

How to Make Your Possessions Most Beneficial

By Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Within our organization, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), there are numberless projects through which you can make your belongings most beneficial for sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha.

Building Statues, Stupas, and Other Holy Objects

Two Large Maitreya Buddha Statues

People will come from all over the world to see, circumambulate, prostrate, make offerings, and so forth to the two large Maitreya Buddha statues that we are planning to build in Bodhgaya and Kushinagar, India. These statues will cause the sentient beings in this world to collect extensive merit, purify unimaginable obscurations and negative karma, and plant the seed of enlightenment, which includes planting seeds of the whole path to enlightenment.

Through doing unbelievable purification and creating limitless skies of merit every second [in relation to these statues], they can transform their mind into bodhichitta so that they live their lives only benefiting others and their actions become only causes of enlightenment, thus bringing perfect enjoyment, peace, and happiness to the world, as well as inner prosperity—the quick attainment of the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

This essential benefit [of building statues and stupas] was explained by Buddha to King Salgyäl:

However many atoms the stupa has, for that many lives you become a king in the deva and human realms. However many atoms it has, you create that many causes of perfect concentration (shamatha, calm abiding) of the form and formless realms. However many atoms it has, you create that many causes to achieve the exalted path. However many atoms it has, you create that many causes of enlightenment.

If in your future lives you are born as a king with wealth and power, it will be possible to relieve many other sentient beings of poverty, to bring many sentient beings temporal and ultimate happiness, and to preserve and spread the teachings of Buddha.

Without perfect meditation, you cannot achieve great insight unified with shamatha (calm abiding), from which an extremely refined ecstasy of body and mind is derived. Without that, you cannot achieve the exalted path, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. Without that, you cannot directly cease the gross and subtle defilements, which means you cannot achieve liberation from the oceans of samsaric suffering for yourself, and you cannot achieve enlightenment for others.

By achieving the Hinayana exalted path, you are able to overcome the cycle of death and rebirth, the sufferings of samsara, and achieve arhatship. By achieving the exalted Mahayana Paramitayana right-seeing path and so forth, you are able to completely abandon the sufferings of rebirth, old age, sickness, and death. By actualizing the exalted path of tantra, the clear light of meaning, you are able to overcome the cycle of death and rebirth and abandon all suffering. Even by achieving just the clear light of example, you are able to overcome death. By making holy objects, you create the causes of all these very important attainments not only to liberate the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering but to bring them to full enlightenment.

The quotation above applies not only to stupas; it is the same for statues. As I often say, since even a statue or stupa the size of a fingernail has an unbelievable number of atoms, can you imagine how many causes of all these attainments and how many causes of enlightenment you create? It is just unbelievable. It is something that makes you want to make holy objects non-stop, day and night, continuously. It is something that makes it a great loss if you stop making holy objects even for a minute.

Since you can't imagine the number of atoms in a holy object the size of your fingernail, or the length of your nose, of course you cannot imagine [the number of atoms in one that is extremely large]! It means whatever contribution you make to building a statue, whether by giving your time or making a donation, however many atoms the statue has, you create that many causes and receive that many benefits, including enlightenment. It is unbelievable!

Smaller Maitreya Buddha Statues

The plan is to make one thousand one-story-plus Maitreya Buddha statues in the world. The purpose of building these statues is not only for the reason that if we don't become enlightened during Buddha's teachings, when Maitreya Buddha descends to this world we will become his disciples and receive teachings and a prediction regarding our enlightenment. The specific benefit is that the more Maitreya Buddha statues are built, the shorter the duration of sentient beings' suffering will be after Buddha's teachings come to an end in this world. At that time the whole world—not just some countries—will experience unbelievable suffering due to famine, sickness, and war. After that, Maitreya Buddha will descend to this world and give teachings. The benefit of building statues of Maitreya Buddha is that Maitreya Buddha will descend earlier.

Large Statues Offer Social Benefits

Another benefit of these large statues is that they also become social services. These projects give jobs to many people who don't have a means of living, helping them take care of their families and send their children to school for an education. Some of them will also provide medical facilities and schools for the local community.

Here we are not talking about working in a factory, building houses, or other normal jobs. People are building holy objects, which means that even if their motivation is only attachment clinging to this

life's happiness, which is a nonvirtuous thought, by the power of the holy object their actions become virtue. All the time they are working for the statue, every single action they do becomes a cause for enlightenment, and by the way it becomes a cause to achieve liberation from samsara, and by the way it becomes a cause of happiness in all their future lives. So there is no question that the success and happiness of this life also happens by the way. Even if they pray for it not to happen, success comes in this life. So there is incredible benefit for their lives.

Of course, by working in factories and so forth, people can get money, but they don't purify their negative karma and mental defilements, and they don't collect merit, that is, their actions don't become good karma, or virtue, and a cause of happiness.

(For more information about Maitreya Project: fpmt.org/projects/other/maitreya/)

Prayer Wheels

One very good idea is to sponsor prayer wheels for others. There are extensive benefits in making and offering prayer wheels. Limitless Light Buddha, Amitabha, said:

For the benefit of sentient beings of the degenerate age, I have explained the benefits of the Mani wheel. One who practices turning it will equal the fortune of the thousand buddhas.

The Founder Savior, the unequalled Shakya King, told the bodhisattva Dribpa Namsel (Sarvanivaranaviskambhin):

It is more beneficial to turn the Dharma wheel one time than to be a meditator of highest capacity who engages in a one-year retreat on the essence meaning of mantra. It is more beneficial than to be a middle capacity meditator who does retreat for seven years or to be a lower capacity meditator who does retreat for nine years.

Manjushri said:

This great Dharma wheel protects you from all the harm-givers, devas, and spirit possession, from the nagas down below, from the *steno* in the middle, and from the multitude of yakshas. The four protectors and the ten directional guardians will protect you from all obstacles in all the main and intermediate directions. The negative karmas of the lower realms, the five heavy negative karmas, and the ten nonvirtuous actions are purified. You will travel to all the pure lands of the buddhas and you will be reborn on a lion throne in the lotus heart of the Blissful Pure Land. You will perform the actions of all the buddhas in all directions.

From *The Peerless Wish-Granting Jewel Tantra*:

The person who turns a wheel possessing OM MANI PADME HUM will be blessed by all the gurus; the deities will grant them realizations; those gone to bliss will pay attention to them, and the Dharma protectors will eliminate all their obstacles.

From *The Will of the Action of the Compassionate-Eye-Looking One*:

Each time turning of this OM-MANI-PADME-HUM Dharma wheel equals the number [of mantras recited in] an approximation retreat.

The benefits of establishing the Dharma wheel in earth, water, fire, and wind are:

When you put a great wheel with OM MANI PADME HUM up in the wind, all those sentient beings who are touched by the wind and all those transmigratory beings abiding in the direction of the wind will be liberated from the sufferings of the lower realms. When you place a Dharma wheel in a fire, any sentient being who smells the smoke and all those transmigratory beings who see the light of the fire will be liberated from the sufferings of the lower realms. If you place a Dharma wheel in the ground, all those transmigratory beings who are touched by the dust and the sentient beings abiding in that ground will be liberated from the sufferings of the lower realms. If you place a Dharma wheel in water, all those sentient beings abiding in and drinking the water will be liberated from the sufferings of the lower realms.

Therefore, the fortunate capable beings turn a great Dharma wheel upright. The highest capable beings will achieve enlightenment and work for sentient beings; the middle capable beings will achieve a fortunate rebirth and be joined to the holy Dharma; and the lowest capable beings will achieve a good rebirth and be separated from the ten nonvirtuous actions.

If you place a Dharma wheel at home and turn it, the transmigratory beings abiding in that house will be liberated, and the home will become similar to the Potala (the pure land of Chenrezig). At the time of death, if you place a Dharma wheel with OM MANI PADME HUM next to your head and make requests with an intense devotional mind, without need of practicing *phowa* your consciousness will be transferred in one instant to the heart of the Compassionate One.

The Savior Loving One Maitreya said:

If you offer good divine robes to a profound Dharma wheel, you will receive good clothing for five hundred lifetimes. Due to the merits of having offered a hook to a profound Dharma wheel, you will be able to go through all the paths of liberation. By the merits of offering a hanging weight, you will become a savior of all transmigratory beings. You will accumulate more merits than having recited a hundred thousand times ten million mantras. The titans and the harm-givers will prostrate to you. You will control human beings, wealth, and food. All your connections will become meaningful, and sentient beings touched by your shadow will be liberated from the lower realms.

Therefore, without a two-pointed mind, or doubt, in this profound supreme Dharma wheel, you should cherish it, build a Dharma wheel with perseverance, and turn it with an intense wish.

(See *100,000 Prayer Wheels Around the World*: <https://fpmt.org/fpmt/vast-vision/100000-prayer-wheels/>)

Funds for Holy Objects, Stupas, and Prayer Wheels

In this way, there are many different holy objects that we plan to build in different parts of the world to quickly purify sentient beings' defilements and negativities, to enable them to collect extensive merits, and to bring them to enlightenment quickly. Many years ago I started some funds, in which I put a part of whatever money offerings I receive every year, to build stupas and prayer wheels in different parts of the world. You can also contribute to these projects.

For more information about the Holy Objects Fund: fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/holy-objects-fund/

For more information about the Stupa Fund: fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/stupa

For more information about the Prayer Wheel Fund: fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/mani/

Prajnaparamita Project

(This project consists of writing the Prajnaparamita Sutras—The Perfection of Wisdom Sutras—in pure gold and silver to be put inside the large Maitreya Buddha statues.)

I would like to increase the number of people, lay and sangha, who have very good Tibetan handwriting to write the text (*Prajnaparamita Sutra*). We need to be able offer some salary to those people. The work would be done in monasteries or wherever people can do it.

There is unbelievable, unbelievable merit in making this text. The benefits are spoken of in the *Sutra Kuntseg Jampa Sengye Chenpoi Do*:

Compared to all the great three-fold thousand worlds being entirely filled with stupas the size of Mount Meru and made of the seven types of jewels, if one writes the *Prajnaparamita*, in the duration of a finger snap one achieves, at the very least, the patience of the profound Dharma, that is, inconceivable exalted merits.

To clarify, one universe of one thousand world systems is a “great thousand world”; one thousand great thousand worlds is a great two-thousand world, while one thousand of these is a great three-thousand world. [Building] one stupa directs the mind to enlightenment and creates inconceivable merit, and with that merit one can meditate on emptiness without fear.

From the *Sutra Containing Precious Qualities*, Yonten Rinpoche Dupa:

Even if someone builds stupas of the One Gone to Bliss, who has completely passed into the sorrowless state, with seven types of jewels, and the number of those stupas completely fills worlds equaling the number of sand grains in the Pacific Ocean multiplied one thousand million times, and however many sentient beings exist in these infinite worlds do nothing other than offer divine flowers, incense, and ornaments three times a day for eons or even longer, the merits of someone who writes out this *Mother (Prajnaparamita) Gone to Bliss One*, from where the guide having ten powers arises, keeps it, offers flowers and ornaments to it, and respects it are incomparable.

To clarify, these world systems are equal to the number of sand grains in the Pacific Ocean, which are subtle like atoms, multiplied one thousand million times. All the sentient beings in all those worlds, without doing any other work, only make offerings of divine flowers, special incense, and ornaments morning, afternoon, and evening, and not just for a month but for eons. Therefore, the merit that is created is unbelievable. However, compared to writing the *Prajnaparamita* text (from where the buddhas of the three times come), keeping it, and making offerings to it, the merit of making and offering to all those stupas is very small.

Just writing one syllable of *Prajnaparamita* with black ink is more meritorious than building the Maitreya Buddha statue, which involves all those physical things and organization. Not just writing it but also reading it, keeping it, making offerings to it, memorizing it, and studying it are more meritorious. As you can see, by making an offering to the writing of the *Prajnaparamita* you create a vast amount of merit and there is extensive purification.

For more information: fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/praj/

Supporting Sangha

The Supporting Ordained Sangha Fund

The Supporting Ordained Sangha Fund was established to replace the extremely successful Sera Je Food Fund, which offered three nutritious meals daily to all the monks of Sera Je Monastery for more than twenty-six years. An interest-bearing endowment given to Sera Je Monastery in 2018 will continue to cover the cost of food for this program indefinitely.

This Supporting Ordained Sangha Fund is broader in scope than the original Sera Je Food Fund. It offers support to monasteries, nunneries, and individual monks and nuns around the world by providing them with food, accommodation, health care, education, and opportunities to practice. The fund is not limited to any one institution and is able to benefit many nunneries and monasteries, as well as individual sangha in need.

Supporting monks and nuns is one of the highest priorities for the FPMT organization because the preservation of the Buddhadharma is dependent on the existence of the sangha.¹ Lama Zopa Rinpoche says:

Taking responsibility for supporting these practitioners is extremely worthwhile because they are preserving and spreading the entire teaching of the Buddha.

For instance the FPMT monastery and nunnery in Kopan, Nepal, provide a very good education to more than 380 nuns and almost as many monks (www.kopanmonastery.com).

For more information: fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/supporting-ordained-sangha-fund/

The Lama Tsongkhapa Teachers Fund

The Lama Tsongkhapa Teachers Fund was set up at the request of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to help support all the main teachers of the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition. Unless lamas receive support from their students or benefactors, they have nothing, as they receive no remuneration from their monasteries.

This fund is now supporting 120 teachers living in India who by and large do not travel often to the West and therefore do not have access to regular sponsorship. In many cases, these teachers are also supporting many of their own students. Because the fund frees them from pressure to go out fundraising, the offerings become quite significant for the beneficiaries, although by Western standards the amounts are quite modest. The fund offers salaries to the current Ganden Tripa, ex-Ganden Tripas, the abbots and ex-abbots of the six main monasteries (Sera Jey, Sera Mey, Ganden

¹ Lama Zopa Rinpoche's original mention of the Sera Je Food Fund was updated based on the presentation found on <https://fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/supporting-ordained-sangha-fund/> on the instruction of Ven. Holly Ansett, Charitable Projects Coordinator.

Shartse, Ganden Jangtse, Drepung Gomang, and Drepung Loseling), and of Tashi Lhunpo (the Panchen Lama's monastery) and Gyume and Gyuto Tantric Monasteries. They also include fifteen key teachers in the Gelugpa tradition who are responsible for educating young monks, and five or more main teachers in Tashi Lhunpo and the two tantric colleges.

These monasteries are our world's centers of learning of the most extensive Buddhist philosophy based on five major treatises: *Abhidharmakosha*, *Pramanavartika*, *Abhisamayalamkara*, *Madhyamaka*, and *Vinaya*, the monastic discipline, as well as their commentaries by Indian pandits and Tibetan lamas, including Lama Tsongkhapa and the particular authors of each monastery. These monasteries have an incredible system of studying Buddhadharma in depth, not merely through explanations of the root texts or by memorizing the commentaries, but also through analysis and debate. The tantric colleges teach the pure tantric tradition and practices, including traditional art and rituals, preserving the lineages purely, without corruption and degeneration. After studying the extensive tantric texts, the monks become fully qualified Buddhist masters holding the whole entire teachings of Buddha. These teachers are then sent to different parts of the world, offering so many sentient beings an opportunity to learn and practice Dharma, and to achieve liberation and enlightenment.

If these monasteries degenerated or stopped functioning, the extensive study of the deep and correct meanings of Buddhist philosophy would cease and no sentient beings would have this opportunity—so the monasteries are essential. Although these monasteries are in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition, other traditions, of course, also have monasteries offering good education in Buddhism and moral discipline.

For more information: fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/ltkt/

Supporting Non-Tibetan Sangha

Supporting sangha in their practice, study, and retreat, and in doing service for sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha, is very important. There are Western monasteries and nunneries that have great need. One can offer to the Lama Yeshe Sangha Fund to support Western as well as Chinese sangha. This sangha fund helps monks and nuns in need (fpmt.org/projects/other/lysf/).

The main FPMT monastery in the West is Nalanda Monastery in France. The biggest nunnery, that is, where the majority of nuns live, is Chenrezig Institute in Australia. However, there are monks and nuns in various countries, including Italy, Spain, and the USA. There is also a great need for places for old sangha to live in and be cared for. My idea is to have several, in different countries, including Spain.

For more information on the non-Tibetan Sangha in FPMT: imisangha.org

Puja Fund

Sponsoring Pujas and Offerings on Special Days

For many years, on the special days of Buddha when merit is multiplied one hundred million times, tea, bread, and money have been offered at breakfast pujas in the monasteries of Sera Jey, Sera Mey, Ganden Jangtse, Ganden Shartse, Drepung Loseling, Drepung Gomang, and Gyuto and Gyume Tantric Colleges in India.

In Ganden Monastery, pujas are sponsored on each eclipse day, and bread and tea are offered at the puja. The other monasteries mentioned are constantly offering pujas for the organization, besides on the special days. In Sera Mey College a Medicine Buddha puja is sponsored on the Tibetan 8th of every month.

Lunch is offered on merit-multiplying days to Lama Zopa Rinpoche's gurus.

The sangha in Nalanda Monastery in France are offered special meals each month, including ice cream, which the monks enjoy very much. They say it's a happy day! Offerings are also made to the sangha in Chenrezig Nunnery and Thubten Shedrup Ling in Australia. Sangha at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in Italy receive money offerings on each wheel-turning day. Food is offered to monks and nuns at Kopan Monastery.

Sera Jey Monastery has more than 2700 monks and the others each have 1000-3000 monks. All those monks in the monasteries where I make offerings are the pores, or the disciples, of my guru. Offering one cup of tea or one rupee to even one disciple collects more merit than having offered tea to numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas. Even offering one candy, a stick of chewing gum, or a Starbucks coffee to one disciple of the same guru creates this much merit! So you can see how much merit you collect by offering to this many monks in one monastery.

We request them to dedicate for the success of the FPMT projects and also for people who rely upon me, whose names have been given to me, who have died or are sick, and so forth.

These pujas are to continue forever. It is unbelievably fortunate to be able to make these offerings: you collect unbelievable merit and even if in the future you are reborn as an ant somewhere in the universe, these pujas will still be happening.

Offering to Stupas and Statues

Also, on those auspicious days, offerings are made to the two very precious stupas in Nepal, Swayambunath and Boudhanath. We pay money and the communities paint the stupas white and then offer saffron water on them, a canopy to go around the stupa, and an umbrella on the top. This is extremely powerful for success, purification, and the collection of merits. The offerings to the stupas are made every month as well as on the special holy days.

Also, we offer money for the Buddha statue in the Jokhang, in Lhasa, to be painted gold on those days, and offer robes. Robes are also offered to the Buddha statue in the Mahabodhi Stupa in Bodhgaya.

I started a fund, into which every year some part of the money offerings made to me go, for the coming years.

(For more information on the Puja Fund: fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/puja/)

The FPMT Translation Fund

Much more money is needed for paying wages to translators and for the printing and publishing of texts. This is another very beneficial project for the many people who have no opportunity to attend courses or hear teachings directly and are very keen to receive Dharma books. Dharma books go to every corner of the world, inspiring people to meditate, transforming their lives, and bringing them happiness and peace.

Education Services of FPMT International Office is translating some extremely precious sutra texts into various languages, with a view to translating many more texts. It is arranging for more and more Dharma texts to become available in different languages (fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/translations/).

Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archives collects, transcribes, edits, and makes available all of Lama Yeshe's [and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's] teachings (lamayeshe.com).

Universal Education

Universal Education is a very important social service and has to meet the considerable expenses of producing school materials, salaries of teachers and staff, regular meetings, etc. We are planning teacher training and many more schools, especially in countries where there is a lot of violence.

The aim of Universal Education is to bring up children as good human beings, practicing kindness and tolerance every day, feeling joy for other's fortune, practicing forgiveness towards those who harm them, and asking forgiveness from those they have harmed. To grow up with these very precious basic human qualities brings peace and happiness to all sentient beings, particularly those in this world, in one's own country and family, and, of course, no question, happiness for oneself comes by the way. Here I am talking about the basic qualities but there are many more to open the heart to others.

Such an education becomes the antidote to war, famine, disease, torture, poverty, sickness, and the dangers from fire, water, air, and earth. The main aim is to develop a good heart, the thought of cherishing others, so this is an extremely important service to society.

Already the Universal Education school in Bodhgaya, a part of the Maitreya Project, seems very beneficial (rootinstitute.ngo/social-service/maitreya-school). The children, after just a few years there, are completely different from other school children—very peaceful, disciplined, and well behaved. Seeing this inspired me to want to start many more schools in remote villages in Bihar, as education is the only way to change the situation when there is a lot of poverty, sickness, killing, stealing, and so forth, because as a result of people continually creating negative karma, the same problems continue.

Starting schools in those very poor villages will not only help provide a means of living and an education, but most importantly it will help the people there develop a good heart, loving kindness, and compassion. If we can start more schools like that, they can really help to change the state for the better as people become better human beings, create less negative karma, and accumulate more prosperity, happiness, and peace.

The other well-established and very successful Universal Education school is Tara Redwood School in Soquel, California (tararedwoodschool.org).

(For more information: compassionandwisdom.org)

Hospices

FPMT has hospices in various countries: Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A, Malaysia, Denmark, Singapore, and Spain. The oldest and most successful is Karuna Hospice in Brisbane, Australia. People say if you are dying and cared for by Karuna you are lucky! So my plan is to follow the Karuna way of running, or even to improve on it, in different cities in Australia and other countries.

Social Services Fund²

The Social Services Fund, established to support Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Vast Visions (fpmt.org/fpmt/vast-vision/) for the FPMT organization, offers benefit to others primarily India, Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia by helping children, the elderly, sick and very poor by offering grants for schools, hospices, health clinics, soup kitchens, elderly homes, orphanages and much more.

The Social Services Fund offers support in many areas:

Support to Children

- Giving grants to poor schools in Nepal, India, and Mongolia
- Offering food for children in a boarding schools and Tibetan refugee camps in India and Nepal

Health Care

- Offering grants to health clinics in India and Mongolia (fpmt.org/charitable-activities/projects/supporting-our-lamas/lzrbf-news/offering-towards-tashi-lhunpo-health-care-center/)
- Giving grants for hospices

² The lists in this section were copied from <https://fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/social-services-fund/> and added here on the instruction of Ven. Holly Ansett, Charitable Projects Coordinator.

- Sponsored the building of an eye hospital in Tibet and ongoing and mobile eye clinics in remotes areas of Tibet (fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/tibet-health-services-project/)
- Offering medical aid to those effected by the earthquake in Nepal

In Bodhgaya, the Maitri Charitable Trust provides free treatment and care for pregnant and nursing women, as well as for TB and leprosy patients. The center also offers a home and treatment for starving, sick or ill-treated dogs. Maitri Trust also runs a village school program. (maitri-bodhgaya.org)

The Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Care Centre in Root Institute originally was a home for sick destitute people and now has a comprehensive program offering free health care on many levels. Many qualified people volunteer their skills there and need to be supported. We are also going to start an animal hospital in Bodhgaya. (rootinstitute.ngo/social-service/shakyamuni-buddha-clinic)

Maya Daya Clinic is Kopan Monastery's charitable project, offering medical help and health care to the local people. (kopanmonastery.com/charitable/maya-daya-village-clinic)

FPMT Mongolia Lamp of the Path provides one nutritious meal a day and offers a basic health service, as well as educational programs to underprivileged people in the Ulaanbaatar outlying districts. (fpmtmongolia.org/lamp-of-the-path-ngo)

Support to the Elderly, Refugees, and Destitute

- Supporting elderly Tibetan refugees in India (fpmt.org/charitable-activities/projects/social-services/supporting-elderly-tibetan-refugees-in-india/)
- Offering grants to soup kitchens in Mongolia
- Sponsoring wells in poor villages in India
- Sponsoring poor women, children, the bedridden and the elderly in Mongolia (fpmt.org/charitable-activities/projects/supporting-our-lamas/lzrbf-news/lama-zopa-rinpoche-helps-fund-panchen-otrul-rinpoches-charitable-work-in-mongolia/)

(For more information on FPMT Social Services: <https://fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/social-services-fund/>)

Natural Disasters

- Sponsors pujas, practices, and prayers to pacify the elements and protect those harmed by disasters of earth, wind, fire, and water (fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/social-services-fund/protecting-environment-and-living-beings/)
- Immediate earthquake relief of food, water and shelter in Nepal following the earthquakes of 2015 as well as housing, rebuilding, and construction support offered to communities in Tibet and Nepal

Animal Care

- Grants to support the saving lives of animals, as well as food, shelter, and medical care (fpmt.org/charitable-activities/projects/social-services/us3000-offered-to-maitri-charitable-trust-bodhgaya-india/)
- The Animal Liberation Fund is also part of the activities of the Social Services Fund (<https://fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/alf/>)

FPMT centers regularly liberate animals in Hong Kong and Singapore. Amitabha Buddha Centre in Singapore has already released several million animals in pursuit of their target of a hundred million. The centers in Malaysia and Taiwan also liberate animals on certain occasions. [Worms are liberated three times a month by the monks and nuns supporting Lama Zopa Rinpoche's residences in the USA.]

Kopan Monastery in Nepal has a large piece of land for an animal sanctuary, where Lama Zopa Rinpoche liberates animals. (*Animal Liberation Sanctuary*: fpmt.org/projects/other/alp/)

(For more information on FPMT Social Services: <https://fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/social-services-fund/>)

Liberation Prison Project

This project provides visits by FPMT monks and nuns to various prisons around the world, giving teachings, advice and guidance. Books are offered by our publishing division, and individual monks and nuns also communicate by letter with inmates (liberationprisonproject.org/).

Dharma Practice and Retreat Projects

Supporting People to do Practices

One project is to revive a very special holy place in Tibet of about a hundred hermitages, where many holy beings, meditators, and yogis achieved the rainbow body and other high attainments, including enlightenment. Some of the hermitages have already been rebuilt by individuals. The project is to restore the buildings and provide a place where those who have finished studying in the monasteries can actualize what they have studied—the complete path to enlightenment.

One can also sponsor retreats, Nyung Nes or the recitation of a hundred million OM MANI PADME HUMs, such as is done in Tsum by the nuns, monks, and villagers. Also, in Tibet, every year in the Kadampa geshe's holy place, Pembo, the nuns and others do at least a hundred million OM MANI PADME HUMs. (<https://fpmt.org/fpmt/vast-vision/100-million-mani-retreats/>)

It is good to sponsor Nyung Nes in the centers where they are done in groups, or to sponsor an individual person who wants to do a hundred or a thousand Nyung Nes. You can also sponsor a group Vajrasattva retreat.

Sponsoring people to do preliminary practices, such as many tsatsas, is very good. Even if you cannot make tsatsas yourself, you can sponsor the expenses of the tsatsas and the person doing the practice. It helps the person to complete the practice and also helps the sponsor to purify and accumulate extensive merit.

(For more information see the Practice and Retreat Fund: fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/practice-and-retreats-fund/)

Making Offerings in Centers

Students who are working find it difficult, due to lack of time and space, to make offerings in their homes, so I suggested to Tara House, in Melbourne, to have a general fund for offerings to holy objects in the center. One person needs to be in charge of the altar, and the fund is used to support that person and buy the offerings. Everybody can donate to the fund because everybody needs to make merit. Then, even while driving to and from work, the students can make offerings by chanting the mantra for blessing the offerings and then offering them to their gurus, which collects the most extensive merit. Just by thinking of all the gurus in Dharamsala, you create limitless skies of merit within that second.

I often tell people that if they don't have a place or time to make offerings, whether they are FPMT or not, they are most welcome to offer all the offerings, the flowers, lights, and so forth, in my houses [Rinpoche's two residences in the U.S.A.], which brings oceans of benefit. It makes the work of the sangha who arrange these offerings every day very worthwhile. You don't need to physically see the offerings, you can visualize them and just think that you are offering all the offerings in those houses.

By offering to the buddhas, and especially to the guru, you can enjoy the result forever: all the happiness you have received from beginningless past lives until now, you will receive in the future; you will actualize the whole path to liberation; you will actualize the whole Mahayana path and achieve enlightenment; and, after that, you will liberate the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, and asuras from the oceans of samsaric suffering and their causes, until the last sentient being has attained enlightenment. That is the final benefit of having offered one tiny flower, one small Christmas light, or stick of incense to Buddha, a statue, a stupa, or another holy object. The benefits are inconceivable, unfathomable, limitless, and uncountable because of Buddha's qualities. If that is the benefit of one person offering one time, can you imagine from each offering how much benefit a person gets, whether they are in China, India, Tibet, or wherever?

Supporting Dharma Centers

You can offer to an FPMT center in your country or another. This is important because FPMT is an organization working to spread and educate sentient beings in Dharma by organizing teachers, translators, and facilities for people to learn and practice, so as to liberate them from the lower realms where they would experience the most unbearable suffering, even for eons. Every year the

organization liberates so many sentient beings from the lower realms by educating them in Dharma, leading them to purify negative karma and practice morality and charity, causing them to achieve higher rebirth.

Students learn not only the extensive philosophy of the Buddhadharma, but the heart of the 84,000 teachings of Buddha—the lamrim, the stages of the path to enlightenment, and the essence, the three principal aspects of the path, particularly renunciation, which causes them to achieve liberation from samsara. They are taught the three higher trainings and educated in the right view that eliminates the root of their samsara, liberating them from delusions and karma and the whole entire ocean of samsaric suffering. They are educated in and led to practice bodhichitta and to engage in the bodhisattvas' deeds, the six paramitas, which causes them to achieve enlightenment, peerless happiness. The tantric path is also revealed to them, causing them to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime, and by practicing highest tantra they can achieve enlightenment even in a few years.

By renting facilities the center organizers make it very easy for other sentient beings to practice Dharma. With qualified teachers, they can learn correct Dharma and attain correct realizations of the path. So bequeathing your money and belongings to a center is a very practical and good way to help, especially if the center has difficulties in meeting the expenses of rent or the running costs.

Already some students have made wills, bequeathing their houses to various centers. One person, who passed away, willed his house to Vajrayana Institute in Sydney, giving the students courage to buy a new center.

You can also sponsor the projects and activities of a center, or practices and pujas. Of course, many people want to sponsor pujas in monasteries in India and so forth, but from time to time I suggest people make offerings to the centers. Normally people don't think to sponsor pujas or make offerings in a center. Even if you don't have much money, you can sponsor food and drink, thinking you are offering to the pores of the same guru. Giving one drink of water or juice to your guru's disciples collects more merit than having made offerings to numberless buddhas, Dharma, and sangha and numberless statues, stupas, and scriptures.

(For more information about FPMT centers: fpmt.org/centers)

Supporting Retreat Centers

Retreat places are extremely important. It can almost be said that doing retreat is your only opportunity to discover yourself. You see your mind, like looking a mirror, and recognize how your life has been so far—all the mistakes and actions that harmed you and others. In other words, you see your negative side. That makes you change, abandoning those faults to live a happier life as a better, more sincere, good-hearted, loving, compassionate, tolerant, and caring person. You become less self-centered and egoistic, all those things that normal people don't like. It makes you a useful person, beneficial for others, or at least one that does not harm others.

Generally speaking, although life is filled with objects of anger and jealousy, life is mostly driven by objects of desire. Life becomes like a garbage can. You are constantly distracted by your job and family so you never get to see your real self, only the hallucinated one. You need to change your life and your mind from being very uncontrolled, due to desire, into contentment, satisfaction, peace, and happiness; from anger into compassion and loving kindness; from an egoistic mind into a good heart that cherishes others; from totally harming others to totally benefiting others. If this doesn't happen, even though you were born human, you become harmful to other sentient beings, to this world, to your country, to your family, and even to yourself. You are not useful even to yourself.

If you change, you immediately see how you can give so much less harm to yourself and others and become truly beneficial. Otherwise, there is no purpose in having this human body. It is no different from animals, and sometimes even becomes more harmful than animals. Animals cannot plot unbelievably destructive actions that kill millions of people and destroy entire countries. Animals cannot destroy a whole city or even a village—but we can. You can see this very clearly in recent events, such as how the destruction of the two towers in New York City affected the whole world, east and west, far and wide. Hotels had to close down, and people lost their jobs in banks and airports in many countries. This shows how one human being's intelligence can be used to destroy the lives of billions of people.

Therefore, by retreating into detached inner peace and happiness, contentment and satisfaction, and away from the uncontrollable, painful mind of desire, the cause of samsara and the billions of problems of this life; by retreating into love, compassion, and bodhichitta and away from the egoistic, self-centered mind that doesn't care about others, the main obstacle to bringing happiness to numberless other sentient beings; and by retreating into wisdom, seeing things as empty of inherent existence and as existing dependently (in other words realizing the truth and falsity of I and phenomena so that you are not deceived by yourself), you are able to cut the root of all the sufferings and their causes, delusion and karma, and you are even able to cease the imprints, the seeds of that ignorance, and achieve liberation, an everlasting blissful state of peace. Not only that, you are also able to cease the subtle defilements and achieve all qualities, becoming able to bring the numberless sentient beings to full enlightenment by liberating them from the oceans of samsaric suffering and their causes. Otherwise, you are drowning in a quagmire of hallucinated views, totally believing the false appearance of a truly existent I and all other phenomena to be true. Then all the rest of the delusions and wrong concepts build up, giving rise to negative karma, and you experience all the suffering of the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras, and intermediate state beings.

Even with some very basic realizations you can benefit other sentient beings limitlessly. With wisdom you can liberate others from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and their causes, delusions and karma, by showing them what is false and what is true. In this way you can liberate them from all suffering forever and bring them to full enlightenment. With bodhichitta and the detached mind, renunciation, you become like medicine for all living beings' suffering and its causes; a source of

peace and happiness to others; and an incredible, most inspiring example to others, to tame their minds and bring peace and happiness in their hearts. Just seeing you, without many words, naturally pacifies all their harmful thoughts, and they generate a good heart and develop wisdom. They naturally get satisfaction and contentment. Wherever you are, even the land is blessed. Wherever you step, the whole environment is blessed; it becomes peaceful and very inspiring. Wherever you are, all the people, and even the animals and spirits, around you are blessed.

Even though there are great scholars who know by heart all Buddha's teachings and the commentaries by the pandits and yogis, just seeing someone who is living in the practice and especially with realizations moves the mind, so that bad thoughts disappear and positive thoughts, such as renunciation, bodhichitta, right view, guru devotion, and so forth, arise effortlessly. You can see the difference. There are no such inspiring examples of a great scholar having the same effect by speaking mere words.

What really helps to transform the world, to bless the people and transform their thoughts, even to protect the environment, is the mind that has become Dharma: content and satisfied, detached and compassionate. Compassion is especially important to avoid war, famine, disease, torture, poverty, and sickness. It even becomes an antidote to danger from the four elements, which is the result of harmful actions motivated by negative attitudes. So such a practitioner inspires the world to practice positive, virtuous thoughts, especially the good heart. Retreat places, therefore, are very important, as they are conducive to meditation and the development of the mind in the path.

The purpose of revealing and studying the hundreds of volumes of Buddha's teachings, the Kangyur, and the commentaries, the Tengyur, including all the commentaries by great Tibetan lamas, is to practice and actualize the path. As Lama Tsongkhapa stressed, the purpose of listening to the teachings is to get the practice done.

People who are meditating on the path, doing retreat, whether in a hermitage or in a city, are like scientists doing profoundly deep inner research, experimenting on the path to liberation and enlightenment, the most important thing in the world, in order to free the numberless sentient beings, including themselves, from suffering and bring them to happiness.

If you never do retreat, never practice meditation, you won't get any real satisfaction because you won't have any realizations of the path. You won't have achieved the real purpose.

Supporting FPMT Retreat Places

Land of Calm Abiding (Shiné Land) is particularly for achieving calm abiding. Most people have incredible experiences there, even though it is very isolated and conditions are quite hard. The upkeep of the land is also quite costly; for instance, the road gets washed away by the rain every year and has to be fixed. In spite of the difficulties, the caretakers do a wonderful job of looking after the retreatants' needs.

Kangaroo Island in Australia is also very nice but totally different. It is flat and bushy, with mountains to one side and very spacious. People do retreat there. Chenrezig Institute and Atisha Centre in Australia also have retreat facilities.

Osel Ling Retreat Center in Granada, Spain, near where Lama Yeshe's incarnation was born, has been established for many years now. Many people have done retreat there and His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave Mahamudra teachings there. It is a great place for retreat.

Lawudo, in the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal, near Mount Everest, is the site of the previous Lawudo Lama's cave.

Kopan Monastery and Nunnery offer retreat facilities in Kathmandu, Nepal, as does Ganden Yiga Chözin Centre in Pokhara.

Mahamudra Centre in New Zealand has retreat facilities for groups and individuals, and a special facility for doing Dorje Khadro fire pujas.

Several European countries offer retreat facilities: Shen Phen Thubten Choeling and Jamyang Buddhist Centre in England; Institut Vajra Yogini and Nalanda Monastery in France; Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in Italy; Kushi Ling Retreat Center on the Swiss/Italian border; Tushita Retreat Center in Spain; Maitreya Instituut in Holland; and Yiga Chözin Retreat Centre in Latvia.

Tushita Meditation Centre in Dharamsala is a very holy place where His Holiness the Dalai Lama's root guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, who is actual Heruka, lived for seven years.

Root Institute, Bodhgaya is also very good for retreat. Whatever practice you do in Bodhgaya is increased eight times.

In the United States, Land of Medicine Buddha, Vajrapani Institute, and Milarepa Center all offer retreat facilities.

In Washington we are drawing up plans for individual retreat houses. In the future, if we get more land, we can extend the facilities to old lay students to live out their lives when they can't function well. At the end of their lives, younger students can help them practice so that they can pass away peacefully surrounded by many holy objects, such as stupas and prayer wheels. This is a dream that has yet to be actualized.

These are some of the present FPMT projects but soon they will be much more extensive. The aim of the projects is to illuminate the world, dispelling darkness, ignorance, and suffering. If things go well, and especially if the Maitreya Project happens, the projects—social services as well as Dharma projects—will be doubled and tripled until they are like the stars in a night sky or like the sun rising in the world.

For information and updates on all these as well as other projects: <https://fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/>

For more information about Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Vast Visions for FPMT: <https://fpmt.org/fpmt/vast-vision/>

How to Make Your Possessions Most Beneficial

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