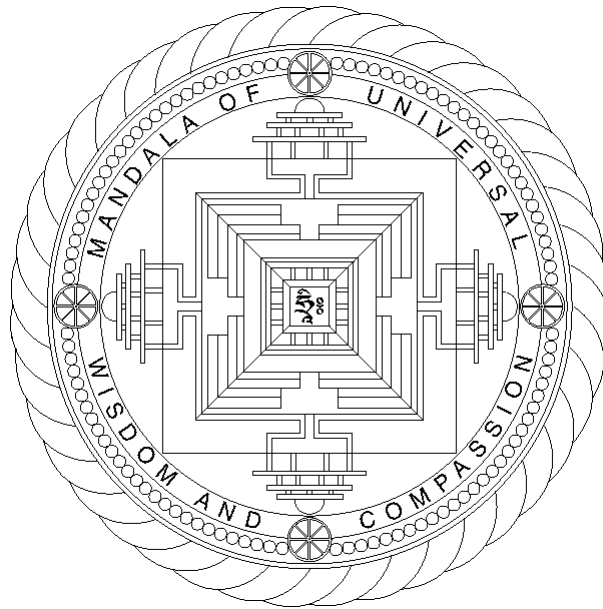


DISCOVERING BUDDHISM AT HOME

*Awakening the limitless potential of your mind
achieving all peace and happiness*



AN FPMT INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM

Guidelines

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM AT HOME

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FOUNDATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE MAHAYANA TRADITION

Mission Statement

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition is an organization devoted to the transmission of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition and values worldwide through teaching, meditation, and community service. We provide integrated education through which people's minds and hearts can be transformed into their highest potential for the benefit of others, inspired by an attitude of universal responsibility. We are committed to creating harmonious environments and helping all beings develop their full potential of infinite wisdom and compassion.

Our organization is based on the Buddhist tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa of Tibet, as taught by our founder, Lama Thubten Yeshe, and Spiritual Director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche.



Mandala of the FPMT

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM AT HOME

*Awakening the limitless potential of your mind,
achieving all peace and happiness*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to thank for putting their time, effort and expertise into creating *Discovering Buddhism (DB) at Home*. The *Discovering Buddhism* program was first developed for use in centers at the FPMT Education Conference 2001 in Pomaia, Italy. Once the center program was in place, attention turned to developing the correspondence course. To date, over fifty western teachers, sangha, and program coordinators of FPMT have contributed to the design and content of *DB at Home*, under the guidance of our Spiritual Director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche. We would especially like to thank Massimo Corona, the FPMT International Office Executive Director, whose commitment to developing an introductory program for FPMT made both the Education Conference and this program a reality. A big thank you goes to Venerable Yeshe Khadro who accepted the position as the first DB Consultant to help centers implement the program and coordinated the effort to make *Discovering Buddhism* available for those without access to centers. Without her endurance and constant support *DB at Home* would never have happened. In addition, we have a committed team of workers here in the FPMT Education Department and a number of people working from a distance who continue to develop and produce *DB at Home*. To all of you who have made this possible, thank you.

There are so many great teachers and spiritual program coordinators who have contributed to the creation of the *Discovering Buddhism* program: Special thanks to Venerables Thubten Dhondrub, Thubten Kunsang, Lobsang Monlam, Sangye Khadro, Robina Courtin, Thubten Dechen, Yeshe Khadro, Connie Miller, Karin Valham, Siliana Bosa, Tenzin Tsapel, Carolyn Lawler, Kaye Miner, Chonyi Taylor, Tenzin Tsomo, and Amy Miller. Thanks to Andrea Antonietti, Kay Cooper, Marly Ferreira, John Feuille, Alnis Grants, Dieter Kratzer, Gordon McDougall, Alison Murdoch, Thubten Pende, Giovanna Pescetti, Olga Planken, Nick Ribush, Robbie Watkins, Silvia Wetzel, and Thubten Yeshe. All of these Education Conference attendees did an amazing job working together in the most harmonious and creative way contributing materials, advice, guidance and wonderful personal stories. They gave of themselves 100%, before, during, and after the conference.

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Heartfelt appreciation goes to Venerable Roger Kunsang, the tireless messenger, who keeps us tuned in to the wishes and advice of Lama Zopa Rinpoche and made sure we included Lama Zopa Rinpoche's special style of doing lam-rim retreats.

Most of all, thank you to our precious Lama Thubten Yeshe and to his heart disciple and our Spiritual Director, Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche. You have been the inspiration and the light of FPMT and thousands of students for over 30 years. You have provided constant guidance and gave us the true and unmistakable teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha that are the only medicine to stop all suffering in this world and beyond. Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Osel Rinpoche may you live forever.

May any being that meets with *Discovering Buddhism at Home* in any way quickly achieve every happiness, liberation and enlightenment. May our gurus have long lives and may all their wishes be fulfilled.

Kendall Magnussen
Discovering Buddhism Project Manager

Merry Colony
FPMT Education Department Director

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM AT HOME

Program Overview

Discovering Buddhism At Home: An FPMT Introductory Program is the result of the combined efforts of a number of FPMT teachers and spiritual program coordinators, under the guidance and advice of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Spiritual Director of the FPMT.

The aim of the *Discovering Buddhism at Home* program is to give participants a solid footing in the practice of Mahayana Buddhism. Specifically, *Discovering Buddhism* is an introduction to the teachings of the *Lam-rim*, or "Graduated Path to Enlightenment" – a step by step blue print of the realizations a single individual needs to actualize in order to attain full enlightenment in one lifetime. By engaging in this program, participants will gain an experiential taste of the Buddha's teachings, some retreat experience, and the skills they need to make their lives most meaningful. Also, by the end of this program, participants should have a solid foundation from which to make informed choices about their continued spiritual development.

As such, this program is not designed as an academic study of Buddhism but is intended to change a person's life.

Discovering Buddhism at Home is one of a number of FPMT education programs currently available. It is an estimated 2- to 3-year course for which students can receive a Certificate of Completion when all requirements have been fulfilled. Students may also choose to follow this course in a casual way without fulfilling these requirements. However, students are *strongly* encouraged to participate with the intention of getting a final completion certificate. The requirements for certification have been put in place with great thought and with guidance from Lama Zopa Rinpoche, a fully qualified Tibetan Buddhist master. We are confident that if a student makes the efforts to engage in this program at the level required for certification, their transformation will be profound and lasting. The practice requirements, in particular, for *Discovering Buddhism* are demanding. There simply is no substitute for intensive practice to quickly bring about the results of happiness, liberation, and enlightenment.

The *Discovering Buddhism* experience is also an excellent foundation for our more advanced Dharma education programs such as the FPMT Basic Program of Buddhist Studies or the Masters Program in Buddhist Studies.

Discovering Buddhism is taught within two formats:

- as a program of courses and retreats at several FPMT centers (e.g. weekend or weekly courses)
- under the title *Discovering Buddhism At Home*, as a correspondence program for individual students and study groups who have limited or no access to a center or teacher but who wish to pursue these studies.

Both the course and correspondence program follow the same 14 subject areas of study.

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM AT HOME

The 14 Subject Areas

There are a total of 14 subject areas within the *Discovering Buddhism At Home* program. Each subject area contains a package of course material for students to study and practice at their own pace. Even for those students who are fulfilling all the requirements for a certificate there is no time schedule that must be followed and one may take as long as you feel necessary to complete any given module

The final subject area “Special Integration Practices” includes a list of longer retreats and other practices that are required for those wishing to receive a completion certificate from the program. Students who do not wish to receive a final completion certificate do not have to fulfill all the requirements for each subject area, but may still participate to the degree they wish, studying one or all of the subject areas and doing as many of the readings and retreats as one likes.

1. *Mind and Its Potential*

Examine what is “mind,” its nature and function, and how it affects our experience of happiness and suffering. Explore the differentiation between mind and brain, mind as the creator of our experiences, and the implications of possessing a mind that has no beginning and no end. In addition, learn methods to transform destructive thoughts and attitudes and create a positive and joyous mind.

2. *How to Meditate*

Basic meditation techniques. Learn the definition and purpose of meditation, how to sit properly, how to set up a meditation session, the different types of meditation techniques one may employ, and how to recognise and deal with obstacles to meditation.

3. *Presenting the Path*

Get an overview of the entire Tibetan Buddhist path to awakening. Hear about the life story of the Buddha and study the basic teachings of Buddhism. Discover the unique system for putting Buddhist philosophy into practice contained in the lam-rim, or “graduated path to enlightenment.”

4. *The Spiritual Teacher*

Take the time to investigate the role of the teacher on the spiritual path: the need for a teacher, the qualities of a teacher, the qualities of a student, and how to relate to a teacher for greatest benefit in one’s spiritual life. Consider the challenges we face when thinking of entering into a “guru-disciple” relationship and learn how to overcome these skillfully.

5. *Death and Rebirth*

Explore the process of death and rebirth and its impact on how we live our lives. Be guided in skillful reflection on the meaning of death and what to expect at the death-time. In this way, fulfill your purpose in life, resolve conflicts, and develop the skills to help both yourself and others at the time of death. Eventually, through Buddhist practice, one can overcome death altogether.

6. All About Karma

Learn the essential facts about the law of cause and effect and generate a clear understanding about how karma works. Discover effective tools to accumulate merit - the cause of happiness and success - and purify mistaken actions done in the past. In addition, explore ways to become adept at dealing with life most effectively and thereby take control of your future.

7. Refuge in the Three Jewels

Get informed about what it means to take refuge in the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), and the essential practices of refuge. Find out more about the advantage of taking lay vows and their role in enhancing our spiritual growth.

8. Establishing a Daily Practice

Assemble the tools you need to develop a successful daily practice. Using Lama Zopa Rinpoche's A DAILY MEDITATION PRACTICE as a guide, become familiar with the elements necessary to generate realizations in the mind. Also, receive some tips for making every action of the day meaningful.

9. Samsara and Nirvana

Investigate what "samsara" is and how we are stuck in it. Find out what "nirvana" is and how to achieve it. Develop the determination to be free from suffering and empower yourself with practical tools to deal with and eliminate disturbing emotions forever.

10. How to Develop Bodhichitta

Discover the clear meditation instruction available in Tibetan Buddhism that enables us to develop our innate qualities of loving kindness and compassion. Become skilled at applying these techniques to generate the mind of bodhichitta, the wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of others, known to be the heart of Buddha's teachings.

11. Transforming Problems

Consider well the disadvantages of self-cherishing and the advantages of cherishing others more than ourselves. Get inspired to "exchange yourself with others," and then be guided in how to employ the special techniques of mind training or "lo-jong" as a means to transform problems into happiness and learn to like problems as much as ice cream!

12. Wisdom of Emptiness

The realisation of emptiness is crucial for the attainment of liberation and enlightenment. Take this opportunity to enhance your ability to bring about this realisation. Learn how to develop calm abiding and different methods to use in meditation on emptiness. Practice accumulation of merit and purification of obstacles - indispensable for generating realizations within the mind.

13. Introduction to Tantra

Learn the definition of tantra, how tantra works and why it is a powerful form of practice. Get a broad overview of the four classes of tantra and learn how to practice simple Kriya tantric methods. In addition, find out how to integrate the practices of tantra with lam-rim meditation for optimal results.

14. Special Integration Experiences

By undertaking intensive practices of purification and a minimum two-week lam-rim residential retreat, prepare your mind in the best possible way to gain realizations on the path to enlightenment. Purification practices include: 100,000 prostrations, 3-month Vajrasattva retreat, and Nyung Nä. This is a great way to seal the blessings of this program.

How to Approach the 14 Subject Areas

There are a total of 14 subject areas within the *Discovering Buddhism at Home* program. For those wishing to receive a DB at Home Completion Certificate, the following requirements for each subject area need to be fulfilled:

- gain a clear comprehension of the subject area topics by listening to and/or reading the course material provided
- do all required reading
- do at least three to five meditation sessions for each of the required meditations
- complete the "required integration practice"
- complete the assessment for each subject area

The final subject area "Special Integration Practices" includes a list of longer retreats and other practices required to receive a DB at Home Completion Certificate. For more information about how to complete Module 14 please see page 23.

It is not compulsory to fulfill all requirements for each subject area in order to participate in the *Discovering Buddhism at Home* program, however students are encouraged to do so. It is only if the student wishes to achieve the DB Completion Certificate that all requirements *must* be fulfilled.

Students may begin this program with any one of the subject areas. It is optimal for students to start at the beginning of the program with 'Mind and Its Potential' and work their way through in order, but it is not a requirement.

As *Discovering Buddhism* is offered in both a correspondence format and a course format - e.g.: weekend or weekly courses at several FPMT centers - correspondence students are encouraged to participate in any courses at FPMT centers they have the opportunity to attend so they can take advantage of the additional interactive sessions being offered.

For example, students may be able to study 'Mind and Its Potential' by correspondence and 'How to Meditate' at a center.

Students can also undertake some components of one subject area by correspondence and some components at a center. E.g.: the assessment and/or retreat day component could be done at a center after having studied the teachings and meditations by correspondence. For a listing of FPMT centers hosting DB retreats please see: <http://www.fpmt.org/retreat/dbschedule.asp>

Please note that the subject areas of *Discovering Buddhism* closely correspond to specific topics covered in the *Lam-rim* method of presenting the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Your primary textbook, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* provides a complete presentation of the Lam-rim and is an excellent tool to help you to understand the "big picture" of how all the different subject areas fit together for your personal blue print to enlightenment. In addition to this, the readings for Module 8: Establishing a Daily Practice, and especially the article entitled, "How to Meditate on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment," by Pabongka Rinpoche provide detailed instructions concerning how to meditate on these teachings in such a way as to produce realizations in the mind.

Following is an overview of how these subject areas fit together in the minds of the organizers of the *Discovering Buddhism* program.

The Big Picture of the 14 Subject Areas

"Mind & Its Potential" is not a classic *Lam-rim* topic, however since most modern audiences have not deeply considered what is mind or even whether or not enlightenment is possible, this seems a natural place to start with the DB curriculum. This subject area includes teachings on the nature of the mind and the mind's potential as a platform from which we can tap into our highest potential.

After waking up to the positive potential of the mind, it is natural to want to know how to develop that potential. As such, the second module, "How to Meditate," introduces us to the basics of meditation; and how to develop the mind using this powerful tool. What do we meditate on? Module 3: Presenting the Path, provides an overview of the different realizations that we will work to develop within our mind stream, through meditation, in order to attain future happiness, liberation, and the full enlightenment of Buddhahood.

The first and one of the most difficult realizations to gain on the path to awakening is the importance of the role of the teacher in our spiritual development. Module 4: The Spiritual Teacher covers this first sensitive area that needs to be explored deeply if the seeds of enlightenment within us are to be given the optimum conditions to flower. The next step in the traditional *Lam-rim* blueprint is recognition of our precious human rebirth, which has already been presented as the inspiration to practice within the readings of Module 1.

So, for us, the fifth module is "Death and Rebirth" followed by "All About Karma." These two subject areas explore in greater depth the potential of our mind to experience different realms of existence as well as happiness and suffering within those specific realms. We look at the death process as well as how to understand past, present, and future lives. Module 6: All About Karma, in particular, answers the common question, "Why is this happening to me?" and gives us some tools to take charge of our destiny.

Once faith is generated in the Buddha's teachings about causal reality (karma), naturally, students will be interested to know what it really means to be a Buddhist and how to formalize their commitment to Buddhism. Thus, Module 7 is "Refuge in the Three Jewels."

After becoming fully motivated to seriously engage in Buddhist practice, we are more interested to learn everything there is to know about "Establishing a Daily Practice," Module 8. Then, we enter the heart of Buddha's teachings; suffering and its causes and liberation and its causes, contained within the Four Noble Truths of "Samsara and Nirvana", Module 9. In addition, we explore the need to look beyond the wish for personal liberation and consider deeply the mind of universal responsibility, the commitment to free all beings from suffering in Module 10, "How to Develop Bodhichitta." Intimately related to the mind of bodhichitta are the teachings of thought transformation - using all situations in life to develop the mind that cherishes others more than self and, thus, we move into Module 11: Transforming Problems.

To be able to Transform Problems is a useful skill, but wouldn't it be better to get rid of problems altogether? There will be no end to problems and suffering without Module 12: Wisdom of Emptiness and no way to complete the entire path to Buddhahood (and thus free all beings from suffering) without the special spiritual technology introduced in Module 13: Introduction to Tantra.

There is no way to be able to complete all of the above understanding and realizations without clearing away eons of negative karmic buildup and obscuration, thus the very powerful practices of Vajrasattva, prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas, and Nyung Nä are to be practiced.

In addition to this, a full immersion course such as a two-week style Kopan course, or even better the month-long November course at Kopan Monastery, Nepal is the best possible way to deeply understand how all of the above fits together into one neat package for taking one to Buddhahood. These last necessities for a complete experience make up Module 14: Special Integration Experiences.

FPMT Wisdom Culture

The *Discovering Buddhism At Home* program is presented within a context that reflects our FPMT wisdom culture. These are the qualities that have inspired students to become part of the FPMT network. The key elements of this wisdom culture are listed below:

- *Openness and breadth in presenting the Dharma* as exemplified in Lama Thubten Yeshe's teaching style. Using non-traditional, yet pure, methods. Making the Dharma accessible according to the culture and needs of students.
- *Detail and depth of instruction* as exemplified by Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teaching style. Placing emphasis on *how* to practice and the *meaning* of practice. Stressing the importance of motivation and dedication.
- *Constant practice of accumulation of merit and purification* as essential to bringing temporal happiness and preparing the mind for realizations.
- *Experiential lam-rim teaching methods & Kopan-style courses*¹
- *Respect and support for ordained Sangha*
- *Regular retreat and meditation practice*
- *Use of standard FPMT practices recommended by Lama Zopa Rinpoche*
- *Reliance on tantric methods.* Encouraging students to have spiritual confidence.
- *Cultivation of a close family feeling.* FPMT is a family of practitioners.
- *Service.* Cultivating the attitude and wish to be of service to others. Think big.
- *Cherishing others.* Imparting a universal love for all beings. Big love.

We recommend that at the beginning and end of every subject students refer to the above list, and consider how well these qualities and experiences are being developed within you.

¹ Kopan Monastery, Nepal is the first center of FPMT where annual one-month courses are offered teaching the entire graduated path to enlightenment (lam-rim) together with guided meditations and discussion. Courses are usually team-taught by a Tibetan lama or geshe and a Western teacher.

Passing on the Lineage

Within Buddhism, the defining feature determining whether a teaching lineage is still intact or not is the existence of a direct oral transmission from teacher to disciple, from today's living teachers all the way back to the historical Buddha. It is FPMT's mission to continue this unbroken lineage and to assure that the blessings of the Buddha's words survive for future generations.

The Education Programs of the FPMT are based on the Buddhist tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa of Tibet, as taught by the founder of the FPMT, Lama Thubten Yeshe, and Spiritual Director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Lama Yeshe was born in Tibet in 1935. After attending Sera Monastic University near Lhasa for nearly twenty years, he followed His Holiness the Dalai Lama into exile in 1959. Contact with Westerners began in 1965 and from that time until his passing in 1984 he devoted his tireless wisdom energy to teaching throughout the world. His incarnation, Lama Tenzin Osel Rinpoche, was born in Spain in 1985.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche was born in the Mt Everest region of Nepal. Recognized at an early age as a very special spiritual practitioner, he became a student of Lama Yeshe in 1960.

Together they began the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), a worldwide network of Buddhist centers, monasteries and affiliated activities, which Lama Zopa Rinpoche now acts as the Spiritual Director.

Subject Area Teachings

Senior FPMT teachers who have studied and practiced directly with Lama Thubten Yeshe and/or Lama Zopa Rinpoche and who express the vision of FPMT have prepared the teachings and meditation outlines for each subject area of the *Discovering Buddhism At Home* program. We chose to offer a variety of teachers presenting the different subject areas so that students would be exposed to a wide range of teaching styles. This helps demonstrate that not only are the Buddha's teachings vast, but are also the methods and styles by which those teachings are presented! One shortcoming in providing this variety is that each teacher has taught their subject area as a complete and somewhat independent course, and as such did not always make explicit how their particular subject area has built upon prior subject areas nor how it contributes to what will follow. Thus, students will need to make effort to continually reflect on the *Lam-rim* as a whole and how each individual subject contributes to the "big picture" referred to above and presented within the main text, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*.

The various topics required for study in each subject area are covered in the teaching sessions, with each teacher choosing the depth of presentation for the topics they believe will be of greatest assistance to students studying the correspondence program.

Each module package contains transcripts of these teachings as well as audio CDs of the recorded teaching sessions and guided meditations to assist the students in their understanding of the material.

It is important to review the material in depth to gain an understanding of the topics. The additional reading (required and suggested) will help broaden this understanding and demonstrate how each individual subject area fits within the entire graduated path to enlightenment (*Lam-rim*).

Meditations

Several meditations have been incorporated into each subject area. The meditations, composed by senior FPMT teachers, are designed to integrate your understanding of the teachings so that they become part of the way you think and act, thus transforming your life into the graduated path to enlightenment.

Tibetan Buddhism is well known for its vast array of meditation techniques. For some people, this can become confusing - so many different meditations to do! How do I know what to do for my daily practice? As you become familiar with each meditation and its place in the *Lam-rim* together with the effect a particular meditation has on your mind, you will be able to skillfully apply these meditations for situations in your daily life and practice. In addition, you will be able to discern what meditation you need to work with next for your evolution towards enlightenment. To support this, it is recommended that students practice each meditation at least five times.

Initially, using the CD or tape, become familiar with the meditation outline. Then to deepen the process of integration, continue with regular practice. This is best done by memorizing the major points of the meditation and learning to do the meditation oneself without continually relying on the CD or tape. You may wish to highlight the main points in the transcript and use that as your guide.

It is important that each meditation begins with motivation and ends with dedication as discussed in the teachings.

Special Integration Practices: Subject Area 14

This area includes intensive practices for purification and accumulation of merit. These include the practice of prostrations, recitation of Vajrasattva (purification) mantras, Nyung Näs (2-day Chenrezig retreats) and a two-week Kopan-style Lam-rim meditation course.

Practices such as prostrations and recitation of mantra can be commenced at any time. Because of the length of time these requirements will take, it is recommended to become familiar with the practice texts required for Module 14 and to begin these practices as soon as possible in your course of study. Alternatively, you can plan to complete these requirements as full-time retreats and develop a strategy to be able to have the time and money to be able to do this. You are welcome to contact the FPMT Education Department Director (see Helpful Contacts, p. 15) for coaching and support in completing these powerful purification requirements. In addition to this, the practice texts *The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva* and *Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls - Extensive* (for prostrations) were designed especially for DB students and include detailed guidelines for how to complete these practice commitments either as daily practices or in a retreat setting.

Many FPMT centers run Nyung Näs retreats during the year. Several centers also run annual Vajrasattva retreats. You may wish to contact FPMT centers in your country to request information about their program and/or subscribe to the FPMT magazine *Mandala* that is published four to six times a year. The magazine contains contact details for all FPMT centers worldwide. Major courses and retreats are often advertised in *Mandala*, however it is also advisable to make direct contact with

centers that you wish to visit to check on course and retreat details. There is also a listing of DB retreats happening worldwide on <http://www.fpmt.org/retreat/dbschedule.asp>, however, this page is not always comprehensive.

Kopan Monastery in Nepal, the spiritual base of the FPMT, runs a one-month Lam-rim meditation course every November and shorter Lam Rim courses throughout the year. Information on these courses is available on Kopan Monastery's web site: <http://www.kopan-monastery.com> Students are encouraged to make the annual one-month Kopan course a final goal for their introductory program experience if at all possible.

Assessments

One of the Completion Certificate requirements for each subject area is a written assessment. This is an opportunity for a senior FPMT teacher to assess your understanding and integration of each subject area. It also introduces students to a relationship with a mentor from whom they will receive written input after their assessment has been submitted. Once students have studied the topics, practiced the meditations and done the required reading, they should forward their completed assessment to the FPMT Education Department Director, preferably by email, to: Education@fpmt.org Assessments will be returned with the name of the assessor and date of assessment for you to fill in on your Completion Card.

Required Reading

There is a substantial amount of reading, both required and suggested, for each subject area. Students can complete this at their own pace. However, required readings for all subjects must be completed and noted on each subject area Completion Card in order to receive a final Completion Certificate.

On the text CD called *Reading Materials* that accompanies Module 1 are transcripts of teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Thubten Yeshe, and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The text-CD also contains the Lam-rim text by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, *Wish Fulfilling Golden Sun*.

Some booklets in the required reading list published by Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive are provided in your subject area kit (Make Your Mind and Ocean, Becoming your own Therapist, the Essence of Tibetan Buddhism and Making Life Meaningful). Others are no longer in print and will have to be downloaded from the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (LYWA) website at: www.lamayeshe.com (Virtue and Reality)

Other textbooks listed as required reading, such as *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, need to be purchased by students. A Required Reading Booklist for each subject area is included in these Guidelines. This includes information about the publishers from whom you can obtain these texts. Also included is a list of suggested texts and videos that students may choose to pursue for more information about a given subject area.

Retreat Days

Intensive practice (retreat) days are a necessary part of the integration process of *Discovering Buddhism At Home*. Students should undertake the retreat day after completing the study, required reading and

meditations as outlined above. A suggested outline for the retreat day is included with each subject area.

Completion Cards

Completion Cards are provided for each subject area and act as a record of accomplishment for anyone wishing to obtain a Completion Certificate for the program. If you wish to obtain a Completion Certificate you will need to have finished all the required components for each subject area as noted on these Completion Cards.

Once you have filled out all 14 of your Completion Cards, send a copy of them to the FPMT Education Department (PO box 888, Taos, NM 87571 USA) to receive the official FPMT Discovering Buddhism Completion Certificate signed by lama Zopa Rinpoche. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of their individual Completion Cards for each subject area until they are ready to send them in. Please keep a copy of all your Completion Cards. Do not send in your only copy of them.

Remember that the process of certification is a very important one - not from the point of view of getting a piece of paper with a pretty picture on it, but rather from the point of view of experience. It is our wish for students to gain direct personal experience of the teachings - to develop realizations of the path in their mind stream. This is very different than acquiring superficial knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and practice. The requirements for certification act as a guideline for students to give themselves every opportunity to gain realizations.

We feel very confident that if students make their way through all of the criteria required to get their final certificate of completion - teachings, readings, assessment questions, meditations, and retreats, as well as a two-week to one month experience at Kopan Monastery, Nepal (or something similar) that they will come away with transformation, inspiration, and a clear sense of what they need to do next for their spiritual evolution.

Program Evaluation

The *Discovering Buddhism At Home* program is still in its developmental stages. Your feedback at the end of your study of each subject area will help us refine the program and make it easier to use and more effective for future students. A Student Satisfaction Survey is included with each subject area. Please let us know how you are finding your experience of the program.

Basic Dharma Etiquette

All written materials containing Dharma teachings should be handled with respect as they contain the tools that lead to your attainment of freedom and enlightenment. They should never be stepped over or placed directly on the floor or seat (where you sit or walk) – a nice cloth or text table should be placed underneath them. It is best to keep all Dharma texts in a high clean place. They should be placed on the uppermost shelf of your bookcase or altar. Other objects, food and even one's mala should not be placed on top of the texts

Helpful Contacts

For general information and support:

FPMT Education Department

PO Box 888

Taos, NM 87571 USA

Phone: 01 (505) 737-0550

Fax: 01 (505) 758-7765

Materials: materials@fpmt.org

Director: Merry Colony, Email: Merry@fpmt.org

Education Services/Editor/Project Manager: Kendall Magnussen, Email: Kendall@fpmt.org

Contributing Editor/Teacher: Ven Connie Miller Email: Connie@fpmt.org

www.fpmt.org/education/

MANDALA Magazine

www.mandalamagazine.org

For ordering books for the program:

Wisdom Publications

199 Elm Street

Somerville, MA 02144-3129

USA

Phone: 001 (617) 776-7416

USA: (800) 272-4050

Fax: 001 (617) 776-7841

Email: info@wisdompubs.org

www.wisdompubs.org

Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive

P.O. Box 356

Weston, MA 02493

USA

Phone: 001 (781) 259-4466

Email: nick@lamayeshe.com

www.lamayeshe.com

Snow Lion Publications

PO Box 6483

Ithaca, NY 14851 USA

Phone: 800-950-0313 (USA)

Phone: 001 (607) 273-8519

www.snowlionpub.com

Mandala Books

PO Box 8111

Camberwell, VIC 3124, AUSTRALIA

Phone: 61 (03) 9882 2484

Fax: 61 (03) 9882 2440

Email: aribush@mandalabooks.com.au

www.mandalabooks.com.au

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM

Awakening the limitless potential of your mind, achieving all peace and happiness

Required Reading Booklist²

(Updated Jan 2004)

Main texts

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (*provided on DB “Reading Materials” CD, also available on LYWA website for download*)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, by Pabongka Rinpoche (WP)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, reading packets for each subject (*provided on DB “Reading Materials” CD*)

According to subject area

Mind and Its Potential

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 1-3, 44-50)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 307-332)

Becoming Your Own Therapist, Make Your Mind an Ocean, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (LYWA, *provided with course materials*)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Mind and Its Potential”

How to Meditate

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 39-43)

How to Meditate, by Kathleen Macdonald (WP, FPMT)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “How to Meditate”

Presenting the Path

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 42-43)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 25-125)

Wisdom Energy, by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche (WP, FPMT)

Essence of Tibetan Buddhism, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (LYWA, *provided with course materials*)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Presenting the Path”

² Books can be obtained from the following distributors:

WP = Wisdom Publications, www.wisdompubs.org

LYWA = Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, www.LamaYeshe.com

SLP = Snow Lion Publications, www.snowlionpub.com

FPMT = FPMT Education Department, www.fpmt.org/shop

SP = Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com

The Spiritual Teacher³

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 251-306)

Fifty Stanzas on the Spiritual Teacher, by Aryashura (available through SLP)

The Life of Milarepa, by Lobsang P. Lhalungpa (SLP, SP, other life stories can be substituted)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “The Spiritual Teacher”

Death and Rebirth

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 50-59)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 332-393)

Advice on Dying and Living a Better Life, HHDL (Atria Books, FPMT)

Reincarnation, the Boy Lama, by Vickie Mackenzie (SLP)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Death and Rebirth”

All About Karma

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 76-83)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 430-470)

Healing Anger, The Power of Patience from a Buddhist Perspective, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “All About Karma”

Refuge in the Three Jewels

Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 69-75)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 394-428)

The Awakened One: A Life of the Buddha, by Sherab Chodzin Kohn (SP)

Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels (provided with course materials, FPMT)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Refuge in the Three Jewels”

Establishing a Daily Practice

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 10-38, 136-140)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 129-247)

Making Life Meaningful, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA, provided with course materials)

A Daily Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Establishing a Daily Practice”

Samsara and Nirvana

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 84-105)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp.473-543)

The Meaning of Life, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (WP, FPMT)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Samsara and Nirvana”

³ Books can be obtained from the following distributors:

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SLP = Snow Lion Publications, www.snowlionpub.com

FPMT = FPMT Education Department, www.fpmt.org/shop

SP = Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com

How to Develop Bodhichitta⁴

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 106-119, 143-187)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp.547-589, 626-646)

A Daily Meditation on Four-Armed Chenrezig, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “How to Develop Bodhichitta”

Transforming Problems

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 106-110, 114-142)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 589-625)

Transforming Problems Into Happiness, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (WP, FPMT)

Transforming the Mind: Teachings on Generating Compassion, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

Everflowing Nectar of Bodhichitta, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Transforming Problems”

Wisdom of Emptiness

Virtue and Reality, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (download only from LYWA)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, by Pabongka Rinpoche (pp. 647-706)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Wisdom of Emptiness”

Heart Sutra; An Oral Teaching, by Geshe Sonam Rinchen (SLP)

Introduction to Tantra

Introduction to Tantra, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (WP, FPMT)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 707-708)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Introduction to Tantra”

Special Integration Experiences

Becoming Vajrasattva (The Tantric Path of Purification), by Lama Thubten Yeshe (WP, FPMT)

The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva, (FPMT)

The Bodhisattva’s Confession of Moral Downfalls – Extensive (FPMT)

Nyung Nä, The Means of Achievement of the Eleven-Face Great Compassionate One (FPMT)

Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, “Special Integration Experiences”

NOTE: Teachers may substitute alternate texts for required reading with prior approval from FPMT Education Department.

⁴ Books can be obtained from the following distributors:

WP = Wisdom Publications, www.wisdompubs.org

LYWA = Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, www.LamaYeshe.com

SLP = Snow Lion Publications, www.snowlionpub.com

FPMT = FPMT Education Department, www.fpmt.org/shop

SP = Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com

Suggested reading & videos⁵

Suggested reading according to subject area

Mind & Its Potential

Spiritual Friends: Meditations by Monks and Nuns of the International Mahayana Institute (WP, FPMT)
Open Heart, Clear Mind, by Thubten Chodron (SLP)

How to Meditate

Spiritual Friends: See above
Fine Arts of Relaxation, Concentration and Meditation, Joel and Michel Levy (WP)
Mindfulness in Plain English, Henepola Gunaratana, (WP)
Meditation for Life, Stephen Batchelor (WP)

Presenting the Path

Spiritual Friends: See above
The Path to Enlightenment (previously entitled, "Essence of Refined Gold," by HH the Dalai Lama (SLP)
The Awakened One: A Life of the Buddha, by Sherab Chodzin Kohn (SP)
Virtue and Reality, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (downloadable only LYWA)
The Principle Teachings of Buddhism, Je Tsong Khapa (Mahayana Sutra and Tantra Press)
The Way to Freedom: The Core Teachings of Buddhism, HH the Dalai Lama (Harper Collins, SLP)
Awakening the Mind, by Geshe Wangchen (WP)

The Spiritual Teacher

Spiritual Friends. See above
Relating to a Spiritual Teacher, by Alex Berzin (SLP)
The Fulfillment of All Hopes, by Je Tsong Khapa (WP)
Life of Gampopa, by Jampa Mackenzie Stewart (SLP, out of print, amazon.com)
Life of Marpa the Translator (SP)
Life and Teaching of Naropa, by Herbert V. Guenther (SP)
Enlightened Beings, by Jan Willis (WP)
The Fourteen Dalai Lamas, by Glenn Mullin (SLP)

Death & Rebirth

Spiritual Friends: See above
Death, Intermediate State, and Rebirth, by Lati Rinpoche and Jeffrey Hopkins (SLP, WP)
Reborn in the West, by Vicki MacKenzie (SLP)
Children Who Remember Previous Lives, by Ian Stevenson (Amazon.com)
Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation, by Ian Stevenson (Amazon.com)

⁵ Books can be obtained from the following distributors:

WP = Wisdom Publications, www.wisdompubs.org

LYWA = Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, www.LamaYeshe.com

SLP = Snow Lion Publications, www.snowlionpub.com

FPMT = FPMT Education Department, www.fpmt.org/shop

SP = Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com

All About Karma⁶

Spiritual Friends. See above

A Short Vajrasattva Practice, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT)

Daily Purification: A Short Vajrasattva Practice, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA)

Making Life Meaningful, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA)

Tantric Path of Purification, by Lama Yeshe (WP, FPMT)

Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA, FPMT)

Refuge in the Three Jewels

Spiritual Friends. See above

Old Path, White Clouds, by Thich Nhat Hanh (Parallax Press, www.parallax.org)

Establishing a Daily Practice

Spiritual Friends. See above

The Direct and Unmistaken Method, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA)

Essential Buddhist Prayers: An FPMT Prayer Book, Volume One, Basic Prayers and Practices (FPMT)

A Short Vajrasattva Meditation, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT, downloadable from LYWA)

Lam-rim Outlines, by Ven. Karin Valham (Kopan Monastery, www.kopan-monastery.com)

The Essential Nectar, by Geshe Rabten (WP, currently out of stock. Will get reprinted, date unknown)

Meditations on the Path to Enlightenment, by Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden (SLP)

Samsara & Nirvana

Spiritual Friends. See above

The Four Noble Truths, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

The Four Noble Truths, by Ven. Lobsang Gyatso (SLP)

Mind and Mental Factors, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (FPMT)

How to Develop Bodhichitta

Spiritual Friends: See above (WP)

Virtue and Reality, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (downloadable from LYWA)

The Bodhisattva Vows (FPMT)

The Joy of Living and Dying in Peace, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Harper Collins, Amazon.com)

How to Develop Bodhichitta, by Ribur Rinpoche (FPMT by request only)

The Six Perfections, by Geshe Sonam Rinchen (SLP)

⁶ Books can be obtained from the following distributors:

WP = Wisdom Publications, www.wisdompubs.org

LYWA = Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, www.LamaYeshe.com

SLP = Snow Lion Publications, www.snowlionpub.com

FPMT = FPMT Education Department, www.fpmt.org/shop

SP = Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com

Transforming Problems⁷

Spiritual Friends. See above

Door to Satisfaction, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (WP, FPMT)

Peacock in the Poison Grove, by Geshe Lhundub Sopa (WP)

Awakening the Mind, Lightening the Heart, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Harper Collins, Amazon.com)

Advice from a Spiritual Friend, by Geshe Rabten (WP)

Becoming a Child of the Buddhas, by Gomo Tulku (WP)

Transforming Problems, by Thubten Gyatso (FPMT by request only)

Wisdom of Emptiness

Spiritual Friends. See above

Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA, FPMT)

Echoes of Voidness, by Geshe Rabten (www.rabten.com)

Calming the Mind, by Gen Lam Rimpa (SLP)

Realizing Emptiness, by Gen Lam Rimpa (SLP)

The Buddhism of Tibet, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

Chandrakirti's Seven-Fold Reasoning, by Joe Wilson (SLP)

Introduction to Tantra

The Tantric Distinction, by Jeffrey Hopkins (WP)

Essence of Tibetan Buddhism, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (LYWA)

Tantra in Tibet, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

Special Integration Experiences

Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA, FPMT)

Everlasting Rain of Nectar, by Geshe Jhampa Gyatso (WP)

Answers: Discussions with Western Buddhists, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

⁷ Books can be obtained from the following distributors:

WP = Wisdom Publications, www.wisdompubs.org

LYWA = Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, www.LamaYeshe.com

SLP = Snow Lion Publications, www.snowlionpub.com

FPMT = FPMT Education Department, www.fpmt.org/shop

SP = Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com

Suggested videos according to subject area⁸

Discovering Buddhism – thirteen-part video series especially designed to accompany the *Discovering Buddhism* program. The series features teachings by Tibetan and non-Tibetan teachers together with student interviews. NTSC and PAL, available in DVD, Spring 2004. (FPMT)

Mind & Its Potential

Heart of Tibet: An Intimate Profile of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Mystic Fire Video [MFV])
Ethics for the New Millennium, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)
Overcoming Differences, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

How to Meditate

Secular Meditation, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

Presenting the Path

Three Principal Paths, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (LYWA)

The Spiritual Teacher

Guru Devotion and Refuge, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT)

Death & Rebirth

The Tibetan Book of the Dead - Part one: A Way of Life (WinStar and Wellspring Media)
“ “ “ “ *Part two: The Great Liberation* (WinStar and Wellspring Media)
Remembering Impermanence and Understanding What is True Dharma, Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT, Temporarily out of stock)

All About Karma

Ethics for the New Millennium, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)
Arising from the Flames: Overcoming Anger through Patience, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (MFV)

Refuge in the Three Jewels

On Buddhism, by Robert Thurman (SLP)
Guru Devotion and Refuge, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT)

Establishing a Daily Practice

Guided Lam-rim Meditations, by Ven. Karin Valham (Kopan Monastery, audio tapes)
Guided Lam-rim Meditations, by Ven. Thubten Chodron (SLP, audio CDs)

⁸ Books can be obtained from the following distributors:

WP = Wisdom Publications, www.wisdompubs.org
LYWA = Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, www.LamaYeshe.com
SLP = Snow Lion Publications, www.snowlionpub.com
FPMT = FPMT Education Department, www.fpmt.org/shop
SP = Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com

Samsara & Nirvana⁹

The Four Noble Truths, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

Peace: A Goal of All Religions, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Meridian Trust)

How to Develop Bodhichitta

Arising from the Flames: Overcoming Anger through Patience, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (MFV)

37 Practices of a Bodhisattva, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

How to Develop Bodhichitta, by John Feuille (FPMT - 10 audio tapes)

Transforming Problems

Lojong: Transforming the Mind, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

Peace through Human Understanding, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Meridian Trust)

Transforming Your Mind By Practicing Dharma, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT)

Transforming the Mind, Transforming the Heart, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (Available in DVD only Feb. 2004, FPMT)

Wisdom of Emptiness

In the Spirit of Manjushri: The Wisdom Teachings of Buddhism, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP)

Introduction to Tantra

Introduction to Tantra, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (LYWA)

Three Principle Paths, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (LYWA)

⁹ Books can be obtained from the following distributors:

WP = Wisdom Publications, www.wisdompubs.org

LYWA = Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, www.LamaYeshe.com

SLP = Snow Lion Publications, www.snowlionpub.com

FPMT = FPMT Education Department, www.fpmt.org/shop

SP = Shambhala Publications, www.shambhala.com

About Special Integration Experiences

Discovering Buddhism Subject Area 14

DESCRIPTION

By undertaking intensive practices of purification and a minimum two-week lam-rim residential retreat, prepare your mind in the best possible way to gain realizations on the path to enlightenment. Purification practices include: 100,000 prostrations, 3-month Vajrasattva retreat, and Nyung Ne. This is a great way to seal the blessings of this program.

REQUIRED

- Two-week Kopan-style Lam-rim course
- Three-month Vajrasattva purification retreat (or 100,000 mantras)
- 100,000 Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas
- Nyung Nā Retreat – Do, Know how to do, Able to lead others to do

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

- Kopan one-month course (at Kopan Monastery, Nepal - fulfills requirement)
- Making pilgrimage to Buddhist holy sites¹⁰
- Meeting a qualified spiritual master

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Discovering Buddhism Required Reading*, “Special Integration Experiences”
- *Becoming Vajrasattva (The Tantric Path of Purification)*, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (WP, FPMT)
- *The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva* (FPMT)
- *The Bodhisattva’s Confession of Moral Downfalls – Extensive* (FPMT)
- *Nyung Nā, The Means of Achievement of the Eleven-Face Great Compassionate One* (FPMT)

SUGGESTED TEXTS

- *Everlasting Rain of Nectar*, by Geshe Jhampa Gyatso (on prostration practice)
- *Confession of Downfalls*, by Brian Beresford
- *Relating to a Spiritual Teacher*, by Alex Berzin
- *Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETE

- 3 Nyung Nās (2 days each = 6-9 days)
- Prostrations (2-3 months full-time retreat or 200-300/day for 1-2 years)
- 2-week lam-rim course
- Vajrasattva retreat (2-3 months full-time retreat or 6-9 months doing two sessions/day)

¹⁰ Pilgrimage can be done in a modified way by creating replicas of the Buddhist Holy Sites in one’s home or center, reading about each place and doing the appropriate practices as if one were actually at these places in India and Nepal.

HOW TO COMPLETE THESE REQUIREMENTS

For students interested in completing all requirements of the *Discovering Buddhism* program, we recommend that you begin your efforts to engage in the “Special Integration Experiences” as soon as possible as they will demand a sincere commitment of time and effort to complete. These requirements can be filled at any point during the program and you do not have to wait until completing other subject areas to start. If you have already done these practices for other reasons prior to your participation in the DB program, you do not have to complete them a second time to fulfill the requirements.

There are a number of ways you can plan to complete these requirements of the program:

Two-week Kopan-style Lam-rim Course

The best way to complete this requirement is by making pilgrimage to Kopan Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal and attending the renowned “Kopan November Course.” This is a one-month course that is an invaluable opportunity to deepen your experience and understanding of the lam-rim. There is time for open discussion, meditation, and lectures from a Tibetan lama and a western sangha member daily. Kopan is where the FPMT first began and there is no better “rite of passage” into the heart of Tibetan Buddhism as practiced in FPMT than to go to Kopan. To find out more about the Kopan November Course, please see Kopan Monastery’s website at: www.kopan-monastery.com. If you are not able to participate in the November Course, attendance at any of the ten-day lam-rim courses offered at Kopan also fulfills this requirement. For a schedule of these courses please see the DB retreats page: www.fpmt.org/retreat/dbschedule.asp

For those unable to travel to Nepal, the best option is to attend one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s annual retreats, offered in different regions every year. While these are often deity-based retreats, the emphasis is always on lam-rim and the experience will give you an equally profound journey to the heart of FPMT. To view the schedule of these retreats again please refer to: www.fpmt.org/retreat/dbschedule.asp

One can also fulfill this requirement is to attend a lam-rim retreat of at least two weeks offered at any FPMT center. A list of current retreats being offered is available on the “Discovering Buddhism Retreats” page mentioned above.

Lastly one can perform the two-week lam-rim retreat in ones own home. This will of course require more discipline and more familiarity with both the lam-rim and how to conduct a retreat than doing the retreat a group setting, but non-the-less is an option. To fulfill the requirement in this way we recommend that you follow the 3-day lam-rim cycle and repeat the cycle 5 times.

Three Month Vajrasattva Purification Retreat

The Vajrasattva practice is a powerful opportunity to clear away obstacles on the path to enlightenment and fertilize the mind for gaining realizations on the path quickly. It is a trademark of Lama Thubten Yeshe’s (Founder of FPMT) style of guiding students that they engage in Vajrasattva retreat, preferably as part of a group. The “three month” commitment

means either doing a full-time Vajrasattva retreat for three months or 100,000¹¹ recitations of the long mantra.

There are a number of ways to fulfill this requirement:

Participate in a group Vajrasattva retreat. Vajrasattva retreats are offered annually at:

Kopan Monastery in Nepal (Feb-May); www.kopan-monastery.org
Tushita Meditation Center in India (June-Sept); www.tushita.info, and
Root Institute in Bodhgaya, India (Feb-May); www.rootinstitute.com

Other FPMT centers offer Vajrasattva retreats from time to time. See the “Discovering Buddhism Retreats” web page mentioned above for current dates and locations. The support of a group is invaluable for retreat. It also gives you a chance to share your experience with others and test your patience!

Do a full-time Vajrasattva retreat alone. This requires anywhere from 2-3 months to complete the mantra count. In a “full-time” retreat, you usually do from 4-6 sessions each day for one to two hours each. Many FPMT centers offer retreat facilities for individuals wishing to undertake longer retreats and can offer some help and guidance in the practice. See the “Retreat Facilities” section of the FPMT web page to locate a retreat center in your region, www.fpmt.org. Retreats can also be done at home if the conditions are suitable and one has enough self-discipline, although if this is your first time, this is not recommended.

Do Vajrasattva practice daily until 100,000 mantras have been completed. While a full-time residential retreat is optimal, this is the best option for those who do not have the luxury of taking three months away to do retreat. You set up the altar and meditation seat as one would do for a full-time retreat and recite any number of mantras each day. It is recommended to do at least two sessions each day, one in the morning and one in the evening. Once you become familiar with the mantra, you can recite anywhere from 200-500 mantras each session. Thus you can complete this requirement in 18 months at a slow pace and in 3 ½ months at a brisk pace while still maintaining a regular work regimen. If one chooses this option, it is important not to “break” retreat, meaning that you must recite at *least* the short Vajrasattva sadhana and 21 long mantras every day until the retreat is finished.

Full instructions on how to properly engage in a Vajrasattva retreat are available in Lama Thubten Yeshe’s, *Tantric Path of Purification* available through Wisdom Publications www.wisdompubs.com Support materials and advice are also available from the FPMT Education Department and in the publication *The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva*. Email: materials@fpmt.org

100,000 Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas

The practice of prostrations is based on the “Sutra of the Three Heaps”, commonly referred to as the “Confession of Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas” or “The Bodhisattva’s

¹¹ When doing retreats that have a recitation commitment of 100,000, it is traditional to add 10% to the total to make up for errors. In this case, one would recite 110,000 mantras.

Confession of Moral Downfalls.” Lama Zopa Rinpoche has given extensive commentary on how to do this practice that has been integrated into a step-by-step guided practice entitled, *The Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls - Extensive*, available from the FPMT Education Department. To complete your 100,000 prostrations, you can either engage in full-time retreat or do them as a daily practice at home.

To do a full-time prostration retreat, it is highly recommended to make pilgrimage to Bodhgaya, India and do your prostrations at the place of the Buddha’s enlightenment. This is recommended for a number of reasons: First, because of the power of the place, each prostration is said to have seven times the effect, and, secondly, because Bodhgaya is a central location for prostration practice. There are a number of prostration boards available, the Bodhgaya Stupa is both powerful and inspirational, and the number of fellow practitioners making prostrations keeps one going when things become difficult! Contact Root Institute at: rifwc@satyam.net.in for more information.

Alternatively, one can do a prostration retreat at any FPMT retreat center or in the convenience of one’s own home. If done full-time, it should take you 2-3 months to complete the requirement.

Prostrations can also be done as a daily practice, as with Vajrasattva. You can do a session each morning and each evening and can eventually do 200-1000 prostrations each day. As it is important not to “break” retreat, once you have begun this practice, you should at the least recite the “The Bodhisattva’s Confession of Moral Downfalls” every day and do a minimum of three prostrations.

Students who are not able to fulfill this requirement due to physical limitations are encouraged to contact the FPMT Education Department for an alternate practice requirement.

Practice and support materials are available from the FPMT Education Department. Email: materials@fpmt.org

Nyung Nä Retreat

Nyung Nä is a profound practice to develop compassion based on offerings, prostrations, and praises to Avalokateshvara, the embodiment of Great Compassion. It is said that engaging in a Nyung Nä retreat is equivalent to doing up to three months of other kinds of retreats. It is a Kriya Tantra level of practice that anyone who has faith can do. A single Nyung Nä takes two days and a morning to complete and requires taking precepts for two days. The second day is a day of fasting and silence, which ends with the final session on the third morning. One does four – 2 ½ hour sessions of well-structured practice each day. To fulfill this requirement, students must not only participate in a Nyung Nä retreat, but also understand how to do the practice on their own, and feel competent to be able to lead others in Nyung Nä retreats.

The best way to do fulfill this requirement is to attend Nyung Nä retreats at any number of FPMT centers. Current dates and locations can be found on the “Discovering Buddhism

Retreats” web page mentioned above. It is most likely that a student will need to do this practice at least three times before feeling able to lead others in it. The first time, one can simply experience the retreat. The second time, one can pay closer attention to how the altars are set-up and the rituals observed during the retreat. The third time, one can volunteer to help set-up the altars and perhaps lead a session or two to test it out. Many centers offer a number of Nyung Näs in a row giving students the opportunity to experience the practice on deeper and deeper levels.

If it is not possible to go to an FPMT center to engage in Nyung Nä retreats, it is possible for students to get the support materials mentioned below and get personal advice on how to do the practice from FPMT Education Department or any experienced FPMT student. In this case, you would need to do at least three Nyung Näs on your own to assure sufficient familiarity with the practice.

Support materials for this practice include: *Nyung Nä – The Means of Achievement of the Eleven-Face Great Compassionate One*, a practice text including full instructions for how to do the retreat, altar set-ups, mudras, etc., and a CD of all of the tunes for the Tibetan chants and English chantable sections of the sadhana. These are available from the FPMT Education Department. Email: materials@fpmt.org

IN CONCLUSION

The retreat requirements of *Discovering Buddhism* are the specific practices advised by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, our Spiritual Director, for those wishing to get the highest benefit from this program. While the practices may at first seem daunting, there is no way to measure the benefit of engaging in them. They are the foundational practices that open the mind to realizations on the path and clear away lifetimes of negative karmic buildup, preparing us for not only a happy death and future rebirth, but also for the ultimate happiness of liberation and enlightenment.

If you have further questions or concerns regarding this or any other aspect of the *Discovering Buddhism* program, please feel free to contact:

Merry Colony,
Director, FPMT Education Department
P.O. Box 888
Taos, NM 87571 USA
Phone: 1 (505) 737-0550, ext. 2#
Fax: 1 (505) 758-7765
Email: merry@fpmt.org.

*May all beings awaken the limitless potential of their minds
achieving all peace and happiness.*