Guidelines for Long Term Dhamma Service

Long term Dhamma service is for old students who want to devote more time to sitting and serving at a Vipassana meditation centre. Integrating what you have learned during courses and applying it while serving brings depth and maturity to your meditation practice.

Long term service gives an opportunity to become more established in the practice of Vipassana and to develop one's paramis (the ten good qualities). The atmosphere of a Vipassana meditation centre is strengthened by the kindness, tolerance and selfless efforts of the people serving there.

Dhamma Dipa and Dhamma Padhana exist in close proximity and are part of a combined Dhamma campus. As a long-term server you are serving both centres. At times you will be serving on courses, at one centre or the other, at times you will be serving in other capacities around the campus, to keep everything running smoothly. While serving on a course at Dhamma Padhana you will be accommodated at Dhamma Padhana, unless you are serving in the main kitchen team, which is based at Dhamma Dipa. Then and at all other times you will be accommodated at Dhamma Dipa.

A Vipassana meditation centre is a place of renunciation. Some of the rules and guidelines may not be appropriate in the outside world, but they are essential in helping to protect the Dhamma atmosphere of a centre.

An applicant needs to be ready, willing and able to work in a humble and co-operative way. You should be

- fully committed to Vipassana as taught by S.N. Goenka
- practising only this technique
- trying to maintain daily meditation practice
- trying to maintain the five precepts in daily life.

Your motivation should not be to avoid your worldly responsibilities or because you have nowhere else to live.

Long term servers follow the standard Code of Conduct for Dhamma Servers and the following additional guidelines.

THE FIVE PRECEPTS

A long term server observes the five precepts for the complete duration of your stay, not only while resident at the Centre but also during break periods away. Regarding the third

precept, for the period of your long term service you should be celibate or in a committed relationship.

DAILY MEDITATION PRACTICE

A long term server meditates for three hours per day when at the Centre. You would usually attend the three daily group sittings, and servers' metta. Attendance at morning chanting is optional.

MEETING WITH TEACHERS

As a long term server, you will have regular meetings with the centre teachers. This allows for mutual feedback and review of service responsibilities. It also provides an opportunity to discuss your meditation practice, your service, working with others and relevant personal matters. In addition, you can meet with another teacher by arrangement, including a teacher conducting a course.

DURATION OF LONG TERM SERVICE

Long term service is usually for an agreed period of time. There may be an extension to this period.

SITTING COURSES

While service will be the principal activity during your time at the Centre, it is important that you sit courses regularly. Generally, long term servers sit one course every three months.
Your course programme will be planned in consultation with the centre management and the responsible teachers.

RESPONSIBILITIES

There is a great deal of work to be done to keep a Vipassana centre running smoothly. The centre management delegates tasks to those on site, and some long term servers are also given specific responsibilities, including supervising work in certain areas.

You will learn about various roles at the Centre, to be able to assist other team members whenever needed. You will also assist in the busy periods at the start and end of courses.

SERVING COURSES

In addition, you may be asked to serve courses, depending on the need at that time. You should then put aside other Dhamma responsibilities and personal matters and give your full attention to the course.

TRUST AND COMMITTEES

Long term servers work collaboratively with the Trust and committees, for example when developing new projects at the Centre. They are welcome to join committees and attend Trust meetings.

BREAKS

It is important to maintain a balance between fulfilling your responsibilities and taking sufficient rest each day.

You will also have regular days off. These will be scheduled in consultation with the centre management and other long term servers, to avoid everyone being away at the same time.

Beyond that you are free to take periods of time away from the Centre as you please. We only ask that this is scheduled in advance and with reasonable notice.

When going out from the Centre for the day or evening, you should be mindful that you will be returning directly to Dhamma land, and so any leisure activity you do should be compatible with this. It is inappropriate to visit places which actively encourage people to break the precepts, such as bars. When watching films, you should avoid content of an explicit sexual or violent nature. In the UK that means not watching films with a 15 or 18 rating.

When staying outside the Centre, you should meditate for at least two one-hour sittings per day.

OUTSIDE WORK AND STUDY

Activities related to outside work or studies are not generally permitted at the Centre. If you feel you need to work or study during your period of long term service, you should discuss this with the Centre Teachers.

Looking for future work can only be done during days off or time away.

People claiming unemployment benefits may do long term service only if this has been agreed with their employment agency and approved by the Centre Teachers.

SEGREGATION AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SERVERS

A Vipassana centre is divided into male and female areas. To protect the Dhamma atmosphere, this segregation should be observed both during and between courses.

Servers should regard each other like brothers and sisters in Dhamma. If a server is feeling attracted towards another server, they are expected to avoid socialising or working together. Care should be taken not to take part in flirtatious exchanges.

Committed relationships are a normal part of our householder tradition. However, a centre is not the place to develop them. If two servers find themselves attracted to each other and want to pursue a relationship, they should leave the Centre. If they decide to enter into a life-long committed relationship they may be able to return to serve as a couple, with the permission of the Centre Teachers.

Couples who wish to give long term service should discuss their intentions with the Centre Teachers.

The principles of how servers should behave towards each other apply equally for all forms of sexual attraction.

ACCOMMODATION

Wherever possible, you will be provided with a single room. However, there may be times when accommodation needs to be shared.

READING MATERIAL AND VIDEO RECORDINGS

You will have access to a library of Dhamma reading material and audio/video recordings at the Centre, and you may also read the news in the server rooms or in your accommodation. You should not read or view material for entertainment while within the course boundary.

PHONES AND INTERNET

Please read the policy on phone use and internet access for long term servers at the Centre.

DANA AND USE OF CENTRE PROPERTY

Everything at the Centre is there as a result of donations given by old students. You have a responsibility to use the resources and facilities of the Centre carefully.

The Centre will provide the basic requirements of food and shelter; any additional personal expenses are your responsibility.

APPLYING FOR LONG TERM SERVICE

Long term service provides an opportunity for a student of Vipassana to grow in Dhamma by giving service for an extended period of time. It greatly benefits both those who serve in this way and those who come to sit and serve courses.

If you would like to give long term service, please fill out the application form.