

THE MOUNTAIN HERMITAGE
Samatha/Concentration Retreat
November 4 - 17, 2020
Columbine Inn, 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. This two week *Samatha/Concentration* retreat is for experienced *Dhamma* students (see below). Guidance will be offered for the development and nurturing of deep concentration leading towards *Jhana* in the lineage of Burmese meditation master Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE MOUNTAIN HERMITAGE PRACTITIONERS:

- Adherence to the ethical guidelines of either the Five or Eight 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
- *Practitioners must have sat a minimum of three week-long or ten-day retreats with a recognized Buddhist teacher and/or a longer period of intensive practice with a recognized teacher.*

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 would like to abide by the Eight Traditional Precepts for lay people (the above plus three more) while in retreat, please indicate this on your application form.

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...other than the possibility of keeping brief practice notes to be discussed with the teacher(s) during practice interviews.

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 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.

POSSIBLE DAILY SCHEDULE

The general retreat schedule will consist of group events such as meals, Dhamma talks, question and answer periods, guided sits plus a suggested schedule of sitting and walking practice.

5:30 a.m. – Group sit and *Metta* chant

6:30 a.m. – Breakfast

7:15 a.m. – Work period

8:15 a.m. -Refuges & Precepts – Group sit – Instructions or Dhamma reflection

9:15 a.m.- 12:00 noon Walk & sit alternate hours - Practice interviews as scheduled

12:00 Noon – Lunch

1:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Walk & sit alternate hours

5:30 p.m. – Tea

6:30 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. Sit & walk

7:15 p.m. –Dhamma talk, guided meditation, or Q & A as scheduled

8:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Walk or sit

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*. It will also be possible to offer *dana* to the retreat staff – the retreat/housekeeping manager, the cook, and the office manager.

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. 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)(iii) 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* 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.