

The Foundation Store:

SENDING DHARMA TO EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD



White Tara, Manjushri and Green Tara copper statues

May our Dharma publications spread all over the world
and in every corner of the world.

- Lama Zopa Rinpoche

When you visit FPMT International Office's building in Portland, Oregon, you'll marvel at the beauty of the holy statues and the sun streaming through the building's many skylights. You'll see the faces of FPMT International Office's staff and of the students who study at Maitripa College (which is housed in the ground floor of the building). What you won't see, what you won't even notice that you are not seeing, is the FPMT Foundation Store. In part, that's because The Foundation Store exists as an **online shop**, but



Shelves of meditation supplies in The Foundation Store

the physical location of The Foundation Store's staff and warehouse are also part of the FPMT building in Portland. They're just tucked discretely in the back of the building, behind an unmarked beige door.

When you enter the world of The Foundation Store office and warehouse your eyes dart from the bright primary colors of prayer flags and brocade to shiny silver water bowls to muted bronze bells and dorjes. According to Diana Ospina, the store's manager, there are over 30,000 items in stock. As you begin to take in the scope of products, you realize how many shelves are overflowing with Dharma texts – prayers, practices and commentaries. “The core of The Foundation Store is in education materials,” said Diana, “[it's how] we can support the centers and share the teachings of Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe.”

The Foundation Store sells directly to individuals as well as providing wholesale materials for FPMT centers, projects, services and several other commercial distributors, fulfilling its mission to make the Dharma widely available in order to benefit sentient beings.

History

“It all started when we were preparing to go to the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Mountain View, California in 2001, organized by Land of Medicine Buddha,” remembered Merry Colony, who serves as the director of FPMT Education Services. “We had just completed *Essential Buddhist Prayers: An FPMT Prayer Book, Volume 1* and we had the idea to make some of our smaller practice booklets available in a nice color cover format for sale at the event.” Education Services pulled together six practices that were ready for publication, did their first major printing job and went off to California with a few hundred prayer books and a few thousand short practice booklets. “When we opened our booth on day one, it was mayhem,” Merry said. “People were literally grabbing the books. We left with empty boxes and a confirmed confidence that there was an eager audience awaiting our education materials.”

With that knowledge, Education Services realized they needed to develop a distribution method. At the time Bob Jacobson worked as FPMT International Office's web developer. “Bob really had the vision of making an online shop,” Merry recalled. Bob, working with Paddy Ryan who organized the office's IT at the time, developed a system that made it easy for someone to place an order online and for staff at the office to pack it up and ship it.

At first the online shop carried only FPMT Education Services materials, including that first prayer book, which has now grown into three volumes of *Essential Buddhist Prayers*. Over time the shop branched out to supply ritual objects and meditation supplies that

Western practitioners needed yet were difficult to find. Eventually the inventory expanded even more to include such items as **baseball caps** embroidered with mantras chosen by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and **animal liberation tools** for catching insects (and saving them from death).

After nine years in business, the store continues to grow. Last year the store switched over to new online software called 3dcart, which allows Diana to manage all aspects of the online store with technical assistance provided by the software company. The result is a more effective and efficient store, relieving the International Office's Technology Department of overseeing a complicated online system.

In 2010, the store received 4,701 orders, which added up to 27,726 items sold. Half of those orders came from outside of the United States, making The Foundation Store an international success. Carefully following Buddhist principles for the use of Dharma income, these proceeds are not used as payment for salaries or food expenses, but instead support FPMT's charitable projects, the construction and purchase of holy objects and other FPMT services. (For more information, see the **2010 Dharma Income Report**.)

Overview of Items

Visit The Foundation Store website and with a few clicks, you'll quickly discover a wide variety of Buddhist study materials and well-crafted meditation supplies available for purchase.

The Foundation Store stocks the entire collection of **materials developed by FPMT Education Services**. You can find practices spanning from the new publication *Charity to*



Meditation supplies and ritual objects from The Foundation Store

Ants to Preliminary Practice of Prostrations to *Meditations on White Tara*. And if you are interested in FPMT's **homestudy programs**, The Foundation Store can help. There is even a page dedicated to **children's materials** (just in case your 8-year-old daughter wants to meditate!). There are over 150 different Dharma titles in a variety of formats – printed booklets, DVDs and CDs as well as downloadable MP3s, PDFs and e-reader documents. (A **complete list of titles** is always available online.) The store also carries a wide selection of **books on Buddhism** by respected scholars and experienced Dharma teachers.

FOUNDATION STORE TOP SELLERS!

EDUCATION MATERIALS:

Buddhism in a Nutshell, Heart Advice for Death and Dying, Altar Set-up and Water Bowl Offerings.

AUDIO AND VIDEO:

Discovering Buddhism, Mystic Tibet, Recitations at Time of Death

NON-EDUCATION MATERIALS:

Lama Zopa Rinpoche Door Mantra, Namgyälma Car Decal, Namgyälma Amulet



White Tara thangka

The Foundation Store buys items from about 30 vendors from around the world, with 95 percent of meditation supplies and ritual objects coming from Nepal. The store at Kopan Monastery in Kathmandu is FPMT's biggest supplier of practice items like **brocade book covers, khatas** and **malas**. They also supply **prayer flags, door curtains, offering bowls, damarus, dorjes and bells**, and several of the dozen or so varieties of **incense** that The Foundation Store stocks. The Kopan store uses the profits it makes from selling items to The Foundation Store to support the monastery.

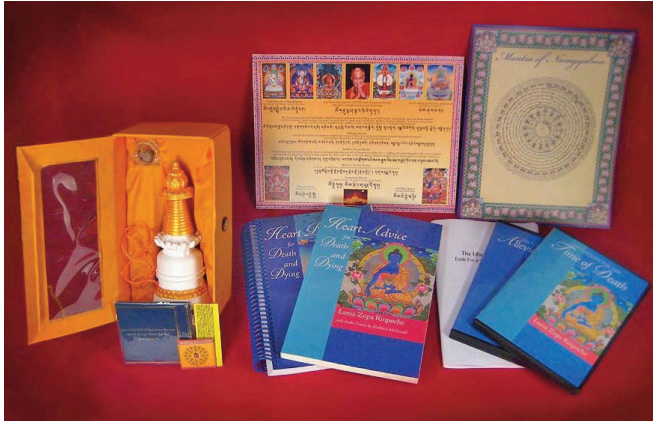
Browsing through the inventory of meditation supplies, many items have a special story of care and blessings behind them. **Lawudo incense** and **Pure Land incenses**, for example, are both handmade at Khachoe Ghakyil, the

FPMT nunnery in Kathmandu. (Lawudo incense is particularly special because it makes use of the plants found in the region where Lama Zopa Rinpoche and his predecessor originate.) **Medicine Buddha incense** comes from "a traditional Tibetan medical recipe containing 31 ingredients, and produced under the supervision of Dr. Wangchug in Kathmandu, Nepal," according to The Foundation Store website, and a **silk incense sachet** is "handmade by a family in Nepal and is filled with pure juniper and cedar wood."

The Foundation Store buys sacred art directly from Nepali vendors recommend by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The store carefully maintains a large inventory of fine **thangkas** created by Pradipkumar Rajbhandari. They also stock a sizable collection of **statues**, including a 13-inch [33-centimeter] tall **Green Tara** of gleaming copper as well as smaller statues of **Shakyamuni Buddha** and many other buddhas, deities and great teachers made of copper and other materials. The detailed copper statues come from Gautam Gift Emporium, a family enterprise in Nepal.

The store carries **hand-held** and **table-top prayer wheels** that are made in the United States in accordance to Lama Zopa Rinpoche's instruction. Each wheel is custom turned from beautiful hardwood, filled with tens of millions of copies of the Buddha Chenrezig's mantra OM MANI PADME HUNG on microfilm and adorned with a beautiful Swarovski lead crystal.

Of the many thousand items available in The Foundation Store, Diana believes the **Liberation Box: Tools for a Fortunate Rebirth** is the most special. This collection of materials, assembled according to Lama Zopa



The Liberation Box: Tools for a Fortunate Rebirth

Rinpoche's advice, contains powerful methods for ensuring fortunate rebirth for those who have died or are in the process of dying. The box includes various mantras, the **Liberation Card for a Dying Person**, a **Namgyälma mantra card**, a Kadampa stupa filled with the four dharmakaya relic mantras, a *powa* pill made by the late master Geshe Lama Konchog, a blessing cord, a copy of *Shetor* to place on the dying person's body, **Recitations to Alleviate Pain** and **Recitations for the Time of Death** on CD and the books **Heart Practices for Death and Dying** and **Heart Advice for Death and Dying**. The box, which is produced by The Foundation Store with the help of volunteers, became available in May 2010. By September, they had sent out 250.

"So much went into creating the Liberation Box. So many people have put work into it. And it was requested by Rinpoche. The nuns in Aptos are involved, consecrating statues. Volunteers bring them up and paint them. The *powa* pill. ... Every little thing has a story," Diana said. "When we hear 'Please, please, I need the Liberation Box,' I tell you, we run to send it out. And then we hear back from the customer, 'I never will forget this box.' There



Foundation Store Manager Diana Ospina looks through the store's book inventory

are so many stories. It is so special how it takes on meaning for each individual."

Staff

Diana Ospina became The Foundation Store manager in April 2009. She had worked with FPMT as the director of Universal Education (now called Essential Education) several years earlier when the International Office was still in Taos, New Mexico. She left to go back to her home country of Colombia where she did a pilot program of Essential Education. Then she worked with at-risk communities in war zones in Colombia, but found the work to be very difficult and unfulfilling. "I prayed to work for an organization congruent with my values and beliefs," she recalled. "I wrote Merry Colony [who she knew from her earlier work with International Office] on the Day of Miracles. She told me that this job was available. And two weeks later, I'm up in Portland."

Samten Gorab is in charge of order fulfillment and customer service and is a key contributor to the store's harmonious day-to-day functioning. "He makes my day," Diana said. "The moment I walk in the door and see him, a smile is automatically drawn on my



HUM Card by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, several kinds of incense and a silk incense sachet

face. He's one of the reasons I'm so happy here." Samten, who started in the store in January 2007, works at the packing station in the warehouse, picking items for orders and preparing them for shipping. He also answers customer questions. Merry Colony remembered when they hired Samten, "He was the sweetest and the best of many, many applicants. He knew about Tibetan culture, he could recognize the Tibetan names of items, and his number one priority was to work in a Dharma environment," she said. When asked how he likes working in The Foundation Store, Samten replied, "Shipping seeds of enlightenment worldwide is the most wonderful job."

"We are able to operate the store with just Samten and me on staff because we have wonderful volunteers," Diana said. "Noah, Tom, Louise, Leah and Sharon are so dedicated." The

Foundation Store volunteers perform activities like photographing items for the website, painting the stupas for the Liberation Box and helping out with various tasks around the warehouse. Many have offered years of service to The Foundation Store.

The Foundation Store and Wholesalers

The Foundation Store sells wholesale materials to about 60 FPMT wholesalers, which are FPMT centers, projects, services and study groups. Wholesalers get a discount of 40 percent off of most education material and 10-20 percent off of most meditation supplies. They also have 90 days to pay for their orders. Effectively, a center can order several dozen copies of a prayer book at a discount for its members and have three months before their payment is due. In this way, The Foundation Store serves the larger FPMT community by making Dharma readily and affordably available. The store also sells to about 25 non-FPMT wholesalers, who have different terms. Amazon is the store's largest wholesale customer, buying FPMT books and DVDs. To learn more about setting up a wholesale account, please visit The Foundation Store page on **wholesale terms and conditions**.

The Future

One of the primary concerns for The Foundation Store is to enlarge its sales outside of the United States. In collaboration with FPMT Education Services, more materials are becoming available in several languages besides English. **Discovering Buddhism** is now available in **French, Spanish** and **German**. **Liberation**

Tool Box is available in **French** and **Spanish**. And several other items in **French, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Tibetan** are available with new selections being added.

The biggest challenge the store faces for domestic and international sales is the high cost of shipping and, in addition, customs charges for its international customers. In response to this, the store offers a majority of the FPMT Education Services materials as electronic downloads. The store currently has **107 items available via download** – including *Essential Buddhist Prayers Volume 1* and *Volume 2* – that can be downloaded as PDFs or in e-reader format and read on a device like Kindle and iPad.

Advancing the Mission of FPMT

The success of The Foundation Store is like that of so many FPMT activities; students saw an opportunity to spread Dharma and took action. From the seed idea of making a book of Buddhist prayers more widely available, The Foundation Store organically blossomed. It's growth and success benefits not only the organization and its centers, but students who live far from qualified teachers; artisans and craft people in Nepal who create the statues, incense and other ritual items that the store sells; the sick and dying who are helped by the Liberation Box; all the beings who see the holy images



The Foundation Store ships Dharma materials worldwide

and hear mantras; as well as countless others. Moreover, The Foundation Store gives every customer an opportunity to practice generosity with each order. Charitable donations to FPMT projects made through the store in 2010 added up to \$13,706.

There is no doubt The Foundation Store is essential to advancing the mission of FPMT. Every day as Dharma materials and texts like practice books, protection items and prayer flags spread across the globe, The Foundation Store is supporting the studies of FPMT students worldwide and helping fulfill the wishes of Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe. ♦

<http://shop.fpmt.org>

