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**Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary**  
**PROSPECTUS**

<http://www.sasanarakkha.org>





## **Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary**



“The time has come  
for us to do something  
or there will be no future  
for Buddhism in Malaysia.”

*Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda, a.k.a. “Chief Reverend”,  
Religious Patron of Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary  
(in his speech during the launching of the SBS fund raising project in May 2000)*

“Sasanarakkha” means ‘Guardian of the Sasana (Buddha’s Teachings)’.

## Introduction



**S**ASANARAKKHA\* **BUDDHIST SANCTUARY (SBS)** is a training centre for Malaysian Theravada Buddhist monks to learn how to live in accordance with the *Dhammavinaya* — the name the Buddha gave his “religion” — as enshrined in the original scriptures.

The Sanctuary dedicates its resources to groom eligible Malaysian monks to become conscientious in the study and practice of the *Dhammavinaya*, and thereby help to perpetuate our *Sasana* and protect it from decline in learning, morals and meditative wisdom. In doing so, it hopes to answer the urgent calls of the Malaysian Buddhist community to overcome the acute shortage of suitably trained local monks.

We hope that SBS will also lay the groundwork for evolving a Malaysian Theravada Buddhist identity that accords with the scriptural tradition in the spirit and the letter.

**T**he Sanctuary is set in more than ten acres of undulating land nestled among secluded hills in the outskirts of Taiping. Removed from the busy, worldly society, it provides an excellent environment for a monastic life that conduces to the lofty aims of SBS.

It is accessible by road via a cemetery and plantations. As certain parts of the road are somewhat steep, it is better to go up by 4WD vehicle, or 4T motorcycle, or on foot.

## Location of the Sanctuary



## A typical day in the Sanctuary

The monastics (monks and postulants) start their mornings with private meditation. They then assemble before going downhill for *pindapata* (alms food). Upon returning they may attend to such chores as cleaning their kutis, washing their robes, and maintaining the monastic facilities. They may have their meal on their own any time before noon.

In the afternoon, they may take a rest and meditate before such activities as attending a class, self-study, discussion, etc.

Whenever necessary, they may also do other things: making robes, preparing dye, baking bowls, etc. In the evening, they gather at the *sima* pavilion or open-air Buddha shrine to recite some parittas and have a group *metta* meditation, spreading loving kindness in all directions. This is followed by a session of qigong, or any other suitable exercise, for the maintenance of good physical health.



## Facilities and utilities

The Sanctuary is reasonably equipped with suitable modern facilities and utilities. For the use of resident monastics, the Sanctuary shall have among other things:

- a *sima* pavilion, which also functions as an assembly and meditation hall (completed)
- a facility centre, which has a pantry, storeroom, sewing room, area for baking alms bowls and dyeing robes, and common toilets
- an air-conditioned library
- a publication room
- a classroom
- a health lodge.

Each monastic will be provided with a *kuti* (hut) specially designed for study and practice. Most *kutis* are





situated within the “monastics only” area, each strategically located to provide adequate seclusion.

A TNB power cable is connected to the Sanctuary. Electrical power is supplied to most of the common areas like the office, sima pavilion, publication room, library, multipurpose hall, health lodge, *dhamma* workers' quarters, kitchen, etc. The *kutis* however are deliberately excluded to create conditions conducive

to meditation at night and in the early morning. For water supply, we rely on springs from the forest.

The office is equipped with telephone and facsimile through a RILL (Radio in Local Loop) transmitter as well as computers, printers and a photocopy machine. Internet access is available for administrative and official use only.

What is taught here

The curriculum of training broadly consists of five components: *Vinaya* [monastic law and discipline], *Dhutanga* [ascetic practices], Meditation, Pali, and Propagation. As a monk, you are expected to follow at least the first three. Pali and Propagation are optional, while *Dhutanga* can be waived in individual cases.



### **Vinaya**

This component deals with practical understanding and actual practice of the *Vinaya*, especially the *Patimokkha*, in accordance with the scriptural tradition.

A study of the *Sasana* shows that a major cause of its decline is the *Sangha's* lack of *Vinaya* learning and practice. As the *Vinaya* Commentary puts it, “The

*Vinaya* is the life of the *Sasana*: if the *Vinaya* endures, the *Sasana* will endure; if the *Vinaya* disappears, the *Sasana* will disappear."

Learning and practice of the *Vinaya* leads to harmony, unity, progress and happiness of the *Sangha* and protects the individual monk as well. Besides that, it also fosters faith among the laity, on whom the *bhikkhus* depend for their support.



### **Dhutanga**

This component deals with practical understanding and actual practice of the *dhutangas*.

Sometimes the mere observance of the *Vinaya* rules may be insufficient to counteract or resist mundane temptations to indulge in material luxuries that are not prohibited by the *Vinaya*. A commitment to practise the *dhutangas*, appropriate to one's

capability, can be more effective in cultivating contentment and reducing defilements.

### **Meditation**

This component deals with practical understanding and actual daily practice of meditation in which lies the essence of the Buddha's teaching.



If one's mind is refined through the practice of meditation, the chances of being overwhelmed by gross defilements resulting in *Vinaya* transgressions and sensual indulgence are reduced. For this reason, all resident monastics are expected to acquire basic principles of meditation so that they can practise on their own daily and regularly.

Principles of *samatha* and *vipassana* meditations will be taught here. In keeping with the spirit of liberality during the Buddha's time, there will be no

insistence on any particular method. Residents may practise whichever method they prefer according to individual capability and aptitude, so long as it accords with the *Dhammavinaya*.

Resident monks who have sufficiently mastered the *Vinaya* and fulfilled other prerequisites for independence will be encouraged to pursue more intensive, full-time, personal meditation retreats with proper guidance.



### **Pali**

This component deals with Pali, the original language in which Theravada Buddhist scriptures are preserved.

Knowledge of Pali language empowers one with direct access to the Pali Canon and its commentaries and sub-commentaries. It enables one to cut through the weeds and undergrowth surrounding Theravada Buddhism, which have proliferated after more than two millennia of transformation since the *Dhammavinaya* was first inscribed on palm leaves.

### **Propagation**

This component deals with courses on the application of contemporary propagation skills in a Malaysian Theravada Buddhist context.

While there is an increase of Malaysian Buddhists who are thirsting for the *Dhamma*, there are not enough suitably trained monks to teach and advise them. It is among the lofty aims of SBS to contribute towards the alleviation of this problem.



Resident monks who have satisfactorily established themselves in the theory and practice of moral discipline,

tranquillity, and meditative wisdom will be encouraged to equip themselves with contemporary propagation skills suitable to the Malaysian Theravada Buddhist community.

### Duration of Course

As individuals differ in capability and aptitude, the actual duration to complete the course varies accordingly. Nonetheless, it should be noted that a monk has to continue being under the tutelage (*nissaya*) of a mentor until he has reached at least five *vassas* (years standing) and has fulfilled all other prerequisites for independence.

### About the Abbot



Venerable **Aggacitta Bhikkhu** is a Malaysian Theravada Buddhist monk. He was ordained as a *samanera* (novice monk) in Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre (MBMC) on Wesak Day 1978. In 1979, he went to Mahasi Meditation Centre, Rangoon, Burma, where he received *upasampada* (higher ordination) on 22 December 1979, with Mahasi Sayadaw U Sobhana as his *upajjhaya* (preceptor). He stayed there for almost 3 years, practising meditation, studying Burmese and elementary Pali, and helping to translate for Burmese Sayadaws and foreign yogis.

In 1980, he stayed for a few months in the forest monastery of Taungpulu Sayadaw (a contemporary of Mahasi Sayadaw) who stressed more on the *dhutangas* (ascetic practices).

To study advanced Pali, he went to the Pali college at Wat Tamaoh, Lampang, Thailand, in 1983. There he learned Pali grammar, poetry, composition, and translation in Thai and Burmese under Sayadaw U Dhammananda. He also began studying the Pali Tipitaka, together with its commentaries and sub-commentaries, especially pertaining to the *Vinaya* (Buddhist Monastic Law and Discipline) in detail.

While at the *wat*, he was invited by the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) of USA to accompany Sayadaw U Pandita to Barre, Massachusetts, USA, and assist as a translator in an intensive meditation retreat at their Centre for 3 months. After that, he returned to Thailand for *Vassa* 1984 and to continue his Pali studies.

At the end of 1984, he went to Burma again and stayed there, mostly in forest monasteries and hermitages, until the end of 1994. He furthered his studies in the Tipitaka, especially the *Vinaya Pitaka*, in Pali and Burmese extensively, while trying to put the theoretical knowledge of the *Vinaya*, *dhutangas* and meditation into actual practice. Among the more notable teachers he stayed with and monasteries or hermitages he stayed in during that period were:

- Sayadaw U Tissara, Yankin Forest Monastery, Pyinmanah Township (over 1 year)
- Yankin Forest Hermitage, Myinbhu-Saku Township (7 years alone)
- Sayadaw U Acinna, Pa Auk Forest Monastery, Mawlamyine Township (5 months)
- Sayadaw U Pandita, Panditarama, Yangon (1 year).

Venerable Aggacitta returned to Malaysia at end of 1994 and went straight to Sarawak. He was on solitary meditation retreat there for nearly 4 years. He then returned to Penang at the end of 1998 to see his bedridden mother who passed away a month later.

In late 1999, after much persuasion—by other monks as well as the laity—and after much consideration, Venerable Aggacitta Bhikkhu decided to carry the responsibility of setting up Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary, the first Theravada Buddhist monk training centre in Malaysia.

Languages that he has knowledge of are English, Bahasa Malaysia, Hokkien, Myanmar, Thai and Pali. Among his major literary contributions are:

- *Kathina Then & Now* (authored, 2001)



- *Dying to Live: the Role of Kamma in Dying and Rebirth* (authored, 1999)
- *Cessation Experiences and the Notion of Enlightenment* (authored, 1996)
- *Raindrops in Hot Summer* (edited, 1995)
- *In this Very Life* (translated, 1993)
- *Dhamma Therapy* (translated, 1984)
- *The Importance of Keeping the Five Precepts* (authored, 1982)



How to be  
a resident  
bhikkhu/  
samanera

## Requirements

- You must be a *bhikkhu/samanera* ordained in accordance with the *Vinaya* in the Theravada tradition.
- You must be resolute in making a life-long commitment to the monastic life.
- You must be a *bhikkhu/samanera* who tries to strictly follow the *Vinaya*, according to the scriptural tradition enshrined in the Pali Canon and its commentaries and sub-commentaries.
- You should have at least completed secondary school (Form 5) education. However, this requirement may be waived under special circumstances.
- You must be willing to follow the curriculum for

training and the Sanctuary schedule and routines (*katikavatta*).

- You must have read the relevant parts of this prospectus and find that you can fit into the way of life, training programme, and other aspects of SBS.

### **What should be done**

- 1 Read the relevant parts of this prospectus and evaluate the suitability between the Sanctuary and you as its resident. Should you have any uncertainty, do contact us for further information.
- 2 If you believe that you can fit in, do come and stay for a few days to see it for yourself. You may contact us directly or any of our state representatives for the necessary arrangements. Please give us ample notice of your coming so that we can make the necessary preparations and avoid any possible inconveniences.
- 3 When you are here, you shall have to be under the tutelage (*nissaya*) of the Abbot if you do not yet qualify for independence. This shall commence after the allowable five-day period of mutual observation.
- 4 When all relevant parties (including you) are agreeable, you may apply for residency.

### **What to bring**

- a good heart nourished by humility, compassionate loving-kindness, open-mindedness, and a willingness to learn
- a set of three robes (*ticivara*)
- alms bowl
- some extra under robes and allowable *amsas*
- any other suitable requisites

## What not to bring

- money
- all other *nissaggiyavatthus* [articles to be forfeited because they are illegal, such as gold, silver, money and precious stones, or wrongfully obtained i.e., through purchase with money you accepted, trading, or wrong livelihood]

If you have any of such things, please relinquish all of them accordingly.

How to be  
a resident  
postulant

## Requirements

- You must be a male who tries to be morally upright.
- You must be willing to observe the eight precepts, plus abstain from smoking, gambling, and other unseemly activities, when you are here.
- You should have at least completed secondary school (Form 5) education. However, this requirement may be waived.
- You must aspire to be ordained a monk in SBS.
  - You must be willing to undergo probation for at least one year as a postulant before you can be ordained.
  - You must aspire to live the rest of your life as a conscientious monk if you are ordained here.
  - You must be willing to follow the curriculum for training and the Sanctuary schedule and routines (*katikavatta*).
  - You must be willing to take responsibility for the Sanctuary's daily chores suitable to your individual capacity and inclinations.
- You must have read the relevant parts of this prospectus and find that you can fit into the way of life, training programme, and other aspects of SBS.



### **What should be done**

- 1 Read the relevant parts of this prospectus and evaluate the suitability between the Sanctuary and you as its resident. Should you have any uncertainty, do contact us for further information.
- 2 If you believe that you can fit in, do come and see it for yourself. Please give us ample notice of your coming so that we can make the necessary preparations to avoid any possible inconveniences.
- 3 You may stay as a lay visitor for one week to see if this place agrees with you before applying for residency as a postulant.
- 4 When all relevant parties (including you) are agreeable, you may apply for residency.

### **What to bring**

- a good heart nourished by humility, compassionate loving-kindness, open-mindedness, and a willingness to learn
- adequate plain clothing
- other necessities, such as basic toiletries

### **What not to bring**

- objects of entertainment (TV, radio, musical instruments, comics, etc.)
- objects of vanity (cologne, fancy clothing, etc.)
- any other objects unsuitable to a monastic setting

## **Terms and conditions of residency**

- 1 SBS reserves the absolute right, any other communication notwithstanding, to reject an application without explanation.
- 2 All residents of SBS must abide by the statement of Objects and By-laws of the Sasanakkhā Buddhist

## Contact information

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orrespondence address

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Note: All information given above is deemed accurate at the time of writing (January 2003). However, things are subject to change. Do contact us for the latest update.

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Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary is run by the Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary Management Committee, a special subcommittee of Taiping Insight Meditation Society (TIMS), under the guidance of the Sanctuary's Abbot.



# Guardian of the Sasana

At the edge of the forest  
Where the spring water flows  
In search of Nibbana  
That is where I would go  
Watching life's little dramas  
With a calm repose  
At the edge of the forest  
That's where I would go

Let us practice the Dhamma  
In our silent heart  
Worry not of the future  
Gently let go the past  
Sit in deep contemplation  
In one-pointedness  
And in that soft moment  
There's just timelessness

At the edge of the forest  
There are hills high and low  
There the Dhamma seed's planted  
And the Sangha shall grow  
Guardian of the Sasana  
Sasanarakkha  
Upholding the Dhamma  
For beings near and far

Long live the Sasana  
Springing from Buddha's light  
Through the Dhamma Vinaya  
And the Truth shining bright  
Worthy is your mission  
Stand tall in your pride  
Lofty is your vision  
Spread the Law far and wide

FLORENCE TAN