



## THE PRECIOUS AND WISH-FULFILLING HOLY OBJECTS OF FPMT

Holy objects have been central to Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s work since their early days teaching Westerners at Kopan Monastery, established by the lamas as the Nepal Mahayana Gompa Center in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, in 1969.

The main building was constructed in 1971-2. Lama Yeshe’s friend, Jampa Trinley (father of Yangsi Rinpoche and Ven. Tsen-la, et al.), donated three statues for the gompa: Lama Tsongkahapa and his two disciples, Khedrub Je and Gyaltsab Je. The walls of the meditation hall were modestly adorned with a few thangka images of deities, and a framed photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

When the first meditation course was given there in 1971, it was attended by about twenty Western students. By the time of the seventh course, held in the autumn of 1974, interest was so great that attendance had to be restricted to 200 eager students, the limit of the local facilities. By 1975, twelve centers had been established, nine of them outside of India and Nepal. Lama Yeshe identified a need for “an organization to keep this together.” And thus, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) became an official organization in 1975.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche firmly established FPMT’s relationship with holy objects in 1976 when the first statue of FPMT, a substantive three-foot (one-meter) tall Tara statue, was obtained and brought to life at Kopan Monastery.

From this first auspicious project countless initiatives have blossomed, bringing symbols of Buddha’s holy body, speech and mind into the world. Holy objects provide easy opportunities for one to purify negative seeds in the mind and to accumulate merit needed to progress along the path. Further, they provide inspiration as they represent the limitless potential (and perfection) of our own body, speech and mind. They remind us that liberation is possible, they habituate our mind toward happiness rather than suffering, they help to preserve the Buddhist culture of which we’re a part, and they bring us closer to one another by planting seeds of universal loving kindness into our collective mind stream.

Every saint or spiritual leader becomes well-known for specific benevolent deeds in which they have engaged for the benefit of the world. Under Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s advice and care, FPMT has made the creation of holy objects a central mission of the international organization. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has personally inspired or commissioned the creation of hundreds of thousands of holy objects from the casting commitments of tsa-tsas he’s given students or suggestions for larger projects like statues, stupas, prayer wheels and large thangkas to be created on FPMT grounds.

In this special feature story, we celebrate the organization’s incredible work in the area of holy object creation, take a look at the history of some of these projects and try to uncover why holy objects are considered precious and wish-fulfilling.