

THE MOUNTAIN HERMITAGE
One-Month Hermitage
April 14 – May 12, 2017

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. This retreat will offer the opportunity for *Vipassana/Insight*, *Brahma Vihara* (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Appreciative joy, and Equanimity) practice, and *Samatha/Concentration* in the lineage of Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw. In consultation with the teacher, students will decide upon a course of practice that may be directed specifically toward *Vipassana*, *Brahma Vihara* or *Samatha* practice... or some combination of the three.

EXPECTATIONS FOR *THE MOUNTAIN HERMITAGE* 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
- Maintenance of silence by refraining from verbal and written communication
- 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 3 - 4 interviews per week

All practitioners applying for a two-week retreat must have sat three or more 7-10 day retreats. Those applying for the full four weeks must have sat three or more 7-10 day retreats, plus a retreat of one month or longer.

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 care for my body and my mind.

If you are interested in taking the eight traditional precepts for lay people (the above plus three more) while practicing at *The Hermitage*, this can be discussed with the teacher(s) at the time of the retreat.

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. Yogis are also asked not to read, write, or keep a journal.

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 long-term nature of the One-Month *Hermitage* stay, 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.

SUGGESTED DAILY SCHEDULE

The general retreat schedule will consist of group events such as meals and *Dhamma* talks plus a suggested schedule of alternate hours of sitting and walking. Retreatants may choose to follow the suggested schedule or tailor it to fit personal needs in consultation with the teacher.

5:30 a.m. Group sit with chanting

6:30 a.m. Breakfast

7:15 a.m. Work period

8:15 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. Group sit with short *Dhamma* Reflection

9:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Walk and sit alternate hours or personal schedule

12:15 p.m. Lunch

2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Sit and walk alternate hours or personal schedule

5:00 p.m. Tea

6:15 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. Sit and walk alternate half-hours or personal schedule

7:15 p.m. *Dhamma* talks or guided meditations when scheduled (refuges/precepts are chanted before the talks)

8:30 - 10:00 p.m. Walk & Sit alternating or personal schedule

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 *Dhamma* 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 teacher(s) offer the Buddha *Dhamma* without any set fee, and totally depend of 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.

MEAL DANA: All *Mountain Hermitage* retreats offer participants an opportunity to offer *dana* to specifically help cover the cost of meals during the retreat – for an entire day or for individual meals. The suggested amount for each of these will be posted at the retreat next to the meal *dana* basket.

HOW TO MAKE AN OFFERING: At the end of the retreat, *dana* envelopes will be provided. Cash or checks on US funds may be used (no credit card support at this time). All *dana* checks should be made out to The Mountain Hermitage. The Mountain Hermitage is 501(c)(3) tax-deductible charitable organization. All *dana* offered to The Mountain Hermitage for use in supporting the teacher, scholarships & general expenses are tax deductible. Donations to staff are not.

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* Office Manager 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.