

# THOSAMLING

BUDDHIST NUNNERY & INSTITUTE  
WINTER RETREAT 2022-2023

***‘Shamatha, Vipashyana & the buddhist  
path of genuine happiness’***

A seven week course with Alma Ayon -  
Meditation teacher and contemplative artist

December 1st, 2022 to January 26th, 2023  
Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, North India

[www.thosamling.com](http://www.thosamling.com)



*The Buddha — and the great commentators and mahasiddhas ever since — emphasized that the effortless stability and vividness of mind achieved with Shamata is essential before experiential wisdom can flourish. The serenity and solitude of Thosamling provides the ideal conditions for a focused exploration of what Tsongkhapa calls, “the fusion of Shamata and Vipashyana.”*

### **Who can come?**

The retreat is open for both women and men and is structured to cater for both beginners and experienced students alike.

### **For how long?**

The retreat will span across seven weeks starting on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 and ending on January 26, 2023. We ask participants to join for the full length of the retreat.

### **What will we learn?**

The retreat is aimed at developing a strong understanding and practice of meditation deeply grounded in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. The course is therefore twofold: one side aims at developing a clear, concentrated mind through the gradual study and practice of Shamata meditation. The other aim is to explore the practices of the Buddhist tradition, starting with an overview of the Buddha’s life and teachings and how Shamata, Vipashyana and other practices fit within the context of the three vehicles. We will also practice the Four Noble truths, the Four Immeasurables and the Six Perfections. The last part of the retreat is dedicated to a brief introduction to Dream Yoga and Dzogchen practice, and a whole overview of the path.

This seven-week retreat gives the participants an opportunity to immerse in the full range of practices for cultivating Shamata and Vipashyana, while providing a wide scope of practice within the Mahayana philosophical world which acts as a support for the practice. During the retreat we will cover the full range of Shamata techniques and their application. The seven weeks of the retreat provide ample time for individual practice. As it is, one of the aims of the retreat is to give the participants the tools and confidence to integrate the practice into their own lives and be able to conduct their own personal retreats. As the retreat progresses, we will dedicate more time for our own individual practice. Near the end of the retreat, we will have a couple of weeks of self-guided practice. Regardless of whether you are a long- time practitioner or absolute beginner, this approach will provide a comprehensive practice to take home.



## ***Who is our teacher?***

Alma is a Certified Meditation and Cultivating Emotional Balance Teacher, and has a Masters in Psychology with a diploma on Educational Psychology.

She is a close disciple of Alan Wallace from whom she has received extensive teachings on the practices of Shamata, Bodhicitta, Vipashyana, Dream yoga and Dzogchen.

She has received training under the guidance of several other meditation teachers including H.H. Dalai Lama, Khandro Rinpoche, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Dagmo-la, Tenzin Palmo, Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche, Mingyur Rinpoche, Zen master Sunim, Goenka, amongst others. She has studied buddhist philosophy and done several group and solitary meditation retreats in Nepal, India, Thailand, Myanmar, United States, México, Greece and Colombia. She was part of the Shamata Project - a Longitudinal Studies of Effects of Intensive Meditation Practice on Attention, Emotional Regulation, and their Neural Correlates.

Over the years she has worked with Alan Wallace on several projects, translated his books "Genuine Happiness", and "Attention Revolution", she's currently leading a translation team for Dudjom Lingpa's treasures, and giving personalized coaching to meditators in retreat.

She is the founder of a dharma centre in Mexico, and has led several Shamata and Vipashyana retreats. She teaches international courses on meditation and Contemplative Art in which she offers a therapeutic and meditative approach to working with creativity, mind and emotions.

Alma is an artist and likes to explore the connections between art and spirituality. She recently taught Shamata within the context of the Lam Rim during a retreat at Kopan Monastery in Nepal. She also frequently teaches the CEB program created at the request of H.H. the Dalai Lama by Alan Wallace and psychologist Paul Ekman, that uses a full spectrum of meditation techniques to achieve emotional self-regulation.



### ***How is the course structured?***

The retreat progresses gradually in order to slowly settle into the practice and allow for cultivation of an understanding of the meditation technique and philosophy.

**Week 1 (Dec 1-8):** Settling in, slowing down and transitioning from daily life mode to retreatmode.

**Week 2 (Dec 9-15):** Retreat starts with 2–3 simple Shamata and guided meditations with nuns.

**Week 3-6 (Dec 16-Jan 12):** Teachings start. Explore different Shamata techniques, their benefits and progression stages and the differences between Shamata and Vipashyana practices. To strengthen our understanding, we will go through overview of the Buddha's life and the Lam Rim meditations, how Shamata practice fits within the context of the three vehicles, the Four Noble Truths, the three higher trainings, and the Six Perfections. Meditations continue with session timings slowly increasing. Silence maintained except during interviews with teacher.

**Week 7 (Jan 13-19):** Continue Shamata meditation in silence on your own.

**Week 8 (Jan 20-26):** Slowly come out of retreat. Talking allowed. Sessions slowly reduced. Preparing for the future; going through how to set a daily practice and how to organize and prepare for a solitary retreat.

The gradual structure of our retreat makes it ideal both for those who are new to the practice, and for experienced practitioners who would like to dive into a prolonged retreat to re-acquaint themselves with the practices in a quiet and supportive environment under the guidance of an experienced teacher.

### ***What does a typical day involve?***

The retreat schedule includes classes and guided meditation sessions as well as individual practice sessions (Ghatikas). The Ghatikas are based on 24-minute sessions, which, as Kamalashila advised, is not too long or too short for most people. These 24-minute sessions are followed by a 6-minute break, which allows people to stay fresh throughout a full day of practice.

As Alma explains: "I feel it is important that people not only learn a full range of Shamata practices, but also develop confidence in making the practices their own so they can easily take what they learn into solitary retreat if they wish". To encourage this, the retreat with progress into more and more practice time. In the final weeks of the retreat, practitioners will be able to do their own self-guided practice.



<b>Time</b>	<b>Sessions</b>
06:00 - 07:30 am	3 Ghatikas (in meditation hall, whilst walking, or in room)
07:30 - 08:30 am	Breakfast
09:00 - 09:30 am	Guided meditation
10:00 - 11:30 am	3 Ghatikas
11:30 am - 13:30 pm	Lunch
13:30 - 15:00 pm	3 Ghatikas
15:00 - 16:00	2 Ghatikas and optional yoga
	Private 15-minute interviews with the teacher
16:30 - 17:30	Class and guided meditation and/or questions
17:30 -19:00	Dinner
19:00 - 20:00	Meditation Session



### ***Where do we stay?***

#### **For Women**

Thosamling nunnery provides two options for accommodation. Either a single room with attached bathroom, or a single room with a shared bathroom.

<b><i>Total Cost (\$USD)</i></b>	<b><i>7 Weeks</i></b>
Single room with attached bathroom	\$900/ 67,500 INR
Single room with shared bathroom	\$800/ 60,000 INR

#### **For Men**

Thosamling nunnery provides two options for accommodation. Either a regular single room with shared bathroom or a small single room with shared bathroom.

<b><i>Total Cost (\$USD)</i></b>	<b><i>7 Weeks</i></b>
Single room with shared bathroom	\$800/ 60,000 INR
Single Small room with shared bathroom	\$750/ 56,250 INR

**A deposit of USD\$100/ 7500 INR is required to confirm your place in the retreat, which is non-refundable.**



### ***Where is Thosamling?***

Thosamling nunnery is located in Kangra Valley, a 20-minute drive from Dharamsala in the state of Himachal Pradesh in North India. The average elevation is 2000ft. above sea level.

**By Bus:** Overnight buses leave daily from Delhi and take approximately 10 hours.

**By Air:** Thosamling is 45 min from Gaggal Airport. We can organise a transfer service for guests.

### ***What should I bring?***

We recommend bringing comfortable warm clothes (shawl, trainers, sweatshirts, trackpants, thick socks, beanies, gloves, etc.) for temperatures are 10-12 degrees Celsius during the day, going down to 5-10 degrees Celsius at night. Please also bring a torch or headlight in cases of power outages, a raincoat for walks, a water bottle (we provide drinkable filtered water), alarm clock, flip-flops for the shower, as well as soaps, shampoos, and a towel. We provide meditation cushions, but you are welcome to bring your own.

Thosamling also has a small supply store with items such as toilet paper, notebooks, pens, incense, etc.

***For any further questions and to register, please feel free to contact [thosamling@gmail.com](mailto:thosamling@gmail.com)***

**Residents should observe the following rules of discipline in order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to retreat:**

- **No killing:** do not intentionally kill any living being, even small insects.
- **No stealing:** do not take anything not freely given.
- **No lying:** do not lie or intentionally deceive others.
- **No sexual activity.** This also includes holding hands, hugging and other physical displays of affection.
- **No intoxicants** such as alcohol, drugs and cigarettes (we encourage you to stop smoking while here).
- **Keep silence:** keep silence in the appropriate areas. No singing or playing music and in general, maintain a quiet demeanour while on the property.
- **Be considerate** of the monks and nuns: dress respectfully (please no shorts above the knee, tank-top shirts or tight and revealing clothing).

**Course Discipline:**

- Please settle all outside communication before the course begins.
- Please settle your travel arrangements etc before you come to Thosamling.
- Do not leave Thosamling property for the duration of the course.
- Participants must attend all sessions of the course and come to sessions on time.
- All communication devices to be deposited into our safekeeping at check-in.