

DHAMMA SOBHANA

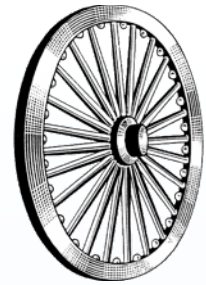
10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



This year the centre celebrates its 10 year anniversary. It was on February 1, 2007, that the Vipassana association formally moved in to the property that now is the centre. The first course started on April 4. Since the first course in Sweden was in 1992, it is also the 25th anniversary of Vipassana in Sweden.

Now the centre runs a full program with twenty 10-day courses, three 3-day courses, one Satipatthana Sutta course and a couple of children's courses a year. All 10-day courses are full with 80 students and a long waiting list and they get booked up earlier for every year. About 1 600 people sit a course at the centre every year and a couple of hundred come to serve. The facilities have been steadily improved, so that students and servers have a better stay at the centre, and this work is ongoing. There are now plans for constructing a new Dhamma hall in the forest with capacity for at least 120 students and 20 servers, and after that new accommodation buildings with single rooms. Dhamma is indeed getting established also in the northern corner of Europe.

When the centre was established, courses had been held in Sweden at rented sites for a number of years. It started out with one or two courses a year which was gradually increased as more and more people volunteered to help with arranging the courses. When four or five courses a year were held, more Vipassana students felt strongly that it would be great with a centre. Partly to have a place that can be improved over the years to provide better atmosphere and facilities, and partly because it just became much work to prepare the rundown rented course site anew every time. It was difficult to find a suitable place at a reasonable price. A Vipassana course requires space for at least 50-60 students and 7-8 servers, separate accommodation for males and females, a kitchen with dining halls and a fairly secluded Dhamma hall. Most places that were found were too small or



*A place for meditation
is praised by the Enlightened
Ones as the greatest of gifts.*

*Therefore a wise person,
concerned about his own
welfare, should establish
pleasant dwellings where
those who have heard about
Dhamma may come
and practice*

- Vinaya, Cullavagga

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Then



Present

there was always something else that made them unsuitable for courses. Other places were just too expensive. The aim was to find a place that was located in the central part of Scandinavia, so that people could easily travel to the centre for courses but also for work periods and meetings. And ideally it should be in an attractive area so that those who want to live near the centre could find a place to live and work. Finally Lyckebygården in Östergötland was found. Built in 1928, it was originally a village school, with two main buildings. In the late 60's, it was bought by a Christian organization that converted it into a rehabilitation centre for mainly alcoholics and built many new houses. This organization ran the rehabilitation centre successfully for about 30 years, after which the property was sold and used as a course centre, youth hostel and café for some time. After lots of discussion and doubts whether the small Vipassana group was ready for such a large project, it was decided to go for it. Enough donations and interest free loans from old students came in, and the property was bought. The first Vipassana centre ever in Scandinavia had been established. Goenkaji named the centre Dhamma Sobhana, which means "Beauty of Dhamma". In pali texts, the word sobhana refers to all positive aspects of consciousness, such as love, compassion, patience and wisdom, which are considered beautiful. Quite an inspiring name!

It soon became clear what a huge challenge the Vipassana group had gotten into. Just to get the buildings ready for the first course required enormous work, involving getting rid of large amounts of rubbish and doing many necessary renovations. The property was quite run down from lack of maintenance and things often broke down, leading to emergency actions to keep the courses running. At one time, the heating system almost stopped in the middle of cold winter, which would have led to the pipes freezing, but it was saved just in time. The sewage system proved to be unreliable, difficult to maintain and too small, so it needed to be replaced immediately at considerable cost. There were not that many people coming to help during the work periods, which meant hard work for those who did. Serving in the kitchen was also demanding, because of poor facilities and lack of organization.

As courses started to be held – seven 10-day courses during the first year with 50 students plus servers on each – it was however clear that there was no turning back. It's was incredibly inspiring to see that the centre was actually giving courses. For every year, more and more people came to serve and help with arranging the courses. The change was not dramatic but it was steady. The level of maintenance was raised so that emergency situations became rare. So many things were improved, most of which probably weren't even noticed by most people. The financial situation was never excellent but quite stable and a small surplus was generated that went into improving the facilities. As the years went by,



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donations increased, as the idea of donation based courses which was new to most people, was getting better understood.

It was fascinating to see how people came to help from near and far. Some people took on quite large renovation projects, others came for a couple of days and cooked food. Most of all people came to meditate, and by this the good atmosphere of the centre kept getting stronger. And people came from so many different countries, not just Scandinavia. On a normal course, the discourse is played in 5-10 different languages. Many came to serve long term, staying at the centre from a month to a year. The number of long term servers has always varied a lot, from a few to quite many, but they have always been invaluable for the centre to keep running and developing.

The 10 year anniversary is a wonderful opportunity to develop sympathetic joy and gratitude to all those people from near and far who have meditated and served at the centre and donated to support it, thus contributing to make this tree of Dhamma grow, for the benefit of so many. And thereby laying the foundation for countless people to benefit in the future.



Renovation of the floor in the Dhamma hall



For a few years the Dhamma hall was located in the attic in the female house



The earth mound was built and planted in 2011.

COURSES IN DENMARK, NORWAY AND FINLAND

In Denmark, a 10 day course will be held on July 12-23 at Aabybro, northern Jutland. With over 100 students, it will be the biggest course in Scandinavia so far. It will be held in English and Danish, the first course ever in Danish. A 3-day course will be held at Hvalsø, near Roskilde, on April 13-17.

In Norway, a 3-day course will be held on July 26-30, followed by a 10-day course on July 31-August 11, at Mysuseter, between Oslo and Trondheim.

In Finland, a 10-day course will be held on August 9-20 at Liesjärvi, north of Helsinki.

1-DAY COURSES

1-day courses are held regularly in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Oslo. Courses may soon be held also in Copenhagen and Uppsala. See the centre course schedule for dates. Please note that all non-centre courses in Sweden, Denmark and Norway are now listed on the course schedule under separate headings (not together with the courses at the centre as before).

CHILDREN'S COURSES

Courses for children 8-12 years old will be held at the centre on April 28-30 and August 25-27. They are conducted in Swedish only. There's plenty of information about children's courses at the centre website.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Nanna Melland, from Norway, has been appointed assistant teacher.

Niklas Damm, Rut Hellsing, Jeppe Strandskov and Sandra Weineland Strandskov have been appointed children's course teachers.

GROUP SITTINGS

Group sittings are held regularly in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Lund, Kristianstad, Oslo, Stavanger, Helsinki, Tampere, Reykjavik and Riga. Please check the centre website for old students for more information (www.sobhana.dhamma.org/os, login: oldstudent pw: behappy)

KEEP GROWING IN DHAMMA!

International newsletter

This newsletter only contains information about what is going on at the centre in Sweden. For Dhamma talks, questions and answers about Vipassana, Dhamma news from around the world, and more, we warmly recommend the international newsletter. It is updated regularly and is available at www.news.dhamma.org (login: oldstudent, password: behappy).