



Nissarana Vanaya Retreat Facilities

Meditation Hall

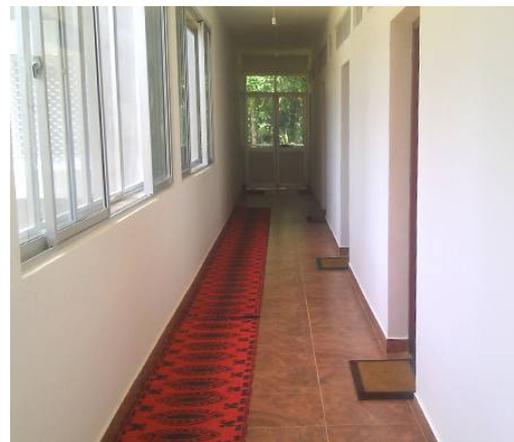
The meditation hall which has been expanded and renovated can now accommodate up to about 100 retreatants. Male yogis and female yoginis have been allocated separate sections in the new large hall. The new sound system and FM microphones that were recently installed, enable all yogis to clearly hear Dhamma talks and participate in Dhamma discussions (Question and Answer sessions) during retreats.

New Male Yogi Accommodation

New accommodation facilities for male retreatants were inaugurated in October 2015. Male yogis who attended the 14-day English medium retreat were accommodated in the new facility. Five spacious rooms, with each room having sleeping arrangements for four yogis (two bunk beds and two normal beds) and with en-suite toilet and shower. Presently there is capacity for 20 male yogis. A separate pantry allocated for male yogis was also commissioned in October 2015. It is no longer necessary for male yogis who join formal retreats to climb to the upper monastery.

New Indoor Walking Paths

The rainy season which lasted close to four months during 2015 posed a problem for walking meditation during meditation retreats at Nissarana Vanaya. Therefore facilities available for indoor walking meditation are now being improved and expanded. An entire upper floor is being constructed for this purpose and should be completed and ready for retreats commencing in February 2016. The photograph below shows some of the areas that are presently under construction.





New Centres for one-day meditation retreats

Moves are underway to construct retreat centres which can accommodate large numbers of participants for one-day retreats which will be conducted by Most Venerable Dhammajiva Maha Thero. These centers will be located outside the city of Colombo and are expected to serve devotees from wider regional areas. Initially, the focus is on creating new facilities at Kaduwela (in Western province, about 16 km away from Colombo city) and Imaduwa (in Southern Province, about 21 km away from Galle city).

English Medium Retreats

Every month a one-day English-medium retreat conducted by Most Venerable Dhammajiva Maha Thero is held at Allenmethiniyarama temple in Colombo. For registration and to join the mailing list please email astha_kumari@yahoo.com

Longer retreats in the English medium will be held at Nissarana Vanaya according to the 2016 Retreat Schedule as published on the website. For more information please visit:

www.nissarana.lk/meditate-with-us/retreat-schedule/

Retreat Organisers Meeting

On 22 November 2015, Nissarana Vanaya Meditation Retreat Organisers and members of the Karakha Sabha met at the meditation hall for the annual gathering to discuss programs for the coming year.

Most Venerable Dhammajiva Maha Thero presided over the meeting.

Several important issues were discussed and decisions were taken in relation to organizing retreats to be held in 2016.

Silent Meditation Retreats

Silent Retreats are held at Nissarana Vanaya in the absence of the Meditation Master. These five-day retreats are intended for experienced meditators who have previously participated in long and short retreats under the guidance of Most Venerable Dhammajiva Maha Thero. Applications from such experienced practitioners should be directly emailed to the relevant Retreat Organiser (www.nissarana.lk) with a completed application form.

During Silent Retreats recorded Dhamma Talks from previous retreats are played, and the Q and A sessions are conducted by Venerable Chandraratana.

Retreat Calendar 2016: some highlights

A retreat dedicated for lay supporters (*Dana Dayakas of Nissarana Vanaya*) has been scheduled for 6 to 11 March 2016. It will be organized by Malkanthi de Silva (sivadema@gmail.com) and Loku Liyanamahattaya.

A special retreat for school children is scheduled for 27 to 30 December 2016. The retreat will be organized by Rupika Gunawardena (rupikag@gmail.com).

The Retreat Calendar can be accessed on www.nissarana.lk/meditate-with-us/retreat-schedule/



Meditation Books online

Through the on-demand publishing platform *Amazon Create Space* several books of Nissarana Vanaya meditation masters are now available online. *Create Space* enables to order the required book and, for a nominal price, they will print and post the book to the address provided. The following books are currently available.

100 Questions and Answers

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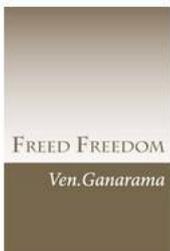
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An exploration of the physiological and psychological impact of a two-week meditation retreat at Nissarana Vanaya

An increasing body of research shows that regular meditation practice is associated with positive physiological and psychological changes. However, most of these research studies have been conducted in the West. Published studies of this nature are scarce in the East and have not been previously documented in Sri Lanka.

The first Sri Lankan study on this subject was conducted at Nissarana Vanaya forest monastery in Mitirigala, during October 2015, with the approval and guidance of the Chief Meditation Master Most Venerable Dhammajiva Maha Thero. The study protocol was designed by a team of researchers from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, and was conducted after approval from the relevant Ethics Committee. Thirty eight persons with long-term experience in meditation practice participated in a 14-day meditation retreat conducted by Most Venerable Dhammajiva Maha Thero. They were subject to a series of tests that measured physiological and psychological impact.

In order to assess physiological impact of meditation, several tests were done on the day before the commencement of the retreat, and on the last day of the retreat. The results showed a significant reduction in the stress-related hormone, Cortisol. Further, there was a trend towards lowering of the parameters on C-reactive protein and lymphocytes. These findings suggest a reduction in the level of inflammatory response in the body. Such a lowered level of inflammation is beneficial and protective against cardiovascular disease. Generally we all have a certain level of inflammation going on in our bodies due to the constant bombardment by microorganisms either from air pollution or from organisms in food and drinks.

In order to assess the psychological impact of the 14 - day retreat, three psychological scales were used: The SF-36 (Short form health survey), the GHQ-12 (General Health Questionnaire), and the PSS (Perceived Stress Scale).

The results showed that the two week meditation retreat has several mental health benefits, such as: (i) a self-reported increase in vitality, physical functioning, emotional functioning, and social functioning; (ii) a self-reported decrease in bodily pain, and general health issues; (iii) a significant improvement in stress management; and (iv) an overall improvement in psychological well-being.

Further studies will be useful to validate these findings and to explore other dimensions.

The laboratory investigations were conducted by Nawaloka Metropolis Laboratories Ltd, and the study was funded by Vishwa Parami Foundation.