

Dhamma Dharā
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New male residences in Dhamma Dharā

Dhamma Dharā, meaning 'Land of Dhamma', is located in the western part of Massachusetts state, approximately 90 miles west of Boston and 200 miles north of New York City. The Centre, the first to have been established in North America, is situated in a traditional, rural farming area of Massachusetts.

The nearby Deerfield and Connecticut rivers flow through an agricultural valley that traverses much of New England. Five well-known universities and several community colleges are situated in the valley, attracting many students. The nearby village of Shelburne Falls records that Native American tribes kept a peace treaty for the area of one day's journey in each direction. Their Mohawk Trail is now a state road and a national tourist destination for viewing the autumn tree foliage colors.

Dhamma Dharā, founded in 1982, was originally a roomy, comfortable two-story house and barn on eight acres of meadowland. Local farmers report that the house was once a temperance tavern (i.e. not serving alcohol) for horse drawn coaches. Just eight students completed the first ten-day course and early courses in the house were limited to 25 students. Slowly the Centre began

expanding to meet the demand of students. In 1989, a group of meditators donated an adjoining seventy acres that brought the land back to its original parcel. Today Dhamma Dharā consists of 108 acres with many new buildings added, including a bathhouse, two dining rooms, meditation hall for 200, a 64-cell pagoda, separate residences for men and women and a centre manager's house.



Question and Answer session with Goenkaji in Dhamma Dhara, Aug 2, 2002, North America Tour

Presently Dhamma Dharā can accommodate 50 women and 44 men for a total of 94 participants year round. During summer, when we can use tents and cabins, the capacity is 146 students. New residences were completed in December 2004 with individual rooms and private baths.

Approximately 19 ten-day courses are scheduled in Shelburne per year, with nearly every course full with a wait list. Approximately 1,725 students from around the world complete our courses annually. Dhamma Dharā also offers courses for children and teenagers as well as 20-, 30- and 45-day courses. The Vipassana Centre supports regional prison outreach as well.

Future expansion plans include construction of the upper floors of a pagoda building with cells, a teacher's residence and two more student residences. From its modest beginnings as a farmhouse on eight acres of land, Dhamma Dharā has continued to grow.

In the past 20 years many student meditators have moved to the area to be close to the Centre. There is now a large community of meditators living in the immediate vicinity who have given invaluable service as well as establishing warm relations between the Centre and local community.