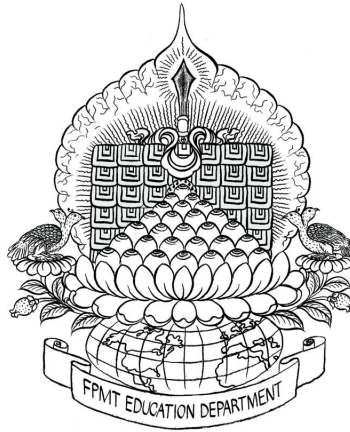


FPMT BASIC PROGRAM OF BUDDHIST STUDIES



GUIDELINES



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This document is a specially adapted version, intended for students of Maitreya Instituut Netherlands who wish to participate in the Basic program. Additions by Janny de Boer, March 2009



“Dharma means understanding reality. Meditation and prayer are not dharma; they are merely tools for reaching this inner wisdom. Even if we meditate all day, but totally lacked dharma understanding, we would achieve precious little. Nor are religious texts dharma; they are merely books about dharma, means for communicating information about dharma. True dharma or religion is a personal experience that each of us must elicit from within himself alone.”

Lama Thubten Yeshe

INTRODUCTION TO THE BASIC PROGRAM



“In order to preserve the entire teachings of the Buddha we need centers with established study programs, to preserve not only the words but also the experience, and produce qualified teachers with deep understanding of Buddha’s extensive teachings so that we can continuously benefit other sentient beings. We have not put so much energy into this; but we need to encourage more people, put more effort into this area.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
FPMT Education Conference, 1996

Since the '96 Education Conference five FPMT study programs have been developed and are currently successfully implemented in centers in order to serve the needs of students at varying levels of experience and interest. **Discovering Buddhism** is a two-year introductory-level program offered at most centers.

The Foundation of Buddhist Thought is a two-year

introductory-level program based at Jamyang Buddhist Centre in London. The **Basic Program**, a comprehensive course of study, meditation and retreat, usually scheduled over five years, is being taught at many larger centers worldwide. The **Maitripa Institute Advanced Buddhist Studies Program** is a four-year non-residential program offered in Portland Oregon, USA. The **Masters Program** is a five-year residential teachers training program offered at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in Italy.

The Basic Program: a brief description

The Basic Program has been devised for Dharma students who wish to progress beyond introductory courses and are ready to commit themselves to more in-depth study and practice. It offers them the chance to develop a good understanding of the complete path to enlightenment, and experience the benefits of serious, practice oriented study, meditation and retreat. Successful students develop a level of understanding and training appropriate to a Dharma teacher, which will also serve as an excellent basis for advanced study, meditation and retreat or for service in the wider community, inspired by the mahayana ethos.

Unique among contemporary Buddhist study programs, the Basic Program is currently taught by twenty geshe and other highly qualified teachers worldwide, reflecting the FPMT's long experience of bringing the Dharma to students outside Tibet under the guidance of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

FPMT education is presented as an integrated approach combining (1) study, (2) behavior (3) practice, and (4) service, and that without all of these components the education students receive is incomplete.

(1) The Curriculum

Participating students will study:

- ~ *the stages of the path to enlightenment, the context and foundation of the entire program*
- ~ *emptiness and the phenomena qualified by it*
- ~ *mahayana mind training and the law of actions and results*
- ~ *the six perfections and how to practice them in everyday life*
- ~ *the way the mind knows phenomena and the mental factors that constitute the basis of our daily experience*
- ~ *the tenets of the four main schools of ancient Buddhist thought*
- ~ *the 173 aspects of the enlightened mind*
- ~ *the buddha essence that exists within every sentient being*
- ~ *the four classes of tantra with emphasis on the generation and completion stages of highest yoga tantra*

These subjects have been chosen by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and the texts and commentaries used to teach them were decided upon by the FPMT geshe at Rinpoche's request. The full **curriculum**, including three optional supplementary subjects, is as follows:

1. Stages of the Path
2. Heart Sutra
3. Mahayana Mind Training
4. Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds
5. Mind and Cognition
6. Tenets
7. Ornament for Clear Realizations - Fourth Chapter
8. Sublime Continuum - First Chapter
9. Grounds and Paths of Secret Mantra

Supplementary

- a. Seventy Topics
- b. The Three Basic Bodies
- c. Highest Yoga Tantra

The teachings are complemented by a **support program** of discussions, meditations and retreats, and study tools such as exams, homework and reading assignments.

Completion of subject tests

Each **Basic Program** subject is completed by a **test or exam**, while for longer subjects there can be several tests, one at the end of each term for example. Providing these tests or exams is

the responsibility of the center; they are usually composed by the BP teacher, or sometimes the SPC or TA. Often it is a combined effort.

The **nature of the test** can vary greatly. Some centers offer **written exams** that are graded, others give **take home** or **open book exams** that are later discussed or used by the teacher in a question and answer session. The essential point is for some form of testing to take place, offering a criterion for successful completion of the subject

Participating in the tests is the main criterium for students to qualify for the final exam.

The Final Exam

Lama Zopa Rinpoche's vision of the Basic Program has been inspired by the wish to ease the burden on Western Sangha who are under pressure to fulfill the need for teachers throughout the organization. Rinpoche envisions Dharma teachers of various levels graduating from the Basic Program and sees a final exam and certificate as an appropriate completion of the program.

"It would be good to offer a Basic Program certificate to recognize what the students have done.(.....) Also a certificate recognizing study produces more respect for qualified western teachers, particularly if the teacher is lay - and the organization needs more teachers. To bring the message about living a moral life across, sangha teachers are more effective. Due to lack of sangha the organization needs lay teachers, so the certificate will bring them more respect. (.....) The certificate indicates that the student can teach the subject that he studied, which does not mean that he or she is a scholar, but that she has the ability to impart knowledge."

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
International Geshe Summit, April 2001

Another reason for a final exam is so that students will revise, placing their understanding of each individual subject in the context of the entire curriculum:

"Having a final exam is helpful because students can forget the subject, so having to review helps to reinforce the learning. If there is an examining system in place, then students will give more energy to study. So for the students and teacher there's more energy, so there will be a more fruitful result, so that they can benefit others more by either teaching or meditating."

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
International Geshe Summit, April 2001

The final exam will be provided for Basic Program students who have completed all the subjects of the core curriculum and three months of Lamrim retreat (NOTE: the initial one month retreat requirement was changed into three months by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in 2003). The exam questions are composed and the exam will be overseen by a committee of three geshe, chosen by participants at the Geshe Summit. This committee works together with the

Education Department to administer the exam, which will be offered in those centers where a Basic Program has been completed and where students are interested to take the exam.

The Final Exam is compiled by a committee of three geshe chosen by the 2001 Geshe Summit and administered by Education Department. The exam will usually take place in the center; before the exam can take place a **period of 3 months** for revision needs to be set aside. Students need to have completed at least the nine subjects of the core curriculum; they can do the three month lamrim retreat before or after the exam. When all elements of the program are completed and signed off on the completion card, a **Basic Program Certificate**, signed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, is issued by Education Department.

Certification

A **Basic Program Completion Certificate**, designed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, will be awarded by the FPMT Education Department to those students who have completed all elements of the program, including the three month lamrim retreat, and have passed the final exam.

In a letter to the FPMT geshees introducing the Basic Program (included in the “BP Introduction for Geshees”, to be found in the section on BP teachers), Rinpoche explains the **measure of recognition that the certificate carries**:

“If our students complete a proper program with exams, a certificate can be awarded. This does not mean that they are qualified to teach the entire Buddhadharma. It indicates that the subject is Buddhism, and not Islam, for example. So we just aim at creating some recognition that they can teach Buddhism. If we can’t call someone a Buddhist teacher unless they can teach all texts, then such recognition would depend on understanding the entire Buddhist teaching, every single thing; then we can’t call anyone a Buddhist teacher until enlightenment is reached. Also, conducting meditation and teaching philosophy – these are not two separate things.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
BP Meeting, Amsterdam, November 1998

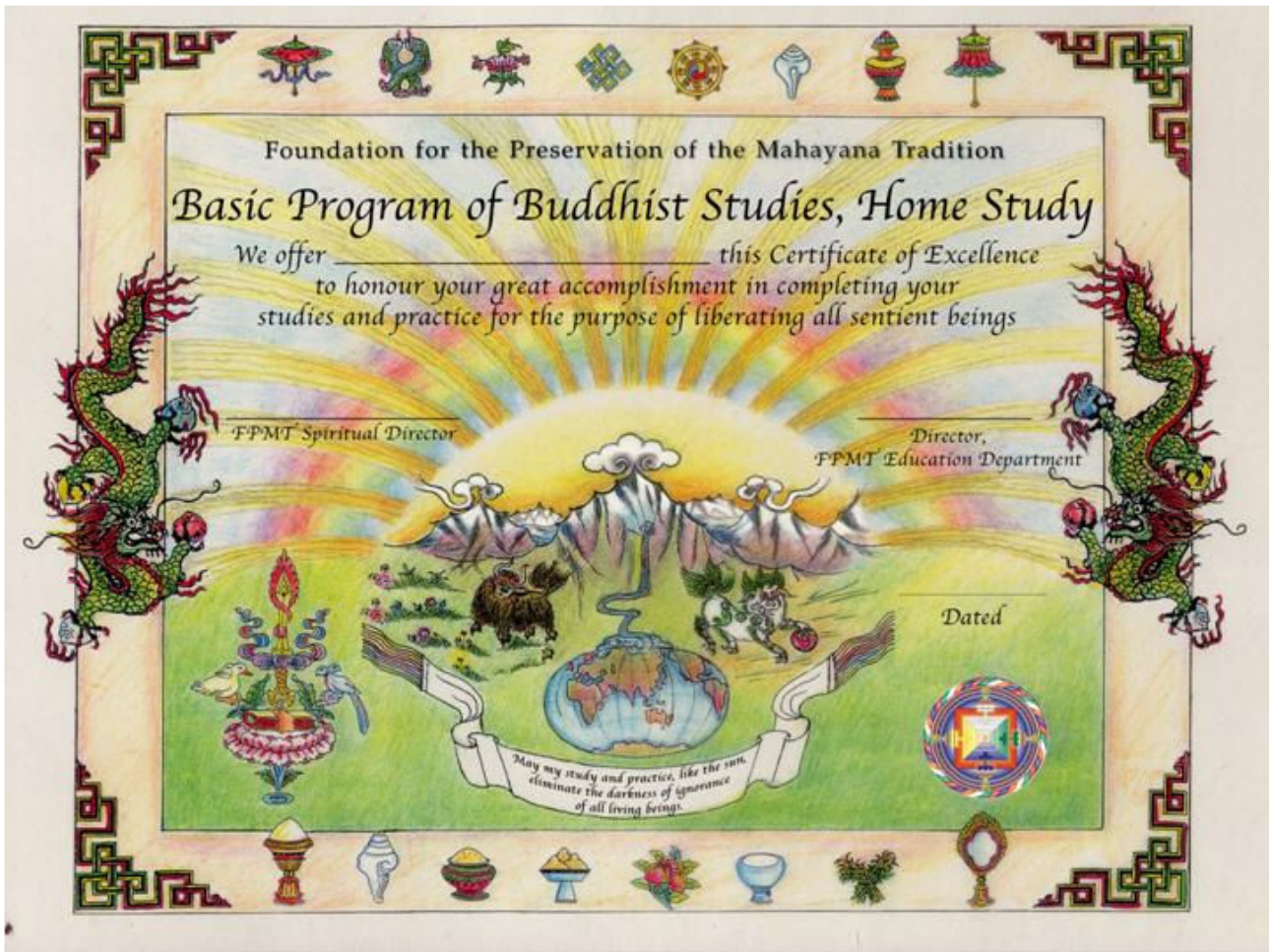


...and the certificate for BP Homestudy

“...Also, someone who has done the Basic Program by correspondence should be able to take the final exam and receive a certificate.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
International Geshe Summit, April 2001

For **Basic Program homestudy** a similar certificate has been designed. Students can complete the entire Basic Program at home, including participation in tests, the final exam, and compliance with the behavior and conduct criteria, on the basis of an honor system.

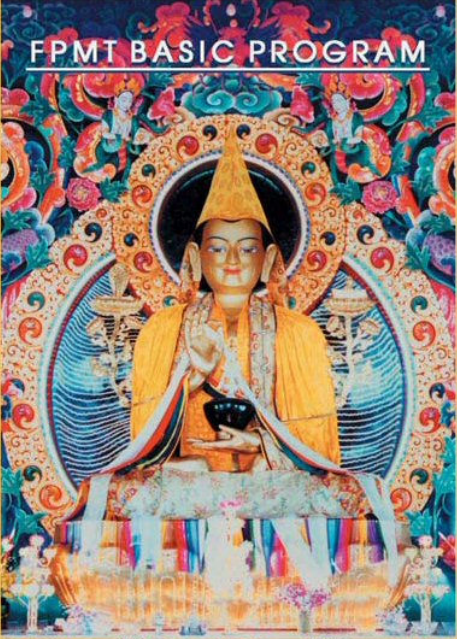


FPMT Education Department brings out BP Homestudy packages that represent the variety of Basic Programs and teachers within the FPMT, using contributions from different centers and teachers for each BP subject.

Centers often offer their own BP homestudy and these students can also qualify for the final exam and certificate. Education Department offers help with including the few necessary elements, and by providing BP Homestudy Completion Cards for center based homestudy upon request.

Basic Program Completion Cards

BP Completion Cards are provided to centers by Education Department. The cards are handed out to students upon passing the test of their first BP subject; further subjects are signed off upon completion. Apart from keeping a record of their successful participation in the program, the card encourages students to complete the entire BP, and makes it easier to follow different subjects in different BP centers. Completion Cards are available in English, Spanish, Italian and German; the card will be provided in other languages by Education Department according to need.

<p>Student name.....</p> <p>Please fill your name in above and use this card to keep a record of your participation in the Basic Program. The card should be dated and endorsed (stamped or signed) by the course teacher or center director on completion of a subject. Endorsement indicates that you have met the host center's requirements regarding attendance, conduct, practice, examination and retreat. Having completed all nine subjects and participated in a three-month <i>lamrim</i> retreat you may sit for the FPMT Basic Program final exam. The course teacher can use this card to certify a pass grade on this exam. Successful completion of all the components of the program will be recognized by a Basic Program Completion Certificate, awarded on presentation of this card to the FPMT Education Department.</p> <p>THREE MONTH LAMRIM RETREAT</p> <p>BASIC PROGRAM FINAL EXAM</p>		<p>DATE OF COMPLETION OF RETREAT</p> <p>CERTIFICATION OF PASS GRADE</p>	<p>FPMT BASIC PROGRAM</p>  <p>COMPLETION CARD</p>
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<p>1 STAGES OF THE PATH</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>	<p>7 ORNAMENT OF CLEAR REALIZATIONS</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>
<p>2 HEART SUTRA</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>	<p>8 SUBLIME CONTINUUM</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>
<p>3 MAHAYANA MIND TRAINING</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>	<p>9 GROUND & PATHS OF SECRET MANTRA</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>
<p>4 ENGAGING IN THE BODHISATTVA DEEDS</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>	<p>SUPPLEMENTARY DEATH, BARDO & REBIRTH</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>
<p>5 MIND & COGNITION</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>	<p>SUPPLEMENTARY 70 TOPICS</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>
<p>6 TENETS</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>	<p>SUPPLEMENTARY HIGHEST YOGA TANTRA</p>	<p>COMPLETION DATE & CENTER ENDORSEMENT</p>

(2) Basic Program Criteria of Behavior

Students must also satisfy the criteria of **ethical conduct and practice** that characterize the values of the FPMT in general, and of prospective Dharma teachers in particular.

“It would be good to implement an assessment for moral conduct within the BP and MP programs; moral behaviour is very important. The three main qualities of a student should be knowledge, good moral conduct and loving kindness - the same as in the monasteries. As for anger, it is very clear that anger brings problems in a center, which is one reason why I put anger on the Masters Program self-evaluation card. Even if it is a lay teacher, if it is clear that they are trying to lead a moral life, using the teachings to subdue their mind and being kind, this will touch the hearts of their students, so their teachings will be more effective. This will give the clear message that even as a lay person one can lead a moral life and become a kindhearted person. If the teacher follows this then the students will get that message. It's not just study to produce material, like a factory, but to subdue the mind.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
International Geshe Summit, April 2001

At the 2001 FPMT International Geshe Summit, the participating geshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche discussed a standard of ethics for the BP, agreeing that as a minimum students should, over the course of their BP studies, sincerely develop their practice of observing the five lay vows, while emphasizing the development of their concern for others. Rinpoche added that as much as possible there should be awareness of one's positive and negative states of mind, development of the practice of patience and putting the bodhicitta motivation into practice. The conduct requirement is intended to ensure that BP students engage in sincerely working with these practices and avoiding gross infractions.

“I think behavior should be based on the five lay vows. I think abstaining from the four negativities of speech (for example) is maybe a little strict, so maybe avoiding the opposite of the five lay vows is more reasonable. It is good if the students can stop drinking alcohol. In the cities there are so many problems from alcohol. Alcohol is one huge problem. Many people die in car accidents from alcohol ...

If students can actually take the vows that would be great, that would be fantastic. Then, it becomes very neat, very special. Leave aside ordinary universities, even Dharma centers do not have such a regulation. It would be an incredible thing if students can do this. But maybe just inspire them to do so. It is not necessary to make it obligatory ...

The minimum behavior should be based on avoiding actions that create disharmony and big problems. Sexual misconduct is one behavior that in my view creates big problems in relationships. Actions that harm many people, disturb them, cause them problems - behavior should be evaluated on that basis. Avoiding that which harms many people is the minimum to be observed. That is the definition. So many problems in peoples' lives, in the cities, are relationship problems. Someone has a wife or husband, but even so has a relationship with someone else; that creates so much pain, so many problems for many people ... So behavior

should be based on that: that which does not harm many people. That is the minimum thing to observe. Generally, the minimum is that which does not harm many people.

Some people naturally think of the benefits of living in morality: how they will be so joyful at the time of death because they will have less negative karma and so much merit. Having kept morality they will have a good rebirth for hundreds of thousands of lifetimes. By thinking of the benefits, one can enjoy such a life, but some people do not think of the benefits, they suffer and get lung. They think it is too difficult and then will not be able to study well.

The attitude in daily life is to look at everyone as the source of all one's past, present, and future happiness, liberation, and enlightenment. Then also, cherishing and caring for others. That comes under ethics and behavior, it is ethics of mind or mental ethics. ... Then on this basis to be helpful and to have respect for others ...”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
International Geshe Summit, April 2001

Rinpoche has agreed that Basic Program students can assess for themselves whether they are meeting the standard. To do this realistically, one needs to understand that this requirement is intended as an ongoing practice and one is not expected to be perfect from the beginning.



Photo: Piero Siriani

(3 en 4) The Practice Element: Support Program and Offering Service

“[It will be best] to include meditation practice and retreat requirements with the study of the subjects, so as to ensure students are given help integrating the three aspects of hearing, contemplation and meditation.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Letter included in the ‘Package to the Venerable Teacher’, 1993

The BP is envisioned by Lama Zopa Rinpoche as combining academic education, training in ethical behavior and meditation practice. A BP should thus be presented as including **criteria for behavior, discussion, meditation, short and long retreats, commitment to study time, and homework (reading and meditation) assignments**. Students will also need **guidance for their individual practice**, and **good study materials** need to be made available.

To make this possible, SPC’s and TA’s are usually assisted by **senior students**. During a recent tour of the Spanish centers Lama Zopa Rinpoche again and again stressed the importance of **offering service**; students can contribute to many aspects of the program, while they will benefit from the **training opportunities** that, for example, **guiding meditations** and **leading discussions** offer.

Each BP center sets its own **attendance and participation requirements** for all elements of the program, in addition to the test at the completion of the subjects.

The 3-Month Lamrim Retreat Requirement

In addition to completing at least the nine subjects of the core curriculum with a test and according to the requirements set by their BP center, a three month lamrim retreat is required for students to qualify for the FPMT Basic Program Certificate.

“From now on all Masters Programs should have a one-year retreat as part of the program and Basic Programs should have a three-month retreat as part of the program.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Meeting at IOF, Taos, October 2003

“Issuing the certificate for the BP is not only from the point of view of having knowledge, rather, it is on the basis of students’ moral discipline and their experience of meditation on lamrim.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Long Letter to the London and Australia Geshe Meetings, August 1998

“As lamrim is one of the BP subjects, we need to have meditation sessions during this time. ... Then also they can do a lamrim retreat, maybe this should be three months [instead of one month], one on the graduated path of the lower capable being, one on the middle capable being and one on the higher capable being, so they can digest and get some experience.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Meeting at IOF, Taos, October 2003

For many BP students with jobs **three one-month retreats** are the only feasible way to fulfil the requirement, while in general **one retreat of three months** is regarded as most beneficial. The retreat can be done during the BP lamrim teachings, or at any time after the BP lamrim subject has been taught, and also at the completion of the BP, before or after the final exam. It would be best if centers can **schedule a month lamrim retreat each year** during their BP, and **a three month retreat at the completion of their BP**.

“The 3-month retreat can be done at the time of the lamrim subject or later in the program. If the student wants to do later, after the Lamrim, that is OK. I would even like this BP retreat to be 5 months, this would be best. Structure it the same as the MP retreat.”

“...For the BP retreat, if the person can combine the retreat with deity practice or preliminaries this is fine, but the main focus must be on the lamrim.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Meeting at IOF, Taos, October 2003

FPMT BASIC PROGRAM OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

Designed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the Basic Program provides a comprehensive, practice oriented transmission of the Buddha's teaching as exemplified by the tradition of the great Tibetan master, Je Tsong Khapa. Chosen for a contemporary setting and with a realistic timescale in mind, the nine principal subjects are introduced by Je Tsong Khapa's masterwork on the stages of the graduated path to enlightenment, and further include a well-known sutra, a selection of the great classics of the Indian Mahayana tradition, ancillary Tibetan treatises on mind and tenets, and an introductory-level teaching on tantra. Three additional subjects supplement the curriculum, including two commentaries on advanced Tantric practice. The program of teachings is supported by meditation, discussion and examination, which together will help ensure that participants acquire a sound basis for daily practice, meditational retreat and further study.



STAGES OF THE PATH

"With study comes understanding; but this must be put to use. It is therefore vital to put as much as one can of what one has studied into practice..."

The celebrated system of teachings known as the Stages of the Path (Lamrim) represents a synthesis of the entire path to enlightenment.

Presented in a clear and concise form, these teachings are easy to understand and apply in meditation. Instruction begins with the preliminary practices, and then progresses through the essential practices of the 'beings of the three scopes', including correct guru devotion, renunciation, the altruistic wish for enlightenment and the view of the middle way. As a foundation and context for Buddhist practice, this subject is a key element of the Basic Program.



HEART SUTRA

"Form is empty, emptiness is form; form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form..."

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

Traditional commentary expands on the cryptic style of the sutra to clarify the exact nature of the wisdom realizing emptiness and the 'method' practices that are its essential complement, relating these two aspects of practice to the five levels on the path to enlightenment. The brevity and profound nature of the Heart Sutra have made its recitation popular as an effective means for dispelling obstacles to spiritual endeavor.



MAHAYANA MIND TRAINING

“And thus bodhisattvas are likened to peacocks: They live on delusions – those poisonous plants. Transforming them into the essence of practice, they thrive in the jungle of everyday life. Whatever is presented they always accept, while destroying the poison of clinging desire...”

The Mahayana path is characterized by the Bodhisattva’s aspiration to become a Buddha for the sake of all beings. The means to develop and enhance this extraordinary attitude are revealed in a genre of teachings, at once practical and radical, known as ‘mind training’, or ‘thought transformation’ (Lojong). Dharmarakshita’s *Wheel of Sharp Weapons* is one of the most esteemed mind training teachings, and a powerful weapon to cut through our true enemies - the self-grasping and self-cherishing which oppose altruistic intent and prevent lasting happiness and peace.



ENGAGING IN THE BODHISATTVA DEEDS

“For as long as space endures, and for as long as living beings remain, until then may I too abide, to dispel the misery of the world.”

The teaching on the bodhisattva’s deeds is based on Shantideva’s inspirational verses on Mahayana aspiration and practice, composed more than a thousand years ago and still widely regarded as the most authentic and complete guide for the practitioner dedicated to the enlightenment of all beings. This highest of motivations lies at the heart of the Guide, which ranges in scope from simple, practical techniques for developing generosity and dealing with destructive emotions, up to the most refined discussion of ultimate truth. Due to its authenticity and relevance for everyday life, this classic is probably cited more often in teachings by Tibetan Buddhist masters than any other Buddhist scripture.



MIND AND COGNITION

“All human accomplishment is preceded by valid cognition.”

Dharmakirti

Mind and Cognition (Lorig) begins with the study of mind, both in its valid and distorted forms. In addition a number of important themes are introduced, including the relationship between subject and object, supramundane (yogic) knowing and the connection between thought and reality. An introduction to Buddhist psychology forms the latter part of the teaching, where the various positive and negative emotions as well as the cognitive states relevant to practice of a liberative path are identified and defined.



TENETS

“My doctrine has two modes: advice and tenets.

To children I speak advice, and to yogis, tenets.”

Lankavatara sutra

Based on the idea that the Buddha taught different things to different people in line with their capacities, Tibetan scholars systemized the numerous trends in Indian Buddhist thought and taught the four schools of Tenets (Drubtha) as a means to approach the most profound philosophical teachings via more accessible levels. The text that is the basis for study of this subject gives a brief overview of the assertions on minds, objects, selflessness and the nature of attainment within each of the schools, culminating in the tenets of the most highly esteemed school, the Madhyamikas.



ORNAMENT OF CLEAR REALIZATIONS CHAPTER FOUR

“That which through the knower of all leads Hearers seeking pacification to peace, which through the knower of paths causes those helping migrators to achieve the aims of the world, and through the perfect possession of which the Munis set forth these varieties having all aspects, to the Mother of the Buddhas as well as the host of Hearers and Bodhisattvas, I pay homage.”

Maitreya's Ornament of Clear Realizations is the root text for the study of the levels of realization related to enlightenment according to the Madhyamika school. This important scripture, traditionally the basis for extensive study in the monastic curriculum, made explicit these levels which were otherwise presented in only a hidden manner in the Buddha's Perfection of Wisdom teachings. From among the seventy topics covered by the Ornament, the eleven topics of Chapter Four have been selected for commentary in the Basic Program curriculum.



SUBLIME CONTINUUM OF THE MAHAYANA CHAPTER ONE: THE TATHAGATA ESSENCE

“I bow to the one who, with no beginning, middle or end, has a serene stillness and is clear-minded and fully evolved, who became clear from his own aspects and once clear, shows fearless, constant paths of the mind to bring realisation to those with no realisation...”

One of the major texts studied in all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, Maitreya's Sublime Continuum clarifies the meaning of our Buddha potential, in particular the emptiness of the mind that allows evolution to a state of complete enlightenment. The first chapter of this work which explains four related 'vajra' subjects - Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and Buddha potential - will be the focus of this teaching.



GROUND AND PATHS OF SECRET MANTRA

“In brief, the Buddhahood achieved over countless aeons, you will attain in this birth, through the most excellent bliss, or the state of Vajradhara.” [Samputa Tantra]

Grounds and Paths of Secret Mantra offers a concise overview of the structure of the Tantric path, widely acclaimed in Tibet as the swiftest and most sublime means to realize Buddhahood. Tantra distinguishes itself in particular through a unique combination of method and wisdom, achieved through meditation on the perfect form of a Buddha as completely devoid of true existence. Kirti Lobsang Trinley’s commentary presents the most important features of the four classes of Tantra as well as the initiation procedures and particularities of the deity yoga related to each class.

SUPPLEMENTS

SEVENTY TOPICS

Seventy Topics is an important study of the entire sutra path to enlightenment as presented in the *Ornament of Clear Realizations*, including all the fundamental features of the basis, path and goal in the Mahayana. The Topics are listed and each is defined and explained in turn.

THE THREE BASIC BODIES: DEATH, INTERMEDIATE STATE AND REBIRTH

Death, intermediate state and rebirth underpin samsara, the condition of repeated rebirth impelled by previous action and delusion. But they are also the three ‘basic bodies’ of Highest Yoga Tantra practice, forming the bases for altruistic transformation into the Truth, Enjoyment and Emanation Bodies of a Buddha. This transformation is brought about by means of simulating in meditation the stages of the death process that result in manifestation of the clear light mind. Therefore, this teaching explains in detail both the death process and the way it is brought into the path to enlightenment.

HIGHEST YOGA TANTRA

Commentary on an actual Highest Yoga Tantra deity-practice, in particular the two stages of generation and completion. Generation stage practice utilizes the imagination as a means to cultivate the pure form and environment of a Buddha. Completion stage follows, during which the practitioner gains increased mastery of the subtle vital energies, culminating in the ability to manifest the powerful clear light mind - the optimum mind for realization of emptiness - and ultimately the union of the clear light mind and the illusory body. The precise details of the associated visualisations and meditation rituals are also clarified, and the complex symbolism explained.

See for more information:

<http://www.fpmt.org/education/bpdescription.asp>.

General Description

Designed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the Basic Program is especially suitable for students wishing to progress beyond introductory level courses, who are ready to commit themselves to more in-depth study and practice. Consisting of nine subjects plus three optional supplements, the curriculum uses standard root texts and commentaries. A support program of meditation, discussions, retreats and study tools such as exams, homework and reading assignments ensures that participants develop an accurate understanding of the Dharma as a basis for daily practice, contemplative retreat and further study.

An FPMT Basic Program Certificate will be awarded by the FPMT to students who successfully complete the final, comprehensive exam. Candidates for this exam must have completed all the subjects of the core curriculum and a three month Lamrim retreat as part of the program. They also have to satisfy the Basic Program criteria for behavior and conduct: to sincerely engage in the practice of refraining from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct (adultery) and intoxicants, while developing their concern for others and awareness of positive and negative states of mind, and developing the practice of patience and the bodhichitta motivation over the course of their Basic Program studies.

The program offers students an opportunity to become qualified teachers certified by the FPMT based on their academic understanding, meditation experience, and exemplary behavior. This is part of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's vision for the Basic Program.

BP Homestudy

The **FPMT Basic Program Homestudy series** offers those who cannot attend the Basic Program in a center the option to study the subjects at home or with a study group and, if interested, qualify for the **Basic Program Homestudy Completion Certificate**. Students are encouraged to engage fully in the program, including the meditation, behavior, and practice and retreat components. A **BP Homestudy Completion Card** encourages them to complete the entire BP, and do the final exam.

Centers can give their BP homestudy students **the option to qualify for the FPMT BP Homestudy Completion Certificate** as well.

All subjects may over time be offered as homestudy by a center, or, if not, students can complete their BP homestudy by using subjects offered by other participating FPMT centers and by using the FPMT BP homestudy packages.

Homestudy students are invited to **participate** as much as possible in **Basic Program retreats and practice days** offered at centers. FPMT BP Homestudy offers further **support** in the form of an online bulletin board where students do converse with each other, as well as a mentor who can field questions on the various subjects.

This project of bringing the BP to as many students as possible is entirely in accordance with Lama Zopa Rinpoche's wish for the BP.

You find more on the FPMT website: www.fpmt.org/education/bphome/default.asp

Several subjects are already available, with **contributions from several BP teachers at different BP centers**: Geshe Tsulga at Kurukulla Center, Geshe Ngawang Drakpa at Tse Chen Ling, Ven. George Churinoff at Dorje Chang Institute and at Land of Medicine Buddha, Geshe Chonyi at Amithaba Buddhist Centre, Geshe Tenzin Tenphel at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Geshe Pema Tsering at Buddha House, Geshe Gelek Chodak at Kadampa Center, and others.

Video recordings on DVD are provided as much as possible; where subjects are longer so that this would make the packages too costly, the teachings are provided in **MP3 audio format**.

Each package includes an **introductory CD-Rom** with information about the subject and the teacher and the accompanying course materials. Each package also includes a **DVD with a short introduction to the BP subjects**, in English with subtitling, offered by Geshe Jampa Gyatso at ILTK.



May all be dedicated to Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche's long life and the effortless fulfillment of his wishes.

April 2006,
Olga Planken, BP Consultant
Merry Colony, Director
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