



## **Watpanyanantaram**

### **AGREEMENT**

**We ask that you follow the daily schedule. All scheduled activities are compulsory, i.e. you must attend them. We try our best to stick to the same daily schedule throughout the retreat so that it is easy for you to know where to go and what to do every day. Any changes will be announced and posted during the retreat. By participating in all activities, you and the other participants build an atmosphere of mutual support.**

**Please be sure to look at the schedule in order to understand what you are agreeing to before deciding to take part in the retreat.**

**The schedule is not easy for most people, but it is not too difficult either. Feedback from many retreats is what we based this schedule on – it works best for what we hope to do here. Sometimes you might feel like skipping a talk or a meditation session, please do not! A little laziness can grow rapidly. Worse, to turn off the mind or escape from the practice is counter-productive for this period. If you become ill, of course, rest is needed. If your difficulty is mental, such as being restless or bored or worried, don't give up. Relax and notice your mind at moments like these—we can learn a great deal from such moments. If your difficulty persists, talk to one of the coordinators who may help you deal with your situation.**

### **Eight Precepts & Daily Routine**

**This paper is intended as a brief guide for visitor guests staying at the monastery.**

**For guests of the International Program at Wat Panyanantaram:**

**On arrival visitors who plan to stay should contact the guest monk to discuss availability of accommodation and the purpose of their visit. Initially, guests are permitted to stay for three days if there is space available. After consultation with the Abbot or the guest monk, this period may be extended.**

For many centuries, Wats, or Buddhist temples, have served as centers of the Dhamma, an ethical foundation for the community, and educational institutions for peoples of all ages, young and old, in the Kingdom of Thailand. In addition, Buddhist temples support social welfare activities for the benefit of the community.

### **Intellectual ideals and aims of Wat Panyanantaram:**

The Most Venerable Phra Brahmamangalacariya (Panyanantha Bhikkhu) mentioned that, "This land should be getting done as a benefit place to religion and for promoting the growth of Buddhism, as a spiritual hospital of the world for whom suffered, when people get to this place, they will find a clean, clear and calm mind according to the name of Wat Panyanantharam." He also added, "Train the monk and teach the young to be good people of the nation, reproduce the religious heirs dwelling in the world correctly according to the teachings of Buddha in order not to fall into the slavery of materialism so much".

The Venerable Panyanantha Bhikkhu established Wat Panyanantharam in 1994 as a place where his disciples could live and train in the Buddha's Teaching. Dhamma-Vinaya, as the Buddha referred to his teaching, includes a detailed code of conduct for Buddhist monastic followers. The Buddha formulated this training discipline in order to provide a form that best served to both actualise and preserve the teaching. Our community, as part of the Theravada Tradition, strictly adheres to this monastic discipline, which encourages simplicity, renunciation and quietude. It is a deliberate commitment to this way of life that facilitates a community environment where people of diverse backgrounds, personalities and temperaments can co-operate in living a spiritual life.

We ask you to respect the customs and conventions - however unfamiliar - you find here; this not only encourages harmony within the Wat, but also a sense of unity with the Thai host-community, with whom our alms-mendicant community has a close relationship of mutual support. We therefore appreciate if our guests pay careful attention to the various ways of monastic etiquette and display a willingness to pick up on some of the more refined conventions. The following eight precepts (i.e. the five training precepts and the three renunciation precepts) are considered the elementary foundation for living in a Buddhist monastery.

Please read and study the following precepts and the details of the daily schedule carefully. As a guest staying at Wat Panyanantaram, you are asked to live in accordance with these guidelines at all times throughout your period of stay. The guest monk or Novice can answer any questions you have if anything is unclear. (For a more detailed explanation of the Buddhist principles underlying the precepts, see Ajahn Panyanathamuni or the current Abbot).

**Five Training Precepts: Ethical standards for the cultivation of virtue**

**1. Harmlessness and nonviolence: to cherish all life — I undertake the training to refrain from intentionally taking the life of living beings.**

The first precept entails the development of metta (goodwill and loving-kindness) and karuna (compassion) toward all beings. This includes even the creatures that we may be afraid of (e.g. spiders) or who may hurt us (e.g. snakes and scorpions). In our practice of metta-karuna we need to make an extra effort not to swat at a mosquito or squash a small spider. Insect repellent may offer an alternative, especially for the early evenings. Mindful of the suffering and unwholesome kamma produced by the taking of life, with this precept we aspire to offer our practice of benevolence and harmlessness as a protection to all beings with which we share the planet.

**2. Trustworthiness and integrity: developing contentment — I undertake the training to refrain from taking what is not given.**

Living in a monastic community involves a high level of respect for belongings that are not ones own. Guests are expected to be careful not to make use of communal property such as toiletries, washing powder, tissues, etc. without permission. Food and drinks should be consumed at the regular meal or teatime. Please remember that everything in the monastery has been offered with faith to the monastic community. If you are in doubt about something, please ask. While living at the monastery you are asked to keep all of your requisites simple and basic. Keeping things simple makes a chance to develop your mind that knows how to relinquish and let go. It also offers a beauty and grace to the form while at the same time freeing up time for meditation practice and service to the community.

**3. Chastity: the gift of wholesomeness — I undertake the training to refrain from all sexual activity.**

A period of retreat in a monastery is a rest from sexual relationships - and possibly a chance to gain some insight into the nature of our sexuality and gender conditioning. Lay guests are asked to mix as little as possible with members of the opposite sex, avoiding long conversations with each other. Newcomers are asked to be particularly aware that postulants in white robes (called pahkows or anagarikas) and resident female practitioners with shaven heads are encouraged to keep their distance from members of the opposite sex. The women's section is out of bounds for men, and similarly women are asked not to walk through the parts of the area where the dwellings for monks are. This precept, perhaps more than any other, distinguishes the type of training practiced at a monastery. Strictly adhering to the practice of chastity enables people to trust and rely on the monastic community, and to be open with us. In turn, we can freely give teachings and help lay guests in a way otherwise not possible. Furthermore, preserving sexual energy can increase vital energy for spiritual practice.

**4. Honesty and right speech: a love of truth — I undertake the training to refrain from speaking untruthfully.**

In an earnest aspiration to care for the truth and develop right speech, we endeavor to refrain from all types of unwholesome speech. This includes speech that is divisive, hurtful, harsh, vulgar, deceitful, evasive, self-aggrandizing, cynical or hypocritical as well as gossip and frivolous speech. Topics such as travel, politics, sports, movies etc. although normally considered harmless can sometimes agitate or distract the mind in a way that takes us away from our goals in meditation. To a community practicing in a forest monastic setting, a conversation that might seem innocuous enough by worldly standards can still be quite inappropriate. Time and place for conversation is as important as is content. Wherever you see someone or a group meditating you should avoid talking. The library and the sala during mealtime and meditation periods are places where you always should avoid conversations. The kitchen and dorm areas, especially after nightfall, can also have a magnetic appeal as a place for socialising. Lay guests are asked to be particularly restrained in these areas. Consider silence a gift that you can offer to others as much as to yourself. Remember that the human voice has a powerful effect on the mind; even if what you speak is not understood, people may still find the sound of it distracting and can't help picking up on tones of voice. Developing a devotion to honesty and silence as an offering to others, and ourselves in turn, facilitates the natural development of inward silence and self-honesty in meditation.

**5. Clarity and purity of mind: sharpening the sense of knowing — I undertake the training to refrain from taking intoxicating drinks and drugs.**

In the broadest sense, the spirit of this precept entails refraining from any activities by body, speech or mind that dull or intoxicate the mind. Through the cultivation of mindfulness and meditation, we take refuge in present-moment awareness, grounding ourselves in the simple down-to-earth clarity of mind. Intoxicating drink or drugs are strictly prohibited. Smoking also is unsuitable for members of the community and all guests are asked to refrain from smoking during their stay at the monastery. Generally, avoid anything that clouds the mind and hinders the practice with heaviness, dullness, defilement or confusion (e.g. certain books, newspapers, etc.).

**Three Renunciation Precepts: Inclining the mind inward for spiritual practice**

**6. Simplicity — I undertake the training to refrain from taking food after mid-day.**

Monks and novices in the Thai tradition keep to the practice of only eating one or two meals a day and guests are asked to follow accordingly. This means not to eat outside the area in the kitchen designated for guests to eat their meal and not to eat before or after the mealtime. Please do not take fruit or cartons of drink away after the meal. Allowances can always be made if there are sufficient medical reasons by discussing one's situation with the abbot. Eating once a day can have many practical benefits. As the body adjusts to the schedule, eating in this manner allows one to sleep less (and better) in the evening, and frees up much more time of the day for meditation.

**7. Sense restraint — I undertake the training to refrain from dancing, singing, playing or listening to music, attending public performances and from any kind of self-adornment including cosmetics, perfumes, garlands and jewelry.**

**These are ways we can amuse ourselves and divert our attention from meditation and spiritual practice. In coming to stay in a spiritual sanctuary we consciously put aside distractions and turn ourselves inward. During your time in the monastery we ask you not to listen to music or the radio and not to use any fancy electronic equipment such as a laptop computer. Lay guests are required to adopt the traditional lay clothing (white trousers and shirt for men, and the white blouse with a long,**

**black skirt for women), all of which the monastery can usually provide. Men or women with long hair are asked to tie it in back and all men staying beyond seven days are asked to shave their heads. In general, guests are asked to relinquish any kind of behavior which can attract the attention of others or distract us away from our goals in meditation and contemplation.**

**8. Wakefulness, alertness and attentiveness in all postures — I undertake the training to refrain from lying on high and luxurious sleeping places.**

**This precept entails practicing mindfulness, clear comprehension and present moment awareness in all postures and activities throughout the day. Although there are no luxurious sleeping places in the monastery, the spirit of this rule is to encourage us to keep our time spent sleeping down to what is really necessary. The combination of hot, sticky weather and boredom can make sleeping a very easy way to pass several hours of the day as well as the night. As this is an area that may pose challenges to a newcomer to a forest monastery, feel free to practice in the salas or the bot if this is an aide to your wakefulness.**

**In sum, these training precepts are guidelines for good conduct in body and speech, a necessary foundation for the inner work of developing the mind in meditation. As we live a more simple and peaceful life, we can begin to heighten our awareness of how our actions can lead to either wholesome mental states or suffering. With wise reflection, the practice of renunciation and restraint offers the opportunity to develop deep insight into the conditioned nature of mental states. As we learn to see both internal and external phenomena as impermanent and without 'self', we can begin to clarify our understanding of the true nature of the mind, not readily apparent to us otherwise.**

**Although the Buddhist precepts and mindfulness observances may appear to focus on restraint, when properly practiced they actually give us the opportunity to experience a profound freedom and happiness. Upholding the precepts, both individually and collectively engenders trust, respect and joy in the community. To fully cultivate sila (virtue and moral conduct) inherently supports the development of samadhi (meditation) and panya (wisdom) as well. When precepts, peace and insight come together as one, the path to realize the fruits of the Buddha's teaching—Awakening and Freedom—is nourished and sustained.**

**With all the precepts and mindfulness observances, the key thing to look at is 'intention' in the mind. Restraint puts a wedge of awareness in between our intention and our actions. With mindfulness we can observe what takes place in our mind before we act. Rather than just reacting to situations from our likes and dislikes, we can learn to transcend our conditioning and respond to life's situations with openness, clarity and wakefulness. We can gain skill at pinning down the deeper defilements and obscurations of the mind, so that we can let go of them on the mental level with awareness.**

**The precepts thus serve the dual purpose of restraining unwholesome speech and actions while helping to promote harmony within the community-and they encourage the integrity and self-discipline necessary for spiritual development. It is important, however, not to see these precepts and guidelines as commandments imposed from without, but as principles of training deliberately taken up as an act of personal choice and initiative. In time the virtuous qualities that grow out of such training naturally will gather strength.**