



# FPMT BASIC PROGRAM

## Descriptions of the Standard Texts and Commentaries

### 1. Stages of the Path

Je Tsongkhapa, *Middling Exposition of the Stages of the Path* (Lam rim 'bring)

Lama Tsongkhapa's middle length version of the Stages of the Path covers all the topics of the graduated path, from the preliminaries up to the mind of enlightenment and the correct view of the middle way. The topics are explained on the basis of classic Indian scriptural sources and set in the context of actual practice. As one of the author's five major works elucidating Madhyamaka, a large part of this text is given over to a challenging special insight section which presents the essential points contained in the *Lam rim chen mo*.

### 2. Heart Sutra

**Root Text:** Shakyamuni Buddha, *The Heart of Wisdom Sutra* (Skt. Prajñahrdayasutra; Shes rab snying po'i mdo)

**Commentary:** Tendar Lharampa, *Jewel Light Illuminating the Meaning: a Commentary to the Heart of Wisdom* (Shes rab snying po'i grel pa don gsal nor bu'i 'od)

The *Heart Sutra* reveals the truth of emptiness through a short exchange between two of the Buddha's most illustrious disciples, Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra.

Tendar Lharampa's commentary is a brief line by line explanation that clarifies the meaning of the sutra by reference to the five paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation and no-more-learning. The text also comments on the origin of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and gives a short history of the sutras in India and Tibet.

### 3. Mahayana Mind Training

Dharmarakshita, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* (Blo sbyong mtshon cha kor lo)

Dharmarakshita's verses on mind training begin by contrasting the qualities of the heroic bodhisattva with the lot of beings bound by ignorance. Various samsaric sufferings are then enumerated and explained as the workings of the law of karma, with a view to developing the resolve to avoid negative actions in the future. A forceful denunciation of the twin negativities of self-grasping and self-cherishing supported by petitions to the wrathful deity Yamantaka makes up the greater part of the second half of the text, which concludes with prayers of altruistic aspiration and a reminder that phenomena are illusory.

## 4. Bodhisattva Deeds

**Root Text:** Shantideva, *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* (Skt. Bodhicaryavatara; bYang chub sems pa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa)

**Commentary:**

Dragpa Gyaltsen, *A Precious Garland, A Commentary on (Shantideva's) Engaging in the Deeds of a Bodhisattva* (bYang chub sems pa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i tikka rin po che'i phreng ba)

Comprising almost a thousand verses, Shantideva combines devotional, practical and philosophical elements to skillfully elucidate the practices of a bodhisattva. The text is structured around the six perfections, and the difficult wisdom chapter presupposes a knowledge of Buddhist epistemology and tenets. Dragpa Gyaltsen's text is a popular commentary, adding a practice oriented structure to the text by means of an extensive outline.

## 5. Mind and Cognition

*Mind and Cognition* encompasses both epistemology (part 1), and psychology (part 2).

### Part 1: Awarenesses and Knowers

Yongdzin Purbuchok, *Explanation of the Presentation of Objects and Object-Possessors as well as Mind and Cognition* (Yul yul can dang blo rig gi rnam par bshad pa)

Purbuchok's short text explains Buddhist epistemology by means of an analysis of the basic presentation of definitions and divisions, introducing the varieties of valid, distorted, conceptual and non-conceptual minds. The text is largely presented in debate format; the Basic Program commentary will not expand on the debates but focus on the 'presentation of our own system'.

### Part 2: Minds and Mental Factors

Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen, *Clear Exposition of the Modes of Minds and Mental Factors: a Necklace for those of Clear Mind* (Sems dang sems byung gi tshul gсар bar ston pa blo gsal mgul rgyan)

Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen's Buddhist psychology textbook explains minds and the fifty-one mental factors - including omnipresent mental factors such as feeling, object-ascertaining mental factors such as concentration, virtuous mental factors, root delusions and changeable mental factors such as investigation - discussing each in turn based on meaning, divisions and scriptural citations.

## 6. Tenets

Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen, *Presentation of Tenets* (Grub mtha'i rnam bzhag)

The *Presentation of Tenets*, composed by the renown scholar and yogi Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen of Sera Je monastery, is a concise and accessible introduction to the four main schools of Buddhist tenets. Each of the four schools summarizes its own understanding of the essential points of the sutras in a brief overview of the assertions on minds, objects, selflessness and the nature of attainment, culminating in the tenets of the most highly esteemed school, the Madhyamaka.

## 7. Ornament

**Root Text:** Maitreya, *Ornament for Clear Realization* (Skt. Abhisamayalankara; mNgon rtogs rgyan)

**Commentary:** Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen, *General Meaning of the Fourth Chapter* (sKabs bzhi spyi don / Rol mtsho)

The fourth chapter of Maitreya's *Ornament*, 'Application in the Complete Aspects', describes the bodhisattva's meditation on the 173 different aspects of the three exalted knowers by way of a union of calm abiding and special insight, for the purpose of attaining mastery over these different aspects.

Jetsün Chökyl Gyaltzen's *Ocean of Sport* is the Sera Je college textbook for the study of chapter four of the *Ornament* and the standard commentary used to teach the subject in the BP. The relevant sections from the *Commentary Clarifying the Meaning* by the Indian scholar Haribhadra are included; this is the Indian commentary traditionally used in combination with the Tibetan commentary.

## 8. Tathagata Essence

**Root Text:** Maitreya, *Sublime Continuum of the Mahayana* (Skt. Mahayana-uttaratantra; Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma)

**Commentary:** Gyaltsab Je, *Commentary on (Maitreya's) 'Sublime Continuum of the Mahayana'* (Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i tikka)

Maitreya's elucidation of the buddha potential is presented in the context of seven related subjects: Buddha; Dharma; Sangha; tathagata essence; enlightenment; the qualities of enlightenment; and enlightened conduct. Chapter one, comprising 168 verses, covers the first four of these, with the BP explanation focusing on the tathagata essence.

The root text relies heavily on written and oral commentary and has inspired a variety of interpretations since its composition; Gyaltsab Je offers a perspective from the tradition of Je Tsong Khapa.

## 9. Grounds and Paths of Secret Mantra

Kirti Lobsang Trinley, *The Condensed Path of the Vajra Vehicle: The Essence of the Nectar of the Great Secret* (rDo rje theg pa'i lam gyi bsdus don gsang chen bdud rtsi'i snying po)

or:

Ngawang Palden, *Illumination of the Tantric Tradition: The Principles of the Grounds and Paths of the Four Great Secret Classes of Tantra* (gSang chen rgyud sde bzhi' sa lam gyi rnam bzhag gzhung gsal byed)

The two texts each present the most important features of the four classes of tantra as well as the initiation procedures and particularities of the deity yoga related to each class, with a special emphasis on Highest Yoga Tantra. Both texts offer a condensed

explanation of the subjects covered in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra* (Ngagrim Chenmo).

Kirti Lobsang Trinley's text, comprising 475 verses, has been successfully taught as part of the Basic Program; however, during the Geshe Summit in April 2001, the assembled BP teachers and Lama Zopa Rinpoche decided that this subject can also be taught on the basis of Ngawang Palden's more accessible *Presentation of the Grounds and Paths of the Four Great Secret Tantra Sets*.

## **10. Seventy Topics** (*supplementary*)

Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen, *Seventy Topics* (Don mdun cu)

The 'Seventy Topics' are the subjects of Maitreya's *Ornament for Clear Realization*, the main source for explanation of the path structure in the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. The topics are arranged into eight categories: the first three – exalted knower of all aspects, knower of paths, and knower of bases – are objects to be practiced and generated; the next four – complete aspects, peak, serial, and momentary applications – are the four practices to be engaged in; and the final clear realization – resultant truth body – is the final object of attainment. The entire path to buddhahood is thus clarified, not in a simple step-by-step description but by revealing the entire path to enlightenment within the presentation of each clear realization.

Jetsunpa presents the seventy topics one by one by means of a definition, divisions and relationship to the five paths, providing a neat overview of the complex *Ornament for Clear Realization* that functions both as an outline of and as a preparation for the study of *Ornament*.

## **11. The Three Basic Bodies** (*supplementary*)

Yangchen Gawai Lodro, *The Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Presentation of the Three Basic Bodies* (gZhi'i sku gsum gyi rnam gzhaq rab gsal sgron me)

Yangchen Gawai Lodro explains concisely and in a very accessible way the eight stages of dissolution that occur at the time of death, the main features of the intermediate state and the way that rebirth takes place. The relationship of these processes to the tantric path to enlightenment is shown by means of a discussion of the 'winds' that accompany states of consciousness.

## **12. Highest Yoga Tantra** (*supplementary*)