

Northern Insight Meditation Center

**WAT RAM POENG
(TAPOTARAM)**

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PHRABHAVANA DHAMMABHIRACH
(Ajahn Suphan)
THE ABBOT OF WAT RAM POENG
(TAPOTARAM)

The Northern Insight Meditation Center welcomes all who are willing to learn the Vipassana Meditation Practice for developing the mind. May you be happy, free from suffering, disease, grief, trouble, difficulty, danger, and may you be protected from all misfortune.

This temple, Wat Tapotaram, was built in B.E. 1942 during the reign of King Phra Jao Yod Chiangrai. It saw much development until World War II, after which the temple deteriorated for a time.

Vipassana Kammatthana or **Insight Meditation and the Technique Practiced**

Mental Development is a personal experience. It does not matter if you are Buddhist, Christian, Jewish or Moslem. Nor is it important what nationality or color you are, since each person in the world is longing for a better life. The Insight Meditation technique taught here is a way to prepare a path to a better, peaceful life through clear understanding about oneself.

‘Meditation’ is the best word in English for the concept of Mental Development.

There are two kinds of meditation:

- ❖ Tranquil, or *Samatha*, Meditation, which develops concentration (*Samadhi*) on one object to help calm the mind.
- ❖ Insight, or *Vipassana*, Meditation, which develops self-understanding through Mindfulness Training.

The Teaching and Practice at Wat Tapotaram (Rampoeng) is based on the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness**:

1. Contemplation of the Body
2. Contemplation of the Feelings
3. Contemplation of the Mind (Thought)
4. Contemplation of Objects of the Mind

Wat Ram Poeng offers a 26-day basic course in Vipassana (Insight) Meditation under the guidance of a Teacher on an on-going basis. For meditators who have completed the basic course, a 10-day

Insight Meditation retreat can be taken, which builds on the 26-day basic course.

For those who do not have time to join the full basic course, the Monastery offers the chance to try out the practice, but not for less than 10 days or more than 6 weeks, without special permission.

If you wish to join the Insight Meditation course offered here, please come to the administration office with your intentions, or contact us using one of the methods listed on the first page (**telephone is best**), and further arrangements can be made. Once you have received official permission, please prepare the following items:

Requirements:

The customary offering for the opening ceremony:

- ❖ Eleven white lotus flowers (or other white flowers).
- ❖ Eleven yellow or orange candles.
- ❖ Eleven incense sticks.

In addition:

- ❖ Your valid passport and visa.
- ❖ One passport photos.
- ❖ One photocopy of the photo, signature and visa pages of your valid passport.
- ❖ A working alarm clock or timer. You must be able to set it to increments of five minutes.
- ❖ At least two sets of white clothing.

For men: Loose, modest, non-transparent white trousers and a shirt. White underwear is a must.

For women: Loose, modest, non-transparent white sarong or trousers, a loose white shirt with sleeves and a white 'sa-bai' (a white scarf, which is worn over the breast and around the shoulder). White underwear (inc. bra) is a must.

- ❖ Personal items (soap, shampoo, toothpaste, towel, sandals, etc.) Some essentials are available at the Temple Shop.

General Rules for Meditators:

What does it mean to stay in a monastery?

Inside the monastery, the Eight Precepts are followed. Please read these in the ‘Opening Ceremony’ section. The following points should also be noted:

1. You and your clothing must always be clean, proper and hygienic. You need to wear white clothing day and night.
2. Keep your room neat and tidy.
(The First Precept, to refrain from destroying living creatures, implies that we shouldn't create situations in which it is easy to destroy living creatures. Having food attracts insects and animals to our rooms, so we should refrain from having it there, since it makes the First Precept easier for us to break.)
3. Keep the bathroom and toilet clean, in order to prevent fungi and bacteria.
4. Meditators are not allowed to talk about their personal meditation practice or experience. Do not discuss or compare your meditation practice with each other. Your experience is your own, and may not be the same as others’.
5. You are not allowed to mix the practice with other techniques.
6. You are only allowed to smoke cigarettes in your room, but it would be better to avoid that burdensome habit.
7. No kissing, hugging, holding hands, massaging or any other physical contact is allowed. No sun-bathing.
8. While taking a bath or sleeping, make sure that the door and window/curtains are closed and locked.
9. The Meditator’s rooms are for their privacy. Visitors are not allowed to enter the Meditator’s rooms.

10. Meditators should not visit others in their rooms. Men are not allowed to enter women's rooms. Women are not allowed to enter men's rooms.

11. No smoking, socializing, gossiping, etc.

12. No reading—this includes Buddhist books. No writing (letters, diaries, etc.). No listening to radios, tapes, CDs, etc. No telephone calls during your practice. Please switch off mobile phone during the course.

13. Meditators are not allowed to leave the Monastery area without the permission of the Teacher.

14. If you are tired during the day, you may lay down and rest in your room, but meditators are not allowed to sleep during the day.

15. Please unplug all electrical appliances when not in use, and turn off all lights, fans, etc., when leaving your room.

16. Temple Authorities reserve the right to refuse entry, or to expel anyone in the case of disrespect regarding the rules or instructions.

17. Upon completion of the course, meditators must pay respect to the Teacher at the Closing Ceremony, and gain further advice from him/her about the practice.

18. Meditators are responsible for the loss or damage of Temple properties.

19. All Temple properties must be returned and the meditator's room must be cleaned before leaving. Imagine you are the next person who will use the room. Don't forget to return your key to the foreign office.

20. Each night in *Wan Phra* (Buddha Day), meditators have to join the ceremony, called "*Wain-tien*" or "*Padakkhina*", walking around the pagoda 3 times to worship the Triple Gem, at 8:00 P.M. in the main hall.

21. Donations are appreciated. All donations should be made at the Temple office, where an official receipt can be obtained.

Daily Routine:

4:00 A.M. The bell or your alarm clock wakes you up for practice. Starting with the Mindfulness Prostration, you continue with mindful Walking and then Sitting practice.

NOTE: Always start with '*Mindful Walking*', then when you stop walking, take your place immediately for the sitting practice.

6:00 A.M. The bell rings for breakfast. It is your responsibility to follow the bell and arrive in the dining hall on time, because prayers are chanted before each meal. Late comers will not be served.

Alms food is considered sacred; take only as much as you will eat. Eat slowly, mindfully, and preferably alone. This means no talking—does not make conversation during or after meals, as doing so is disruptive to mindfulness.

Wash your dish and glass immediately after eating. Take care of your rubbish; there is a place for it near the sink where you wash your dishes.

After breakfast, you may clean, wash and bathe. Then, it is again time for practice until the bell rings for lunch.

10:30 A.M. The bell rings for lunch. Follow the same guidelines as breakfast. Afterwards, it is again time for practice until Reporting.

Reporting: This is typically at two o'clock for Foreign Meditators, but may change depending on the Teacher's schedule. Please check the whiteboard in the Teacher's Office each day, in case the reporting time has been changed.

10:00 P.M. Sleeping may begin, while dressed in your white clothing.

Additional Advice to Foreign Meditators

In Thailand, the feet are considered the lowest part of your body. Therefore, it is rude to point your feet at anyone. While sitting and during meal times, please be aware of this and sit with your legs either crossed, in front of you, or to the side.

- ❖ Also, be aware that it is rude to point your feet at any Buddha images.
- ❖ The mats in the temples are to be used by the monks only, please do not use or remove them.

Reporting:

Once a day you Report to the Teacher.

Here is an example of what you might say:

“Sawatdee-ka, Ajahn Suphan” (for women)

“Sawatdee-krap, Ajahn Suphan” (for men)

“You told me to do the first walking step, acknowledging ‘left-goes-thus, right-goes-thus’ for 20 minutes. I was asked to do 20 minutes of sitting practice, too, observing and acknowledging the rising and falling of the belly as rising and falling. In total, I was told to do 7 hours. I did 8 hours.”

“The practice is both easy and difficult. Walking is easier than sitting, and pain is a problem, with cramped legs when I sit. I never imagined that 20 minutes could be so long. I had feelings of anger, doubt, impatience, and I was constantly looking at my timer. Sometimes I felt a little bit tired, sometimes my thinking became like a movie.”

If the Teacher wants to know more, s/he will ask you. Give short answers. No story about the pain, anger, or thinking is necessary—you do not have to find excuses for why you are not perfect. You must just learn to understand your imperfection. Be patient with yourself.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness Explained

Acknowledging is the heart of Insight Meditation. It is the continual work of mindfulness to be aware and acknowledge. Insight meditation, through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, focuses on the body, the feelings, the mind (thought) and objects of the mind. Literally, the four foundations of mindfulness serve as the base of mindfulness. Practically, they are the state of being continually mindful of what happens to the five aggregates (*which are: body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness*).

1. Mindfulness of the Body is to contemplate bodily action and sensations. This includes, for example, acknowledging or being conscious of the lifting, stepping and placing of the feet during *walking meditation*, and acknowledging the rising and falling of the abdomen in *sitting meditation*.

2. Mindfulness of One's Feelings is to contemplate the happiness/suffering/neutrality of your experience. That is, to acknowledge happiness, to know how happy one is, or to acknowledge misery, and to know how miserable one is, or to acknowledge the neutral feeling which is neither happiness nor misery.

3. Mindfulness of the Mind (Thought) is to contemplate one's thoughts or to be conscious of the passion, anger, delusion, sloth, distraction, peace, etc. in the thought. While in meditation our minds may think of the past or the future. We then take that thought as the

momentary focus of the meditation by acknowledging '*thinking-thinking-thinking*' before returning our focus to the breath or the feet.

4. Mindfulness of Objects of the Mind is to contemplate mental recognition and other volitional activities. Recognition is to know something when perceiving it. Volitional activities happen when we think about or comment on something. While we think, we must be mindful of thinking. When we are desirous, angry, slothful, restless, or doubtful as a result of thinking or external stimulation, we must be mindful too.

In short, the foundation of mindfulness is the principle of continually practicing mindfulness. We should be conscious of what we are doing both physically and mentally in the present moment. We contemplate the present only, not the past or future. The present moment is immensely important to meditation practice. Acknowledging the body/mind in the present moment develops and strengthens momentary concentration. Without acknowledgement of the present moment, meditation practice cannot progress, because momentary concentration cannot occur.

Continuity is also important. Be mindful from the moment you wake up until the moment you fall asleep at night. We have to acknowledge our daily activities. When we rest after meditation, we may begin to talk without mindfulness. When this happens, the mind wanders away and gets distracted. Thus the momentary concentration developed in meditation will weaken.

The goal of Insight Meditation is to gain a clear, complete understanding of the three obvious characteristics: *Impermanence*, *Suffering* and *Non-self*. Having gained an insight into the three characteristics, the meditator realizes that everything in this world is transient, subject to suffering and uncontrollable. Thus the mind abandons the desire to acquire, to have and to be.

Lord Buddha gave five purposes for insight meditation:

To purify the mind.

To get rid of sorrows and lamentations.

To get rid of physical and mental sufferings.

To understand the truth of life.

To extinguish suffering and gain Nibbana (nirvana).

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are the heart of the Buddha's teaching. The Lord Buddha repeatedly taught them to his disciples from the time of his enlightenment until his ceasing. As he stated strongly and clearly in the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*:

“Look, you who find the cycle of rebirth harmful, the four foundations of mindfulness are the only way to the purification of all sorrows and lamentations, the end of all suffering and grief, and the attainment of Nibbana (nirvana).”

The Opening Ceremony

The following is a translation of the Opening Ceremony. The Teacher or Assistant will speak the Pali words one by one, and you will repeat them in turn. It would be helpful to read through the translation before the ceremony.

HOMAGE TO THE TRIPLE GEM

With hands joined together in *anjali*, recite the passage in Pali:

ARAHAM SAMMASAMBUDDHO BHAGAVA
The Lord, The Perfectly Enlightened and Blessed One,
BUDDHAM BHAGAVANTAM ABHIVADEMI
I render homage to the Buddha, the Blessed One.

- prostrate -

SVAKKHATO BHAGAVATA DHAMMO
 The Teaching so completely explained by Him,
 DHAMMAM NAMASSAMI
 I humbly bow before the Dhamma.

- *prostrate* -

SUPATIPANNO BHAGAVATO SAVAKASANGHO
 The Blessed One's Disciples, who have practiced,
 SANGHAM NAMAMI
 I humbly bow before the Sangha.

- *prostrate* -

REQUESTING THE THREE REFUGES AND THE EIGHT PRECEPTS

After prostrating three times, with your hands joined in *anjali*,
 recite the following request in Pali:

AHAM (MAYAM) BHANTE TISARANENA
 SAHA ATTHA SILANI YACAMI (YACAMA)
 I/We, Venerable Sir, request the Three Refuges and Eight Precepts.

DUTIYAMPI AHAM (MAYAM) BHANTE TISARANENA
 SAHA ATTHA SILANI YACAMI (YACAMA)
 For the second time, I/We, Venerable Sir, request the Three Refuges and
 Eight Precepts.

TATIYAMPI AHAM (MAYAM) BHANTE TISARANENA
 SAHA ATTHA SILANI YACAMI (YACAMA)

For the third time, I/We, Venerable Sir, request the Three Refuges and Eight Precepts.

GOING TO THE THREE REFUGES

With your hands joined together in *anjali*, repeat each word after the leader in Pali:

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO
SAMMASAMBUDDHASSA

Homage to the Blessed One, the Noble One, the Perfectly Enlightened One.

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO
SAMMASAMBUDDHASSA

Homage to the Blessed One, the Noble One, the Perfectly Enlightened One.

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO
SAMMASAMBUDDHASSA

Homage to the Blessed One, the Noble One, the Perfectly Enlightened One.

BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

To the Buddha I go for Refuge.

DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

To the Dhamma I go for Refuge.

SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

To the Sangha I go for Refuge.

DUTIYAMPI BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

For the second time, to the Buddha I go for Refuge.

DUTIYAMPI DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

For the second time, to the Dhamma I go for Refuge.

DUTIYAMPI SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

For the second time, to the Sangha I go for Refuge.

TATIYAMPI BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

For the third time, to the Buddha I go for Refuge.

TATIYAMPI DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

For the third time, to the Dhamma I go for Refuge.

TATIYAMPI SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

For the third time, to the Sangha I go for Refuge.

The Leader:

TISARANAGAMANAM NITTHITAM

This completes going to the Three Refuges.

Response:

AMA BHANTE

Yes, Venerable Sir.

UNDERTAKING THE EIGHT PRECEPTS

To undertake the Eight Precepts, with your hands joined in *anjali*, repeat each precept after the leader in Pali:

1. PANATIPATA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADA SAMADIYAMI

I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.

2. ADINNADANA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM

SAMADIYAMI

I undertake the precept to refrain from taking what is not given.

3. ABRAHMACARIYA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM

SAMADIYAMI

I undertake the precept to refrain from any kind of erotic behavior.

4. MUSAVADA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI

I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.

5. SURAMERAYA-MAJJAPAMADATTHANA VERAMANI
SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI

I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating liquor and drugs, which lead to carelessness.

6. VIKALABHOJANA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM
SAMADIYAMI

I undertake the precept to refrain from eating at the wrong time.

7. NACCAGITAVADITAVISUKADASSANA-MALAGANDHA-
VILEPANA-DHARANA-MANDANA-VIBHUSANATTHANA
VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI

I undertake the precept to refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to shows, wearing garlands and beautifying myself with perfumes and cosmetics.

8. UCCA SAYANA-MAHA SAYANA VERAMANI
SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI

I undertake the precept to refrain from lying on high or luxurious sleeping beds.

IMANI ATTHA SIKKHAPADANI SAMADIYAMI

I undertake these Eight Precepts.

IMANI ATTHA SIKKHAPADANI SAMADIYAMI

I undertake these Eight Precepts.

IMANI ATTHA SIKKHAPADANI SAMADIYAMI

I undertake these Eight Precepts.

Leader:

IMANI ATTHA SIKKHAPADANI SILENA SUGATIM YANTI
SILENA BHOGASAMPADA SILENA NIBBUTIM YANTI
TASMA SILAM VISODHAYE

These Eight Precepts have morality as a vehicle for happiness, good fortune and liberation. Let morality therefore be purified.

Requesting the Kammatthana (Meditation Practice)

Sitting in a kneeling position, with your hands together in *anjali*, recite the following passages in Pali:

1. Paying homage and offering oneself to the Buddha:

IMAHAM BHAGAVA ATTABHAVAM TUMHAKAM
PARICCAJAMI

Holy Sir, the Lord Buddha, the Blessed One, may I humbly offer my body and mind to you for the purpose of practicing Insight Meditation.

2. Paying Homage and offering oneself to the Teacher:

IMAHAM ACARIYA ATTABHAVAM TUMHAKAM
PARICCAJAMI

Venerable Sir, Teacher, may I humbly offer my body and mind to you for the purpose of practicing Insight Meditation.

3. Requesting the Meditation Exercise:

NIBBANASSA ME BHANTE SACCHIKARANATHAYA
KAMMATTHANAM TEHI

Venerable Sir, please give me the instruction for Insight Meditation so that I may realize Nibbana (nirvana).

4. Extending friendship to yourself:

AHAM SUKHITO HOMI NIDDUKKHO HOMI AVERO HOMI
ABHAYA PAJJHO HOMI ANIGHO HOMI SUKHI ATTANAM
PARIHARAMI

May I be happy, free from suffering, free from enmity, diseases and grief, free from troubles, difficulties and danger and be protected from all misfortune.

5. Extending friendship to all beings:

SABBE SATTA SUKHITA HONTU AVERA HONTU ABHAYA
PAJHA HONTU ANIGHA HONTU SUKHI ATTANAM
PARIHARANTU

May all beings be happy, free from suffering, free from enmity, diseases and grief, free from troubles, difficulties and danger and be protected from all misfortune.

6. Practicing the exercise of mindfulness of death:

ADDHUVAM ME JIVITAM

Our lives are transient and death is certain. That being so, we are fortunate to have entered upon the practice of Vipassana on this occasion, as we now have not been born in vain and missed the opportunity to practice the Dhamma.

7. Resolving to the Buddha and his disciples:

YENEVA YANTI NIBBANAM BUDDHA TESANCA SAVAKA
EKAYANENA MAGGENA SATIPATTHANA SANNINA

The path taken by all Buddhas and their two Chief Disciples, their great disciples and their Arahant disciples to Nibbana, the path which is known as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and is the path comprehended by the wise, I solemnly promise to practice to attain that Path, the Fruition and Nibbana, according to my own initiative, from this occasion onwards.

8. IMAYA DHAMMANUDHAMMA PATIPATTIYA
RATTANATAYAM PUJEMI

With this practice of Dhamma, worthy of Dhamma, I worship The Triple Gem.

- prostrate three times-

**Khamapana – kammam
Asking For Forgiveness**

It is advisable, in the Teachings of the Lord Buddha, that when a person has done wrong to another—by thought, word or action—to ask for the forgiveness of the wronged person. One should not have

thoughts of revenge against the former, but should forgive the other for their wrong doing.

If a person undertakes the meditation practice with thoughts of anger, hatred or revenge against the Teacher, s/he will not be able to progress in the meditation. Therefore, it is advisable to beg forgiveness from the Teacher before beginning the meditation practice, during the course of the practice (when wrong doing has occurred) and upon completion of the practice, when taking the Closing Ceremony.

To ask forgiveness, with hands joined in *anjali*, recite the following passages in Pali after the leader:

ACARIYE PAMADENA DVARATTAYENA KATAM SABBAM
APARADHAM KAMATHA ME (KAMATHU NO) BHANTE

Forgive me (us), Venerable Sir, for all wrong doing done carelessly to the Reverend One by way of the three doors—Mind, Body and Speech.

The Teacher then responds:

AHAM KHAMAMI TAYAPI (TUMHEHIPI) ME
KHAMITABBAM

I forgive you (all), you should forgive me.

The disciples then respond:

KHAMAMI (KHAMAMA) BHANTE

I (We) forgive you, Venerable Sir.

- *prostrate three times* -

The Closing Ceremony

The Steps of the Closing Ceremony are similar to the Opening Ceremony.

1. Homage to the Triple Gem
2. Requesting the Three Refuges. Change “ATTHA SILANI” to “PANCA SILANI”
3. Change Eight Precepts to Five Precepts.

THE FIVE PRECEPTS

To undertake the Five Precepts, with your hands joined in *anjali*, repeat each precept after the leader in Pali:

1. PANATIPATA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI
I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
2. ADINNADANA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI
I undertake the precept to refrain from taking what is not given.
3. KAMESUMICCHACARA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI
I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.
4. MUSAVADA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI
I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.
5. SURAMERAYA-MAJJAPAMADATTHANA VERAMANI SIKKHAPADAM SAMADIYAMI
I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating liquor and drugs, which lead to carelessness.

Leader:

IMANI PANCA SIKKHAPADANI SILENA SUGATIM YANTI
SILENA BHOGASAMPADA SILENA NIBBUTIM YANTI
TASMA SILAM VISODHAYE

These Five Precepts have morality as a vehicle for happiness, good fortune, and liberation. Let morality therefore be purified.

- prostrate three times-

- ❖ Do not touch the top of any Thai person's head, as this is also considered rude.
- ❖ Don't hang your underwear and socks outside. Let them dry in your room, somewhere below waist level.

If you want to leave the meditation practice earlier than planned, inform the office or the Teacher, so that a Closing Ceremony for you can be arranged. It is very disrespectful to leave the Monastery without informing the Teacher.