

Our Dream Our Pride

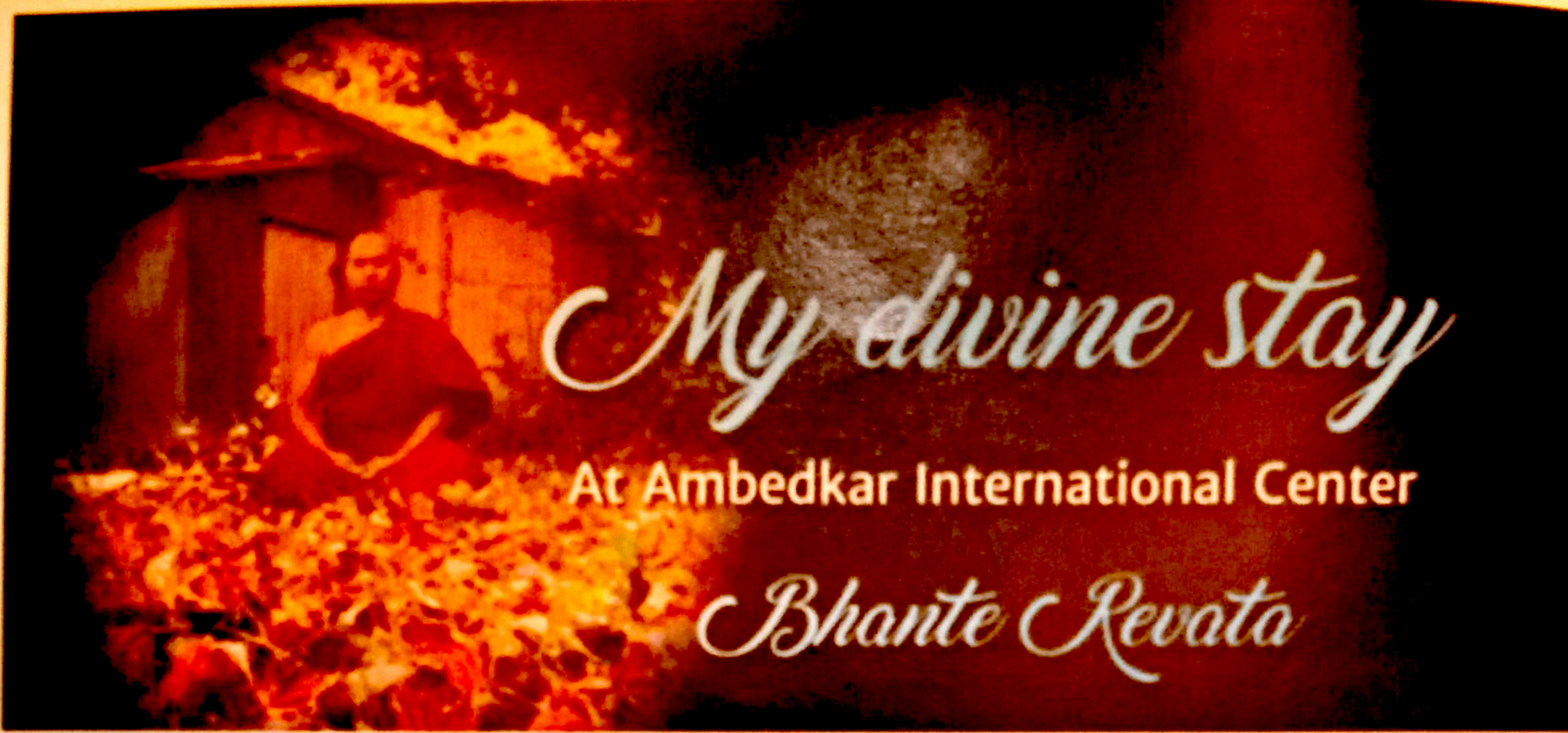
**DR. AMBEDKAR
MEMORIAL IN
THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA**

**Unveiling The Largest Statue
of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar
in North America**

Statue of Equality

October 14, 2023
15755 Livingston Rd
Accokeek, MD, USA
www.aicusa.org





My divine stay

At Ambedkar International Center

Bhante Revata

"If you observe deeply, you will see that everything is your teacher". This is what I experienced while serving to the community of AIC. This is not a temple, not a monastery, no people, no food, but you are all alone, how are you going to stay, people often ask me? This is the answer. My name is Bhante Revata and this is my story at AIC. I came to AIC in the early Spring 2021, not so cold and not so hot – perfect weather. From far away, both the place and the house (AIC) look amazingly beautiful and peaceful suitable for nurturing my inner self and enrich my spiritual practice. But as I approach closer to the house, I find windows are broken, full of dust and the whole house was unclean; no gas for cooking and several outlets and lights were not working either. Luckily, air condition and heater were working. But the heat does not cover kitchen area, so it stays freezing cold there in the winter. It was unhygienic and smell very bad. When I open the windows, besides inches of dust, I found so many dead flies/insects.

After observation inside of the house, I went out and closed my eye, took a long breath – listened deeply my breath, calmed my feeling and smiled; Touching my heart, I said to myself I "will be alright." It took me one to two months to clean up all dirt; of course, slowly, slowly! While cleaning the house, I remember the teaching of the Buddha that we should not be afraid of "suffering" and "hardship" rather we should take them as "blessing" to understand the deeper of meaning of life, spiritual awakening, and developing insight.

The AIC was also jungle, bushy, and forestry. In short, it was not livable. In my daily meditation, I contemplated deeply – reflecting how I can help AIC community and people in the greater DC area? How do I transform this place from unlikeable to likeable, from inhabitable to habitable? Daily I reminded myself that "patience", "care," "tenderness," "trust," and "dedication," among other, are the heart of my spiritual practice. I have applied

them here at AIC. It was my labor of love or dāna/gift to AIC.

There is something magical about AIC – the place and the people. As I spend more time in the nature and forest behind the AIC property, walking, sitting, and meditating, I began loving it. I felt there is an intimate bond between me and AIC, between dhamma and Baba Shahed, between social engagement and seclusion, and balance between attachment and liberation at AIC. Thus, by borrowing mower, tree cutter machines, knives, and other cleaning tools from one Burmese family (Tin Win Tun) who lives nearby I cleaned up entire AIC-premise. I made a beautiful walking trail behind the AIC for walking meditation and hike. With the help (dāna) of Archana, along the walking trail, I made 6 meditation spots for self-retreat, personal meditation, peace, and inner healing. I also created a forest sitting area and put up four hammocks where visitors can sit, have a coffee/tea, and relax in nature.

Another challenge at AIC was cooking. I don't know how to cook. As a monk I have never cooked. Monks go for alms round for daily food and we eat whatever people offer to us. I learned cooking from YouTube! I didn't have proper kitchen appliances either. I have been managing cooking with a small electric stove. When I arrived at AIC, I stayed without proper food for few days. As I have never done grocery work, I have no idea what to buy for cooking. Now I love cooking, but please don't ask me about the taste of my cooking/food.

Without a car was biggest challenge. With extreme cold in the winter and extreme hot in the summer, I walked almost a mile for

groceries, carrying heavy goods on my shoulders, head, and hands. I almost had an accident in front of a car. Because my Cīvar (monk's robe) was flying due to the strong wind. I can't hold all (bags, foods, my robe). Despite all these "struggles" and "challenges," I love AIC. I love AIC community. I know no path is easy, we make the path easy. The monastic life thought me that doing the right thing is not easy but necessary. It requires "persistent," "dedication" and "faith." The Buddha admonished us that we should make inner temple wherever we are. Temple is not physical place, but it is our inner space and thinking.

AIC is an animal sanctuary where they feel safe, protected, and roam around freely. In fact, I am living with 5 wild cats, 6 deer, 3 tortoises, 2 rabbits, 4 squeals, 2 raccoons, variety of birds and 3 vultures who catch snakes. I also live with 10 different snakes. I love feeding cats. But deer loves eating my veggies, often they destroy my veggie garden. Every summer I make vegetable garden where I grow varieties of fresh/organic veggie - tomatoes, watermelon, cucumber, zucchini, eggplant, cauliflower, chili, and beans. All these experiences at AIC taught me one thing that "everything is our teacher." AIC is not only a place for equality, justice, and freedom but it is also place for inclusivity, diversity, peace, and communal service. AIC has much more to offer to the world and we will.

Bhante Revata

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