Hidden Valley Zen Center (Yuukoku-ji) and Mountain Gate (Sanmon-ji)

Residential Training Guidlines

Introduction

Yuukoku-ji and Sanmon-ji are a training centers established for the purpose of enabling students of Zen Buddhism to deepen their practice in a residential environment. In choosing to enter into this intensive training, you are making a commitment to discover new levels of understanding and meaning in your life. You will also learn to use tools that will help you end your own suffering and help end the suffering of others. As a resident you will be continually encouraged to investigate your own heart-mind, and to serve the sangha and local community. The center/monastery is not just a nice place to live with a supportive group of like-minded people; it is a place in which you are called upon to explore the great matter of your own life and death.

The essence of Zen practice is to respond appropriately with your whole being to whatever life brings in each moment. Life is unpredictable. Residency at Yuukoku-ji and Sanmon-ji reflects this unpredictability. It gives you the opportunity to meet life's challenges by adapting to the varying schedules and expectations; often visitors come, spontaneous meetings are held, and other unexpected events occur. Since our schedule is already demanding and our sleep periods are shortened, it is important to use all the tools we have acquired through our practice in responding smoothly and fully to these occurrences. In life we never know what is coming next, either from others or ourselves, but we can do our best to be open, balanced and tranquil in whatever circumstances arise.

As a resident you will be expected to participate fully in the training program by attending all meditation periods, formal meals, sesshin, sanzen, samu (work-practice) and other group events. Our schedule is intentionally meant to be personally demanding because learning to adapt ourselves to challenging situations matures our spiritual practice.

As your practice deepens, you may bear witness to the First Noble Truth (we all experience challenges, disappointments) as it manifests in community life. The arising of internal and interpersonal conflict is a common part of life. How we work with them is the difference between a practice center and an ordinary job. Being willing to not evade inner tension but tuning in, accepting, and as a result, responding in a clear and compassionate way is important. Developing tolerance for our internal experience and for others' different ways of being is a cornerstone of practice. All residents are asked to commit to using kind curiosity and active self-inquiry when problems and conflicts arise.

Yuukoku-ji and Sanmon-ji are under the spiritual direction of Mitra Roshi and Sozui Sensei. By becoming a resident you agree to follow their spiritual guidance and leadership of the sangha.

General Guidelines for Living at Yuukoku-ji and Sanmon-ji

Work

Wholeheartedly participating in work such as cooking, gardening, taking care of the temple grounds, shopping and cleaning is a very important part of spiritual training. It is also the way the center/monastery is maintained for both residents and the community. Work areas (such as kitchen, office, garden and grounds) present wonderful opportunities for everyday practice. It is critical that you participate fully and take responsibility for whatever task you are assigned, including returning any tools used to their appropriate storage places when finished. If you have specific limitations, please tell the teachers. Social visits, personal conversations and telephone calls should be limited to break periods

Meals and Food

As a resident you are required to attend all formal meals. Meals are vegetarian. Grains, seasonal fruits and vegetables are emphasized. Special diets are generally not supported (although serious medical food allergies are taken into consideration). Please do not cook or ask to cook special meals except on days off. Our basic attitude toward food is to appreciate whatever we are given. Please make it part of your practice to adapt yourself to the monastery diet, rather than trying to change the monastery to adapt to you. We accept all donations of vegetarian food whether it is organic, fast, junk, canned or food straight from the garden. We serve all offerings with gratitude.

The Zen rule of taking only as much as you need applies to all meals. Therefore, when something edible is on your plate, it should be eaten. (Make any medical reasons for avoiding or eating certain foods known to the center/monastery leaders.)

Kitchen Use

The tenzo (head cook) is in charge of the kitchen. Do not use any food or ingredients without first checking with the tenzo to make sure they are available. Kitchen cleaning is shared among all residents. After clean-up there should be no dirty dishes, plastic bags, food or liquid left on the counters. The floor should be swept and, if necessary, mopped. A general rule is to always clean up more than your share.

Personal time

Personal time is generally Sunday afternoon till Monday morning chanting and zazen and on Free Days (the day following the end of a sesshin). Please use your time appropriately in accordance with your intention on coming to the center. You may leave the center/monastery during this time, but know that the Center or monastery vehicles are not available. Always inform the teachers when you leave and return.

Visitors and Personal Guests

An important practice at the center is hospitality. This is both an offering to the community and part of our spiritual practice. Being gracious and welcoming to whoever comes is a test of our willingness to serve. Visitors may be given a tour of public rooms, served tea or invited for a meal (except during sesshin or workshops). Please let the teachers know if a guest is coming. It is appropriate for $6/28/13\ 6:30\ am$

guests to make a donation when coming to a meal. Do not expect other residents to entertain your guests for you.

Media Use

At the center/monastery we cultivate a still, clear and responsive mind. Entertainment and media use should respect this intention. Media such as television, radio, musical devices, videos, DVDs, computer games, etc. are not part of monastery life. An exception is that a movie MAY be shown on Sunday evenings. Music may be played on days off, but should not be heard by others; headphones are appropriate. During free time, e-mail may be checked on your own computer. The telephone in the office or kitchen may be used for personal calls ONLY with the permission of the teachers.

Library

The library is for members only. Residents may use anything in the library as long as it is returned to the proper shelf afterwards. You may check out a book for a reasonable period of time (one or two weeks); however, no book on the reserve shelf may be removed from the room except with express advance permission from one of the teachers.

Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking

Alcohol and illegal drugs are never permitted at the center/monastery. Cigarette smoking is also not permitted. If you have ever suffered from substance abuse, including addiction to cigarettes, please discuss your situation with one of the teachers.

Medical

If you take prescription medicine for an on-going condition, or have any other medical issues, please inform the teachers before you enter training. The center/monastery does not have medical insurance for residents. You will be responsible for any medical treatment you may need. Zen practice can be demanding. Please note that you are responsible for your own physical and mental health.

Silence

There are times in the center/monastery when Noble Silence is primary. This is true especially during sesshin and other periods of intensive training, and also after the end of the evening sitting. Loud talking and unnecessary noise are not appropriate at any time.

Zendo

The quiet and cleanliness of the zendo should be respected at all times. Please bear in mind that when the zendo is in use, activities that might be disruptive to meditation should be avoided. During zazen please be settled in your seat at least 5 minutes before the zazen period begins. If you expect to find and try out seating supplies (seiza bench, support cushions, etc.) come early so as not to cause undue disruptions at the last moment. Zendo clothing should be clean, simple and presentable. Solid, dark or muted colors are best. Please do not wear watches, hats, scarves, shorts, shirts with writing on them, noisy pants or tank tops. Out of

respect for everyone, especially those who may be allergic, do not wear strong fragrances or use toiletries that are highly scented. Please DO use deodorant if your body odor is strong.

Sanzen -Private interview with a teacher

Sanzen with both Mitra Roshi and Sozui Sensei is an integral part of residency at Yuukoku-ji or Sanmon-ji. It is not optional. Sanzen is the time to demonstrate your practice and to receive individual guidance and encouragement from the teacher. It is a precious opportunity to get to the very bottom of yourself with the help of another. Sanzen is not merely for discussing practice, but rather for realizing and revealing who and what you actually are.

Sanzen is private but under certain circumstances not confidential. Your decision to discuss personal problems or history depends on your level of trust of yourself and the teacher. Trust develops over time based on shared experience. The teachers learn to trust students as they see how they behave and respond to difficult situations. The same is true of students trusting the teachers. When you feel that the teacher's deepest motivation is to help you see the truth and to function in a healthy way in the world, then being completely open will allow you to make the best use of sanzen.

It is up to you to decide what you tell your teacher. Realize that teachers are not omnipotent, and for them to give you the best teaching, they may need to consult from time to time with other seniors, teachers, with Zen teachers outside of Yuukoku-ji and Sanmon-ji or with other professionals such as therapists or medical doctors. IN GENERAL, THE TEACHERS DO NOT TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY HEAR (even with one another). Don't ever tell one teacher something important and assume that it has been shared with the other!

The teacher is specifically NOT bound to keep what has occurred in sanzen confidential in several circumstances. These include, when child abuse or family violence is occurring; when there is serious intent to harm self or others; or if the student has complaints about what was said in sanzen.

Clothing in the Monastery

Clothing should be modest and appropriate. Cover night clothing with a robe if you leave your room at night to use the rest room. If you leave your room at night to sit zazen, please do so in appropriate clothing (this does not include sleepwear). Please do not wear revealing clothing in the center/monastery at any time. Appropriate underclothing should be worn at all times.

Cleanliness

You will find that living at the monastery means living in a public environment. We try to maintain an uncluttered atmosphere conducive to meditation. Please keep yourself and all living quarters clean and neat. In order to limit distractions, please keep the doors to bedrooms closed at all times.

Water is a very scarce resource, all the more so in this part of the country. Accordingly, do not shower unnecessarily, and when you do shower, please turn off water while soaping. Also do not leave water running while brushing your teeth or washing dishes.

The same is true of electricity; please do not leave lights on unnecessarily. We are the custodians of our planet, and it is our responsibility to see to it that these resources are available for future generations.

Bathroom

Doors are left ajar when not occupied, to indicate the bathroom is available. Bathrooms are public spaces. "Leave no traces" is a good habit to cultivate in using the bathrooms—or kitchens or anywhere else. When you wash, wipe up all traces of water, soap or toothpaste around the sink. For the most part, personal toiletries (shampoo, razor, etc.) brought into the bathroom should be removed when you are finished. Replace rolls of toilet paper, paper towels or boxes of facial tissue as needed and appropriately dispose of the empty roll or box.

Relationships and Courtship

Your stay at the monastery is a time for intense practice. It is not the place or time to seek or develop a new romantic or sexual relationship or to solve relationship problems. If you find yourself attracted to someone physically or emotionally, please discuss the situation with one of the teachers so that together you can work out what would be best for your practice.

Becoming a resident means that you agree not to begin a romantic or sexual relationship until you and your potential partner have each been in residency for at least one year. If you feel you must enter into a sexual relationship during this time, you will be asked to leave the center/monastery. This may be a time to change your place of practice so that you can give your attention to developing a healthy relationship, which requires more time and attention than is available here. This rule is regarded as extremely important. Public displays of affection are not appropriate. If two people who have a well established previous relationship enter residential training together, an exception to this rule may be made by the teachers.

Leaving the Monastery

Each person who joins the monastery does so for a specific amount of time. We ask that you keep whatever time commitment you make for residential training and not to leave until you have completed that time period. In addition, if you are coming from a foreign country, you must abide by the terms of your visa, including exiting the country by the required time. We encourage everyone to be realistic in their commitment.

As a full-time resident, it is customary to formally inform the teachers when you enter or leave the center/monastery.

Conclusion

All of the above rules and guidelines arise from our long experience in residential training. It is important to follow ALL of them. If you have difficulties with these or any other rules, or if you find yourself not wanting to abide by them, please talk with a teacher. It may be that it is time for you to leave the center, or it may be there is some training obstacle that needs attention. If you do not follow the rules, forms, or schedules, even after discussing the problem and working on it with a teacher, you may be asked to leave. No one will be asked to leave without

discussion of the situation and attempts to work things out.

May we live in a way that makes us worthy to receive what is offered for our support.