

Metta In Action Update (3)

November 2019

Islands of Refuge

Support for Nuns



Nunneries in Burma are refuges and sources of support for countless children young women. Your very generous offerings have once again allowed us to provide substantial support to nuns: in the last two years we have offered the equivalent of over 52,000 USD to all the nuns and youngsters (both girls and boys) living in 20 nunneries! It is such a joy to be able to offer them your amazing support, knowing that as a result many hundreds of children and young women can thrive – loved, supported, educated, and protected from the difficult conditions that many of them would otherwise face.

We have been supporting these nunneries for over a decade, and so have joyfully watched as little girls have grown into confident and happy young women – proud of their considerable accomplishments in secular and Dhamma studies and ready to go out into their lives, as nuns or laywomen. And if nuns leave the nunnery for further study or to disrobe, other girls invariably come to take their place.



Ma Sudhammacari has grown from a child to a confident young woman, surrounded by kindness and care.

Burma continues to change: the country has opened up to the wider world, and inevitably both the best and worst of humanity have come in. So the importance of nunneries as places of refuge for the most vulnerable of us has become even more urgent than it already was. So here are a few stories that we have heard this year – stories that break our hearts open, happier than ever that we can continue to offer support to these wonderful women, and so grateful for the generosity, *your* generosity, that makes the dana possible!

Danger and Escape

All the abbesses are aware that many of the kids in their care who come from conflict areas have faced considerable dangers in their native villages. Usually, though, this awareness is only intellectual – the nuns receive the kids sent from afar. But this year Daw Kesari from Chanmyavati Nunnery traveled up to a village in a conflict area in the Shan State, intending to bring to Yangon any girls who wanted to come – and she got a much deeper understanding of what ‘danger’ *really* means. When she arrived at the village, her linecar was mobbed by with people desperate to get away from poverty, conflict, and human trafficking. Parents came, frantic to get their kids to a safe place; girls arrived hand in hand with their brothers, begging to stay together; one man even offered to sell his daughter for only 3000 kyat (about two dollars).

Shocked by what she was witnessing, Daw Kesari returned to Yangon with as many kids as the linecar would hold, about 40 boys and girls. The nunnery took in the all the girls, and the boys now live in a nearby monastery so the siblings can be close. She told us it was both heartbreaking and terrifying: she said she will not go back.



Just a few kids in a linecar. This is not at all crowded compared to Daw Kesari's on the way home from the Shan State.



New construction and expansion are underway at the New Kyasin Aye Nunnery.

Building and Expansion

Because there is wide awareness of the terrible situations many families face, many nuns told us they wanted to use our offering to make new space, so they can take in even *more* young nuns than they have already. Daw Aye Cari, (the abbess of Sukhacari Nunnery) has 83 nuns, but still wants to take in more. She told us, “I just can’t say no.” And sometimes new building is needed for physical reasons: Kyasin Aye Nunnery has moved completely, so that they will no longer have to cope with yearly flooding that has become such a problem.

Love and Care Without Limits

Sometimes the care the nuns offer is extraordinary. Two of the little nuns at Sukhacari Nunnery had been badly injured by a car while on their almsround, and needed ongoing treatment. It was so touching to see the tender kindness of the nuns in their care of these youngsters – though it offered a heart-wrenching contrast to the level of medical care most children in our own countries would have received for the same injuries. But the nuns’ astonishing effectiveness and kind resiliency in the face of it all makes up for much that they lack. More than once after a visit we have asked each other, “*How* in the world do they manage to do all that?!”



At the Sasanasukhacari Laputta Nunnery, nuns who have grown up there joyfully care for the next generation of residents.

They do get some help from monks in the area, and we were touched to witness the visit of a local Sayadaw to one of the bigger nunneries – he said he knows the nuns and often visits to offer them encouragement – “They are my neighbors,” he said.



Walls offer safety at night and make sure that coming home from almsround is always a happy event.

Walls: Protecting the Protectors

But not all the neighbors are so good. “There are so many more people around here, and we cannot not any longer trust them to be wholesome. So we need a higher wall than we already have, and a gate that we can keep locked,” said Daw Rupa of Chanmyay Thayar Nunnery. Their neighborhood has changed a lot in the last few years, and sadly thievery borne of desperation is no longer unusual. So most nunneries leave someone at home on almsound days so that things do not from ‘walk off.’ nuns told us of thefts of cash, pots and pans, food, and even appliances. And now people can even

be bothersome at night – so walls have become more and more essential for a sense of safe enclosure, and allow the nuns to feel safe and protected.

Freedom from Worry

The daily challenges many people in Burma have to cope can take the meaning of ‘desperation’ to a whole new level – and the nuns respond wholeheartedly to that, without holding anything back. This comes at a cost: they tell us they worry sometimes how they will be able to continue, and often lie awake at night thinking about what the kids need, wondering how they will manage to provide that. When we offer your donations, they often express



immense relief – saying your support both uplifts them and allows them to sleep at night! So there is great happiness in both the giving and the receiving! Every nunnery is in its own unique way a place of joy and love, made possible only because of generosity. Your dana is essential.

So, heartfelt and boundless thanks from them and from us to each of you, for your ongoing and gracious support. It touches everyone – both you who offer and the nuns and children who benefit – changing the world for the better in a small but meaningful way.

Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu!







