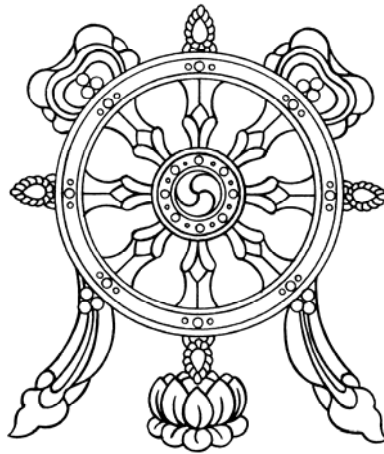


Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home*

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



AN FPMT INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM

General Program Information

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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

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To Lama Zopa's guru and FPMT's founder, Lama Thubten Yeshe, no words could possibly capture the brilliance you brought to this world. You were a visionary and manager-without-equal in the means of energizing the lot of disciples you attracted and steering their energies toward the greater good. No achievement short of enlightenment could possibly repay your kindness. To you two great lamas, who together have been the inspiration and the light of the FPMT and for thousands of students, who have provided constant guidance and given us the true and unmistakable teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, the only medicine to stop all suffering in this world and beyond, Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Osel Rinpoche (Lama Yeshe's incarnation) may you live forever!

There are many people to thank for putting their time, effort and expertise into creating *Discovering BUDDHISM at Home*. The *Discovering BUDDHISM (DB)* program was first developed for use in centers at the FPMT Education Conference in Pomaia, Italy, 2001. Once the center program was in place, attention turned to developing the homestudy version. 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 Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Special thanks go to Massimo Corona, the Executive Director of FPMT, Inc., whose commitment to developing an introductory program for FPMT made both the Education Conference and this program a reality. The Education Conference, follow up design, and materials for the program were coordinated and compiled by Kendall Magnussen. The work she accomplished was extraordinary and will bring benefit for many years to come. My thanks for Kendall's stamina and vision are eternal. A big thank you goes to Venerable Yeshe Khadro who accepted the position of DB Consultant, helping centers implement the program and coordinating the effort to make it available to those without access to centers. Without her endurance and constant support *DB at Home* would never have happened. Thank you to Thubten Yeshe, *DB at Home*'s first assessor who answered the call for help with a characteristic willingness to happily take on the responsibility of benefiting others. And to the committed team of workers here in the FPMT Education Department as well as those who work from a distance developing *DB at Home*, to all of you who have made this program possible, thank you.

Additionally, I must thank all the great teachers and spiritual program coordinators who contributed to the creation of the *Discovering BUDDHISM* program: Venerables Thubten Dondrub, 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; and 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

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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 who made sure we included Lama Zopa Rinpoche's special style of doing lam-rim retreats.

To all the DB *at Home* teachers that we bring to you in this series of modules I cannot say enough thanks. None of these teachers knew the work that was being asked of them when they first agreed to teach a module and have it taped for the *at Home* students. More often than not it meant getting a transcript made, polishing the transcript and then re-recording the module, often several times! This was always fit into schedules already very filled with teaching engagements, retreats and travel. Thus to Thubten Yeshe, Ven. Sanghe Khadro, Ven. Robina Courtin, Ven. Connie Miller, Nick Ribush, Renate Ogilvie, Ven. Thubten Dondrub, Kendall Magnussen, Ven. Fedor Stracke, Ven. Kaye Miner, Ven. Tenzin Tsapel, Tubten Pende, and Jon Landaw I shall be indebted always.

My heartfelt thanks as well to Ed Gibson, our eternally optimistic technician, who does all the hands-on work of CD duplication, collating of materials and packaging. After Ed endured the first exceedingly frustrating six months of program development and came out smiling, I knew we had found a pot of gold. A final thanks to Ven. Connie Miller and Garry Benson for helping with the layout and design of the DB *at Home* materials, and my gratitude to all who I have forgotten to mention, without whom this fantastic program could not have happened!

May all beings who meet 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.

Merry Colony

Director

FPMT Education Department

Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home*

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



Dear Most Valued Participant,

Welcome to Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home*, and thank you for becoming a part of the growing number of students around the world involved in this program. If you choose to follow this program for a Completion Certificate, please contact the FPMT Education Department to receive your passport-size Completion Card of all the subjects.

When you have completed the requirements* for any given module and have received a reply from your assessor to the assessment questions, then simply write your assessor's name and the date on your completion card. When all 14 modules have been completed in this way, the card may then be sent to the FPMT Education Department to receive your final Completion Certificate designed and signed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

We wish you every success in your participation with Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home* and hope that this unique opportunity will transform your life and awaken the true nature of your mind so that you may be of greatest benefit to all beings.

Merry Colony, Director
FPMT Education Department

**Please be reminded that all "requirements" apply only to those who choose to follow this program for a Completion Certificate. This is a personal choice that one can make at any time during the program. For those wishing to receive a Completion Certificate there is no set order or time period that one must fill out the Completion Card of the 14 modules.*

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 blueprint 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 all the 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, 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 Foundation of Buddhist Thought program, the Basic Program of Buddhist Studies, Maitripa Institute for Advanced Buddhist Studies program, or the Masters Program in Buddhist Studies.

Discovering BUDDHISM is taught within two formats:

- as a program of courses and retreats hosted at many FPMT centers (for example, weekend or weekly courses), or
- under the title Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home*, as a homestudy 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 homestudy program follow the same 14 subject areas of study.

The 14 Subject Areas

There are a total of fourteen 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 necessary to complete any given module.

The final subject area “Special Integration Practices” includes 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 DB *at Home* Completion Certificate do not have to fulfill all the requirements for each subject area, but may 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 recognize 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. Be 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 realization of emptiness is crucial for the attainment of liberation and enlightenment. Take this opportunity to enhance your ability to bring about this realization. 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, three-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 fourteen 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 each of the required meditations at least three times
- complete the required “integration practices”
- 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 pp. 46–52.

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 *at Home* 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 both in a homestudy format and as a series of courses – for example, weekend or weekly courses – offered at FPMT centers. Homestudy students are encouraged to participate in any DB courses at FPMT centers that they have the opportunity to attend in order to take advantage of the additional interactive sessions offered there. For example, students may be able to study **Mind and Its Potential** by homestudy and **How to Meditate** at a center.

Students can also undertake some components of one subject area by homestudy and some components at a center. For example: The assessment and/or retreat-day component may be done at a center after having studied the teachings and meditations by homestudy. For a listing of FPMT centers hosting DB retreats please see: <http://www.fpmt.org/retreat/dbschedule.asp>. In such cases, one’s completion card can be signed by the center’s teacher or by oneself, if the assessment questions have been sent to the assessor.

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 blueprint 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 Pabongkha Rinpoche, provide detailed instructions concerning how to meditate on these teachings in such a way as to produce realizations in the mind.

An overview follows of how these subject areas fit together.

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.

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 potential, which has first been presented as the inspiration to practice in Module 3 and is taught once again in greater depth in Module 8.

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 whatever we can about **Establishing a Daily Practice**, Module 8. This subject area includes teachings on the importance of a precious human rebirth as a platform from which we can tap into our highest potential. Then, we enter the heart of Buddha's teachings on **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 we thus move into Module 11: **Transforming Problems**.

** Please note that some DB *at Home* teachers feel that the study of **The Spiritual Teacher** should be delayed until after Module 7, **Refuge in the Three Jewels**. Whether to study **The Spiritual Teacher** as Module 4 or after one's study of Module 7 is left to the discretion of the individual student.

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 through the very powerful purification practices of Vajrasattva, prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas, and Nyung Nä.

In addition to this, participation in a full-immersion meditation course – such as a two-week Kopan-style course (see pp. 45–6) or, even better, the one-month 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 to 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.
- 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. Thinking 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.

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. His 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 Mount Everest region of Nepal in 1945. Recognized at an early age as the incarnation of the Lawudo Lama, 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 also are 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 a particular teaching contributes to the "big picture" referred to earlier and presented in 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 the teachings and meditations 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 ability, it is recommended that students practice each meditation at least three times.

Initially, use the CD to 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. 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 resources to be able to do this. You are welcome to contact the FPMT Education Department (see Helpful Contacts, p. 51) for coaching and support in completing these powerful purification requirements. In addition to this, the practice texts *The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva* and *The Preliminary Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas* were designed especially for DB students and include detailed guidelines for how to complete these practice commitments.

Many FPMT centers run Nyung Nā 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* (www.mandalamagazine.org) that is published 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 www.fpmt.org/retreat/dbschedule.asp, however, this page is not 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: www.kopan-monastery.com.

Students are encouraged to make the annual one-month Kopan course a final goal for their introductory program experience whenever 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 ‘Course Materials’ that accompanies each module 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, *The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*. These are your “DB at Home Readings,” which are mentioned on the Summary Sheet under Required Readings for each module.

Some booklets in the required reading list published by Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive are provided in your individual module packages (*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 and distributors 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.

Required Integration Practices

Intensive practice (retreat) is a necessary part of the integration process of Discovering BUDDHISM at Home. Students should undertake the retreat day(s) 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 with each subject area and act as your record of accomplishment. To receive a more convenient passport-size Completion Card that includes all fourteen modules please write to: education@fpmt.org. If you wish to obtain a Completion Certificate, you will need to have finished all the required components of each subject area as noted on these cards. (See details on page 20.)

Once you have filled out all fourteen of your Completion Cards (or the single Completion Card for all 14 modules), send a copy of them to the FPMT Education Department 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 your set of Completion Cards. DO NOT send in your only copy.

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 mindstream. 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 lam-rim retreat 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, or even one's mala should not be placed on top of Dharma texts.

Required Reading Booklist

(Updated June 2005)

NOTE: All “required” readings indicated on this list are requirements only for students following this program for a completion certificate.

Key to Publisher Abbreviations:

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

Main Texts

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche [Provided on DB “Course Materials” CD, also available on LYWA website for download.]

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, by Pabongka Rinpoche (WP)
[Page numbers by module for the Spanish edition of Liberation are available from the Education Department.]

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, reading packets for each subject. [Provided on DB “Course Materials” CD.]

According to Subject Area

Mind and Its Potential

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 1–3, 44–50)

Becoming Your Own Therapist and 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

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 39–43)

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

Transforming the Heart (ch. 3 only), by Geshe Jampa Tegchok (SLP)

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “How to Meditate”

Presenting the Path

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 42–3)

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

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”

The Spiritual Teacher

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

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

The Life of Milarepa, by Lobsang P. Lhalungpa (FPMT, SLP, SP) [*Other life stories may be substituted.*]

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “The Spiritual Teacher”

Death and Rebirth

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 50–9)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 332–93) (FPMT)

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

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

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “Death and Rebirth”

All About Karma

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 76–83)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 430–70) (FPMT)

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

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “All About Karma”

Refuge in the Three Jewels

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

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

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

Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels (FPMT) [*Provided with course materials.*]

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

Establishing a Daily Practice

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 10–38, 136–40)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 129–247 & 307–32) (FPMT)

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

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 84–105)

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

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

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

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “Samsara and Nirvana”

How to Develop Bodhichitta

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 106–19, 143–87)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 547–89, 626–46) (FPMT)

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

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “How to Develop Bodhichitta”

Transforming Problems

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun (pp. 106–10, 114–42)

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

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

Transforming the Mind: Teachings on Generating Compassion, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (SLP) [*N.B.:
The above text is out of print until November 2005.]

The 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. (Available only by download online from LYWA.)

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

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

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “Wisdom of Emptiness”

Introduction to Tantra

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

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 707–8) (FPMT)

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “Introduction to Tantra”

Special Integration Experiences

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

Everlasting Rain of Nectar, by Geshe Jampa Gyatso (Amazon.com)

The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva, (FPMT)

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 (FPMT)

Discovering BUDDHISM Required Reading, “Special Integration Experiences”

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

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)

The Mind and its Functions. Editions Rabten Choeling, Le Mont-Pelerin, Switzerland, 1992. (Available from SLP.)

How to Meditate

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 307–32) (FPMT)

Spiritual Friends: See above

The Fine Arts of Relaxation, Concentration and Meditation, Joel and Michelle Levy (FPMT, WP)

Mindfulness in Plain English, Henepola Gunaratana, (FPMT, WP)

Meditation for Life, Stephen Batchelor (FPMT, WP)

Presenting the Path

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand (pp. 307–32) (FPMT)

Spiritual Friends: See above

The Path to Enlightenment [previously entitled *Essence of Refined Gold* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama] (SLP)

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

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

The Principle Teachings of Buddhism, Je Tsong Khapa (Mahayana Sutra and Tantra Press)

The Way to Freedom: The Core Teachings of Buddhism, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Harper Collins, SLP)

Awakening the Mind, by Geshe Wangchen (FPMT, WP)

The Spiritual Teacher

Spiritual Friends. See above

Relating to a Spiritual Teacher, by Alex Berzin (FPMT, SLP)

The Fulfillment of All Hopes, by Je Tsong Khapa (FPMT, WP)

The Life of Gampopa, by Jampa Mackenzie Stewart (FPMT)

The Life and Teaching of Naropa, by Herbert V. Guenther (FPMT, SP)

Enlightened Beings, by Jan Willis (FPMT, WP)

The Fourteen Dalai Lamas, by Glenn Mullin (FPMT, SLP)

Death & Rebirth

Spiritual Friends: See above

Death, Intermediate State, and Rebirth, by Lati Rinpoche and Jeffrey Hopkins (FPMT, 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)

All About Karma

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)
Becoming Vajrasattva (previously titled *The 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 (FPMT)

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 Practice, 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 be reprinted, date unknown.*]
Meditations on the Path to Enlightenment, by Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden (SLP)
Transforming the Heart: The Buddhist Way to Joy and Courage, Geshe Jampa Tegchok (SLP)

Samsara & Nirvana

Spiritual Friends. See above
The Four Noble Truths, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (FPMT, 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 (Available only by download online 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 (FPMT, SLP)

Transforming Problems

Spiritual Friends. See above
The Door to Satisfaction, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (FPMT, WP)
Peacock in the Poison Grove, by Geshe Lhundub Sopa (FPMT, WP)
Awakening the Mind, Lightening the Heart, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (HarperCollins; Amazon.com)
Advice from a Spiritual Friend, by Geshe Rabten (WP)

Becoming a Child of the Buddhas, by Gomo Tulku (FPMT, 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 Lamrimpa (FPMT, SLP)

Realizing Emptiness, by Gen Lamrimpa (FPMT, SLP)

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

Chandrakīrti's Sevenfold Reasoning, by Joe Wilson (SLP)

Introduction to Tantra

The Tantric Distinction, by Jeffrey Hopkins (FPMT, WP)

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

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

Special Integration Experiences

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

Confession of Downfalls, by Brian Beresford (SLP)

Relating to a Spiritual Teacher, by Alex Berzin (SLP)

Suggested Videos

According to Subject Area

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 (FPMT, 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 1: A Way of Life (WinStar and Wellspring Media)

The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Part 2: 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 (FPMT, 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 (FPMT, 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)

Samsara & Nirvana

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

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 (on DVD, 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 Principal Paths, by Lama Thubten Yeshe (LYWA)

About Subject Area 14: Special Integration Experiences

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, 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras, and Nyung Nä. These wonderful practice experiences serve 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 Confession Buddhas
- Nyung Nä retreat – Do, know how to do, and be able to lead others in retreat

Highly Recommended

- One-month Kopan meditation course (at Kopan Monastery, Nepal - fulfills requirement)
- Making pilgrimage to Buddhist holy sites
- 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 Preliminary Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas* (FPMT)
- *Nyung Nä: The Means of Achievement of the Eleven-Face Great Compassionate One* (FPMT)

Suggested Texts

- *Everlasting Rain of Nectar*, by Geshe Jampa 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

- Three Nyung Näs (2 days each = 6–9 days)
- Prostrations (2–3 months full-time retreat or 100–300/day for 1–3 years)
- Two-week lam-rim course
- Vajrasattva retreat (2–3 months full-time retreat or 6–9 months doing two sessions/day)

How to Complete These Requirements

For students interested in completing all requirements of the Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home* 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 the FPMT. To view the schedule of these retreats again, please refer to: www.fpmt.org/retreat/dbschedule.asp.

One can also fulfill this requirement by attending a lam-rim retreat of at least two weeks offered at any FPMT center. Vajrapani Institute in California offers an annual “Kopan West” two-week lam-rim retreat each autumn; centers in Australia and Europe are also beginning to offer similar annual retreats. A list of current retreats being offered is available on the online Discovering Buddhism Retreats page mentioned above.

Last, one can perform the two-week lam-rim retreat in one’s 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 in a group setting, but nonetheless it is an option. To fulfill the requirement in this way, we recommend that you follow the three-day lam-rim cycle (see pp. 51–3) and repeat the cycle five 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 quickly gaining realizations on the path. It is a trademark of Lama Thubten Yeshe’s (FPMT’s founder) style of guiding students that they engage in a Vajrasattva retreat, preferably as part of a group. The “three-month” commitment means doing a full-time Vajrasattva retreat for either three months or until one concludes 100,000** recitations of the long mantra.

** Note that for many practitioners this number of mantras can be completed in as little as two months.

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.
- 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 FPMT 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 if one has enough self-discipline, although if this is your first retreat, this is not highly 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 you would do for a full-time retreat, and you recite any number of mantras (as many as you have time to do) 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 to 500 mantras in each session. Thus, you can complete this requirement in 18 months at a slow pace and in 3 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 perform at least one session and 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 *Becoming Vajrasattva* (previously entitled *The Tantric Path of Purification*) and *The Preliminary Practice of Vajrasattva* available through the Foundation Store, www.fpmt.org/shop.

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 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 booklet entitled *The Preliminary Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas*, which is available from the Foundation Store. 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 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, second, because Bodhgaya is a central location for prostration practice. There are many prostration boards available, Bodhgaya Stupa is both powerful and inspirational, and the number of fellow practitioners making prostrations keeps one going when things become difficult! Contact FPMT's Root Institute, 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 100–1,000 prostrations each day. As it is important not to “break” retreat, once you have begun this practice, every day you should at least recite the *The Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls* and do a minimum of three prostrations.

Students who are not able to fulfill the physical requirement of prostrations due to physical limitations may still fulfill the practice requirement by putting the hands together at the heart in the mudra of prostration, reciting the names of the thirty-five Confession Buddhas, and keeping the mind focused on the practice of confession. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has confirmed that in this way one fulfills the requirement of having done prostrations with body, speech, and mind.

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, and the retreat ends with a final session on the third morning.

During Nyung Nä one does three to four two-hour sessions of well-structured practice each day. To fulfill this requirement, students must not only participate in a Nyung Nä retreat, they must 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 altar is set-up and the rituals observed during the retreat. The third time, one can volunteer to help set-up the altar 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 progressively 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 the FPMT Education Department or from 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. These can be done individually on separate occasions or back to back in a single retreat.

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-up,

mudras, etc., and a CD of Tibetan chanting of some of the sadhana prayers. These are available from the FPMT Foundation Store, www.fpmt.org/shop.

In Conclusion

The retreat requirements of Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home* are the specific practices advised by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, FPMT's 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.

Suggested Schedule for a Three-Day Lam-rim Retreat

In the early 1970s, Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave advice on how to do a lam-rim retreat. This involves a three-day cycle of meditations where one goes through all the main lam-rim topics in the course of three days and then begins again. Retreats can be arranged for three, six, nine, or any number of days divisible by three. A sample schedule of one of these three-day cycles follows:

Day One

5:30 am	Precepts (optional)
6:00	Tea
6:30–7:15	Morning prayers with prostrations to the 35 Confession Buddhas
7:15–8:30	Breakfast and break
8:30–9:15	Shakyamuni Buddha guru yoga ¹ with precious human rebirth
9:30–10:15	Impermanence and death
10:30–11:15	Death dissolution
11:15–12:00	Lunch
12:00–2:00 pm	Break
2:00–2:45	Discussion
3:00–3:45	Suffering of the lower realms: hell realms
4:00–4:45	Suffering of the lower realms: preta realm
5:00–5:45	Suffering of the lower realms: animal realm
5:45–6:30	Tea break
6:30–7:15	Refuge
7:15–8:15	Dinner or tea break
8:15–9:00	Karma: 4 principles of karma ending with a short Vajrasattva practice together with the 4 opponent powers

Day Two

5:30 am	Precepts (optional)
6:00	Tea
6:30–7:15	Morning prayers with prostrations to the 35 Confession Buddhas
7:15–8:30	Breakfast and break
8:30–9:15	Shakyamuni Buddha guru yoga with precious human rebirth
9:30–10:15	Karma: 10 nonvirtues and their results
10:30–11:15	Suffering of the higher realms: human realm
11:15–12:00	Lunch

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1. You can do this in a simple way: For example, take refuge and bodhichitta, visualize Shakyamuni at your crown, entrust yourself to his care, recite his mantra for purification and blessings for approx. 5–10 minutes, then enter into the meditation. All lam-rim sessions should start in this way. Other deities can also be used, such as Chenrezig together with the great scope, Manjushri when meditating on emptiness, and so on.

12:00–2:00 pm	Break
2:00–2:45	Discussion
3:00–3:45	Suffering of the higher realms: deva and asura realms
4:00–4:45	General sufferings of samsara: 8, 6, or 3 sufferings (<i>Choose one set for each cycle.</i>)
5:00–5:45	Four Noble Truths
5:45–6:30	Tea break
6:30–7:15	Wheel of life
7:15–8:15	Dinner or tea break
8:15–9:00	Generating the mind of renunciation; short Vajrasattva practice

Day Three

5:30 am	Precepts (optional)
6:00	Tea
6:30–7:15	Morning prayers with prostrations to the 35 Confession Buddhas
7:15–8:30	Breakfast and break
8:30–9:15	Shakyamuni Buddha guru yoga with precious human rebirth
9:30–10:15	Equanimity
10:30–11:15	Bodhichitta: 6 causes and 1 effect
11:15–12:00	Lunch
12:00–2:00 pm	Break
2:00–2:45	Discussion
3:00–3:45	Equalizing and exchanging self with others
4:00–4:45	Tong-len
5:00–5:45	Concentration
5:45–6:30	Tea break
6:30–7:15	Emptiness
7:15–8:15	Dinner or tea break
8:15–9:00	Short Vajrasattva practice, <i>King of Prayers</i>

One can use this formula for arranging retreats to complement lam-rim courses such as teachings on the *Three Principal Paths*, the *Foundation of All Good Qualities*, or any other lam-rim text. It is a great way to give people the training they need to know *how* to meditate on the lam-rim and become familiar with the outline of meditation topics in the lam-rim.

One can also use a lam-rim prayer such as those mentioned above. 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 your lam-rim 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. This way, each session becomes a complete lam-rim review, with special emphasis on a particular topic.

Helpful Contacts

General Information and Support:

FPMT Education Department

P. O. Box 888

Taos, NM 87571 USA

Director: Merry Colony

Phone: 01 (505) 737-0550, ext. 2#

Fax: 01 (505) 758-7765

Email: education@fpmt.org

Materials: materials@fpmt.org

Web: www.fpmt.org/education

The Foundation Store: www.fpmt.org/shop_

MANDALA Magazine

P. O. Box 888

Taos, NM 87571 USA

Editor: Nancy Patton

Phone: 01 (505) 737-0550, ext. 7#

Fax: 01 (505) 758-7765

Email: mandala@fpmt.org

Web: www.mandalamagazine.org

Sources of Publications:

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Email: ordering@mysticfire.com
Web: www.mysticfire.com

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

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: education@fpmt.org



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

FPMT Education Department



The aim of the Education Department at FPMT International Office is to serve the needs of Dharma centers and individuals in the area of Tibetan Buddhist educational and spiritual materials. This includes prayers and practice texts, retreat sadhanas and other practice materials, a variety of study texts and translations, deity images for meditation, and curricular materials for study programs in FPMT Dharma centers and for homestudy.

One of our principal objectives is to serve as a repository for a wide variety of practice texts primarily within the Gelug tradition, especially those authored or translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Thubten Yeshe. We work in close collaboration with the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, Boston, Massachusetts, which serves as a repository for the commentaries and transcripts of teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe.

If we can be of service to you in any way, please contact us at:

Education Department
FPMT International Office
P. O. Box 888
Taos, New Mexico 87571 USA
Tel: (505)737-0550, ext. 1#
Email: materials@fpmt.org
www.fpmt.org/shop