

THOSAMLING

Institute & Nunnery for International Buddhist Women

*Non-Himalayan
Nuns Association
-NHNA*

*Tibetan Language
Program 2014/2015
@ Thosamling*

*Dharma Teachings
& Nuns Training
at Thosamling*



NEWS letter
Summer 2014



Sangmo's Column

Monsoon is on the way. The rice paddies are covered with water and tiny rice buds are popping up. This year the weather changed here as everywhere in the world. It was a longer winter, with more rain which was good for our garden, and really hot temperatures in April and May. With the monsoon starting the temperature dropped again – it was time to give our nunnery a new coating! For two months the painters were here to give it all a new shiny look.

Our much loved and revered Geshe Tsewang Nyima taught for three months the Middle Lamrim by Lama Tsongkhapa, which was amazing and very in-depth. Before moving back to South India Geshela took time to give all of us special advice and practices. The connection with Geshela and Thosamling is very close and having Geshe-la here is a great blessing and delight.

The classroom has been completely updated, with new chairs and tables in fancy colors. New equipment, like a projector, was purchased to make the Tibetan language lessons easier and quicker to digest. For many people time factors are the most important in their lives. Therefore we changed the structure of the Tibetan classes so that no time gets wasted. Preparations took a lot of energy and time, but the results will be seen in the course that starts on the 4th of August. **There are still spaces open, so if you want to join in, contact us ASAP.**

Several nuns were heading to Leh for the Kalachakra, and safely arrived back after the teaching and initiation. All were very happy to be part of such a great event.

On their way back, they brought apricots from Manali, and together with the figs from our own garden these were transformed in our kitchen into numerous glasses filled with delicious jam for our breakfast table.

Those of us staying behind in the nunnery had to prepare for the courses and other activities, which was also greatly beneficial as all was finally done. So please check the result in the form of our coming program on the following pages (:

Contents

Sangmo's Column 2
On-going Study Program
at Thosamling with
Geshe Lharampa
Tsewang Nyima 3
Interesting People: Ifat 3
Tibetan Language Program 4
NHNA / Nuns Study Program
at Thosamling 6+7

back cover:
Become a Friend of Thosamling 8

Cover photo: **Western nuns at the**
meeting of the newly founded
Non-Himalayan Nuns Alliance
– NHNA –
in April 2014 at Thosamling



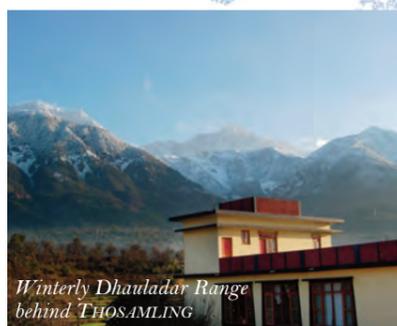
HIS HOLINESS THE 14TH DALAI LAMA
blessed THOSAMLING Institute & Nunnery
with His visit in May 2009

THOSAMLING INSTITUTE & NUNNERY
FOR INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST WOMEN
Founder: Ven. Tenzin Sangmo
Sidhpur, 176057
Dharamsala, H.P., India
mobile: 9816141830
thosamling@gmail.com
www.thosamling.net



Help us build a heater in our dining hall ...

Thosamling is situated at the foothills of the Himalayas. The snow line is slightly higher than where we are located, but when it snows in the mountains the cold we experience is very strong. In recent years the Dharamsala area winters have been getting colder and longer, and two years ago Thosamling even got snow for the first time since 40 years.



Winterly Dhauladhar Range behind THOSAMLING

Therefore we would like to add a wood-fired heater in our dining hall to get us through these cold days. We have a lot of wood leftover from earlier building construction, which is now too old or too bad to do anything with except use in wood fires.

Companies Niermann Ofenbau GmbH and K3 Dämmservice, both from Germany, have generously offered to help us build a strong, long-lasting wood-fired clay heater in our dining hall. In October they will send a four-person crew to India to work for two weeks, setting us up with heat just in time for the coming winter.



Both companies are sending their workers as volunteers to work for free, but they will of course incur travel expenses. To support their generous offer we would like to help with their flight tickets and additional travel costs totaling 3,000 Euros.

If you would like to help us with this project please contact us at:

 thosamling@gmail.com

 **Niermann Ofenbau GmbH**
www.niermann-steinofen.de

 **K3 Dämmservice**
www.k3-daemmservice.de



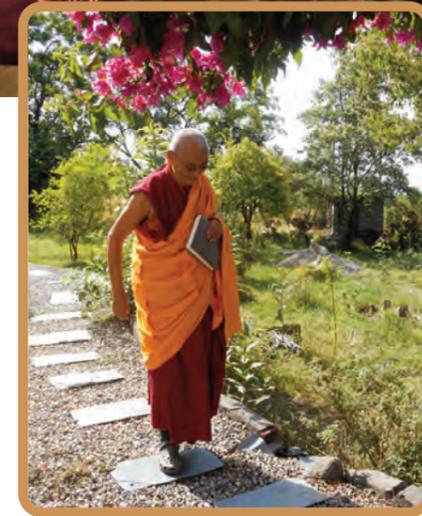
Lama Tsong Khapa's Middle Lamrim with Geshe Lharampa Tsewang Nyima

From April to June this year Geshe Tsewang Nyima, our teacher at Thosamling, came from his monastery Drepung Loseling in South India to teach Lama Tsong Khapa's Middle Lamrim.

Geshela completed all the chapters which cover the lower scope and on the last day finished classes by teaching the first lines of the middle scope, an indication that Geshela will continue teaching the lamrim in 2015.

Geshela said that next year he will try to come back for six months. In the meantime, we will review all the teachings which have been given so far, listening again to the recordings, and we will also memorize at least the main points of the extensive outline.

Top, Geshela teaching in the temple; right, Geshela coming from his house to the temple.



One thing is certain at Thosamling: You will meet ... Interesting people !

Recently we received an email from Ifat, the 'Israeli girl'...

Hi, this is Ifat, the Israeli Iyengar yoga teacher and body therapist (Grindberg method) that spent time in India recently with you all.

Now, after being four months back in Israel, I am remembering the time that I spent in India, and especially in the beautiful nunnery of Thosamling in Dharamsala.

And I can say that it changed my life!

I came to India to learn about yoga, and I found myself (literally) and fell in love with Buddhism while staying in a Buddhist nunnery for almost three months. I think that my entire life led me to this moment.

I just want to say thank you all from the bottom of my heart, and I am looking forward to seeing you all again very soon in this life.

With love,
Ifat (the Israeli girl)

If you ever walk by yourself high in the mountains among the pines and rocks, leaving everything in the valley far below you, when there is not a whisper among the trees and every thought has withered away, then it may come to you, the otherness. If you hold it, it will never come again; what you hold is the memory of it, dead and gone. What you hold is not the real; your heart and mind are too small, they can hold only the things of thought and that is barren. Go further away from the valley, far away, leaving everything down there. You can come back and pick them up if you want to but they will have lost their weight. You will never be the same again.

Krishnamurti



Tibetan Language Program 2014/2015 at Thosamling

Below you can find the new courses for the coming year and a half. We are looking forward to Professor Bill Magee's visit in March 2015, as his teachings are highly qualified and truly amazing. The classroom in Thosamling is freshly painted and we have a new projector which makes the teachings more easy to follow and will save the teacher a lot of time. Drilling sessions can be followed anytime in the day and evening, as a laptop is available in the classroom with necessary materials. Classes are fun and we focus on achieving optimal results in the shortest period of time.

Program

Since 2003, Thosamling has been offering Tibetan language courses for nuns, monks and lay practitioners. The main aim is to enlarge the opportunities for in-depth study of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. Some students continue their studies in Tibetan monastic institutions; others become translators for Tibetan teachers in their home countries. Guest teachers from all over the world,

such as Professor Bill Magee and Geshema Kelsang Wangmo, visit Thosamling to share their knowledge with the students.

There is a year-long program that is designed to give students a complete training – starting from the alphabet, learning colloquial and then gradually moving on to understanding Buddhist teachings and reading philosophical texts. Every module can also be followed separately, depending on one's previous learning experience or time limitations. After having finished the beginner and

Tibetan grammar from 1993 until 2011 in Dolmaling Nunnery. After completing her studies in Dolmaling, she received a degree in Pharchin (Paramita), Uma (Madhyamaka), Dzo (Abhidharma), Tsema (Pramana) and Dulwa (Vinaya). After that she followed a teacher training course and studied Sanskrit and Hindi in Sarnath for two and half years. In Dolmaling she has been teaching different philosophical subjects. Dawa Dolma is currently preparing for her Geshe exam, after which she expects to receive her Geshe degree.

Our teachers



Geshe Lharampa Tsewang Nyima

was awarded the degree of Geshe Lharampa in 1980. Geshe-la spent ten years at Kyil Monastery in Spiti, teaching Buddhist philosophy and

establishing a modern education program for the younger monks. After that Geshe-la assisted in establishing the study program at Dolmaling Nunnery. He volunteered to help in this project, teaching Dharma for more than two years. Geshe-la also spent more than ten years at Norbulingka Institute for the Preservation of the Tibetan culture.

Geshe-la is an expert in the Vinaya and wrote a dictionary about the Vinaya. From 2007 Geshe-la was the resident Buddhist philosophy teacher in Thosamling. Since 2013 Geshe-la semi-retired and divides his time between Thosamling and Drepung Loseling Monastery in South India. Geshe-la will continue to teach every year for about four to six months in Thosamling.



Tsunma Dawa Dolma

was born in Tibet in 1982. She has been a nun for twenty years and studied subjects such as Buddhist philosophy, English and

Tenzin Choekyi
My name is Tenzin Choekyi. Both of my parents are from Tibet, and I was born in India. I am 25 years old. I did my B.A. in Tibetan studies from Sara Tibetan College including a year of bridge class. After graduation I

did teacher training courses from the same college for a year and half.

I always appreciated the idea of Westerners learning my language. The opportunity to become a teacher for foreign students just presented itself to me, and at Thosamling we have a lovely team of teachers which is a big source of inspiration. We supervise the teachings a lot and try our best to make it very appealing for the students. In this way we have enthusiastic students and they get the best out of the learning process. Thosamling is also a very environmentally friendly place and, being away from the noise of McLeod Ganj, an oasis of green and quiet and calm. The best environment in which to study!

We are very close to Sidhpur where many Tibetans live and where you can practice your Tibetan as much as you like. They are very helpful and willing to spend time with you.

All courses are free for ordained Sangha.

intermediate courses, the students can continue their studies with Dharma Tibetan Language and Debate courses.

Note: The year-program will start every six months, so there are always two programs running simultaneously. For reasons of clarity, the modules are numbered according to their levels. Accommodation and food is not included in the course donations. See also: www.thosamling.com



Tsering Lhamo

I was born in Lhasa, Tibet. At a young age I escaped with my uncle to India and attended the TCV School in Mussoori. I was very grateful to get the blessings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. As in Tibet the

study situation was very bad, I really appreciated the guidance I got from my teachers. After school I went to Dharamsala. Five years ago I started as a conversation partner in Thosamling. I am moved by the foreign people who come to study the Buddhist teachings and Tibetan. It is such a challenge for them and they put so much effort into it. Therefore I will be always there to help them.

Calendar overview

Year	Month	Module
2014	Aug	Mod 1 Beginners
	Sep	Mod 1 Beginners
	Oct	Mod 2 Intermed.
	Nov	Mod 2 Intermed.
	Dec	Mod 4 Intro Debate
	Jan	Mod 1 Begin.
	Feb	Mod 1 Begin.
	Mar	Mod 2 Inter Spec.
	Apr	Mod 2 Inter Spec.
	May	Mod 3 Dharma & Lamrim
	Jun	Mod 3 Dharma & Lamrim
	Jul	Mod 3 Dharma & Lamrim
2015	Aug	Mod 1 Beginners
	Sep	Mod 1 Beginners
	Oct	Mod 2 Intermediate
	Nov	Mod 2 Intermediate
	Dec	Mod 3 Dharma
	Jan	Mod 3 Dharma
	Feb	Mod 3 Dharma
	Mar	Mod 3 Dharma
	Apr	Mod 3 Dharma
	May	Mod 3 Dharma
	Jun	Mod 3 Dharma
	Jul	Mod 3 Dharma

MODULE 1: Tibetan Language Course Beginners

2014: Aug 4 to Oct 24

2015: Jan 5 to Feb 27; June 22 to Sept 11

Teachers: Tenzin Chokyi and Tsering Lhamo

Starting with the alphabet, you will be able to read and write basic Tibetan in two weeks time. We work with an outline of the course which has proven to be successful throughout the years. There are handouts, homework exercises, audio and video materials, all designed to progress as quickly as possible. The course is intensive and you need to focus only on your studies to make it successful. The morning sessions are used to go through the new materials and the afternoons are for exercises and practice. Guest teachers and senior students will be invited during the course to talk about their experiences.

5 days/week, 2.5 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon. Course donation 6000 rs/month.

MODULE 2: Tibetan Intermediate Course

2014: Oct 27 to Dec 19

2015: Sept 28 to Dec 11

Teachers: Tenzin Chokyi and Tsering Lhamo

We will work with texts from the book by Geshe Lhundup Sopa, Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture, and also use other texts that have been collected and proven useful throughout the years. These include newspapers, books, and general talks. Besides focusing on improving one's literary Tibetan there is enough time to improve your spoken Tibetan as well. In the afternoons all students can meet with conversation partners for two hours to improve their colloquial skills. Exercises amongst the students will help them to start translating and increase confidence in speaking.

Details: see Module 1



MODULE 2: Intermediate Special: Literary Tibetan with Professor Bill Magee

2015: March 2 to April 10

We are very grateful to announce this unique opportunity for an in-depth study of literary Tibetan with Professor

Bill Magee. As a long-time teacher of literary Tibetan, Bill has extensive experience and skill in making the classical texts accessible to anyone with a basic level of Tibetan – in fact, he possesses the rare talent to make learning literary Tibetan seem fun and easy.

This course will provide students with a clear understanding of how to examine a Tibetan sentence and understand its grammar, a solid foundation of vocabulary for reading Geluk texts, including debate-orientated texts, an appreciation for the wide differences between literatures of the different lineages as well as for the distinctive Tibetan-Sanskrit translation style.

The course will last for 6 weeks, with 4 classes a week. 2.5 hours a day. Course fee 24.000 rs.

Prerequisites: Students need to have done the beginners course or at least be able to read Tibetan with a basic understanding of sentence structures.

MODULE 3: Dharma Tibetan Language Course

2014: Aug 4 to Sept 26

2015: Jan 5 to Feb 27; Oct 27 to Dec 19

Teacher: Tsunma Dawa Dolma

This course will focus on literary as well as colloquial Tibetan. We work with public talks given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Lam Rim teachings by our resident teacher Geshe Tsewang Nyima. In class we will read texts on the subjects that are taught. Next to that we will practice our understanding of the oral explanation. Every day the students will receive the vocabulary needed to understand the teachings of the next day. The translation of the audio will also be available. In this way both the fluency in colloquial as well as literary Tibetan will develop fast.

2.5 hours a day, 5 days a week. Self-study is necessary to get the most out of this course. Course donation 4000 rs/month.

As this course follows up on our intermediate level course, students have ideally already studied intensively for at least half a year. If you are uncertain about your level, please contact us.

MODULE 3: Dharma Tibetan Language Course combined with the Lam Rim Course with Geshe Tsewang Nyima

2015: April 6 to July 17 and Oct 19 to Dec 11

Teacher: Tsunma Dawa Dolma

Geshe Tsewang Nyima will be teaching The Middle Lam Rim of Lama Tsong Khapa. These teachings will be study material for the classes.

The students will attend the teachings of Geshe-la and later will review the audio materials to get a better understanding. Every day the students will receive the vocabulary needed to understand the teachings of the next day. The translation of the audio will also be available. In this way both the fluency in colloquial as well as literary Tibetan will develop fast.

4 days/week 2 hours with Geshe Tsewang Nyima and 5 days/week 2.5 hours with Dawa Dolma.

Course donation 4500 rs/month.

MODULE 4: Introduction to Debate (Dudra/Lorig)

2014: Oct 13 to Dec 19

2015: Aug 3 to Oct 9

Teacher: Tsunma Dawa Dolma;

Guest teacher: Geshema Kelsang Wangmo and others

Learning how to debate is essential to understand the teachings of the Buddha. One lama expressed it like this: "Listening to the Dharma without the understand-

ing of debate is like trying to chew food without teeth." Debate will open many doors to the Dharma and will help you to sharpen your mind. One gets trained in a completely different way of thinking.

Those who plan to enter Tibetan nunneries or monasteries need to study Debate thoroughly. Tsunma Dawa Dolma will lead us through the whole system, and with the help of Geshe Kelsang Wangmo it will be easier to relate to the debate as she is an excellent teacher who makes debate very clear to Western minds.

As this course follows up on our Dharma Tibetan Language Course, students have ideally studied intensively for at least eight months. If you are uncertain about your level, please contact us.

5 classes/week, 2.5 hours/day plus afternoon debate sessions. Course donation 4500 rs/month.

Tenzin Palmo, a student of the Intermediate Course:

My experiences ...

I joined the Tibetan class at Thosamling in April. I did have a bit of knowledge before (I was able to read, slowly and with mistakes, and knew some Dharma words), but I really did not have the confidence of being an

intermediate student, so I was kind of nervous about how it would be like. However, all my doubts got dispelled, as Choekyi, the teacher, is very kind and available to answer questions any time. She also prepares her own materials for lessons taking into account the students' needs and interests. In the morning we mostly practice grammar, writing and understanding written texts, although some lessons are focused on vocabulary. In the afternoon we have the opportunity to speak about what we learned in the morning – of course in Tibetan. Choekyi and Lhamo, the second teacher, are always there to correct us or give a hint about the words or structures we don't know.

"We are happy that you want to learn Tibetan. We are ready to help you!"

"We are happy that you want to learn Tibetan. We are ready to help you" – these are not only words. I can really feel our teachers are interested in students' progress and do not hesitate to prolong the lesson if necessary or to meet students privately. I had a wonderful experience of listening to His Holiness' speech on YouTube with Choekyi in the evening – I could not understand much from His Holiness himself but when Choekyi repeated it for me slowly, I was pleasantly surprised how much I could get – and then the next day working with the story "How I met His Holiness for the first time".

4.5 hours a day plus homework or self-study is quite an intense course, but at the same time I find it very effective and enjoyable. Of course there are moments when one feels frustrated or stupid (many words sound very similar so it is difficult to recognize them in spoken language, grammar rules are in my opinion quite vague, etc), but as Master Shantideva says, "there is nothing which does not become easier with familiarization" – and after two months of study I can see a big difference compared to when I started.

What I like the most is that there are opportunities to practice Tibetan even out of classroom. All the Tibetans you can meet at Thosamling – Choekyi, Lhamo and Ven. Dawa Dolma – are indeed very kind and interested in helping us to learn. I believe that continuing the courses at Thosamling will enable me to learn Tibetan well enough to even study in a Tibetan nunnery one day ...



TENZIN PALMO, A CZECH NUN



Non-Himalayan Nuns Alliance

On the 5th of April this year a first meeting of the **Non-Himalayan Nuns Alliance (NHNA)** in Thosamling Nunnery took place with many nuns to explore our needs and discuss our difficulties as Buddhist nuns living within and outside of India.



The need for this meeting was already “hanging in the air for a while”. Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo and Geshema Kelsang Wangmo graciously accepted our invitation to join this meeting. Exchange of experiences were made which were sometimes very sad and shocking to hear about. Some of the nuns were living in established monastic institutions where we receive support and training, but also many faced challenges due to lack of support, both material and psychological. Many nuns often suffer from loneliness

and discouragement. It became more evident that we have to do something to organize and support ourselves. With the support of Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo and Geshe Kelsang Wangmo, we continued the meetings.

At the end of the meeting, the Non-Himalayan Nuns Alliance was formed; a new affiliation for nuns following the Tibetan Buddhist tradition but who are not from Tibet or the other Himalayan regions.

The Non-Himalayan Nuns Alliance seeks to encourage non-Himalayan nuns to net-

work and support each other. Likewise we will bring this situation to the notice of more lay people in order to promote their cooperation and support.

This is a very fresh initiative and we all are happy that the first steps have been made in the direction of more solid support and understanding of the situation non-Himalayan nuns are in.

For certain, more news will come soon as more progress is made. You can email NHNA at NHNA@gmail.com

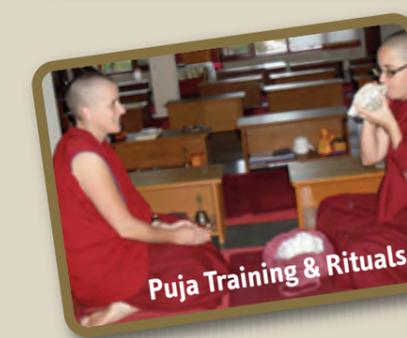
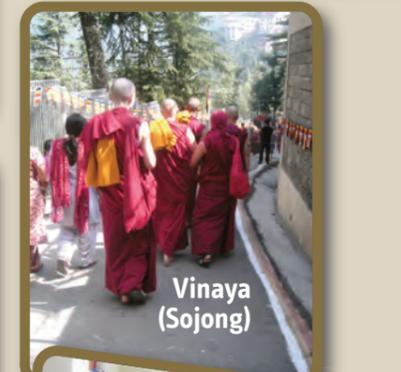
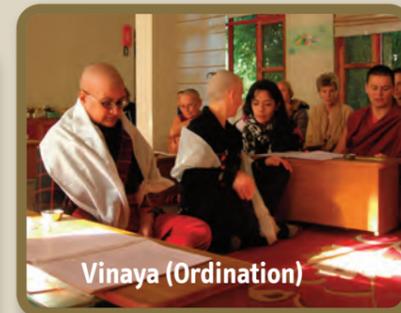
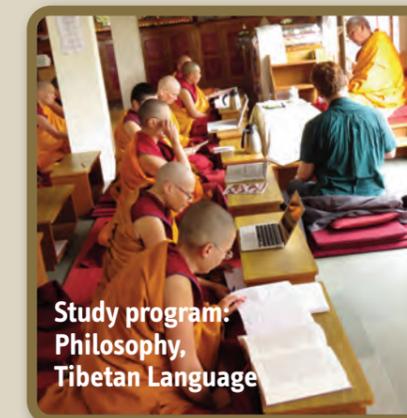


Nuns Training Program at Thosamling

With new nuns always entering Thosamling it is necessary to organize the training program according to the needs of the nuns.

Because being a nun requires a unique set of knowledge and skills, Thosamling provides training for new nuns to learn a variety of practices. This training program will be taught by senior and experienced nuns at Thosamling, as well as a variety of visiting Sangha members, monks and nuns from other monastic institutions.

It will cover:



Important trainings to understand the benefits of living in a Sangha community – how to make the best of it and how to get the most out of it for oneself and for the other nuns – are included, and special guidance for the newly ordained will be provided.

Whether nuns are looking for a solid grounding to sustain their own further practice or for the tools they need to enter a Tibetan nunnery's study program, Thosamling is a very good place to start. And as always, it also depends on what each individual nun is making of an excellent opportunity.



Become a : Friend of Thosamling

Two of our most dear friends, Toni and Andrea, started a support program in 2013 called *Friend of Thosamling* to help the nunnery financially continue with the work we do. For a small (and also a slightly bigger) amount you can help us continue to offer courses, affordable retreat space and in-depth study programs. We want to continue for the coming year with our programs and are still looking for friends and members of Thosamling to make our aims and goals possible and the Dharma available for everyone.



If you would like to become a *Friend of Thosamling*, please contact us at thosamling@gmail.com

As mentioned on our website www.thosamling.com, Thosamling provides a strong Dharma study program as well as Tibetan language courses. In the past, about 25 students ended up studying in higher Buddhist Philosophy Institutes such as Sera and Drepung monasteries, the School of Dialectics or in Tibetan nunneries. Others went home to their centers, translating for their lamas.

For retreatants, Thosamling is an excellent place and we want to make sure that all of our high standard programs will still be offered in the future.

The Dharma is available for free for everybody, that was and always will be the case. But due to higher costs (gas, electricity, handimen,

materials etc) – like in the West –, Dharma centers have to charge higher rates for continuation of their centers.

We noticed that many people are not able to attend Dharma teachings anymore or have to rely only on books. Retreat places are available but for many they do not fit within their budget. We like to keep our doors open so that the Dharma and the retreat facilities are still available for those who have lesser financial capabilities. By becoming a *Friend of Thosamling* you can help us make the Dharma available for everybody.

As a *Friend of Thosamling* you will receive our bi-annual newsletter, daily prayers for your good health and success, and discounts on accommodation and courses, as follows:

Level of Membership	Annual donation (Euro)	BENEFITS						
		Newsletter	Name on prayer list	Prayers for family	Discount on stay	Discount on courses	Free retreat 2 weeks/year	Dharma gift
FRIEND	75	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	–
MEMBER	150	✓	✓	✓	–	–	–	–
SPONSOR MEMBER	300	✓	✓	✓	10%	–	–	–
SPECIAL MEMBER	350	✓	✓	✓	15%	–	–	–
ROYAL MEMBER	450	✓	✓	✓	15%	15%	✓	✓