



## BUDDHIST

### THE ENGLISH SANGHA TRUST LTD (AMARAVATI AND CITTAVIVEKA BUDDHIST MONASTERIES, UK)

The English Sangha Trust is a small Buddhist non-profit, with the object to support residences in the UK for Theravadan Buddhist monastics who follow the practice as established in the Forest Tradition of Ajahn Chah in Thailand.

The Trust is the steward of two monasteries with around 50 monks, nuns and novices. Since 1979, guiding principles have been to make the monasteries as sustainable as possible. A temple was built in the 1990s at Amaravati in Hertfordshire, using materials designed to last 1,000 years. From 2011, Amaravati has developed a 30- year plan to replace 22 high-maintenance energy-inefficient wooden structures with low- maintenance energy-efficient ones. Following the fabric-first principle, by investing in energy efficiency of the construction methods, based on the Passive House system, the buildings will use only 10% of the energy they have been using until now. As far as possible the electricity will be generated within the community. By setting such an example in our own house, we hope to set an example for our lay community and the wider local and national community.

The Trust keeps Reserves of £250,000 and currently has Development Funds of £700,000; of the latter, all is expected to be spent by June 2020. The funds are with a European ethical bank in short-term fixed interest instruments.

#### *Negative Screening*

The Trust restricts investment in the following in particular:

- Marketing or distribution of alcohol
- Involvement in medical or non-medical animal testing
- Breeding or rearing of animals for intensive meat, dairy, egg production, retailing products or entertainment, or any cruelty to animals in general
- Any involvement in arms supply or manufacture
- Any involvement in genetic modification
- Companies with poor environmental records or which harm the environment, including the production of fossil fuels
- Companies at risk of human rights abuses
- Any involvement in nuclear activities
- Involvement in gambling operations
- Involvement in production or distribution of pornographic or “adult” materials
- Any involvement in the manufacture or distribution of tobacco
- Companies involved in irresponsible marketing, finance or those that have operations which may raise sanctity of life issues.

*What guides the guidelines?*

The sangha encourages investments with positive attributes including those that bring about harmony especially those that allow that all people should have a chance to make an honest living. ‘Right Livelihood’ is one of eight aspects of the Buddhist path. This can be extrapolated into not exploiting those who work.

There are no specific instructions for stewards as to how they should look after the sangha’s resources, however in his 1979 book *A Constitution for Living* Ajahn Payutto says that:

‘Citizens who contribute to bringing about good administration, especially in a democracy, should know and abide by the following .... of which the highest is the supremacy of the Dhamma, (natural law) putting the prime importance on principles, truth, righteousness, virtue and reason, operating on the basis of what has been learned and verified against the facts.... On a general level it means acting out of respect for established principles, laws, rules and regulations’.

Ajahn Payutto also says that through abiding by certain principles, you can be said to know how to acquire and use wealth beneficially (‘i.e. to be money wise’.)

- On the level of seeking and safeguarding wealth, he recommends that people: apply themselves to their duties and making an honest living; train to acquire skills and true knowledge; wisely scrutinise their undertakings and conduct their work for good results; know how to protect their honestly-gained wealth from risk; associate with good, honourable people; and keep track of income and expenditure, living within their means to be neither deprived nor extravagant and with income left over for saving.
- On the level of allotting wealth, he recommends that people know how to allot it into four portions according to the principles known as the four bhoga-vibhaga: one portion to be used for supporting oneself and one's dependents and for good causes; two portions to be used for investment; another portion to be put aside for future needs.
- On the level of using wealth, it should always be borne in mind that the acquisition, protection and possession of wealth are for the purpose of creating benefit for both oneself and others. "If wealth is not used to create benefit, its acquisition and possession are of no value or meaning."

#### *The future*

The Five Precepts in Theravada Buddhism restrict the taking of life and the use of alcohol. These would be guiding principles that steer toward use of renewable resources for energy (not polluting, not leaving a toxic legacy for the future, both of which cause sickness and disease; nor rapaciously consuming the planet's resources, which leaves it as a less sustainable place). The community at Amaravati is engaging with the worldwide sangha of monastics and lay people in the Ajahn Chah community, regarding the sustainability initiatives they are undertaking. We seek to broaden the understanding of 'investment' and create an encouraging, informed atmosphere around these issues. Whilst we have negative screens, we will also develop more positive screens, so our policy positively encourages investment in wholesome initiatives.

*The original version of these guidelines was approved by the Board of Trustees on 22nd July 2017*