

Chapter IV

Suitable Models of Meditation Retreats for Foreigners

This chapter presents suitable models for meditation centres at Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), the Middle Way Meditation Retreat, the International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH), and Wat Pah Nanachat. The analyses of these meditation centres are based on the SWOT analysis, an important tool to evaluate the overall strategic position of an organization and its environment. Appropriate models for each centre are proposed. In addition, the guidelines of general models for meditation retreats in Thailand are explained.

4.1 Suitable Model for Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5) Meditation Centre

4.1.1 SWOT Analysis of Wat Mahādhātu, (Section 5)

SWOT is an abbreviation for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strengths are characteristics of the meditation centre or team that give it an advantage over the others. Weaknesses are characteristics that place the retreat centre at a disadvantage relative to others. Opportunities are external opportunities to take advantage of the environment. Threats are external elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the meditation centres. The SWOT analysis of Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5) is shown in the following items.

4.1.1.1 Analysis of Strengths

1) The centre has a good meditation instructor as a suitable person (*puggala sappāya*) and a as good friend (*kalyānamitta*) who has a good knowledge of the Dhamma and has meditation teaching experience. Their teachings are clear and their lectures are very interesting and helpful. In addition, the teacher monks are very kind and generous. Therefore, many foreign practitioners are impressed with the instructor, so they always visit and practice meditation at this centre.

2) The section 5 of Wat Mahādhātu is located in the centre of Bangkok; therefore, it is easily accessible. The practitioners or the guests can come by boat or bus. It also located in tourist area, so it is easy for foreigners to visit the centre.

3) The centre has good accommodation and good facilities and a nice location which is suitable for the small group of practitioners.

4) The centre provides suitable food and refreshment.

5) The centre is a famous centre which has been teaching meditation for more than 50 years. The centre is very popular for both Thai and foreigners, so it can attach many practitioners to practice meditation at this centre.

6) The meditation retreat has a regular schedule. The centre opens every day and it is easy for visitors to participate in the program.

7) The programme is free of charge. Food and refreshments as well as accommodation are free. It also welcomes all practitioners who are interested in meditation practice.

4.1.1.2 Analysis of Weaknesses

1) There are many people who visit the centre, so there is some noise disturbance for the meditation practice. Furthermore, the centre has not enough space for many practitioners when both Thais and non-Thais practice meditation at the same

time. In addition, sometimes there is not enough accommodation for many practitioners.

- 2) There are not enough mentors or teacher assistants at the centre.
- 3) Not good management and no planning for the retreats.
- 4) The website of the centre is not updated.

4.1.1.3 Analysis of Opportunities

1) Wat Mahādhātu has been promoted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). It is also recommended in guide books such as “Lonely Planet” which attract many international visitors to the centre. They usually use the guide books to search for places to visit. “Lonely planet” is the most famous guide book and provides free advertising for the centre. For these reasons, of the many foreign practitioners, who attended the meditation retreats at this centre, almost all were recommended to come by the guide book.

2) The centre is located right in Wat Mahādhātu, and so it can offer other attractions such as Buddhist ceremonies, blessing, daily services and work details that some foreigners are interested in.

3) The teacher monk is often interviewed by foreign newspapers, so that makes many foreigners interested in visiting the centre.

4) There are many websites which recommend that Wat Mahādhātu (section5) as a good meditation retreat centre; therefore, many foreigners who usually search for information on the Internet find it attractive and want to visit the centre.

4.1.1.4 Analysis of Threats

1) The centre is located near Sanamluang, where there are sometimes demonstrations so it may scare away participants and make it difficult to manage the retreat during protests. Furthermore, because the centre is close to the tourist area and

the market that tempts some participants to want to go out during the retreat and so they lose concentration. It is difficult to find peace.

2) Respiratory infection such as the “Flu 2009” made some potential visitors avoid Bangkok which caused a decline in the number of meditators.

3) In the rainy season, sometimes, there is heavy rain which makes it inconvenient to visit the centre for meditation, so foreign practitioners do not usually visit the temple in the rainy season.

4) The limited number of volunteers restricts the centre’s expansion and growth.

4.1.2 Suggestion Model for Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5)

1) The centre should develop more suitable persons (*puggala sappāya*) or good friends (*kalyānamitta*) and should have many good meditation instructors who know both practice and theory in English. They should have a human resources development and training for monks, staff and volunteers. For example, the centre can start training the volunteer monks from the temple first. Then it should create a program to ordain foreigners who come meditate in the temple. It can start from a small group of foreigners who visit the temple first. Then, if they love the monkhood, they can ordain and become meditation instructors.

2) The centre is famous. There are many practitioners who come to visit and practice meditation here. For this reason, the centre has not enough space to for both Thai and non-Thai practitioners to practice at the same time, so it needs a new, larger building and better facilities. In addition, the centre should develop more accommodation for women because facilities are sometimes too crowded. The other suggestion is that the centre should manage the meditation retreat schedule by organizing different times for Thais and foreigners. The practitioners should book the course before they stay in the temple. In addition, if many practitioners come to

practice meditation, the centre should prohibit foreigners who only want to stay in the temple for free without practicing meditation or taking eight precepts.

3) They should have separate classes for practitioners who just want to sightsee, for beginners who want to learn about meditation and for experienced students who have practiced meditation before.

4) They should be stricter on the rules of the retreat such as keeping silence by and banning cell phones during meditation practice. In addition, the centre should emphasize correct dress, especially for women who should wear brassieres and should not wear short pants.

5) More publicity and donations are needed from people so that air conditioning, a new building and sleeping areas can be built. Therefore, the centre should explain to foreigners about donations for accommodation, food and the facilities or mention a minimum-donation for the retreats because some foreigners do not understand the concept of donations.

6) The centre should develop and update the website. It should have more advertising, especially on the Internet and a booking-facility so that people from around the world can book a retreat.

4.1.3 Evaluation and Feedback of Developed Model

Phra Rajsitthimuni, the vice abbot of Wat Mahādhātu, who is in charge of the meditation centre, agrees with the suggestions. Now the temple does not have many instructors who can speak English and such instructors are difficult to find. The temple has no training system for the teacher monks yet. He also explained that in the future, if the temple had no teacher monks who can speak English, it had to set-up training, which should starting from the monks in this temple, although this would be difficult because there were not many monks in the temple (about 50 monks). Furthermore, there were few monks interested in practicing English. However, the

temple's management team would find some volunteer monks, and, then, they would teach them English, together with meditation training. He planned to start the training about the end of that year. He would teach by himself starting with monks at this temple first. It is like "Dhammaduta" (Buddhist missionary). They trained for meditation practice and English. However, it still difficult to find persons who have both meditation skills and English proficiency. Nevertheless, he would set-up the training.¹

For accommodation, he said that the temple already had planned to built a big building for meditation and have a better facility with an air conditioned room, and he also set the booking system for the retreat. The problem of the noise from cell phones disturbing the retreat could easily be solved by t turning off cell phones during the meditation retreat.

He also agreed that the centre should go public in Internet, and it should train people who are in charge of this. However, it was difficult to find monks who can develop a website. For advertising, normally the temple would not do it; however, the practitioners still attend the retreat without advertising.

4.2 Analysis of the Middle Way Meditation Retreat

4.2.1 SWOT Analysis

4.2.1.1 Analysis of Strengths

1) The Middle Way Meditation Retreat is located in a suitable location in the midst of rolling hills and mountainous scenery of Phu Ruea, Loei province. It is not too large and not too crowded with few people. In addition, it has good facilities and

¹ Phra Rajsitthimuni, the vice abbot of Wat Mahādhātu interview. (19 July2010).

the accommodations are built for supporting group of practitioners in order to make them feel comfortable and protect them from noise and insects.

2) The centre has experience, through organizing meditation retreats for Thais for more than 30 years. It also applies the concept of “sappāya seven” to the retreat such as nice residence, good food, and good teamwork. Additionally, the centre’s professional team has a lot of experience. The team leader has an open mind to new ideas which makes the retreat appropriate for foreigners. In addition, most of the staff can speak English. The organizers understand everyone’s needs as well and the teamwork creates an atmosphere in which the participants become happy, joyous and free.

3) The meditation instructors teach simple meditation teaching which is very easy for the meditators to understand. The program includes some basic information about Buddhism to help participants understand meditation. Therefore, the practitioners can proceed in meditation.

4) The centre provides suitable food and refreshments with nutritious and tasty food; therefore, the practitioners can choose suitable food for them.

5) The meditation program is suitable for the participants. In addition, the course is free to people of all nationalities, religions and beliefs. The centre harmoniously brings together people of different ages, nationalities, backgrounds and beliefs

4.2.1.2 Analysis of Weaknesses

1) The “Suan Pa Himmawan” at Phu Ruea, Loei province can accommodate about 200 people. However, it is not suitable when both Thai groups and foreign groups come to meditate, at the same time. Therefore, it is too crowded and noisy when there are too many practitioners. Furthermore, some facilities such as rooms and

chairs and the toilet facilities should be improved. In addition, clearer instructions should be made available on how to find the centre.

2) There are too few human resources. The staff may not be numerous enough to support the program due to its being offered in English. In addition, there are no new trained personnel to replace the personnel that leave.

3) There is sometimes too much talking among the meditators during the retreats and sometimes telephones ring, disturbing meditation.

4) Taking pictures and video during the meditation retreat sometimes disturbs meditation.

4.2.1.3 Analysis of Opportunities

1) The centre main website, www.meditationthai.org and the support website such as www.dmc.tv are easy to understand and search-out information. Therefore the practitioners can book the course on-line.

2) There are many recommendations from friends and family who use to practice here, so they then invite their relatives and friends to practice meditation at this centre.

3) The Middle Way Meditation Retreat has been placed in the top three of all international retreats world-wide.² Therefore, many practitioners have learned about the retreat before they apply for the course.

4) This centre can set-up meditation practices in many countries which have Dhammakaya temple branches. As a result, the temple plans to expand to 208 counties in 2011, so the Middle Way Meditation Retreat can also set meditation programme in those countries.

² Travel+ Leisure. **10 Top Meditation Retreats**. (on-line). source: <http://www.travelandleisure.com>, (1 January 2010).

4.2.1.4 Analysis of Threats

1) Political and economical instability in Thailand affected the attitudes of practitioners. For example, visitors chose to attend retreats in other countries, because of political and economical instability in Thailand was creating a bad reputation for the country.

2) In the rainy season, there are many insects in the centre, and it annoys participants.

3) Sounds and noises from the surroundings and the community always disturb the retreat in the morning.

4.2.2 Suggested Model for the Middle Way Meditation Retreat

1) The centre should find a more appropriate location. It should have private meditation areas because sometimes the retreat centre has to share the meditation area with Thai groups. So the site is too crowded, and it is difficult to stay quietly. In addition, the retreat centre should separate the schedule for Thai and foreign programmes, so the centre would not be too crowded during meditation. Besides, the retreat should have clearer instructions on the exact location of the centre.

2) The centre should improve online technology and make it more public. Then, the centre can ask participants to recommend it to their friends to practice meditation at this centre.

3) In addition, advertising is needed to increase the number of participants and give access to all people. For example, they should give more pictures to the participants by using Facebook or emailing materials to them. People could then see meditation practice on Facebook.

4) The centre should increase supplementary programs such as health care with meditation. It should offer more languages, not only English at the retreat. In

addition, the centre should offer meditation retreats more often, and it should open retreats in the other countries.

5) The centre should offer consistent training for staff members as a career path. Both monks and lay people should receive more intensive meditation training.

6) More and better visual aids are needed to support presentations.

7) It should provide English – Pāli translation in the chanting book and give some basic guidelines of how to read Pāli

8) The centre should add a map of the meeting-point to help participants to go there easily.

4.2.3 Evaluation and Feedback of Developed Model

The team leader of the Middle Way Meditation Retreat explained that he agreed that the retreat centre should have an appropriate separate location for the foreigner retreats. He also explained that, according to the Middle Way Retreat year plan, when the centre gets more than 50 foreign practitioners for each retreat, it could use the area of “Suan Pa Himmawan” without sharing it with Thai groups. It would also be good if the centre could find another place for small groups. The organizers said they would research that further.

In addition, the facility at the retreat such as the meditation room was fixed already with new air-conditioning that had less noise and a new sound system to help the acoustics in the room. The centre totally agreed that it should upgrade toilet facilities and would work on that. Regarding the chanting book, there are some basic guidelines of how to read Pāli at the back but the section may be too short.

According to the suggestion that the retreat should have clearer instructions regarding the exact location, The Middle Way Meditation Retreat organizers explained that they had already added map in the website to help direct participants to go to the meeting point. However, , the retreat centre do not have a map of Phu Reua

or directions to Phu Ruea because the practitioners will go together by bus to Phu Ruea, anyway, and it was not recommended for people to go there by themselves because it was too far and the participants might get easily lost.

The organizers agreed with the recommendation that the retreat had not enough human resources and the centre had already planned to provide training to increase the number of volunteers to help them, full-time or part-time.

Regarding the comment that there are too many talking and chatting among the fellow meditators, the organizers explained that it was quite hard for the centre to use Noble Silence retreat. But the centre taught people about moderation in speaking and talks only for essential things. For promotion, the retreat centre is working more on both public relations and Internet and using new media such as Facebook, Hi5, and other social networks to help spread the words. In addition, the centre agreed that the retreat should have more and better visual aids to support the presentation and are now working towards the comments

The retreat centre also offers the Middle Way Retreat in Chinese and Japanese every year. However, it is not arranged like the English one. The retreat is working to increase more retreats, with different languages offered. At this time, the centre has Middle Way retreats in almost every continent; in South Africa, USA, Europe, Australia and also Japan. The retreat centre agrees that its people should receive more intensive meditation training, and is working towards these commitments. In addition, the retreat centre normally minimizes photo taking to only one session in one day for photos taken in the meditation room. They also respect the time to meditate.

Regarding the comment that the centre should bring monks closer to dialogue with participants, the centre normally has group sharing activities two times during the retreat with monks and mentors discussing with participants, and teaching monks and mentors also talked to participants outside the meditation room quite often.

4.3 Analysis of International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH)

4.3.1 SWOT Analysis

4.3.1.1 Analysis of Strengths

- 1) The centre has suitable persons such as good teaching monks and the staff are very kind.
- 2) It is well-organized and in a remote setting, which makes participants want to visit this centre. In addition, teaching and practicing are well-structured in regard to the methods and presentation of ideas.
- 3) The centre has a suitable area such as a hot springs, mountains, ponds and it has very nice open atmosphere suitable for meditation.
- 4) The retreat programme encourages the practitioners to be health mentally and physically and improve in meditation.
- 5) The yoga class is great for people who never sit on the floor.

4.3.1.2 Analysis of Weaknesses

- 1) There are many mosquitoes, insects, some snakes that disturb the practitioners.
- 2) The wooden pillow is too high for some practitioners.
- 3) There are strict rules; therefore, some practitioners cannot follow them. For instance, some of them do not keep silent and about 10-30 percent leave the retreat before the program finished
- 4) Because of the language, sometimes it is difficult to follow and to concentrate, and it is a silent retreat, the participants cannot ask if they do not understand. It makes some participants confused and some sleepy.

5) The food sometimes is too spicy for some participants, so they have only eaten rice without anything with it.

6) The pollution of water and air because of the burning of plastic in the place disturbed the practitioners.

4.3.1.3 Analysis of Opportunities

1) When Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) promotes tourism in Surat Thani province, people also come to attend the retreat here.

2) TV programs such as “The National Geographic” went to interview the monk at IDH which made people from around the world know about this retreat centre and attend it.

3) Guide books such as “Lonely Planet” also recommend Suan Mohkhh and the IDH meditation retreat, so many practitioners come because of recommendations.

4) The IDH centre located at Surat Thani province which has many famous islands; therefore, many tourists who want to go to the beach and driving come to visit the retreat before or after their travels in the islands.

4.3.1.4 Analysis of Threats

1) Political and economy, flooding, infectious flu, and threat of war cause practitioners to avoid Thailand.

2) Noise from the neighbours such as radio broadcasts in the villages, restaurants, and the train station make it difficult for practitioners to concentrate.

3) The rainy season with heavy rain makes the practitioners feel uncomfortable about meditating and flooding in the south of Thailand also made some foreigners change their plans and not attend the retreat.

4.3.2 Suggested Model for International Dhamma Hermitage

1) The retreat centre should develop the area around the centre in order to make the retreat a suitable location because there was too much noise and temptation to stray to town or go shopping. For example, the radio broadcast in the surrounding community and music from the restaurants could reduce the volume. Furthermore, the centre should develop a good relationship with the community in the nearby area and explain to them why the retreat needs silence. In the meantime, the IDH centre should set-up a meditation room which is sound-proof from the noise outside. Also, an air conditioned room with a curtain could also reduce the noise from the outside area.

2) To develop suitable persons to be good meditation instructors and good volunteers, the retreat centre should set-up a training program for them in order to have more effective resources to help manage the retreat.

3) The retreat can develop suitable speech and suitable Dhamma teaching by separating the Dhamma topics by the instructors because multiple speakers on one single topic can be confusing, especially for those new to this practice. Perhaps if there were only one speaker allocated to a specific area, then it might be easier for beginners to follow.

In addition, the centre should set the topic for the course and set the Dhamma topic for each instructor. The instructors should schedule meetings and update what they already taught and make a record, so the teaching will be more effective and the practitioners can understand the teaching better.

4) The practitioners need more instruction on meditation because many of them have never done it before. The practitioners said that although it may be simple for the one who had experience before, it was all new to them. In addition, for non-native English speakers, sometimes, it was hard to understand the teaching of some monks. It would be good to provide some previous information in handouts.

5) The practitioners felt disappointing at seeing how people leave the place so soon. In every course about 10-30 person left the retreat before it finished. The retreat centre should strictly inform on guest's arriving. In addition, they should separate classes of the beginners, non-beginners and advanced practice. For example, they can set the introduction to meditation course for e tourists or backpackers who want to try the challenge and want to know how meditation is for three or five days. This course should not be too strict or too long. Next, the ten days retreat should be set-up for those who have already past the introduction course. For practitioners who usually practice at IDH for many times, they should set-up an advanced meditation retreat for them or set-up an ordination program. Furthermore, the centre should set-up the retreats in other provinces. In addition, it should have more testimonials about the retreat such as on the website.

4.3.3 Evaluation and Feedback of Developed Model

The team leader of the IDH centre explained that for the problem of noise and temptations in the surrounding, the retreat centre agreed that it should cultivate a good relationship with the surrounding community. The centre already had a plan to invite the leaders of the communities to meditate and made them understand what the retreat centre does.

As for the suggestion that the retreat centre should set-up a training program for the instructors and staff to have more resources to set the retreat, the centre agreed with this and already had asked visitors who used to attend the Dhammamata retreats to become staff members. However, the retreat did not want many staff members, but it wants quality resources.

In addition, for non-native English speakers it was sometimes difficult to understand the teaching of some monks. For this reason, the centre emphasizes that instructors should speak slowly and clearly. For the instruction on meditation, the

retreat centre had no policy to make a program such as PowerPoint presentation or use any paper. Nonetheless, the retreat centre has meditation guide books and some related documents in the office, which if the practitioners wanted to read they could ask for at the retreat office. In addition, sometimes the multiple speakers for a single topic can be confusing, especially for those new to this practice. For this reason, the retreat centre already told the instructors to manage the teaching.

As the practitioners felt disappointed to see how people left the place earlier so they had recommended that the retreat centre should inform retreatants on arriving on the first day orientation, that if the practitioners felt uncomfortable or they could not follow the rules, that they could leave the retreat. However, the centre had no policy to expand other branches for the meditation retreats: however, they said that if anyone or any meditation centre would like to do a retreat and follow this tradition, they could do it without any problem of copyright.

Regarding the suggestion that the retreats should set-up a meditation retreat for non-beginners and advanced practice, the centre had already done it although it had the problem of lacking enough the human resources and the centre was lacking enough qualified mediation instructors and staff.

For the testimonials about the retreat such as may be found on the website, the retreat agrees with this and already has the staff to develop such a website for the retreat.

4.4 Analysis of Wat Pah Nanachat

4.4.1 SWOT analysis

4.4.1.1 Analysis of Strengths

1) There is suitable place for meditation with a high quality of silence in the temple, in the forest, in the air, and it in isolation from society.

2) There are suitable persons such as an abbot and guest monks and other monks who are very nice and they can help and answer the Dhamma questions of the practitioners to concentrate their mind.

3) They have self-discipline; therefore, the practitioners would also like to practice the monastic rules and learn Thai culture, together with meditation and living a monastic life.

4) The schedule is not too timed-consuming, so the practitioners can have private time to practice meditation by themselves.

5) The temple is famous, so many foreigners want to visit and practice meditation and prepare for ordain there.

6) There was suitable food and refreshment which was delicious, healthy and various types of food suitable for each practitioners.

4.4.1.2 Analysis of Weakness

1) The lack of formal meditation instruction or guidance. .

2) Women residences are not conveniently located. Sometimes, in the rainy season, the accommodation area is messy with tree leaves and broken equipment, and they have no light on the way to go for morning chanting at 3.00 am.

3) No first aid for the practitioners who get sick.

4) The temple's website is not updated.

5) The temple has no formal meditation teachings or guidelines for the practitioners.

4.4.1.3 Analysis of Opportunities

1) More people come because of the recommendation from friends and by word-of-mouth.

2) Many books, such as "Lonely Planet", contain the life story of Luang Phor Cha and mention this temple making many visitors want to visit there.

3) The information from Internet makes many people come visits the temple and meditate there.

4.4.2.4 Analysis of Threat

1) Lack of instructors and staff.

2) Increasing contact with the materialistic and sensual culture of the modern world can distract young monastics from their aspiration to cultivate the path to overcome all suffering.

3) City and town coming closer to the temple.

4) In the rainy season, many insects in the temple that disturb for the practitioners.

4.4.3 Suggestion Model for Wat Pah Nanachat

1) The temple should develop more suitable persons such as more senior monks or meditation instructors in charge for many years. If there were a larger number of a very experienced, senior monks in residence, here, it would be of benefit.

2) The temple should have scheduled group meditation for lay people.

3) The temple should have more contacts between monks and lay people.

4) It should update and develop more websites.

5) The temple should do public relations to promote or advertise the temple's ordination information.

6) There are many people interested in practicing meditation here, it will be better if the temple set-up a schedule for the meditation retreats, such as meditation programs for beginners and for women.

7) Sometimes, in the rainy season, the accommodation area is messy with the tree leaves, and broken equipment. It will be good if the temple staff and volunteers can fix some broken equipment and clean and clear that area.

8) The temple should brief those interested about the meditation teaching or give a guide line for the practitioners on the first day that they get to the temple.

4.4.4 Evaluation and Feedback of Developed Model

1) The temple organizers agreed that they should have more senior monks or the meditation instructors or an abbot to stay for many years. However, it was difficult to find human resources, especially the abbot or the leader of all temple projects. Normally, in this temple, the abbot or the leader would change every five years, so it was not easy and take time to develop people who could speak in fluent Thai.

2) The temple had the scheduled for an ordination program but had no policy to set-up group meditation for the lay people.

3) The temple had already set the time for answering questions for the practitioners.

4) The temple agreed that it should update and develop the website. However, they lacked the human resources who could update information regularly.

5) The temple had no policy to do public relations to promote or advertise the temple's ordination information. The temple wanted people come here for ordination and not just come for travelling.

6) It was good idea to provide the meditation program for women but the temple had no human resources or nuns who can be in charge of this.

7) The temple had not many monks and they were busy with Dhamma study and helping with the temple work, so they could not fix or clean all of the accommodation area. The temple needed volunteers to do this and in the rainy season

there were rarely volunteers or practitioners, so some areas were not suitable for staying during meditation.

8) The temple had no policy to teach meditation but it prepared for ordination. There was no formal meditation teaching here. However, the teaching monks could give advice for practitioners. For practitioners who had never meditated before, the temple recommend them to go visit Suan Mohhk or others meditation retreat to learn basic meditation before coming here.

4.5 Guideline Models for Meditation Retreats for Foreigner in Thailand

According to the result of interview and SWOT analysis, it is recommended that the guideline models for meditation retreats should be divided into different levels: visitor centre, beginners, intermediates, and model for advanced level.

4.5.1 Guideline Model for Visitor Centre

Model for visitor centre is suitable for the temples or meditation retreats that usually have many tourists visiting and who want to observe the meditation practice but are not ready to attend a meditation retreat, such as in Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), Bangkok, Suan Mokkh, Wat Pah Nanachat, Wat Kow Tham International Centre, Wat Phradhatu Doi Suthep, and so forth.

The visitor centres should separate the area between the visitors and the practitioners who attend the meditation retreat, so, they will not disturb each other. In addition, the centres should set a time schedule for meditation guide line. For example:

9.00 -10.00	Introduction to meditation
10.00- 10.30	Meditation Practice
10.30-11.00	Questions - Answers

The centres should set the specific time separately from the general meditation practice, so it will not disturb the other practitioners.

During this introductory session, the centres can also give information about the other meditation programs and some brief information for practitioners who want to attend the other meditation retreats for beginners or intermediates.

4.5.2 Guideline Model for Beginners

The model for beginners' or new students is suitable for non-Thais and non-Buddhists or those who have never practiced meditation before and want to learn the basic meditation practice. The duration of the course should be three to seven days. The course should offer structured periods of meditation throughout the day with the meditation master or the teaching monks giving instructions on meditation for new students.

4.5.2.1 Meditation Retreat Schedule

This course should set a schedule for basic meditation teaching. It should set a personal guide for meditation, including exercises for stretching their body of the practitioners, and so on. An example meditation schedule for the new students is below:

4.30 - 05.00	Wake up
05.30	Meditation practice
06.15	Morning Exercise
07.00	Breakfast
09.00	Meditation Instruction
09.30	Meditation Practice
11.00	Lunch

12.30	Personal time
14.00	Basic Dhamma Teaching
15.00	Meditation Practice or Walking Meditation (Up to the retreat)
16.00	Personal Time / Private meditation interview
17.30	Refreshments
19.00	Basic Dhamma Teaching
20.00	Meditation practice
21.00	Personal Time

4.5.2.2 Factor Favourable for Beginners

The most appropriate location for beginner course should have a forest environment or be near a natural environment with little noise. However, if the centres or the temples are located in the city, the air conditioning room can help to reduce noise from the neighbouring area and set the appropriate temperature for foreigners. In addition, the accommodation should be appropriate to the number of practitioners. If there are too many candidates whom the centres cannot accommodate, they should separate groups for meditation retreats in the other sites (if they have any); otherwise, let the practitioners apply for the next retreat.

The retreat centres do not need to force the practitioners to do silent retreat; however, it should inform them to talk on suitable subjects such as on the Dhamma or meditation. They should be allowed to ask Dhamma questions or share the meditation practice experience with a mentor or a meditation master personally.

The meditation instructors should be suitable persons who understand Dhamma and meditation practice very well. They usually give good explanations on basic Dhamma teachings, meditation practices, and so forth. They should also teach the practitioners to concentrate their minds and answer their questions clearly. The

basic Dhamma teaching should be related to basic concepts of meditation such as, loving kindness meditation, benefits of meditation, obstacles of meditation practice or the Five Hindrances, and application of meditation in everyday life. For this level, the retreat centres should set the basic rules based on the eight precepts or offer a light meal dinner. This course should focus on basic meditation practices and should not make the practitioners feel like they are forced to convert to Buddhism. For example, the practitioners should not be forced to bow or pay respect for the Triple Gems if they do not want to do so. Furthermore, morning chanting and evening chanting should be avoided at this level.

Regarding suitable food and refreshments, the retreat should provide many types of healthy and nutritious food for breakfast and lunch. Food served can be both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, so the practitioners can choose food suitable for them. In the evening, light refreshments such as fruit juices, milk, tea or hot chocolate, coffee, and so forth, should be provided. In addition, if some practitioners request dinner, a light meal such as salad or yoghurt could be provided.

To provide a suitable climate for foreign practitioners, a closed room which can protect them from the rain and which has an air conditioner create the right temperature is needed. Regarding suitable posture, the centre should teach both sitting meditation and practicing in the other postures such as walking meditation.

4.5.3 Guideline Model for Intermediate

The model for the intermediate level is suitable for non-Thais and even non-Buddhists or those who have practiced meditation before and want to continue practicing and studying Buddha Dhamma. The course can be offered for seven day to ten day meditation retreats. At this level, the meditation master or the teaching monks should give instructions on meditation and Buddha Dhamma teachings such as

understanding the Triple Gems (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha). In addition, the meditation practice could be a bit longer than at the beginner level.

4.5.3.2 Meditation Retreat Schedule

The intermediate course should set a schedule for meditation, teaching both theory and practice, morning and evening chanting, basic Buddhist teachings, personal guidance for meditation, exercise for stretching the body, and so on. An example of such a meditation schedule is as below:

04.30	Wake up
05.00	Meditation practice & Spreading Loving-kindness
05.30	Morning Chanting
06.30	Exercises
07.00	Breakfast
09.00	Meditation Instruction
09.30	Meditation Practice
11.00	Lunch
12.30	Personal time
14.00	Dhamma Teaching
15.00	Meditation Practice or Walking Meditation (Up to the retreat)
16.00	Personal Time / Private meditation interview
17.30	Refreshments
18.30	Evening Chanting
19.00	Dhamma Teaching
20.00	Meditation practice
21.00	Personal Time

4.5.3.2 Factor Favourable for the Intermediate

The suitable place for an intermediate course is similar to that for the beginners' course. However, the forest or a natural environment will be more appropriate. In addition, the retreat centres can inform the practitioners to talk less talks or have suitable talks also being allowed to ask about Dhamma questions or meditation practice experiences with a mentor or a meditation master.

The meditation instructors should be suitable persons who understand Buddha Dhamma and meditation practices very well. They should give good explanations on Dhamma teachings, meditation practices, and so forth. They should also teach the practitioners to concentrate their minds and answer their questions clearly. The Dhamma teachings should be related to meditation theory, loving kindness meditation, obstacles of meditation practice, the Five Hindrances, the importance of the five or eight precepts, the concept of donation, the fourth noble truth, and so on. For this level, the retreat centres should set the basic rules based on the eight precepts with no dinner allowed. This course should focus on longer meditation practice.

Regarding suitable food and refreshments, the retreat should provide many types of healthy and nutritious food for breakfast and lunch, and light refreshment such fruit juices, milk, should be provided in the evening. As for suitable climate and suitable posture, it could be the same as for the beginners' course.

4.5.4 Guideline Model for Advanced Level

The model for the advanced level is suitable for practitioners who have practiced an intermediate level course before and want to proceed in meditation

practice and study more Buddha Dhamma. The course should offer a minimum of two weeks for meditation retreat. At this level, the meditation master or the teaching monks should be experts and have excellent meditation experiences and good teachings. In addition, the practitioners should understand Buddhist teaching in theory and practice, and should spend longer times for meditation practice.

4.5.4.2 Meditation Retreat Schedule

The advanced course should have a scheduled for meditation teachings both in theory and practice, morning and evening chanting, Buddhist teachings, personal guidance for meditation, chore, and exercise for stretching their body. In addition, at this course, the practitioners should practice working meditation such as kitchen work, cleaning the temple and so on. An example for the meditation schedule is as below:

04.00-4.30	Wake up
05.00	Morning Chanting, Meditation practice, and spreading loving-kindness
06.15	Exercise
06.30	Chores
07.00	Breakfast
09.00	Meditation Session and Dhamma Talk
11.00	Lunch
12.30	Chores (Dish washing, and kitchen work)
13.00	Personal time
14.00	Dhamma Teachings
15.00	Meditation Practice,
16.00	Walking Meditation (Up to the retreat)

17.00	Refreshments
18.30	Evening Chanting
19.00	Meditation Session and Dhamma Talk
21.00	Personal Time

4.5.4.2 Factor Favourable for Advanced Level

The suitable place for an advanced course is similar as for an intermediate course. Nonetheless, a natural environment can better support meditation practice. In addition, the retreat centres can inform the practitioners to have only suitable talks and also allow them to ask Dhamma questions or share their questions about meditation practice experience with a mentor or a meditation master personally. In addition, the meditation instructors should be experts and have good meditation experience; they can give explanation in depth on Dhamma teachings and meditation practices. They should also teach suitable meditation subjects to the practitioners upon the participant's temperaments. The Dhamma teachings should focus on meditation theory and practice such as the three-fold training (tisikkhā) which are training in higher morality (adhisīla-sikkhā), training in higher mentality (adhicitta-sikkhā) and training in higher wisdom (adhipaññā-sikkhā), the four noble truths (ariya-sacca), the dependent origination, and so forth.

Regarding suitable food and refreshments, the retreat should provide many types of healthy and nutritious food, and light refreshment such as fruit juice should be provided in the evening. At this level, the retreat centres should set the basic role based on the eight precepts with no dinner allowed. As for the suitable climate and the suitable postures, it could be the same as for the beginner & intermediate courses.

In summary, meditation retreats and temples with meditation practices for foreigners should separate classes in different levels: for visitors who are interested in meditation and wish to learn about it but are not yet ready to practice it; the

meditation retreat for beginners, intermediates, advanced meditation practitioners, and set an ordination programme. In addition, they should also apply the concept of sappāya or the factors favourable to mental development to support the retreat. Additionally, the retreat centres or temples could estimate the cost for the class and set the minimum donation for the practitioners because some foreigners have no idea about “donations”; therefore, the centres can set a budget for the next retreat.