



TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF STAY IN ĀRĀMA KARUṆĀ SEVENA

ĀRĀMA KARUṆĀ SEVENA

was founded as a **monastic dwelling and a refuge for *bhikkhunī Visuddhi***. The ārāma Karuṇā Sevena runs in line with the Buddha's teaching and a firmly set discipline (*dhamma-vinaya*). The ārāma Karuṇā Sevena is a place of contemplation, meditation and training for living in seclusion. It is a space free of the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It is a suitable environment for those who seek refuge in the Triple Gem and a space for one's spiritual practice for anyone who wants to spend some time developing tranquility and meditation within a protected environment.

Some monasteries enable lay practitioners to become female and male novices (*sāmaṇerī/sāmaṇera*) for a short period of time. In our *ārāma*, visitors cultivate themselves to be **lay practitioners** (*upāsikā/upāsaka*). Thanks to staying in this environment, everyone can have a taste of disciplined and orderly lifestyle trying out the way of the life led by the monks and nuns for centuries, at least for a short period of time. This presents an opportunity to change our old unwholesome habits and tendencies for the better and to learn how to live in a skilful way.

Wishing well for the future of Buddhism in Czech Republic, *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* realized that the teaching would only become truly established here once the Czech themselves took responsibility for its development. Buddhism is not a missionary religion in the sense that is usually understood. Religion cannot be imposed from outside; it must develop in line with the culture in which it finds itself and how best to do this can only be truly understood by people who are native to that culture. The intent of *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* is not to set up new religion, but bringing people to the Buddha's teachings and thus help them to live a happier life. On the other hand, it is also necessary for these people to have some depth of understanding of Buddha's



teachings itself and so they must have training and information available to them which is suitable to their cultural background and age group.

BHIKKHUNĪ VISUDDHI THERĪ

Venerable *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* is a fully ordained nun (*bhikkhunī*) of the theravāda tradition living in Czech republic. Venerable *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* has been a Buddhist nun for thirteen years now and she prefers an individualised approach to each student practitioner. She teaches Buddha teaching not only to adults, but to mothers, children and young people as well. From the very beginning of her stay in Czech Republic venerable *Visuddhi* opened a Dhamma school for children of all age groups based on her previous long-time experience. She is regularly invited to talk about Buddha's teaching (*dhamma*) in the primary schools and universities.

Bhikkhunī Visuddhi had spent many years in Sri Lanka where she had lead a very simple monastic life in a seclusion of a small poor village in the south of Sri Lanka. Together with fellow *bhikkhunīs* they taught *Dhamma*, did social activities and took care of the poor and sufferers. She engaged intensely in the education and taking care of children, taught Sunday Dhamma School and founded the project Suriya Lamai "The Children of the Sun." The aim of this project is to enable children from poor families to develop and get education and to ensure that their basic needs are met. Venerable *Visuddhi* has been practicing under venerable *bhante Pemasiri* for more than 10years and helping him to teach his students as his assistant. *Bhante Pemasiri* is recognized to be one of the respectable and qualified traditional meditation teachers in Sri Lanka. Venerable *Visuddhi* focuses mainly on the meditation practice of *mettā* and *satipaṭṭhāna* and its instruction. Since 2009 venerable *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* has been more active in the Czech Republic and other European countries. Here, together with her supporters she established a monastic residence named Karuṇā Sevena (a dwelling of compassion). Venerable *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* founded this small monastic dwelling as a refuge of the Triple Gem, in which lay practitioners and friends can study *Dhamma-vinaya* in peace and harmony and develop their spiritual practice.



SANGHA

The Buddha established an order of *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* (monks/nuns) in order to support **the *dhamma-vinaya* practice** and to protect the teaching for the future generations. Up to this day, *Saṅgha* passes the teaching on to generations of monks and nuns as well as lay followers. The fact, that venerable *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* resides and practices in Czech Republic in the heart of Europe, gives us an extraordinary and rare opportunity to obtain a direct mediation of the Buddha's teaching through a representative and a member of the *Saṅgha*. Following an order is an essential part of a spiritual practice not only for monks and nuns but also for us, lay practitioners.

The Buddha kept reminding his followers that *dhamma-vinaya* is the essential and fundamental part of the practice. If the practitioner follows the rules heedfully this will bring about a satisfying and full life and (will) provide conditions for higher attainment. Monks/nuns are instructed by the Buddha to "live with yourself as an island and as a refuge."

"Therefore, Ānanda, live with yourself as an island, yourself as a refuge, with no other refuge, with the Teaching as an island, the Teaching as a refuge, with no other refuge."
Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, D.16

MEETINGS WITH BHIKKHUNĪ VISUDDHI

It is necessary to be familiar with the *Rules of conduct* of laypeople towards monastics prior to the meeting with *bhikkhunī Visuddhi*. *Bhikkhunī* observes 311 *vinaya* rules so you should keep this in mind and comply with it. See: *Pāli Theravāda Vinaya - Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha*

Bhikkhunīs do not use money and do not consume foods or drinks that have not been formally offered to them. We never address *bhikkhunī* by her name, instead we use the title "*bhikkhunī*," "venerable" or "*ayya*." If we want to make an offering to a *bhikkhunī* we should keep a close watch on the mind and our intentions we pass the gift with. It is good to be concentrated on the ritual of offering and be aware that we



are gaining merit (*puñña*) by this action. It is essential to avoid flirting, flattery, and not expect any expressions of emotion and gratitude from the *bhikkhunī*. We hand the gift with both hands. It is fitting to avoid physical contact. The most convenient expression of gratitude is with joined palms (*añjali*).

In the western cultures it has become a custom that people usually hug, kiss, shake their hands, and pat themselves on the backs and so on as a way of greeting. We never touch a *bhikkhunī* and in buddhist countries the common form of greeting is with joined palms. Men need to keep their distance too, this is called “*hatapasa*” and it is a distance of an arm stretched out sideways. We should touch neither *bhikkhunī*'s robe nor take or use her personal belongings and requisites. Men should keep in mind that it is not fitting to arrange a meeting with a *bhikkhunī* in a private, confidential place and alone. Bear in mind that if a man wants to arrange a meeting he cannot come on his own but needs to have a female accompaniment. If a man talks to a *bhikkhunī* he should not court and flatter her, show off or pose. It is important to understand that *bhikkhunīs* are fully celibate and have renounced sensual pleasures. It is not appropriate to discuss intimate relations with a *bhikkhunī* and ask her opinion on partners' choice. The role of monastics is often mistaken for a role of therapeutic workers and lay people expect advice and help in their relationships.

Bhikkhunīs cannot travel on their own, the use of public transportation is tolerated. This is not something what a *bhikkhunī* should attend to herself though. Therefore if anybody wants to invite a *bhikkhunī*, he should provide for the transportation and accompaniment (picking up at the railway station, airport). If this person happens to be a man it is necessary (to ensure) that another woman is present at the pick-up. *Bhikkhunīs* are not allowed to travel at night and walk the streets after dark. Thus, all the appointments and traveling should take place in daylight.

Let's have an open heart and cultivate mutual respect and regard, this is the only way we can learn from monks and nuns and understand their behaviour and way of life.



VISITING ĀRĀMA

You can visit *ārāma* solely for the purpose of getting to know and practicing Buddha's teaching, developing your meditation practice and spiritual growth. Last but not least, there is the opportunity to meet and talk to *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* and obtain a direct mediation of the Buddha's teaching through a representative and a member of the *Saṅgha*.

- 1) Every single meeting with *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* must be announced and planned ahead. It is not possible to visit *ārāma* unannounced.
- 2) You need to arrange a meeting with *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* in daylight. It is not possible to pay a visit after dark.
- 3) If you attend any activities offered by *Karuṇā Sevena* you need to be on time, we will pay no regard to late arrivals. This goes for Meditation practice/class/seclusion in particular.
- 4) Lay people visit *ārāma* and *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* in order to discuss *Dhamma*-related issues and to get support in their practice only.
- 5) Questions and discussion should be related to *Dhamma* only. You are advised to avoid inappropriate and unwholesome speech like vulgar and harsh speech, gossiping, chitchatting, joking, sarcastic speech, worldly affairs and politics etc.
- 6) We never enter *bhikkhunī's* room as well as other rooms labeled "Monastic premises" or "Monastic Store Room," unless we are asked to do so.
- 7) We always let *bhikkhunī* go first. If she is walking across the room we do not stand in the way but rather make place so that she could pass by. If the *bhikkhunī* asks us to leave the room we politely comply. If we are having a conversation with the *bhikkhunī* we should not stand directly in front of her or stand higher than she does / stand on a platform, and we should keep our distance.



STAYING OVERNIGHT

Only females can stay overnight in the *ārāma* according to the *vinaya* rules for *bhikkhunīs*.

- 1) We offer the accommodation in the *ārāma* preferentially to committee members of KS and to *bhikkhunīs* who occasionally spend their seclusion here.
- 2) Both short-term and long-term stay is possible by prior arrangement. You need to inform us on the arrival and departure dates; the plan that has been agreed on cannot be changed freely without discussing it with members of the Trust Society Karuna Sevena and *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* first.
- 3) For men and other lay practitioners we offer the accommodation in *Viveka* (the adjacent house) that is the property of the Trust Society Karuna Sevena.

MEDITATION SECLUSION - BHĀVANĀ

The venerable *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* focuses mainly on the **meditation practice of *mettā* and *satipaṭṭhāna***, thus the running and structure of the monastery also serve the purpose to facilitate the practice, as a complement to the formal instruction she provides. For this reason while being at the *ārāma* it is not suitable to combine different practices, do yoga or other exercises, or consider the stay at the *ārāma* a vacation or therapy time. Everybody who wishes to stay here for meditation and seclusion should think this over, to be clear on what her/his intention is, and to take the opportunity for practice that the *ārāma* offers very seriously. Most of us are used to meditation retreats where group meditation and fixed timetable are common. Venerable *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* prefers an individualised approach to each practitioner and offers her/him an opportunity for a dedicated practice according to the person's needs and inclinations. This is very rare. Everybody can arrange a meeting during his stay and ask the venerable for an interview, especially those who are new to meditation and need guidance.

Ārāma Karuṇā Sevena is a place of contemplation, meditation and a training of living in seclusion. It is a space free of hustle and bustle of everyday life. Therefore it is not appropriate for you to take care of matters and affairs connected to lay life, and deal



with your everyday problems during the course of your stay. It would be advisable to keep all your electrical appliances turned off the whole time and stay focused on the practice instead. It is vital to respect and keep up the atmosphere of contemplation that is based on mutual respect and consideration between visitors and lay practitioners.

The process of self-purification by introspection is certainly never easy-students have to work very hard at it. By their own efforts students arrive at their own realizations; no one else can do this for them. Therefore, the meditation will suit only those willing to work seriously and observe the discipline, which is there for the benefit and protection of the meditators and is an integral part of the meditation practice.

Rules and regulations have been developed keeping this practical aspect in mind. They are not primarily for the benefit of the teacher or the course management, nor are they negative expressions of tradition, orthodoxy or blind faith in some organized religion. Rather, they are based on the practical experience of thousands of meditators over the years and are both scientific and rational. Abiding by the rules creates a very conducive atmosphere for meditation; breaking them pollutes it.

Human mind is very unpredictable and it is foolish of us to think that we are able to resist the mind's impurities, and moreover, be mindful, persistent, unselfish and firm in our households. We tend to succumb to laziness, sensuality, passion, jealousy and our own habits; our effort put to practice diminishes and it is difficult to keep it up. Monastic environment, on the contrary, keeps us focused on the practice and anchored in it.

These rules should be carefully read and considered. Only those who feel that they can honestly and scrupulously follow the discipline should apply for admission. Those not prepared to make a determined effort will waste their time and, moreover, will disturb others who wish to work seriously.

- 1) *Bhikkhunī Visuddhi* reviews and decides who gets to stay for meditation seclusion.



- 2) The stays are time-limited, you can attend a meditation retreat twice a year at the maximum of 10 days.
- 3) Prior to a meditation seclusion everybody has to be familiar with the *Rules for lay practitioners* and the way things run in the *ārāma Karuṇā Sevena*, and make a commitment to keeping the rules.
- 4) It is essential to follow the rules heedfully and to be disciplined, otherwise your stay could be terminated. If you break one of the eight precepts (*atthasīla*) your stay is terminated instantly.
- 5) The one who attends a meditation seclusion for the first time is to be in a group with more experienced meditators. Senior members of KS will help the newcomer to observe the precepts and follow the daily schedule.
- 6) Currently, 8 people can attend a long-term meditation retreat at the maximum.
- 7) All who attend a course must conscientiously undertake the following eight precepts for the duration of the course:
 1. to abstain from killing any being;
 2. to abstain from stealing;
 3. to abstain from all sexual activity;
 4. to abstain from telling lies;
 5. to abstain from all intoxicants.
 6. to abstain from eating after midday;
 7. to abstain from sensual entertainment and bodily decorations;
 8. to abstain from using high or luxurious beds.

There is possibility to excuse student from observing 6. precept for health reasons. The seventh and eighth precept will be observed by all.

During the course it is absolutely essential that all forms of prayer, worship, or religious ceremony — fasting, burning incense, counting beads, reciting mantras, singing and dancing, etc. — be discontinued. All other meditation techniques and healing or spiritual practices should also be suspended. This is not to condemn any other technique or practice, but to give a fair trial to the technique of *satipaṭṭhāna* practise in its purity.

Students are strongly advised that deliberately mixing other techniques of meditation will impede and even reverse their progress. Despite repeated warnings by the



teacher, there have been cases in the past where students have intentionally mixed this technique with a ritual or another practice, and have done themselves a great disservice. Any doubts or confusion which may arise should always be clarified by meeting with the teacher.

People with serious mental disorders have occasionally come to courses with the unrealistic expectation that the technique will cure or alleviate their mental problems. Unstable interpersonal relationships and a history of various treatments can be additional factors which make it difficult for such people to benefit from, or even complete, a course. Our capacity as a nonprofessional volunteer organization makes it impossible for us to properly care for people with these backgrounds. Although meditation is beneficial for most people, it is not a substitute for medical or psychiatric treatment and we do not recommend it for people with serious psychiatric disorders.

It may be that a student cannot understand the practical reasons for one or several of the above rules. Rather than allow negativity and doubt to develop, immediate clarification should be sought from the teacher.

It is only by taking a disciplined approach and by making maximum effort that a student can fully grasp the practice and benefit from it. The emphasis during the course is on work. A golden rule is to meditate as if one were alone, with one's mind turned inward, ignoring any inconveniences and distractions that one may encounter.

Finally, students should note that their progress in meditation depends solely on their own good qualities and personal development and on five factors: earnest efforts, confidence, sincerity, health and wisdom. It is important that throughout the course there be no physical contact whatsoever between persons of the same or opposite sex.

Many lay followers think that if they take up the practice of renunciation and decide to give up desires, that there would be a sudden crossover from happiness to sadness and from abundance to deprivation. On the contrary, renunciation leads us away from coarse, clinging pleasure to noble happiness and equanimity, and from bondage to self-control. *Nekkhamma* or "renunciation" gives rise to fearlessness and joy, desire by contrast brings about fear and grief.



“What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by restraining? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, abides with the eye faculty, ear faculty, nose faculty, tongue faculty, body faculty and mind faculty restrained. While taints, vexation, and fever might arise in one who abides with the faculties unrestrained, there are no taints, vexation, or fever in one who abides with the faculties restrained. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by restraining.”

MN 2

Although physical yoga and other exercises are compatible with meditation, they should be suspended during the course because proper secluded facilities are not available at the course site. Jogging is also not permitted. Students may exercise during rest periods by walking in the designated areas or exercise in the nearby park or in the room after prior agreement with their roommate.

No drugs, alcohol, or other intoxicants should be brought to the site; this also applies to tranquilizers, sleeping pills, and all other sedatives. Those taking medicines or drugs on a doctor's prescription should notify the teacher.

It is not possible to satisfy the special food preferences and requirements of all the meditators. Students are therefore kindly requested to make do with the simple vegetarian meals provided. The course management endeavors to prepare a balanced, wholesome menu suitable for meditation. If any students have been prescribed a special diet because of ill-health, they should inform the management at the time of application. Fasting is not permitted.

DEVELOPING THE NOBLE FRIENDSHIP - KALYĀṆA-MITTA

Cultivation of noble relationships and friendship forms an integral part of our spiritual practice. A life in a community sets a good example and provides favorable conditions; this is yet another benefit that a stay in the *ārāma* can offer. People often come to monasteries broken-hearted from dysfunctional relationships, seeking a place of refuge and support. A taste of monastic life may help lay practitioners to realise the drawbacks and the unsatisfactoriness of relationships in general and at the same time to understand what the foundations of a well-functioning relationship are.

“Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who has a good friend abandons what is unwholesome and develops what is wholesome.” Iti 1.17



Kalyāṇa-mittatā is a Buddhist concept of "spiritual friendship" within Buddhist community life, applicable to both monastic and householder relationships. One involved in such a relationship is known as a "good friend," "virtuous friend," "noble friend" or "admirable friend" (*kalyāṇa-mitta*).

Since early Buddhist history, these relationships have involved spiritual teacher-student dyads as well as communal peer groups. In general, such is a supportive relationship based on shared Buddhist ethical values and the pursuit of enlightenment.

'This is half of the holy life, lord: admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie.' *'Don't say that, Ānanda. Don't say that. Admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & comrades, he can be expected to develop & pursue the noble eightfold path.'* Upaddha Sutta (SN 45,2)

In traditional schools of Buddhist thought, a spiritual friendship is a friendship not between one's peers, but a friendship between a student and their spiritual teacher. From the aforementioned suttas, we can see that the Buddha believed it vital for spiritual growth to have a spiritual friend. This friendship is built on a deep respect for the teacher's knowledge and the student's potential, and, through this respect and friendship, the two individuals learn constructive behaviour. Constructive behaviour in Buddhism is to think, speak, and behave in a constructive way towards life, leading to personal happiness, and, then, to enlightenment.

"The friend who is a helper, the friend through thick and thin, the friend who gives good counsel, and the compassionate friend; these four are friends indeed, the wise understand this and attend on them carefully, like a mother her own child. The wise endowed with virtue shine forth like a burning fire, gathering wealth as bees do honey and heaping it up like an ant hill. Once wealth is accumulated, family and household life may follow. By dividing wealth into four parts, true friendships are bound; one part should be enjoyed; two parts invested in business; and the fourth set aside against future misfortunes." DN 31



Sharing common area

Community life presents a huge opportunity for lay practitioners. Nowadays people tend to forget what makes man truly human and what good manners and decent behaviour are. And so the phrases like “hello,” “thank you,” “have a nice day” and listening closely to others are considered somehow obsolete. There is only a few people who take responsibility for their actions. Recklessness, irresponsibility, shallowness and consumerism are coming to the fore. We lack qualities like forgiveness, compassion, patience and modesty, although they are potentially present in each of us. We give little care to the cultivation of interpersonal relations and cultivation of humbleness. This gives rise to hatred and racism. Qualities of the heart like generosity, love and kindness, and cultivating noble relationships are the key to living a happy life with yourself and others.

Taking into account that there is a limited space in the *ārāma* and that *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* shares the space with you, it is essential to be perceptive and considerate about this. Be mindful of your body and speech so that it does not cause disturbance to others, and reversely do not let yourself be distracted by others’ unskilful conduct.

- 1) Every item in the monastery has its place, it is not allowed to put the items away according to your own will or wishes. Thus, pay attention to where you take things from and put them away where they belong, so that other people have no difficulty finding them. Our own habits can cause an unwanted chaos and confusion.
- 2) Mind that there is a shoe rack for laypeople in the hallway and a separate one for monastics. Put your shoes away to the shoe rack reserved for laypeople. Considering that it is the first thing the newcomers see when entering the *ārāma* it is important to keep the shoe rack tidy and the shoes aligned.
- 3) As for the groceries – you need to ask what place you should put them to. Otherwise some of the food could be past the expiration date and the food situation could be messy.
- 4) The lay practitioners either bring their own food or the food is bought collectively by prior arrangement with senior members of KS. The lay



practitioners never leave their own food behind in the monastery when they go home!

- 5) Do not store your personal belongings in the monastery, after your stay is over take your stuff with you. Do not leave your cups, towels or bedlinen behind with the prospect you can use them when you visit the monastery again.
- 6) It is necessary to keep the monastery clean and tidy, do not leave your belongings lying around. Due to limited spaces it is good to be restrained and have regard for the privacy of other fellow practitioners.
- 7) Smoking and drinking alcohol is strictly forbidden. It is not allowed to either lit candles or incense in the *ārāma* due to higher risk of igniting wooden structures/ fire damage to wooden structures.

Dāna – offering

is voluntary, it covers basic necessities of life of the *Saṅgha*. Inevitable part of our practice is **taking care of the *bhikkhunī* and occasional visiting *Saṅgha* members and providing for their basic needs**. If you want to make an offering to *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* (or other members of the *Saṅgha* residing in the *ārāma*) of particular items, we advise you to make an appointment with *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* and consult with her or the committee members of the Karuṇā Sevena Trust Society first.

„Of all gifts [alms], the gift of Dhamma is the highest.“ - Dhṛ. XXIV v. 354

In Buddhism, a householder's spiritual path is often conceived of in terms of making merit (Pali: *puñña*). The primary bases for meritorious action in Buddhism are generosity (*dāna*), ethical conduct (*sīla*) and mental development (*bhāvanā*).

Dāna has been defined in traditional texts as any action of relinquishing the ownership of what one considered or identified as one's own, and investing the same in a recipient without expecting anything in return.

“For the one who gives merit is increased,



*From restraint hatred is not accumulated.
The skilful one gives up what is bad,
Through the destruction of passion, hatred, and delusion, he is emancipated.” - DN 16*

- 1) Only the *Four requisites* could be offered to bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs:
 - a) **Clothing** – you need to ask what part of the robe or clothing is needed at the moment. *Bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* cannot own more than 3 robes at a time.
 - b) **Food** – only vegetarian meals are cooked in the *ārāma* (+egg-free). *Bhikkhunī Visuddhi* has some health problems, thus it is important for you to ask her food advisor what food is OK to buy.
 - c) **Medicine** – in case of illness. Do not buy drugs (even plant-based) on your own or according to your previous experience. Even though your intention is good and we appreciate that, it could cause more health problems in the end.
 - d) **Shelter** – *ārāma* is being rebuilt, repaired/renovated and equipped at the time. You can make a donation, thus help other people there to feel better.
- 2) Offer the *dāna* with both hands. In case there is more than one *bhikkhunī* in the *ārāma* always make an offering to a senior *bhikkhunī* first.
- 3) If you happen to be on the monastic premises, the food given to the *bhikkhunī* as a *dāna* and stored in the kitchen cannot be taken away by the laypeople. The same goes for drugstore products in the monastic bathroom. *Dāna* belongs to *Saṅgha*, mind that if you steal something from *Saṅgha* it would bring on karmic consequences.
- 4) *ārāma*'s equipment was provided by the donors, therefore we kindly ask you to give it a careful and considerate treatment.

Daily Schedule

Following a disciplined and orderly lifestyle is an essential part of a spiritual practice not only for monks and nuns but also for us, lay practitioners. During your stay, we



expect your natural involvement in the way the *ārāma* runs. The daily schedule is basically similar in all Theravāda Buddhist monasteries. Mornings begin with a group meditation, then the mid-morning activities include shared cleaning activities, cooking, washing the dishes and doing smaller household chores cultivating a feeling of lightness and being joyful. The rest of the day is dedicated to contemplation, studies and meditation practice.

The following timetable was designed to maintain the continuity of practice. In order to get the best results the lay followers are encouraged to adhere to it thoroughly.

- 5:00 Wake-up alarm and hygiene period
- 5:15 Morning meditation practice
- 6:00 Preparation of *dāna* and cleaning the rooms - practising mindfulness in the daily working activities
- 7:00 *Dāna* - offering the food to *bhikkhunī*
- 7:30 Cleaning up the kitchen
- 8:00 Discussion about organizing the work schedule for the day
- 8:30 Working period – practicing mindfulness in the daily working activities
- 10:00 Preparation of *dāna* and cleaning the kitchen afterwards, grocery shopping, personal laundry
- 11:30 *Dāna* - offering the food to *bhikkhunī*
- 12:00 Cleaning up the kitchen
- 12:30 Dhamma discussion
- 13:00 afternoon resting period
- 14:00 Individual meditation practice
- 17:00 Interview with *bhikkhunī*, tea & coffee, personal hygiene
- 18:00 Group meditation
- 19:00 Individual meditation practice
- 22:00 Bedtime, turning the alarm on

Regular activities offered by Karuna Sevana

- meditation and meditation seclusion



- Sutta study class (discourses of the Buddha)
- dhamma school for children
- lectures in the schools

What ārāma Karuṇā Sevena is not:

- a public meditation centre offering various activities and retreats
- a place for vacation and healing
- a place of socialization leading to idle talk, gossiping and false speech
- a place for exercising yoga, kung-fu, etc.
- a place for practicing rites and rituals based on a blind faith
- a place for reciting mantras
- a place to escape responsibility and duties of everyday life
- asylum, a crisis centre, does not serve therapeutic purpose

Questions and Answers

Why is it necessary to follow the daily schedule?

On account of these rules and this way of life the noble ones used to attain enlightenment and it is a great gift to be able to try out this way of life under our conditions of a hectic world. Living in order keep us within boundaries so we can act wholesomely and thanks to it we can understand our own wrong habits and replace them with the good ones.

“Living in an order is something that makes you a better person. To respect the rules and to live accordingly is one’s primary obligation. It would be very difficult if we lived in a community that doesn’t follow order. Every society has its own set of rules and so does our monastic community, whose rules have been laid down by the lord Buddha - on the ground of committing offence - and I personally hold these precepts in high regard. In the beginning one does not fully comprehend the meaning and it is difficult to observe all of them, but this is because our minds are used to do what they want and are not willing to obey. The mind likes



its freedom and does not want to submit. On the contrary, the order gives you more freedom than you would think. Abiding by the rules gives us protection from ourselves and our mind's impurities. It is something that helps us overcome our wrong habits, laziness, arrogance, false speech, and on the other hand it supports the good qualities like effort, concentration, compassion and equanimity. Observing the rules, in fact, means to tighten one's belt so that we could become a more cultivated person and a better one. After some time we might see that we does not need to tighten the belt so fast since this is our natural behaviour now and we are not capable of bad conduct.

Bhikkhunī Visuddhi (excerpt from the interview for the magazine Dingir)

Who is the Saṅgha? Why should we care about the needs of the Saṅgha?

Saṅgha is a word in Pali and Sanskrit meaning "association", "assembly," "company" or "community" and most commonly refers in Buddhism to the monastic community of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns. This community is traditionally referred to as the *bhikkhu-saṅgha* or *bhikkhunī-saṅgha*. As a separate category, those who have attained any of the four stages of enlightenment, whether or not they are members of the *bhikkhu-saṅgha* or *bhikkhunī-saṅgha*, are referred to as the *ariya-saṅgha* or "noble *saṅgha*".

Some lay practitioners in the West these days use the word "*Saṅgha*" as a collective term for all Buddhists, but the Pali Canon uses the word *parisā* for the larger Buddhist community - the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen who have taken the Three Refuges - reserving '*Saṅgha*' for a more restricted use. The distinction between *Saṅgha* and lay persons has always been important and forms the *Parisa*, Buddhist community.

The *Saṅgha* is the third of the Three Jewels in Buddhism. Due to the temptations and vicissitudes of life in the world, monastic life is considered to provide the safest and most suitable environment for advancing toward enlightenment and liberation.

"He acquires unwavering confidence in the Saṅgha thus: 'The Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples is practising the good way, practising the straight way, practising the true way, practising the proper way, that is, the four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals; this Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of



offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.' "
MN7

We should admit to ourselves that we do not know how to take care of buddhist monastics properly here in Czech republic. No monastic has been able to live here for a longer period of time. Our country does not have a good reputation by foreign monks. The only monk that used to live here had to move away and is not inclined to coming back. Let taking care of monastics be our challenge to cultivating ourselves and an opportunity to amend history and our attitude towards monastics.

Who is it bhikkhunī?

A *bhikkhunī* is a fully ordained female monastic. *Bhikkhunīs* live by the *vinaya*, a set of rules. The progression to ordination as a *bhikkhunī* is taken in four steps. A layperson takes the Five Precepts. The next step is to enter the *pabbajja* or monastic way of life, which includes wearing the monastic's robes. After that, one can become a *sāmaṇerī* or "novitiate". The last and final step is to take the full vows of a *bhikkhunī*.

Nuns at the time of the Buddha had equal rights and an equal share in everything. In one case, eight robes were offered to both *Saṅghas* at a place where there was only one nun and four monks. The Buddha divided the robes in half, giving four to the nun and four to the monks, because the robes were for both *Saṅghas* and had to be divided equally however many were in each group. Because the nuns tended to receive fewer invitations to lay-people's homes, the Buddha had all offerings brought to the monastery and equally divided between the two *Saṅghas*. He protected the nuns and was fair to both parties. They are subordinate in the sense of being younger sisters and elder brothers.

According to the Buddha's teaching women are well able to realize *nibbāna* as men do. The order of *bhikkhunīs* has been established by the Buddha at the request of his aunt and stepmother Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī who was the first woman to obtain *bhikkhunī* ordination.



Who is it upāsikā/ upāsaka?

Upāsikā (feminine) or *Upāsaka* (masculine) are from the Sanskrit and Pāli words for "attendant". This is the title of followers of Buddhism (or, historically, of Gautama Buddha) who are not monks, nuns, or novice monastics in a Buddhist order, and who undertake certain vows. In modern times they have a connotation of dedicated piety that is best suggested by terms such as "lay devotee" or "devout lay follower."

"The rules of conduct" refer to "the Eight Precepts" and to the minor training rules. You can stay in the *ārāma* provided that you accept and follow the rules undertaking of which is valid on entering the *ārāma*. The precepts give rise to *samādhi* (concentration) and thanks to *samādhi* wisdom arises. This leads to the attainment of noble path meaning the goal of *Dhamma* has been accomplished.

If anybody wants to go deeper into the precepts he should go through the whole *vinaya pitaka*, the monastic rules for *bhikkhunī*.

Upāsikās and *upāsakas* - are householders and other laypersons who take refuge in the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the teachings and the community) and practice the Five Precepts. In southeast Asian communities, lay disciples also give alms to monks on their daily rounds and observe weekly uposatha days. In Buddhist thought, the cultivation of ethical conduct and *dāna* or "almsgiving" will themselves refine consciousness to such a level that rebirth in one of the lower heavens is likely even if there is no further Buddhist practice. This level of attainment is viewed as a proper aim for laypersons.

In the Pali Canon's Jīvaka Sutta, the Buddha is asked, "Lord, to what extent is one a lay follower (*upāsako*)?" The Buddha replies that one takes refuge in the Triple Gem. Asked how one is a "virtuous lay follower" (*upāsako sīlavā*), the Buddha replies that one undertakes the Five Precepts. Asked how one practices being a lay follower "both for his own benefit & the benefit of others," the Buddha states that one is consummate oneself in and encourages others in the consummation of: conviction



(*saddhā*); virtue (*sīla*); generosity (*cāga*); visiting monks/nuns; and, hearing, remembering, analyzing, understanding and practicing the *Dhamma*. Traditionally, in India, *upāsikās* wore white robes, representing a level of renunciation between lay people and monastics. For this reason, some traditional texts make reference to "white-robed lay people" (*avadāta-vassana*).

In this discourse, the Buddha instructs a householder named *Dīghajāṇu Vyagghapajja*, a Koliyan householder, on eight personality traits or conditions that lead to happiness and well-being in this and future lives.

What am I supposed to wear in the ārāma if I stay?

In the *ārāma* we train ourselves as *upāsikā/upāsaka*, therefore we wear white clothes. Clothes should be simple and comfortable, shirts and blouses should have long sleeves, skirts and trousers should cover knees. Any provocative clothes like tight and short shirts, low-cut neckline and see-through material, is inappropriate. Please, do not use perfumes, cosmetics and jewellery. It is enough if you bring along your toilet articles, watch or a small alarm clock, slippers and a sleeping bag. You can find more in *Terms of stay* section.

Overhead expenses

Lay practitioners visit the **monastery solely for the purpose of getting to know and practice the Buddha's teaching, study, meditation practice and a spiritual progress.**

Meditation seclusions are accessible to lay practitioners thanks to the generosity of the previous donors. In the same way, your generosity will enable other practitioners to practice here. These **overhead expenses are a suggested price** that comprises all *ārāma* and *Viveka*, costs, both in summer and winter season, various equipments for the *ārāma*, energy, floor heating, air conditioning and water use. The amount of the contribution stated is a recommendation, it is up to every person what she/he can afford and offer.



In this way seclusions are supported by those who have realized for themselves the benefits of the practice. Wishing to share these benefits with others, one gives a donation according to one's means and volition. Such donations are the only source of funding for seclusion in this tradition around the world. There is no wealthy foundation or individual sponsoring them. Neither the teachers nor the organizers receive any kind of payment for their service. Thus, the spread of *Dhamma-vinaya* is carried out with purity of purpose, free from any commercialism.

1. This is a rough estimation of the costs of accommodation per person per seclusion, the food excluded:
 - Weekend seclusion: 45 EUR, for the members and volunteers of KS 40 EUR
 - One week seclusion: 130 EUR, for the members and volunteers of KS 110 EUR
 - Two weeks seclusion: 260 EUR, for the members and volunteers of KS 210 EUR
 - Three weeks seclusion: 390 EUR, for the members and volunteers of KS 320 EUR
2. We offer the accommodation for seclusion preferentially to people who actively help Trust Society Karuna Sevena and who have been supporting *bhikkhunī Visuddhi* for a long time. The cost is 10 EUR per room per night.
3. If you do not stay overnight in *ārāma Karuṇā Sevena*, the costs being the same. The most of the energy and water use is spent during the day.

Contact:

The following people represent the committee on behalf of Trust Society Karuna Sevena: Ivona Mollberg, Michaela Spohrová, Barbora Glombová and Lucie Němcová.

Email contacts

Nutrition advisor Lucie Němcová

We wish you a great stay. It is an extraordinary and rare opportunity to practice in the *ārāma Karuṇā Sevena* and only wise people seize the opportunity wholesomely.



This place is indeed beautiful and pure and meets all the conditions for a good practice. Places like this are rare in the world. We wish you to attain *nibbāna* soon.



For as long as one is entangled by craving, one remains bound in saṃsāra, the cycle of birth and death; but when all craving has been extirpated, one attains nibbāna, deliverance from the cycle of birth and death.

'The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One, to be seen here and now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be realized by the wise for themselves.' — A X.92

"Come now, monks, for I tell you all conditioned things are subject to decay, strive on with heedfulness!"

*"Be heedful, mindful, and virtuous, monks,
With well-reasoned thoughts, protect your minds.
Whoever in this Teaching and Discipline will live heedful,
Having given up the round of rebirths, he will put an end to suffering." DN 16*