

The 1st anniversary of Dhamma Pallava's opening

What does it mean?

Joyful times! Getting the Centre ready was a job well done! All who helped, did it selflessly, and were rewarded with joy and sense of fulfilment. Hundreds of people had the opportunity to sit their very first course here. Dozens of volunteers helped in preparation and running of the courses, as well as in gardening, maintenance and cleaning. Equally important were the tasks done by people who helped with translations, communication, managing stock and finances. Many provided help remotely, from various places across Poland.

The first year has been a great success. We had over twenty courses; all were held in a positive atmosphere and went smoothly without major problems. The very few small issues we experienced, such as leaking taps or flickering lights, were not a hindrance to the meditators. The progress in the establishment of Dhamma Pallava is excellent news for the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe. We are open to cooperation with countries where centres are being established or are at the planning stage. We based the structure of our centre partly on knowledge acquired from existing Vipassana centres, but at the same time we introduced some new solutions. Perhaps this is a start to a positive new trend. We continue to receive compliments on the positive impact the surrounding natural environment and single room set up have on meditation quality.

Facts and figures

In 2017, 8 courses took place, including the German-English and Czech-English courses at the turn of the year. In 2018, we have already had over a dozen courses (as of June), including two 3-day courses and a Satipatthana Sutta course, which teaches a deeper practice of mindfulness. Back in April we had a 10-day course organised by a friendly trust from Berlin, and in June and July there were courses in Czech and Lithuanian. The next Czech course will take place at the turn of 2018/2019.

Our centre is becoming more and more popular with new students! In the first year and a half, more people will have passed through the centre than in total at Krutyń in the last few years. This sudden change from seasonal to a year-round schedule, immediately after the opening of the centre, means a much greater demand for courses. So far this increase in demand is still served by the same number of old students.

The schedule for 2019 has been released! There's something there for everyone: 6 x English-Polish courses, 2 x Czech-English courses, 3 x German-English, a Satipatthana Sutta course and several short 3-day courses. Remember this when

planning your holiday! Also important are the service periods (maintenance, construction, household and gardening projects), without them the centre could not function well. These are a great chance to give a helping hand and meditate for a minimum of 3 hours a day in a slightly more relaxed formula: morning, afternoon and evening.

New students, old students & older students?

It is estimated that between June 2002 and June 2017 (before Dhamma Pallava opened) around 3 – 4 000 people sat Vipassana courses in Poland. We will now be able to reach the same number in 2 to 4 years! This is assuming that on average about 100 students participate in each course at Dhamma Pallava, of which about 75% are new students. For each course, there are also about 14 servers. The statistics are impressive. The 3-day courses for old students usually see smaller numbers, but here too one course stood out with a large number of attendees.

Between September 2017 and summer of 2018, approximately 1 500 people participated in 10-day courses at Dhamma Pallava.

Teachers: how many and where from?

“A brand new and the most modern centre in Europe, perhaps in the world? I need to check it out! “ This is a thought that might cross the minds of many people, but not the teachers! For them, it is most important that as many courses as possible are on offer so that more people may experience inner peace. Nevertheless, the opening of a new centre can be inspiring, especially when one considers how rarely new and purposefully designed centres are built.

So it was this time. First, teachers from Germany and New Zealand came to Dhamma Pallava (they conducted the inaugural course), next came teachers from France, Great Britain and Poland (the second course was held), then courses were conducted by teachers from Ireland, USA and Canada. One teacher, responsible for the Swedish centre, where the meditation hall is very small, had a chance to speak to us about Dhamma Pallava. After conducting a course here in the 22m x 15m room, he gained a different perspective on how to plan the expansion of the centre in Sweden.

Assistant teacher training, where an experienced teacher helps a younger colleague learn about the realities of teaching, took place here as early as the second run of a 10-day course.

Making young adepts comfortable is crucial because in our tradition, where quality is the main principle, it is the insufficient number of teachers that holds us back from being able to run more courses. All centres are allocated the same number of courses, meaning that even if there are several dozen teachers in Germany or France, the

centres there will not receive more 10-day courses than other countries where there are fewer teachers.

It is important that the courses are equally available in every geographical location.

We would like to remind you that questions for teachers can be directed to:

info@pallava.dhamma.org

You can write in Polish or English. The reply will follow suit and will come from the teacher from your course or another teacher.

Library

Our library is slowly expanding. After changing the conference room into a meeting room, those who want to stay in the centre longer, can find books related to this meditation technique and the history of our organisation here. Many of the books are the same as the ones you see on display during Metta day (unfortunately, often only single copies). Also, we have many books that can help you relax after a day of hard and rewarding Dhamma service. We will gladly accept more books you may have and would like to share, so that others will also benefit. Books must be in accordance with the content of the evening discourses.

Website focus

We are ashamed to admit, but it was not until June 2018 that we found a moment to take care of our website, updating the information and modernising the site. We hope that new photos of the centre will make the content more attractive and will encourage you to visit. We invite you to go online and sign up to our newsletter. We assure you that the website no longer displays out-dated materials from 2015/16. For the curious, we plan a separate webpage showing the development stages of the centre from the time of construction.

Update on group meditations

We have had many positive initiatives throughout the year. People from different cities have suggested they would organise weekly or monthly group meditations. We invite you to check the website for more information.

Open day

Although our first open day, which took place on 10 September 2017, was a success and a surprising hit (the number of guests exceeded our expectations by at least ten fold!), we are holding back on organising another one. You may ask why?

Well, the unexpected turnout on our first open day certainly meant that the curiosity of the local residents was satisfied. Since then the local interest has significantly

normalised, we have blended into the environment and it seems that the centre has been accepted. We run a very tight schedule of courses in the summer, without any maintenance period before mid-September. We would find it very challenging to fit such a large undertaking into our schedule. Although people would like to repeat last year's success of Dhamma Pallava's promo day, we must put it on hold. It should also be noted that the next open day might not be met with such big local interest. Other Vipassana centres know this and do not organise open days too often, devoting more time to think about whom to reach with information about meditation courses instead.

Who's yet to learn about our existence?

There are many people who, despite knowing of Vipassana for years and perhaps even having attended several courses, still do not know about the existence of the centre! I was one of them. One time, in 2015, a teacher told me about the plans for Dhamma Pallava, but I did not take it seriously. I was pleasantly surprised when in 2016, on Metta Day I learned about the first stages of work done at the site, but thought that the construction would take many years. I observed similar reactions when I arrived at the construction site myself. People wanted to know how many years the construction had been going on for, and some guessed it must have been at least 10! So when I informed them it was ten, but months, not years, - they were flabbergasted! Who knows how many old students, who are neither on our mailing list nor have sat a course in years, do not know about the centre at all? It could be 1000 people! So the question arises - how do we reach them or encourage them to reach us?

Changes in committees

To benefit the centre, we have restructured our organisation. We no longer have a committee responsible for organising the courses, instead we have a "household" committee and a "maintenance" committee. The "outreach" committee has seen their responsibilities increase. Our "translations" committee is much busier. Also, the "technical" and "registration" committees have had a tough job, now that the courses run back to back. All committees will eagerly accept new members willing to get involved for longer periods of time and help organise courses.

Changes in the trust of the Polish Vipassana Meditation Foundation

In recent years, the structure of the trust has changed. The panel was "slimmed down" to make decision-making faster and more efficient. Currently, the trust has 6 members, instead of 9. This arrangement worked well during construction period, but this will now need to change due to the different nature of required competencies and time commitment. With the opening of the new centre comes a time when old students,

who live locally and who for the past two years have been working tirelessly, can catch a breath. It has been an exhausting service period.

All the same, the workload, once seasonal, has become a year-round affair. As a result, the trust has now approximately three times the volume in documents and paperwork it used to. Transport for teachers, often foreign, needs to be organized several dozen times a year. With such a sudden increase in duties we need many more “trust members”.

New Manager required immediately

The centre, like any other large building, could not function without proper management.

The trust of the Foundation is responsible for the centre's operational strategy. Day-to-day management of the centre is the task of the manager. The manager organises work at the centre in accordance with the guidelines set out by the trust - time and resources permitting. The manager's work is a continual process. It consists of formalities, finance management and office work, communication with suppliers, training new-coming servers, organizing subsequent courses, facilities management and maintenance. The day starts early and finishes after an evening meeting with teachers and course managers. At that point, the manager could turn to bed, if it wasn't for the final tasks like ... closing doors and windows, turning off kitchen appliances and ventilation, turning descalers on, closing taps and gas valves, storing leftovers away (if they are out), and sometimes turning off washing machines and dryers, which somehow are oblivious to our “no noise after 9.30 pm” rule!

This goes on repeatedly for 10 days straight, and is a perfect test of the balance of the mind. The record holders kept the pace for weeks or months on end, enjoying the not-so-busy moments between courses. Ideally we would like to have a group of a dozen or so willing old students, ready to take up this task and take turns. In recent times, during the interim periods, we have people stay in the centre for longer, occasionally a big group, sometimes just a few. Long-term servers are crucial to the success of the centre's operation: the more there are, the easier it is to make the centre work. An experienced helper can, over time, take over the function of the centre manager and relieve other long-term servers. Many centres struggle with the problem of organisational chaos when well-experienced people return to the outside world, and willing but inexperienced people replace them. We have been doing fine so far, mainly because we have been lucky with many experienced servers from different parts of the world paying us a visit!

During the construction period, Dominika and Jurek spent a lot of time here; Marek - almost two years; Mariusz, Jacek and Guillaume (who came from a centre in

Switzerland) were also here. Once the centre opened, the following people joined: Nicola, Ania, Marcin, Michał, Corrado (witty Italian) and Tomas (a friend from Slovakia). Thanks to them, we've always had someone experienced, often several people, running the centre together. Who knows, maybe you also will join the team in the near future?