

Metta In Action Update—December 31, 2012

“MIA”~Momentum in Action!



The years have gone by, and so much has been accomplished thanks to your dāna! While going through old photo files recently, I was struck how much has happened in a relatively short period of time. It's easy to forget how things were even a short time ago, and changes have often unfolded in such a gradual way that it has been easy to miss the sheer scale of the improvements your dāna has made—but not when the images are side-by-side!

Nowhere is this more obvious than with work we do supporting nunneries. In the summer of 2008, when we first began to offer dāna after Cyclone Nargis, we had no intention to do much more than to help alleviate immediate and pressing needs. At the time, these were all too obvious: food, shelter, and clean water were scarce, and everyone was scrambling to put their lives back together again. The nuns, who were taking in many cyclone orphans, were struggling.

At first we offered to nuns we knew living nearby, for food or shelter. But only a little exploration revealed many others who were also in need. And as we met more and more nuns and learned how they lived, a seed took root in our hearts—a desire to help support the dreams

and aspirations of these nuns as they deserved to be supported in an ongoing way. Many of the nuns we met lived in bamboo houses, and at the time most did not have reliable electricity or potable water. Toilets and kitchen facilities were basic, to say the least. So we wanted in some small way to help these remarkable women do the work they do so well. And now we are doing it! Together, we have been able to do this wonderful work for 5 years!

So to celebrate our successes at year's end, here are some before and after photos and stories for you, reminders of the power of your generosity, and vivid images of how it has allowed immeasurable goodness to arise in the world!



One of the very first nunneries we supported in 2008 was **Appamada Nunnery**, which had lost one of its hostels to Cyclone Nargis. This we rebuilt (left, 2008), and over the years had been offering other support. Then in late 2010, we were approached by Daw Sumanacari, who told us that she wanted to open a school for the youngest children. With our initial offering, and

the support of other local and foreign donors, the **Appamada Nunnery School** (right, December 2012) is now a thriving with a student body of almost 200 students—where there was once a simple nunnery with only 8 nuns!



In several cases we have seen nunneries grow ‘from the ground up’—in the very Burmese way that allows the use of a partially completed structure over the many years it takes for a dream to gradually materialize as money gradually becomes available. **Mya Thita Oo Nunnery's** version of this has been fairly typical. First they built the shell of a one-story brick building (left, 2009), and for a

number of years this kept this basic shape, gradually getting more and more finished while the nuns used the dāna they received to build highest priority items like wells and toilets. But then last year they were finally able to move ahead with the completion of the main building, adding a second story in the process. The beautiful end result (right, December 2012) is the labor of many people, including the nuns themselves, and the direct result of your dāna!



Like Mya Thita Oo, we have been supporting **Sasanaramsi Nunnery** from the start. They are neighbors of us here at Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Centre, and in 2009 we offered the equivalent of about 1000 USD to fund their initial construction (left below, April 2009). Since then, we have been delighted to watch as this nunnery has grown from 8 to 62 nuns. Since the initial dāna, we have offered the well (2010), a bath house, toilets (2011 and 2012), and the a



new kitchen (2012). Every morning and every evening we can hear the young nuns chanting—loudly!—and sometimes the yogis here are inspired to offer dāna as a result. In 2010 one of the yogis introduced the nuns to her ‘Dhamma Mother’ who has since been offering very generous support. As a result, they

have been able to considerably expand the nunnery, and to build new and better accommodation for the many young nuns who live here (right, 2012).



In 2008, the **Sasanasukhacari Laputta Nunnery** was just a small bamboo hut, packed with small nuns. The building had been badly damaged by the Cyclone and was leaning badly, and the nuns were struggling to keep everyone fed (left, July 2008). But there was something ‘special’ about this nunnery—the garden was always carefully tended, the kids were happy and cared for, and there was always a new lesson on the blackboard—in Burmese, Pali, Sanskrit, or English. With your support, they have been able to greatly expand and improve the building; and through MIA, two Dhamma Groups (one in California and one in

Canada) have sponsored much of the cost of a spacious and well-built structure that is presently under construction (right, November 2012). The new building will be able to withstand any future climatic dramas with ease!



There has been so much improvement to so many lives, and this alone would be deeply satisfying. But we are also beginning to see another quite wonderful process, a ‘snowballing effect’. It’s been deeply touching to see how in our own small way we have created the conditions that then have prompted others to give on a scale that we could never match.



The **Zaloon Parahita Nunnery and Monastic School** is a wonderful example of this. We first heard of this nunnery in the months after the cyclone and learned that they had taken in orphaned girls after the

cyclone—as well as having many orphans from other parts of the country. At the time Zaloon Parahita was only a nunnery. We offered



initial support, and then start-up funds for the school in 2009-2010 (above left, 2010). Since then, MIA has supported it in an ongoing way. Seeing the result, other donors have been sufficiently impressed to offer their own support. Then in January of this year some Japanese donors were so inspired that they offered and completely built a \$100,000 3-storey school building (above right, December 2012), far exceeding what we could ever have offered in such a short period of time!



The classrooms in 2010...



...And in 2012



We learned that this snowball effect has also manifested in a wonderful way at yet another of the monastic schools we supported last year. [Ananda Metta School](#) was one of the most sobering and inspiring places we have ever visited, built on swampy land near an extremely poor village on the outskirts of Yangon. With very little support, a monk named U Indaka had managed to build a basic school building for novices and local kids (left), and had a big vision for future expansion. But conditions were unbelievably difficult. We offered some dāna

and told other donors about this remarkable school. They in turn offered more support to build a more solid school building, which was being constructed in July the midst of the rainy season, with workers laboring in thigh-deep mud. As this was underway, a third group of donors from Korea turned up, and were so blown away by what they saw that they offered a very large sum for a multi-story building. Now (right, October 2012) there is already a two-story hostel for orphans, the wonderful brand new school building with 5 classrooms, and new lodgings for the resident novices and monks (the roof of the original school building is on the right side of the photo). Once someone sets the ball rolling it can pick up speed very quickly!



Looking Ahead

As January approaches, there has been other news coming in, and very soon we will begin distributing the very generous offerings that you have made in 2012 with joyful hearts—more

aware than ever before that together we are truly making a difference, and that the benefits of all our actions will continue to multiply and ripple outwards in unknown and unknowable ways.

We are so grateful for your support open-handed generosity, as it's the only thing that allows this beautiful process to continue! The recipients can't personally thank you, but of course they are immensely grateful—and often they tell us that they daily send *mettā* to all the donors—you, in other words!

Metta In Action is not just the group of six of us who do the work 'on the ground'—but it is *all* of us together, and the process by which your care becomes transformed into *dāna* that we receive and then distribute on your behalf. This is a magical process, and a humbling one. We are, all of us, the hands of *mettā*, and the means by which it can act in the world. Your *dāna* directly benefits thousands of people—and as the results of this benefit ripple outwards, who knows what its indirect benefits will be, and what good might ultimately come as a result?

So wishing each of you a *very* Happy New Year with this traditional Burmese Blessing: “May all donors be healthy and happy; may you be free from physical suffering, may you be free from mental suffering, and may all aspects of your lives be accomplished”

Viraṇani

Chanmyay Myaing Mediation Centre

