

Spiritual Advisors Venerable Balangoda Ananda Maitreya and Bhante Henepola Gunaratana

18 May 2026

Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) (BGKT) is very fortunate to have as its founder Spiritual Advisors two senior Theravada Buddhist *Bhikkhus* [Monks] Venerable Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya and Bhante Henepola Gunaratana. BGKT will always remember them with gratitude for their inspiration and indefatigable efforts to develop Theravada Buddhism in the West.

BGKT was founded in September 1991. Venerable Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thera Aggamaha Pandita Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru DLitt DLitt (one of the world's most senior Theravada Buddhist *Bhikkhus* [Monks]), and Bhante Henepola Gunaratana Maha Thera (an internationally respected meditation master and author who has been resident in the USA for many years) agreed to become BGKT's spiritual advisors.

Jacquetta Gomes's memories of Venerable Balangoda Ananda Maitreya and Bhante Henepola Gunaratana are included in "Recalling TCH, the Society and Summer Schools Past: *Bodhicarini Upasika* Jayasili (Jacquetta Gomes) remembers speakers at the Buddhist Society's Summer Schools", *The Middle Way: Journal of The Buddhist Society* [London], 89(4) (February 2015) pages 289-296.

Venerable Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thera Aggamaha Pandita Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru DLitt DLitt (23 August 1896 - 18 July 1998)

Venerable Ananda Maitreya was ordained as a novice *Bhikkhu* [Monk] on 2 March 1911 in Sri Lanka. His *upasampada* [higher ordination] was conducted on 14 July 1916. He was *Mahanayaka* [Head] of the *Amarapura Nikaya* of the Sangha [community of Buddhist Monks] in Sri Lanka, and had been a participant at the historic sixth *Sangayama* [Buddhist Council], held in Burma in 1954-56. That Council was held to coincide with *Buddha Jayanthi*, the 2500th anniversary of the passing away of the Buddha. Members of the Sangha from the five Theravada Buddhist countries of South-East Asia [Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia] attended this Council. The purpose of these Councils is to rehearse [*Sangayama* means rehearsal] and compare their respective copies of the *Tipitaka* [The *Pali Canon*], the teachings of the Buddha, in order to ensure that purity and accuracy has been maintained over the years. The previous five Councils had all been held under royal patronage in India and Sri Lanka. An important Council was convened in the 3rd century BC by Emperor Asoka of India after his conversion to Buddhism, when he found that incorrect teachings were being taught and practised by the Sangha [community of Buddhist Monks]. That Council saw the expulsion of many unsuitable *Bhikkhus* [Monks].

The Burmese government wished the Sixth Council to produce an authorized version of the *Tipitaka* [The *Pali Canon*]. Venerable Ananda Maitreya was the Sri Lankan representative on the final editing committee. He had also served as chairman of the Council for a few weeks during its third session in 1956. The Burmese government subsequently conferred upon him the honorific title of *Agga Mahapandita* [Chief Great Scholar]. After his 100th birthday he was invited to Burma where he received

their highest religious title, *Abhidhaja Maharatthagura* [His Eminence, the Great Spiritual Teacher of the Nation].

Venerable Ananda Maitreya frequently stayed at the LBV London Buddhist Vihara. He was popular with everyone, and valued for his long and deep experience of being a member of the *Sangha* [community of Buddhist Monks]. Most of the questions he was asked he answered in relation to his many years of being a *Bhikkhu* [Monk].

The 87 year old Venerable Ananda Maitreya and Anagarika Munindra were guest speakers at the Buddhist Society [London]'s Summer School in 1982. Despite his great age Venerable Ananda Maitreya stood to give a talk on "The Three-Factored Path". This talk appeared in the February 1983 issue of *The Middle Way: Journal of The Buddhist Society* [London]. When Jacquetta Gomes attended the 1982 Buddhist Society Summer School, she already knew Venerable Ananda Maitreya from the LBV London Buddhist Vihara. At the Summer School she went to his room to take something he needed, and waited outside the open door while he was talking to Venerable Sumedho and Venerable Amaro on the subject of the monastic life. From where she was standing, she could overhear the conversation, and it was interesting to hear Venerable Amaro asking the elderly Venerable Ananda Maitreya questions based on the latter's decades-long experience of being a *Bhikkhu* [Monk], a Buddhist elder and leader. Venerable Ananda Maitreya eventually asked her to come in and present the required item.

Venerable Ananda Maitreya was already well known to the Forest Sangha at Cittaviveka Chithurst Monastery in Sussex England. In 1981 he stayed at Chithurst Monastery and convened the assembly which authorized Venerable Sumedho to be a Preceptor and conduct *Bhikkhu* Ordinations. For this purpose, Venerable Ananda Maitreya conducted the ceremony to establish a *Sima* (bounded area of consecrated ground) for which he had the necessary qualifications according to the Vinaya rules. Ordinations have to be conducted on a *Sima*. The Chithurst *Sangha* [community of Buddhist Monks] named the new *Sima* the "Ananda Maitreya *Sima*".

Venerable Ananda Maitreya gave a talk at Jacquetta Gomes's wedding and performed the wedding blessings. His talk is in his book, *Buddhism - Lectures and Essays*, under the title 'Family Life (A talk given at Chiswick Vihara [LBV London Buddhist Vihara] at an English Buddhist girl's wedding....

Venerable Ananda Maitreya authorised *Upasika* Jayasili Jacquetta Gomes to teach in 1983.

Venerable Ananda Maitreya gave *Upasaka* Sudharma (a member of BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada)) his Buddhist name and *Panca Sila* (Five Precepts) at a Buddhist Monastery in London on 9 March 1994.

Venerable Ananda Maitreya conducted the ceremony in which *Upasika* Jayasili Jacquetta Gomes was given the *Bodhicari* Precepts in 1994. This was the first time the *Bodhicari* Precepts were given outside the USA.

Introducing Buddhism by Venerable Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thera Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru Aggamaha Pandita DLitt DLitt (1896-1998) and Jacquetta Gomes Bodhicarini Upasika Jayasili. *Introducing Buddhism* was originally published by The Buddhist Society London in 1988, to accompany The Buddhist Society's Introducing Buddhism Course, on which Jacquetta Gomes was one of the

teachers. *Introducing Buddhism* has subsequently been published by Buddhist organisations in England, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Taiwan, and the USA. *Introducing Buddhism* is available on several websites including Access to Insight, TBE Tibetan Buddhist Encyclopedia and Google Books. *Introducing Buddhism* was launched by the BCC Buddhist Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka with 24 other books under the patronage of Venerable Dr K. Sri Dhammananda Chief Sangha Nayaka of Malaysia and Singapore, in December 1997.

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Bhante Henepola Gunaratana Maha Thera (1927-)

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana was born in Sri Lanka in 1927. He became a Novice Monk at the age of 12 and received full ordination in 1947 at the age of 20. He moved to the USA in 1968. He is Founding Abbot of the Bhavana Society (which he co-founded in 1985) in West Virginia USA. In 1996 he was awarded the title Chief Sangha Nayaka [Head Theravada *Bhikkhu* [Buddhist Monk]] of North America. He has led meditation retreats, and taught Buddhism in the USA, Canada, Europe, and Australia. He is an internationally respected meditation master and author.

He has visited BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) and Keswick Buddhist Group (Theravada) and taught a 1995 meditation retreat for these groups in Cumbria England.

Teachings in BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada)'s Open Meetings are based on *Mindfulness in Plain English*, *Loving-Kindness in Plain English*, *Start Here, Start Now: A Short Guide to Mindfulness Meditation* and the *In Plain English* series by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana published by Wisdom Experience.

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana gave *Upasika* Canda (a member of BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada)) her Buddhist name and *Panca Sila* (Five Precepts) at a retreat in for BGKT and Keswick Buddhist Group (Theravada) in Cumbria England on 14 April 1995.

The Eight Lifetime Precepts are an expansion of *Ajivatthamaka Sila* (Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth). The first seven Precepts are the same but the eighth Precept is an amalgamation of the eighth Precept of *Ajivatthamaka Sila* and the fifth Precept of *Panca Sila* (The Five Precepts): I undertake the training rule to abstain from wrong livelihood and from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

Bhavana Vandana: Devotions for Meditation explains The Eight Lifetime Precepts on page x of the Introduction and in Part One Refuges and Precepts on pages 6-9.

“Eight Lifetime Precepts

The second selection in the book provides an opportunity for lay devotees to take the Eight Lifetime Precepts. These include the five basic precepts plus three other precepts relating to right speech. In addition to abstain from false speech, one who takes the Eight Lifetime Precepts promises to abstain from malicious speech, from harsh speech, and from useless speech. The basic precept to refrain from intoxicants is expanded to include right livelihood, aligning the way we earn our living with the principles of Dhamma. These precepts mirror the right action, right speech, and right livelihood sections of the Noble Eightfold Path.”

Buddhist Suttas for Recitation: A Companion for Walking the Buddha's Path explains The Eight Lifetime Precepts on page xxvii of the Introduction and in Part One Refuges and Precepts on pages 8-11.

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana described the development of the Eight Lifetime Precepts in his 2001 book *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness: Walking the Path of the Buddha* in Step 4 Skillful Action: Higher Precepts for Laypeople on pages 125-126. The Eight Lifetime Precepts were first offered at the Bhavana Society in 1998 for the 10th anniversary of the Bhavana Society.

Upasika Panna (a member of BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada)) received her Buddhist name and the Eight Lifetime Precepts from Bhante Henepola Gunaratana at Gaia House in Devon England on 6 June 2007.

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Audio and Video by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana

There are several audio and video recordings of Bhante Gunaratana on the internet.