



## **Ethical statement SIM**

(version May 2017)

- A. Code of conduct
- B. Confidential counsellor
- C. Ethical Committee

### **Preface**

What follows is the ethical code of the SIM. The SIM organises and facilitates vipassana retreats and dhamma activities with the aim of cultivating and spreading the (Theravada) Buddhist practice of insight meditation. On our website we announce vipassana activities that are organised by the SIM and other related organisations.

The SIM aims to cultivate and warrant a safe and responsible environment. In doing so we commit to further implement of and abiding to the guidelines of this ethical code.

Besides we aim for clear criteria regarding our teachers and emphasise the importance of intercollegial consulting and follow up trainings. These ethical guidelines will be actively made known to participants of retreats and other activities that are advertised by the SIM, so as to know what behaviour to expect from teachers and organisers and to know what to do when guidelines are violated.

We emphasise that these guidelines are supported in the teachings of the Dhamma. They are situated in the context of spiritual growth towards the awakening and liberation of the mind. In the unfortunate event of violation of these guidelines, we aim to initiate a process on the premises of insight, forgiveness and reconciliation, even when juridical actions are required.

The ethical code and the implementation is an ongoing progress, any suggestions and/or advices will be very much welcomed.

Three pillars constitute the proposed ethical agreement, namely:

- A ) A code of conduct,
- B) Regulations for confidential counsellors, and:
- C) Regulations for installing ethical committee as referred to in the stipulations.

## **A. Ethical code of conduct.**

The ethical code of conduct is the first part of this ethical agreement. The code encompasses the five Buddhist lay-precepts and reflects spiritual values, such as the care and attention for other's wellbeing.

Teachers, board members, directors and others involved in the activities of the SIM are kindly asked to endorse the following in relation to their work with / for the SIM:

### **Code of Conduct**

SIM teachers, organisers and otherwise related to the SIM, acknowledge that the foundation of spiritual life is based in mindful and caring relationships with the living beings around us. We appreciate that without the support of monastic vows and Asian customs, we have a need for clear Western guidelines within the context of (the organisation of) vipassana retreats weekends and courses. In line with this understanding, and for the long-term benefit of ourselves and the community at large, we agree to uphold the five lay training precepts. Furthermore, we have specifically expanded the scope of these five precepts to make them explicitly appropriate to our role as Dharma-workers in our specific cultural setting. In addition, in our understanding, the nature of the Dhamma, makes it hard for a teacher to be 'off-duty' and should therefore be responsive to these guidelines in any given situation.

We thus have agreed to the following guidelines:

#### **1) We undertake the precept of refraining from killing.**

In undertaking this precept we acknowledge the interconnection of all beings and our respect for all life. We agree to refine our understanding of not killing and nonharming in all our actions. We seek to understand the implication of this precept in such difficult areas as abortion, euthanasia, and the killing of pets. While some of us recommend vegetarianism, and others do not, we all commit ourselves to fulfilling this precept in the spirit of reverence for life.

#### **2) We undertake the precept of refraining from stealing.**

We agree to not take that which does not belong to us and to respect the property of others. We agree to bring consciousness to the use of all of the earth's resources in a respectful and ecological way. We agree to be honest in our dealing with money and not to misappropriate money committed to Dharma projects. We agree to offer teachings without favouritism in regard to student's financial circumstances.

#### **3) We undertake the precept of refraining from false speech.**

We agree to speak that which is true and useful and to refrain from gossip in our community. We agree to hold in confidence what is explicitly told to us in confidence. We agree to cultivate conscious and clear communication, and to cultivate the quality of loving-kindness and honesty as the basis of our speech.

#### **4) We undertake the precept of refraining from sexual misconduct.**

We agree to avoid creating harm through sexuality and to avoid sexual exploitation or relationships of a sexual manner that are outside of the bounds of the relationship commitments we have made to another or that involve another who has made vows to another. Teachers with vows of celibacy will live according to their vows. Teachers in committed relationships will honour their vows and refrain from adultery. All teachers agree not to use their teaching role to exploit their authority and position in order to assume a sexual relationship with a student.

Because several single teachers in our community have developed partnerships and marriages with former students, we acknowledge that such a healthy relationship can be possible, but that great care and sensitivity is needed. We agree that in this case the following guidelines are crucial.

- a) A sexual relationship is never appropriate between teachers and students.
- b) During retreats or formal teaching, any intimation of future student-teacher romantic or sexual relationship is inappropriate.
- c) If interest in a genuine and committed relationship develops over time between a teacher and a student, the student-teacher relationship must clearly and consciously have ended before any further development toward a romantic relationship. Such a relationship must be approached with restraint and sensitivity - in no

case should it occur immediately after retreat. A minimum time period of three months or longer from the last formal teaching between them, and a clear understanding from both parties that the student-teacher relationship has ended must be coupled with a conscious commitment to enter into a relationship that brings no harm to either party.

**5) We undertake the precept of refraining from intoxicants that cause heedlessness or loss of awareness.**

It is clear that substance abuse is the cause of tremendous suffering. We agree that there should be no use of intoxicants during retreats or while on retreat premises. We agree not to abuse or misuse intoxicants at any time. We agree that if any teacher, board member or organiser has a drug or alcohol addiction problem, it should be immediately addressed by the community. It is then expected that this person professional help to overcome his or her addiction problem.

The guidelines named above apply equally to organisers and directors, board members of the SIM.

**B) Confidential counsellor SIM**

The confidential counsellor is assigned to the task of providing initial assistance to persons who claim to be victims of inappropriate behaviour of teachers and/or organisers of the SIM, or otherwise associated with the SIM.

The activities of the confidential counsellor include:

- giving advise;
- mediating
- assisting with the process of lodging a formal complaint
- assisting with making a police report
- assisting with the first steps towards 'slachtofferhulp'

**The procedure remains under auspices of the complainant / victim, unless juridical boundaries have been violated in a severe manner.**

The counsellor's conduct is of a caring, attentive and highly confidential nature. Although there is a relationship between the SIM and the counsellor, there is enough distance for the counsellor to act independently.

In case of an incident of inappropriate or undesirable behaviour, one is strongly encouraged to seek the guidance of one of the appointed counsellors. However, naturally, one is utterly free to rely on any other person (un)related to the SIM for advise or otherwise.

Confidential counsellors:

**Elly van Hoorn**

Regio Maastricht

06 20979112

vanhoornelly@gmail.com

Als arbeids- en organisatiepsycholoog adviseert Elly organisaties over thema's zoals werkdruk en grensoverschrijdend gedrag. Ze is momenteel werkzaam als externe vertrouwenspersoon voor diverse organisaties in verschillende sectoren (onderwijs, zorg, productie).

**Janet Wester**

Den Bosch

06 10003260

janet.wester@gmail.com

Janet Wester holds more than 25 years of experience in management of change-processes en personal development. She started her expertise in the context of HRM, while she works independently in the private

practice since 2009. Her focus lies on bringing about a cooperation which allows for all involved to safely explore an abiding problem or challenge and come to an adequate insight, acceptance or action.

Janet has experience in Vipassana meditation, although she isn't currently actively involved with vipassana meditation. She feels very much connected to the wisdom coming from Buddhist philosophy. Parallel to forementioned activities, she volunteers for palliative care and for the SIM in the function of confidential counsellor.

**We are currently looking for a third counsellor of confidentiality, who is unrelated to the SIM or other Buddhist organisations.**

In case of a prolonged absence of one of the counsellors, the other counsellor is kindly asked to take over.

#### **Regulations for confidential counsellors SIM**

1. The board of the SIM appoints at least two confidential counsellors.
2. The confidential counsellor operates independently from the SIM, both in organisatory and emotional sense;
3. The confidential counsellor is assigned to the following tasks:
  - to be available by phone for yogi's partaking in SIM retreats (article 5)
  - In the case that a possible victim first approaches a SIM-board member, teacher or a person otherwise affiliated with the SIM, the counsellor can be involved at any moment suitable.
  - The SIM board member, teacher or otherwise affiliated person should inform the victim about the possibility of the guidance of the counsellor.
  - The information provided by the victim is confidential. Further discussing the matter and /or informing third parties can only be done with explicit permission of the victim / complainant.
  - On request of the person concerned a complaint can be brought to the ethical committee, immediately or at any other moment.
  - The confidential counsellor reports to the ethical committee, but only when the complainant explicitly gives permission.
  - The confidential counsellor guides the putative victim in making report to the police when necessary or wanted
  - The confidential counsellor advises the SIM board on request and on his/her own initiative on confidential matters.
  - In his/her name of confidential counsellor he/she can publish articles in the SIMsara in the context of informing and preventing incidents.
4. Undesired behaviour includes, but is not limited to:
  - internal criminality
  - fraud
  - aggression and violence (both verbally and physically)
  - abuse / misuse of authority and / or position
  - sexually inappropriate behaviour
  - (sexual) intimidation
  - bullying
  - discrimination
5. A by the SIM appointed confidential counsellor cannot be suspended on the ground of actions taken in the context of this appointment, provided that no regulations are violated by the counsellor.
6. The appointed counsellors can only then be relieved from their appointment, when they have given approval, have requested such, have been suspended because of misbehaviour or have deceased.
7. At least once a year, the confidential counsellor reports to the board of the SIM regarding the number of complaints on an ethical basis.

The SIM is member of the Buddhist Union Netherlands ([www.boeddhisme.nl](http://www.boeddhisme.nl)) It is also possible to contact the external confidential counsellor who has been appointed by the Buddhist Union Netherlands.

In addition there is the possibility to contact the independent service and information point for sexual abuse within the Buddhist community.

### C. Ethical Committee

Buddhist ethics, especially the five precepts, are the basis of the practice of vipassana meditation. Accordingly, these ethics play a central role in handling a conflict and are pivotal in seeking for wise and sensible ways in learning from and overcoming a conflict.

Noteworthy, according to these ethics, overcoming a conflict is not about right or wrong, guilt or innocence, winning or losing or even perpetrators and victims. Rather it concerns seeing and acknowledging the suffering that is caused by and for all those involved. These conflicts cannot always be overcome by the ones immediately involved. If something is the matter, the confidential counsellor can be contacted at any time. In careful consultation with the confidential counsellor, it may be decided that the complaint will be presented to the ethical committee

The ethical committee aims to be of help with finding a suitable and satisfactory solution in the case a conflict, while directing forces towards reconciliation. The members of the ethical committee will be sought in the surroundings of the SIM.

The complaint procedure reads as follows:

1. Please contact a confidential counsellor
2. If after consulting the confidential counsellor more guidance is needed and / or a complaint is furthered, the ethical committee will process the complaint. A brief notice must be sent to the SIM.
3. Next, in response to the complaint, the ethical committee will be established by the SIM and will proceed with the procedure. The Ethical committee will consist of at least three persons that are wise and independent. The ethical committee can be extended, depending on the nature and the gravity of the complaint. In case that a very complex situation arises, external experts are consulted.
4. The ethical committee hears all parties involved in order to obtain a clear picture both in factual and psychological sense.
5. The ethical committee proceeds by writing its advise to the board of the SIM.
6. The SIM undertakes action in order to solve the problem with all involved.
7. The SIM informs the confidential counsellor.

In case that it is necessary to set up an ethical committee in order to handle a complaints, it is aimed to reach a conclusion within the period of four weeks. The SIM can decide to set up an ethical committee on the basis of signals, in absence of a formal complaint.

The ethical agreement is carefully put together and primarily meant to serve the yogi's participating in retreats organised and / or facilitated by the SIM.

This ethical agreement is hereby proposed to you.