

THE MOUNTAIN HERMITAGE

Two-week Retreat: Self – No Self and the Creative Process

July 9-23, 2012

AustingHaus Lodge, Taos Ski Valley, New Mexico, USA.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The Mountain Hermitage offers a uniquely supportive space of solitude and silence for qualified individuals who wish to undertake longer periods of intensive meditation practice. The foundation practice at *The Mountain Hermitage* is Vipassana, which may at times be supplemented by other concentration or awareness practices.

EXPECTATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS:

- Adherence to the ethical guidelines of the Five Precepts (see below).
- A commitment to use all activities of the day as opportunities for practice
- Maintaining silence by refraining from verbal and written communication, except as is prescribed by this retreat
- Sustained and continuous practice
- A commitment to being fully at *The Mountain Hermitage*, with no outside activities
- Completion of a daily work meditation
- Participation in individual and group practice interviews

All practitioners applying must have sat three or more 7-10 day retreats.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES:

We ask that you abide by the five traditional Buddhist precepts for lay practitioners while at *The Mountain Hermitage*:

1. I undertake the training to refrain from harming living creatures. I undertake the training to practice compassionate action.
2. I undertake the training to refrain from taking that which is not given. I undertake the training to practice contentment.
3. I undertake the training to refrain from sexual activity. I undertake the training to

practice responsibility in all my relationships.

4. I undertake the training to refrain from harmful speech. I undertake the training to practice noble silence

5. I undertake the training to refrain from the use of intoxicants. I undertake the training to wisely care for my body and my mind.

NOBLE SILENCE:

After registration and orientation you will enter the silent space of the intensive retreat environment. The buildings and grounds are in silence at all times, apart from staff working and living areas.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD:

The experience of being at *The Mountain Hermitage* is a rare opportunity for silence and solitude. In support of this, all personal and business obligations should be taken care of prior to arrival, so that communication with the outside world can be kept to an absolute minimum. We ask that retreatants refrain from the use of telephones, cell phones, computers, and from sending or receiving e-mail or text messages. However, given the length of this retreat, exceptional circumstances may arise when communication is necessary. In this case, contact the Retreat Manager. Even in those times, please remember that wise restraint is an integral part of practice.

WORK MEDITATION

As part of your intensive retreat practice, you will be asked to engage in mindful work practice. The work will consist of one hour a day at tasks such as helping in meal preparation, washing dishes, vacuuming, cleaning bathroom facilities, sweeping outside walkways and porches, etc. This work meditation, a form of service, is also vital: it enables us to maintain relatively low retreat fees, and it allows you the opportunity to practice mindfulness in daily activities.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The retreat schedule will consist of group events such as meals and Dhamma talks, along with periods of movement practice, seeing/drawing practice, and writing practice. The schedule will also include periods of sitting and walking. We will begin with two days of intense sitting and walking

practice. Between each three-day period of the creative modalities, there will be a full day of sitting and walking practice.

5:45 am Group sit with chanting
6:30 am **Breakfast**
7:30 am Work period
8:30 am Reflection - Sit
9:15 am Movement or Seeing-Drawing or Writing Session
10:45 am Sit
11:30 am Walk or individual practice interviews
12:15 pm **Lunch**
2:15 pm Sit
2:45 pm Movement or Seeing-Drawing or Writing Session
4:00 pm Sit
4:45 pm Walk or individual practice interviews
5:15 pm **Tea/Light Supper**
7:15 pm Dhamma talk or more movement, or drawing, or writing practice
9:00 pm Sit or walk
9:30 pm Rest/Sleep or continuing practice

DANA

DANA, an ancient Pali word meaning *generosity*, *giving*, or *gift*, is central to the 2,600-year-old tradition of Buddhism. The teachings of the Buddha have been offered freely since the time of the Buddha. There was and is no way to put a price on the teachings of the truth - they are valuable beyond any fee one could set.

The early teachers received no payment for their instruction. In Buddhist countries, traditionally, it has always been understood that the lay community, through their voluntary generosity (their *dana*), provide physical support - the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and medicine - for the monks and nuns. In turn they were/are offered guidance and teachings in their own practice by this monastic sangha. This practice of *dana* has been a very significant pillar in keeping the dhamma (teachings) alive. The generosity of the laity towards the practical support of the monastic community since ancient times, is what has kept the dharma spreading through the world.

Western teachers have continued this tradition of offering the teachings freely. In our culture, where no real training exists in living generously, it is a new practice for us in both offering and receiving the Dhamma.

Dana is not only a practical matter; it also plays a crucial role in the spiritual life of a dhamma practitioner. Generosity is the first of the ten *paramis*, or qualities of character, to be perfected in spiritual life. The very act of giving is of immeasurable benefit to the giver, for it opens the heart, lessens self-absorption, and serves the well-being of others.

The Mountain Hermitage fees for this retreat only cover basic expenses and operating costs. The teachers offer the Buddha Dhamma without any set fee, and depend on the generosity of students for the support of their daily life needs. Giving to the teacher, from the heart, whatever feels appropriate, is the practice of Dana. You may also wish to offer dana to the staff, or to the *Hermitage* itself to support operating expenses or future scholarships.

As is done in Asian monasteries, another way to support the work of the *Hermitage* is to offer dana to cover the cost of a meal or a full day's food during the retreat.

HOW TO MAKE AN OFFERING: At the end of the retreat, dana envelopes will be provided. Please clearly designate on the outside of the envelope who your dana is to be directed to. All dana checks should be made out to *The Mountain Hermitage* with a clearly written designation on the check who the dana is for. *The Mountain Hermitage* is 501(c)(3) tax-deductible charitable organization. All dana checks made out to *The Mountain Hermitage* are tax deductible. You are welcome to mail dana for teachers, *Hermitage* staff, and *The Mountain Hermitage* itself anytime.

MEDICAL ISSUES:

All participants must be mentally stable and physically able to care for themselves. Everyone must have health insurance or be able to cover his/her own expenses in case of illness or medical emergencies.

Any special needs must be discussed with *The Mountain Hermitage* Administrative Assistant and the Retreat Manager and agreed to in advance. Given the length of stay, and the possibility of a participant becoming ill, we recommend that retreatants come prepared to treat a variety of non-urgent common illnesses. Should medical needs or emergencies arise, the Retreat Manager will offer assistance.