

# Discovering BUDDHISM

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



**An FPMT Foundational Buddhism Program**

## **Module 14. Special Integration Practices**

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# About the Special Integration Experiences

## Description

By undertaking intensive practices of purification and a minimum two-week lamrim retreat, you prepare your mind in the best possible way to gain the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Specifically learn why and how to do the practices of 100,000 prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas, 100,000 long Vajrasattva mantras, and three Nyung Nes. In addition, attend or do a two-week lamrim retreat to review the whole path to enlightenment.

## Required Integration Experiences

- Two-week Kopan-style lamrim course/retreat
- 100,000 long Vajrasattva mantras as a preliminary practice
- 100,000 prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas as a preliminary practice
- Three Nyung Nä Retreats – do, know how to do, be able to lead others to do

## Highly Recommended Integration Experiences

- Attending the annual one-month course at Kopan Monastery, Nepal (instead of the two-week Kopan-style lamrim course/retreat)
- Going on pilgrimage to Buddhist holy sites in India and Nepal

Note: Pilgrimage can be done in a modified way by setting up images of the Buddhist holy sites in your home or center, reading about each place, and doing the appropriate practices as if you were actually in those places.

## Required Readings

- *Discovering Buddhism Required Reading, Special Integration Experiences: The Eight Places of Buddhist Pilgrimage*, by Jeremy Russell
- *The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva* (FPMT)
- *Becoming Vajrasattva* (previously entitled *The Tantric Path of Purification*), by Lama Thubten Yeshe (WP)
- *The Preliminary Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas* (FPMT)
- *Nyung Nä: The Means of Achievement of the Eleven-Face Great Compassionate One* (sadhana for the Nyung Ne practice) (FPMT)
- *Abiding in the Retreat: A Nyung Nä Commentary*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA)

## Suggested Readings

- *Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA)
- *Purification in Tibetan Buddhism* (previously entitled *Everlasting Rain of Nectar*), by Geshe Jampa Gyatso (WP)
- *Confession of Downfalls: The Confession Sutra and Vajrasattva Practice*, by Brian Beresford (SP)
- *Wise Teacher, Wise Student: Tibetan Approaches to a Healthy Relationship* (originally published as *Relating to Spiritual Teachers: Building a Healthy Relationship*), by Alexander Berzin (SP)

FPMT = FPMT Education Services, [shop.fpmt.org](http://shop.fpmt.org)  
LYWA = Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, [lamayeshe.com](http://lamayeshe.com)  
SP = Shambhala Publications, [shambhala.com](http://shambhala.com)  
WP = Wisdom Publications, [wisdomexperience.org](http://wisdomexperience.org)

## Estimated Time to Complete the Special Integration Experiences

- Two-week lamrim course/retreat (attending a ten-day course is also sufficient)
- 100,000 long Vajrasattva mantras (2-3 months full-time retreat or 6-9 months doing two sessions a day)
- 100,000 prostrations (2-3 months full-time retreat or 200-300 a day for 1-2 years)
- 3 Nyung Nes (2 days each=6-9 days)

## How to Complete the Special Integration Experiences

For students interested in completing all the requirements of *Discovering Buddhism*, it is highly recommended that you begin to do the Special Integration Experiences as soon as possible during the program as you do not have to wait until you have completed all the other modules in order to begin. If you have already done these practices prior to participating in *Discovering Buddhism*, you do not need to complete them a second time.

There are a number of ways you can complete the Special Integration Experiences:

### How to Complete a Two-Week Kopan-Style Lamrim Course/Retreat

The best way to complete this requirement is by going to Kopan Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal and attending the renowned “Kopan November Course.” This one-month course is an invaluable opportunity to deepen your experience and understanding of the lamrim. In addition to daily lectures, usually by a Western monk or nun, there is time for open discussion and for meditation. Lama Zopa Rinpoche traditionally teaches for about ten days during the course. 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, see Kopan Monastery’s website: <https://kopanmonastery.com/courses-retreats/courses/november-course>

If you are not able to participate in the November Course, attendance at any of the ten-day introduction to Buddhism courses offered at [Kopan Monastery](#) or [Tushita Meditation Centre](#) in Dharamsala, India, also fulfills this requirement. From time to time other FPMT centers also offer Kopan-style lamrim courses that fulfill this requirement.

See <https://fpmt.org/centers/retreat/dbretreats/>

Another option that fulfills this requirement is to attend at least two weeks of one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's annual teaching events or retreats, which are offered in different regions of the world every year. While these are sometimes deity-based retreats, the emphasis of Rinpoche's teachings is always the lamrim. For the schedule of teaching events and retreats with Lama Zopa Rinpoche, see:

<http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/zopa/schedule.asp>

If none of the above options are available to you, you can do a two-week lamrim retreat in your own home. This, of course, requires self-discipline and familiarity with both the lamrim and how to engage in a retreat. To fulfill the requirement in this way, it is recommended to follow the three-day lamrim cycle found in Module 3. Presenting the Path and repeat the cycle five times:

### **Day 1**

**5:30 am** Take the eight Mahayana precepts (optional)

**6:00 am** Tea

**6:30–7:15 am** Morning motivation with prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas

**7:15–8:30 am** Breakfast and a break

**8:30–9:15 am** *A Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha* with meditation on the precious human rebirth\*

**9:30–10:15 am** Impermanence and death

**10:30–11:15 am** Death dissolution

**11:15–3:00 pm** Lunch and a break

**3:00–3:45 pm** Suffering of the lower realms: hell realms

**4:00–4:45 pm** Suffering of the lower realms: preta realm

**5:00–5:45 pm** Suffering of the lower realms: animal realm

**5:45–6:30 pm** Tea break

**6:30–7:15 pm** Refuge

**7:15–8:15 pm** Dinner or tea break

**8:15–9:00 pm** Karma: four characteristics of karma followed by a short Vajrasattva practice together with the four opponent powers

\*Alternatively, do this in a simple way: take refuge and bodhichitta, visualize Shakyamuni at your crown, entrust yourself to his care, recite his mantra for purification and blessings for approximately 5–10 minutes, then enter into the meditation. All lamrim sessions should start in this way. Other deities can also be used, such as Chenrezig when meditating on the great scope, Manjushri when meditating on emptiness, and so on.

**Day 2**

**5:30 am** Take the eight Mahayana precepts (optional)

**6:00 am** Tea

**6:30–7:15 am** Morning motivation with prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas

**7:15–8:30 am** Breakfast and a break

**8:30–9:15 am** *A Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha* with meditation on the precious human rebirth

**9:30–10:15 am** Karma: ten nonvirtues and their results

**10:30–11:15 am** Suffering of the higher realms: human realm

**11:15–3:00 pm** Lunch and a break

**3:00–3:45 pm** Suffering of the higher realms: deva and asura realms

**4:00–4:45 pm** 8, 6, and 3 sufferings (*Choose one set for each cycle.*)

**5:00–5:45 pm** Four Noble Truths

**5:45–6:30 pm** Tea break

**6:30–7:15 pm** Wheel of life

**7:15–8:15 pm** Dinner or tea break

**8:15–9:00 pm** Generating the mind of renunciation followed by a short Vajrasattva practice

**Day 3**

**5:30 am** Take the eight Mahayana precepts (optional)

**6:00 am** Tea

**6:30–7:15 am** Morning motivation with prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas

**7:15–8:30 am** Breakfast and a break

**8:30–9:15 am** *A Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha* with meditation on the precious human rebirth

**9:30–10:15 am** Equanimity

**10:30–11:15 am** Bodhichitta: six causes and one effect

**11:15–3:00 pm** Lunch and a break

**3:00–3:45 pm** Equalizing and exchanging self with others

**4:00–4:45 pm** Tong-len

**5:00–5:45 pm** Concentration

**5:45–6:30 pm** Tea break

**6:30–7:15 pm** Emptiness

**7:15–8:15 pm** Dinner or tea break

**8:15–9:00 pm** Short Vajrasattva practice followed by the *King of Prayers*

You can also use a lamrim prayer such as *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path* or the *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*. Visualize Shakyamuni Buddha, take refuge, and generate bodhichitta. Then visualize the Buddha coming to rest on the crown of your head to bless your

meditation session. Recite the lamrim prayer at the beginning of every session, stopping at the topic you have reached, doing the appropriate meditation, and then finishing the prayer before dedicating. In this way, each session becomes a complete lamrim review, with special emphasis on a particular topic.

## **How to Complete 100,000 Long Vajrasattva Mantras**

The Vajrasattva practice is a powerful way to clear away obstacles on the path to enlightenment and to bless the mind for gaining the realizations of the path quickly. In addition to being one of the nine preliminary practices of Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, it is a trademark of Lama Thubten Yeshe's style of guiding students that they engage in Vajrasattva retreat, preferably in a group. However, if it is not possible to do the mantras in a full-time retreat situation, which usually takes about three months, 100,000 recitations of the long mantra can be done as an intensive daily practice.

There are a number of ways to fulfill this requirement:

### **1. Participate in a group Vajrasattva retreat**

Vajrasattva retreats are offered annually at:

- Kopan Monastery in Nepal (January-April):  
[kopanmonastery.com/courses-retreats/retreats](http://kopanmonastery.com/courses-retreats/retreats)
- Tushita Meditation Center in India (June-Sept or July-October):  
[tushita.info/programs/group-retreats/vajrasattva-retreat/](http://tushita.info/programs/group-retreats/vajrasattva-retreat/)

The support of a group is invaluable for retreat, especially for such a long retreat as this one. It also provides a chance to share your experience with others and to receive personal guidance in the case that you experience difficulties.

### **2. Do a full-time Vajrasattva retreat alone**

It generally takes from 2-3 months to complete 100,000 long Vajrasattva mantras. In a full-time retreat, you would usually do 4 sessions each day of about two hours in length. Alternatively, you can do shorter but more sessions, such as 5 or 6 a day. Many FPMT centers offer retreat facilities for individuals wishing to undertake retreats and also offer help and guidance in doing the practice. See the "Retreat Facilities" section of the FPMT webpage to locate a retreat center in your region: <https://fpmt.org/centers/retreat/>

The Vajrasattva retreat can also be done in your own home, if the conditions are suitable and you have enough self-discipline. However, this is not recommended if this is your first long retreat.

### **3. Do a daily practice of Vajrasattva**

While a full-time residential retreat is optimal, this is an option for those who do not have the luxury of being able to take three months off to do retreat. In your own home, set up an altar and a meditation seat as you would do for a full-time retreat. It is recommended to do at least two sessions each day, one in the morning and one in the evening. However, it is also possible to do just one session a day. Once you become familiar with the mantra, you can recite anywhere from 200-500 mantras each session. In this way, 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 schedule. If you choose this option, it is important to try not to interrupt it, meaning that you should try to at least recite twenty-one long mantras every day until you have completed the mantras. However, if an exception happens and you miss a day, you do not need to start counting all over again.

### **4. Do a combination of daily practice and short retreats**

In general do a daily practice of Vajrasattva as described above, but, whenever you can, dedicate some days or weeks to doing more intensive practice in a full-time retreat situation.

Note: This preliminary practice actually entails doing 111,000 recitations of the long Vajrasattva mantra. 10%, or 10,000 mantras, are added to the 100,000 to purify any mistakes made while doing the 100,000 mantras, and on top of that an additional 1,000 mantras are done to purify any mistakes made while doing the extra 10,000 mantras, for a total of 111,000 mantras.

Support materials for this practice available from the Foundation Store include:

- [The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva](#): contains the necessary practice text together with full instructions for completing 100,000 mantras as well as a list of helpful resources to complete the practice.
- [Becoming Vajrasattva](#) (previously entitled *The Tantric Path of Purification*), by Lama Thubten Yeshe: contains the necessary practice text as well as an explanation of the Vajrasattva practice

## **How to Complete 100,000 Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas**

The practice of prostrations is based on the *Sutra of the Three Heaps*, otherwise referred to as *Confession of a Bodhisattva's Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas*. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has given extensive commentaries on how to do this practice, which have been compiled in [The Preliminary Practice of Prostrations](#). To complete 100,000 prostrations, you can either engage in full-time retreat or do them as a daily practice at home.

### **1. Do a full-time prostration retreat**

If you are planning to do a full-time prostration retreat, it is highly recommended to do it in



Bodhgaya, India, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment. This is, first, because of the power of the place each prostration is said to have seven times the effect, and, secondly, because Bodhgaya is an ideal place for prostration practice. Prostration boards are available, the Bodhgaya Stupa is powerful and inspirational, and the number of fellow practitioners doing prostrations helps keep you going. Contact Root Institute at: <https://www.rootinstitute.ngo/contact> for more information.

Alternatively, you can do a prostration retreat at a retreat center or in your own home. When done full-time, it generally takes 2-3 months to complete the prostrations.

### **2. Do a daily practice of prostrations**

Prostrations can also be done as a daily practice. You can, for example, do a session each morning and evening and in this way do 200-1000 prostrations each day. As it is important to try not to interrupt the practice, it is good to at least recite the *Confession of a Bodhisattva's Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas* every day and do a minimum of three prostrations. However, if an exception happens and you miss a day, you do not need to start counting all over again.

### **3. Do a combination of daily practice and short retreats**

In general do a daily practice of prostrations as described above, but, whenever you can, dedicate some days or weeks to doing more intensive practice in a full-time retreat situation.

If physically you are unable to do prostrations, you can still do the practice by folding your hands in prostration, reciting *Confession of a Bodhisattva's Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas* (the recitation of each of the buddha's names is counted as one prostration) and at the same time developing regret and visualizing many replicas of yourself prostrating. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has confirmed that in this way you fulfill the requirement of having done prostrations with your body, speech, and mind.

Note: This preliminary practice actually entails doing 111,000 prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas. 10%, or 10,000 prostrations, are added to the 100,000 to purify any mistakes made while doing the 100,000 prostrations, and on top of that an additional 1,000 prostrations are done to purify any mistakes made while doing the extra 10,000 prostrations, for a total of 111,000 prostrations.

Support materials for this practice available from the Foundation Store include:

- [Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas](#) (FPMT)
- [The Preliminary Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas](#) (FPMT)

## How to Complete the Nyung Ne Retreats

Nyung Ne is a profound practice to develop compassion based on offerings, prostrations, and praises to Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara), the buddha of compassion. It is said that engaging in a Nyung Ne retreat is equivalent to doing three months of other kinds of retreats. The Nyung Ne is a kriya tantra practice and is best done on the basis of having received the complete initiation of Thousand-Arm Chenrezig. However, it can also be done by anyone with faith in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. A single Nyung Ne takes two days and an additional morning session to complete, and requires taking the eight Mahayana precepts for the two days. The second day is a day of complete fasting (no eating and no drinking) and silence. The retreat ends with a final session on the third morning. Three sessions based on the Nyung Ne sadhana of Thousand-Arm Chenrezig are done on the two days, each session being 2-3 hours in length. To fulfill this requirement, in addition to participating in three Nyung Ne retreats, you also need to learn how to set up the altar, how to do the ritual practices, and how to lead others in Nyung Ne retreats. The first time you can simply experience the retreat. The second time you can pay closer attention to how the altar is set-up and how the various rituals are done. The third time you can volunteer to help set-up the altar and ideally lead a session or two to gain confidence in your ability to do so.

Nyung Ne retreats are offered by many FPMT centers. These retreats are often scheduled around the full moon of Saka Dawa, one of the holiest Buddhist days of the year, which falls in May or June. Many centers offer a number of Nyung Nes in a row (eight is traditional), giving students the opportunity to experience the practice on deeper and deeper levels. Centers that regularly offer Nyung Nes include Kopan Nunnery, Kathmandu, Nepal; Tushita Meditation Centre, Dharamsala, India; and Root Institute, Bodhgaya, India. Each year, from November through June, Vajra Yogini Institute in Lavour, France, offers people the possibility to do as many as [108 Nyung Nes](#).

If it is not possible to go to an FPMT center to participate in their Nyung Ne retreats, you can receive personal advice on how to do the practice from [FPMT Education Services](#) or an experienced FPMT student. In this case, you need to do at least three Nyung Nes on your own to assure sufficient familiarity with the practice. However, these three Nyung Nes do not need to be done consecutively.

Support materials for this practice available from the Foundation Store include:

- [Nyung Nä: The Means of Achievement of the Eleven-Face Great Compassionate One](#)—a practice text including instructions for how to do the retreat, set up the altar, do the necessary mudras, and so forth
- [Abiding in the Retreat: A Nyung Nä Commentary](#), by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (LYWA)

## In Conclusion

The special integration experience requirements of *Discovering Buddhism* were advised by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, FPMT Spiritual Director, for those wishing to get the highest benefit from this program. While the practices may at first seem daunting, the benefits of engaging in them are immeasurable. They are the foundational practices that clear away negative karmas collected from beginningless lifetimes, preparing you for not only a peaceful death and a good future rebirth, but also for the ultimate happinesses of liberation and enlightenment.

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

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