [www.fpmt.org/images/stories/organization/FPMT\\_Ethical\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.fpmt.org/images/stories/organization/FPMT_Ethical_Policy.pdf)

## FPMT is Extremely Fortunate



From left: Lama Yeshe teaching at Seventh Meditation Course, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1974; Lama Yeshe and student, Manjushri Institute, England, 1976; International Mahayana Institute monks and nuns with some lay friends, Kopan 1974. Many of the early Sangha have become FPMT registered teachers. All photos courtesy of Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.

“FPMT is extremely fortunate, unbelievably fortunate that we have many qualified teachers,” Lama Zopa Rinpoche told students at Tse Chen Ling in San Francisco, California, in 2007. “[They] have extensively studied Buddhist philosophy, the whole path to enlightenment, the four noble truths. And [they] are not only scholars but are living in practice; that is an extremely important model for us. ... So we are very fortunate, they are not just scholars in words, but beings who are actually living the practice.”

In these remarks, Rinpoche is referring to the impressive number of qualified teachers who are currently giving

instruction at some of the 159 FPMT centers, projects and services worldwide. There are currently 53 teachers resident in centers, 39 of whom are Tibetan geshe. In addition, FPMT centers are able to invite more than 135 FPMT registered teachers with diverse histories, languages and experiences to their centers – and these numbers are always increasing! The variety and quality of these registered teachers means students from a wide range of backgrounds can have that truly remarkable experience of finding a spiritual friend that speaks to them. Creating this kind of connection is an important aspect of the FPMT organization.



More than 40 FPMT centers in Australia, Denmark, England, France, Germany, India, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United States are home to 53 FPMT resident teachers.

See the FPMT directory on page 59 for a listing of all FPMT centers, projects and services as well as for centers with resident teachers. Or go online for the most up-to-date listing: [www.fpmt.org/teachers/resident.html](http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/resident.html)

This rich assembly of teachers makes sense when we consider *where* Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche made contact with their early Western students: first in India and hippie-saturated Kopan in Nepal, later in Australia and New Zealand, Europe and North America. These Western spiritual seekers were inspired by their precious teachers to create Dharma centers in their own countries, facilitating the spreading of the Buddha’s teachings

throughout the world. Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche also traveled throughout Asia. In later years, especially because of Rinpoche’s efforts, centers have blossomed in Mongolia, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and Indonesia. Today, FPMT has centers, projects, services and study groups in 39 countries, including Mauritius, Israel, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil.

## Growing New Teachers

As the number of centers, projects, services and study groups grows, there is an ever-increasing need for qualified teachers. Happily as more centers offer the full standard education programs, such as *Discovering Buddhism*, *Basic Program* and *Masters Program*, more students are becoming certified, which is the first step in becoming eligible to apply to be registered as a teacher!

FPMT centers and study groups can cultivate new teachers by encouraging suitable and experienced local stu-

dents to lead meditation and introduction to Buddhism classes. These students can be labeled “Dharma friend,” “introductory class leader” or “facilitator” in order to clearly distinguish them from FPMT registered teachers. The centers hold responsibility for monitoring, supporting and training these individuals, and for encouraging them to complete one of the standard education programs.

The future of Dharma depends on qualified teachers. And the preservation of the Gelug tradition rests, in part, with

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FPMT's commitment to training and supporting teachers able to keep the lineage teachings authentic.

As Lama Zopa Rinpoche consistently emphasizes, the motivation behind all of our actions should be our personal commitment to the path of the bodhisattva. "The best answer is to learn Dharma – and to meditate – especially how to develop wisdom and compassion towards other sentient beings," Lama Zopa Rinpoche advised in November 2011. "We each have full responsibility to free all sentient beings from suffering and bring them to full enlightenment. Therefore, we need to achieve full enlightenment and so we need to practice Dharma. Therefore, we need a place where there is a teacher and facilities to practice. Now we can see how important the Dharma center is. We should know how fortunate and lucky we are having different Dharma centers with teachers."

We are indeed fortunate that so many opportunities exist within FPMT for us to receive Dharma instruction and to work on developing our compassion and wisdom. Our teachers offer us support and inspiration so we can



Lama Zopa Rinpoche with a young Tibetan girl in Boudha, Nepal, February 2012. Photo by Ven. Roger Kunsang.

change ourselves, seeking not only our own enlightenment, but working to become truly helpful to others. In the future, may we all become skillful teachers of Dharma and bring peace and happiness to all beings. ♦

To learn more about FPMT study programs visit:  
<http://www.fpmt.org/education/programs.html>

*Support* the continuing activities of **LAMA YESHE** and **LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE** over many lifetimes to come by requesting your legal advisor to include a bequest to FPMT in your will or trust.

#### SAMPLE BEQUEST LANGUAGE:

I give, devise, and bequeath to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, Inc., a California Non Profit Corporation, with offices at 1632 SE 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon, 97214, USA \_\_\_\_\_ percent (\_\_\_\_%) of my residuary estate; and/or the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ dollars (\$\_\_\_\_\_).

Gifts of stocks, bonds, life insurance proceeds, real estate and other assets may also be donated in your will or trust.

For more information, contact Chuck Latimer at FPMT International Office: Tel. +1 (503) 808-1586; Email: [chuck@fpmt.org](mailto:chuck@fpmt.org). Or visit: [www.fpmt.org/projects/office/planned-giving.html](http://www.fpmt.org/projects/office/planned-giving.html)



*"Within our organization, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, there are numberless projects through which you can make your belongings most beneficial for sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha. . . . The aim of the projects is to illuminate the world from darkness, ignorance and suffering." – LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE*

**FPMT, INC. 1632 SE 11TH AVE. PORTLAND OR 97214 WWW.FPMT.ORG**