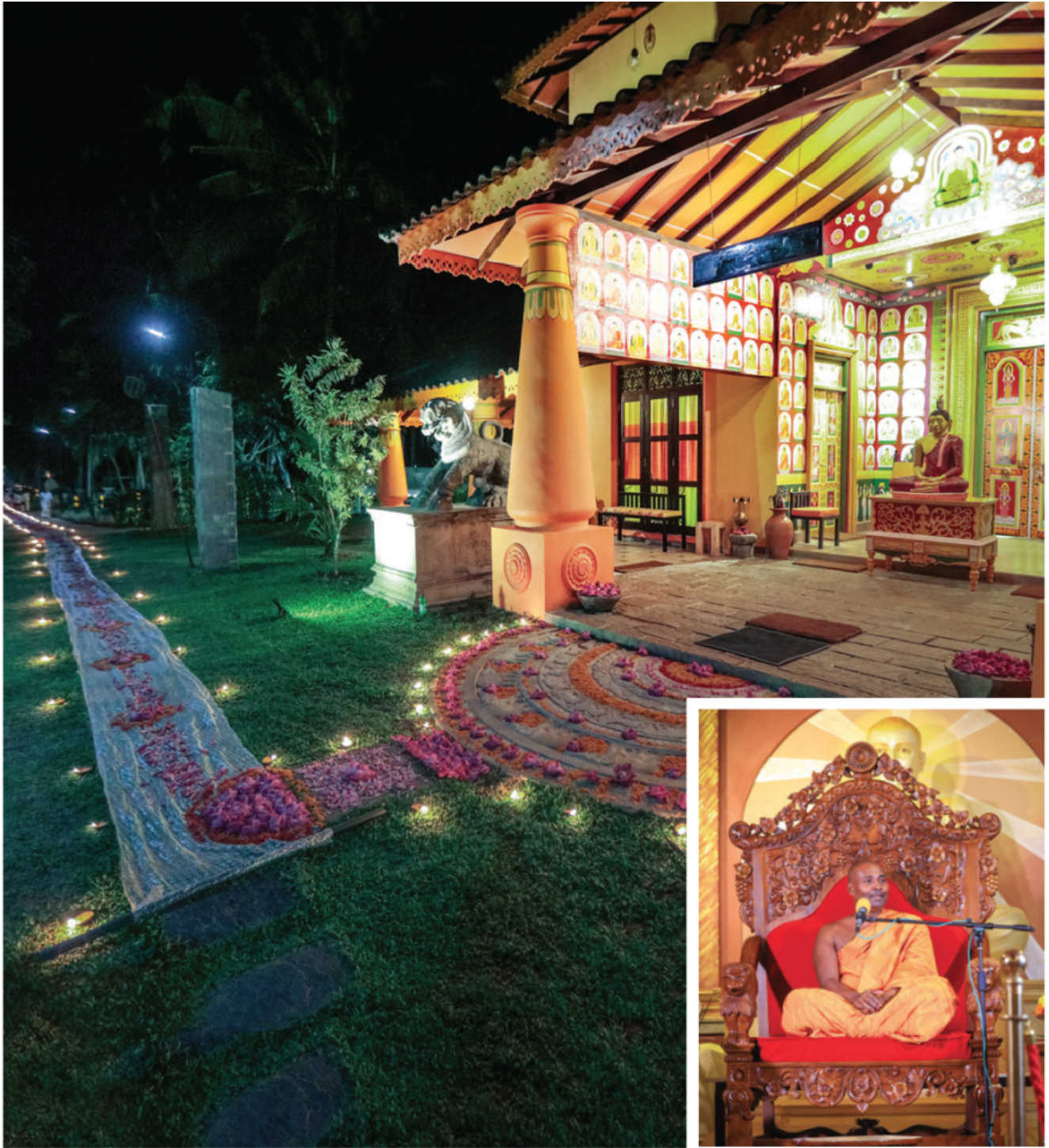


Umandawa Monastery Celebrates Fourth Year Anniversary

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe. **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda.



Umandawa exudes a sense of spiritual awakening.

Most Ven Siri Samanthabhadra Arahath Thero.

Umandawa Monastery, a concept of Most Ven Siri Samanthabhadra Arahath Thero commemorated the fourth year anniversary with a series of activities, which was a

celebration that appreciated the simplicity of life. Held over a weekend, devotees gathered to commemorate this milestone helping each other and working in unison to create a wonderful atmosphere of spirituality, culture and happiness.

On Saturday, starting early in the morning, a 'Shrama Poojawa', which was essentially volunteering ones-self to clean and maintain the buildings and the gardens was held in preparation for the day's program. Buddhist monks, nuns and devotees all worked together with smiles on their faces, gifting their energy and time for a greater purpose. Umandawa was a hive of activity. There was much preparation in the kitchen too with various dishes being prepared for the evening. As afternoon approached, groups of participants gathered to practice for the cultural performance that was to be held later in the day. There was much goodwill and laughter as all practiced the various roles they were to perform. In the evening light, as the sun set in the North Central sky, the Sangha arrived at the Maha Sukhawathi Auditorium (Dhamma Shalawa) for prayers and to listen to the sermon of the Most Ven Siri Samanthabhadra Arahath Thero. Devotees all dressed in white gathered within the hall and together with the Sangha in deep veneration, listened to the Thero's wise words.



Volunteers in preparation for the day's program.



Music filled the air as participants practiced for the evening program.



The monks and lay people spend their energy for a special occasion.

The 'Ahara Salpila' (food festival) was a multi-cultural display of Sri Lankan food that included traditional cuisines and sweets. The various types of food were prepared during the day and were made available to the participants. Furthermore, the tree planting program known as 'The Breath' was initiated with the planting of 100,000 Sansevieria or snake plants. The much anticipated cultural performance began with music, fun and laughter with Sri Lankan theater performed with great flair. On Sunday, a Kiri Danaya (almsgiving) was held for 108 Kiri Ammarawaru (mothers). It was indeed a beautiful sight, mothers of all ages were dressed in white and arrived early in the morning at the Kethumathi Prasadaya in a disciplined manner. All of them participated in the Danaya, and following the morning sermon by Most Ven Siri Samanthabhadra Arahath Thero, the celebrations concluded.



Life at Umandawa reflects peace, discipline and the philosophies of Buddhism.



Meditation amidst the serene surroundings.



The arrival of the Most Ven Siri Samanthabhadra Arahath Thero.



The Thero delivering a sermon at the Maha Sukhawathi Auditorium.



Devotees attentively listen to the Thero.



The fourth year anniversary was celebrated with the cutting of a cake and other activities.



The planting of the first Sansevieria (snake plant) by the Thero.



The cultural performances displayed the talents of many.



Devotees at the 'Ahara Salpila' (food festival).



Most Ven Siri Samanthabadra Arahath Thero at the evening function.



In the early morning hours, mothers of all ages arrive at the Kethumathi Prasadaya.





Preparations for the dana are done with care.



108 Kiri Ammarawaru clad in white at the Kiri Danaya (almsgiving).



Ven Uduwe Dhammaloka Thero



Tissa Attanayake serving the Kiri Ammarawaru.



Ven Uduwe Dhammaloka Thero and Most Ven Siri Samanthabadra Arahath Thero.



Most Ven Siri Samanthabhadra Arahath Thero delivers the morning sermon.