

*Metta in Action Update*  
*December 2010*



**Sharing the Light**

Your donations have brought light into so many lives this year. The outpouring of gratitude for what Metta in Action has been able to do has been a heartwarming source of joy for all of us. So as a heartfelt gift of thanks for the end of the year here are some images, and some of the news that we have received—news that we hope will lift your spirits and warm your hearts.

### **Nunnery updates**

The many nunneries that your donations support are doing very well—in large part because of the ongoing support you are offering. Here are a few recent ‘happenings’ that the nuns are justly proud of:

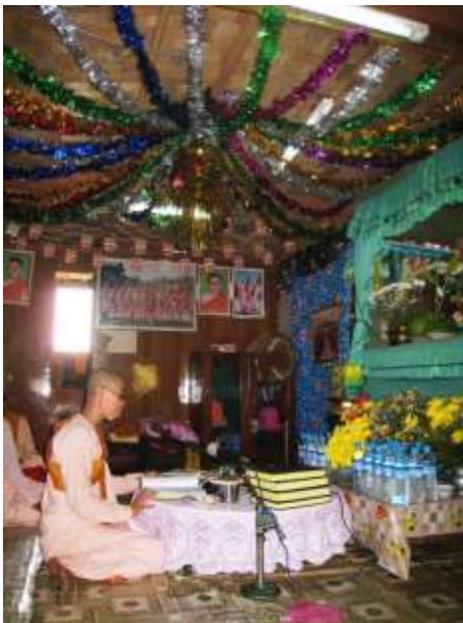
#### *Mingalagonwei Nunnery Paṭṭhāna Chanting*

In early November, Mimmi and I (Virañani) received an invitation from the Mingalagonwei Nunnery to attend the celebration of their upcoming Paṭṭhāna chanting. So a few days before the event we went to see them and to offer them our congratulations and good wishes, and I dropped in in the midst of it to experience the special ambience of the occasion.

The Paṭṭhāna is the book of the Abhidhamma that explains conditionality, and here in Burma people say that as long as this text is known, the Buddha’s dispensation will survive. So in order to ensure the long life of the *sāsana*, monks and nuns all over the country will make the great effort to chant the entire Paṭṭhāna, which takes 3 days and nights, continuously. The chanting is ‘shared’ with as many people as possible: the huge old-fashioned ‘village-blasters’ that’s rented for the occasion ensures that everyone is able to hear the chanting and rejoice in it!



*Daw Obhasa tells us about the upcoming Paṭṭhāna Chanting*



*Daw Uttama takes her turn at the microphone.*

This is no small undertaking, for any monastery, but particularly for Mingalagonwei Nunnery—some of you have visited this nunnery and know its humble circumstances. Before the chanting began, Daw Obhasa explained that they would each take turns at the microphone, for a half an hour at a time. The oldest nuns from Mingalagonwei would participate, and nuns from other nunneries nearby had also been invited to join. Because of the rotating ‘microphone duty’, no-one gets much sleep—even those who aren’t chanting are affected, because of the incredible noise level!

I visited on the second morning of the celebration. From Shwe Oo Min Road, the sound of the chanting was at first just part of the background of the morning village hubbub, but as we got closer it became louder and clearer, eventually drowning out everything else. There was great happiness and *muditā* that arose, knowing everything and everyone (all of you!) who had been part of making this event possible.

When I arrived, it was a pleasant surprise to find Daw Uttama (the abbess from the Sasanasukhacari Laputta Nunnery) waiting to take her turn at the ‘mike’. When it was time for the change-over, this was done without a pause in the chanting, as the departing nun moved aside (indicating the place in the book that she’d reached), and the Daw Uttama gracefully slid into her place.

All the meals for the three days were offered by special donors—we noticed from the *dāna* board that one of these was the factory not far from CMMC that sometimes offers meals at the Centre. The new temporary kitchen that had been built behind the main building was a hub of activity, and the nun in charge of the dishes had a very big cleaning job!

#### *Sasanasukhacari Laputta Nuns*

After she had finished chanting, I walked Daw Uttama home to the Sasanasukhacari Laputta nunnery, and she told me of her nervousness about the upcoming university examinations she would be taking—5 days of testing on 5 subjects English, Buddhist History, Abhidhamma, Pāḷi (Suttanta), and Pāḷi Grammar.

Carol and I went to visit after the exams had finished and Daw Uttama told us that the exams went well, but she feels that her English is weak. That she can find the time to study at all amazes and inspires us. They have taken in an orphaned baby boy, who we noticed was quite chubby; the little girl who had been there this last spring has gone back to her family.



*Tender loving care at the Laputta Nunnery*

#### *Chanmyay Thayar Nuns*

It is always heartening to visit the Chanmyay Thayar Nunnery and to remember how they had been living in the poorest little bamboo shack around just 4 years ago. Now they have a 2-story main brick building and a brick kitchen, allowing them to live cleanly and comfortably. The kitchen is not quite complete, and they hope to finish that this year.



*Chanmyay Thayar is thriving!*

Daw Rupa, the abbess there, described their almsround routine to us: 12 of the older nuns go out twice a week, 7 to Yangon (near the Shwedagon) and 5 to the town of Htaukyant, to the north of us. They now can get enough rice on their almsround to feed everyone, and sometimes there is extra that they can sell back to the local shop, giving them cash they can use for meat or vegetables. This is a welcome change from how things were immediately after the Cyclone when everyone was struggling and alms were more meager.

There is now a baby at Chanmyay Thayar, too--an orphaned little girl. The role that these nunneries play in providing refuge and shelter to poor and orphaned children cannot be underestimated. All over the country, children who would otherwise be on the streets are loved, educated, and cared for by nuns. It is a huge social service, done with grace and beauty. Daw Rupa would like to ordain the child, but is waiting until she is

old enough to understand what that means—wanting her to be able to make her own decision about such an important thing.

### **Education**

#### *Daw Yuzana's School*

We have also paid a visit to Daw Yuzana, at the Kyaikkalo School. She told us that last year there were 90 residential students, but now the enrollment is up to 140 residential students: she is running out of space! Including the day students, there are 400 students now, all girls. It was amazing to see this, knowing that in May 2008 there was nothing here at all! Now she hires 30 teachers, and somehow has to raise about 3400 dollars each month to keep the school running. If there isn't enough coming in, she contributes the balance herself to cover the expenses.



*Nuns share the light with the next generation.*

This year there has been a landmark: 2 students have passed their 10<sup>th</sup> Standard exams and are doing university correspondence courses. Next year she thinks there will be 5 more students able to study at university level. For 10<sup>th</sup> Standard students, she has to hire 2 special teachers 2 days per week for computer studies and English.

Because of the growth, Daw Yuzana has decided not to accept new students for next year so that she can support the ones who are already here.

We were moved later in the conversation to hear her speak about what motivates her to do everything that's needed to support the school. Ultimately, she sees the school as Dhamma work, rather than 'just' social service. And so she works as hard as she does in order to plant as many Dhamma seeds in the hearts of the students now, for their future happiness—and so that they become good people who will become the life-blood *sāsana* in years to come.

#### *Salon Parahita School*

Daw Ayesinghī visited us at the end of the rains retreat and told us that her school has also had a 'growth spurt'—up to over 220 students now, from 160 in the spring. She has had to hire 4 more teachers to take up the extra workload.

There is a hunger for education in this country that is unstoppable—so the cheerful 'can-do' attitude of these immensely competent nuns is wonderful to see. Two and a half years ago there were no schools at these nunneries, and now almost 700 children are receiving a free education—thanks in no small part to your generosity!

### **Metta Clinic**

The Metta Clinic continues to thrive. In early December, Lai Fun (one of the original clinic benefactors) arranged to bring a large quantity of medicine and supplies, including a 2-month supply of dental anesthetic. This has been difficult to get, so the dentists were very happy for this *dāna*!



*Lai Fun (Malaysia) and her friends joyfully offering freedom from dental pain!*

When we took Lai Fun and her group over to the clinic, it was a busy Sunday at the Dental Clinic. So it was a joy to know that the crowd waiting for treatment would not have to face extra-painful extractions, either that day or for at least a few months to come.

### **Thaleba Solar Project**

The village of Thaleba is buzzing these days, excited about the news that Metta in Action will donate solar light to the village this year. In the last few years we've offered donations both to the youth and to the elders, but this year we wanted to offer something that would help the planet as well as the villagers.

In the spring we asked Sayadaw U Indaka what he thought of that—and got an immediate and enthusiastic response. We were thinking of only providing light for the school and library compound, but he consulted with some engineers with local solar expertise and found that a more comprehensive project will be possible. This will provide light for the two main streets in the village. Sayadaw pointed out that there will now be fewer people being bitten by snakes than before: safety walking about at night is no small thing, and a wonderful thing to be able to offer. We're giving freedom from fear...not just to the people, but to many other beings, including the snakes!



*Early morning light at the Thaleba Pagoda*

### **Village dāna: Houses**



*Needed: a few good houses!*

Each year at about this time we ask the monks at Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Centre to please let us know if they see people in the village living in particularly poor conditions, so that we can offer whatever they may need—whether repairs or even new houses. This year we know of several families who may need assistance because of unforeseen circumstances (such as illness or the sudden death of the head of the household).

The village here contains a mix of people; some have lived in this area for generations (and tend to be relatively well off), while others are basically migrant workers from Upper Burma who have come here to work in the nearby factories. There is much poverty amongst these workers, and they often have no 'cushion' to provide security in case of sudden misfortune. So we are happy to lend a hand to families who have stumbled upon hard times.

### **Looking Ahead**

As January approaches, we look forward to distributing the very generous offerings that you have made to Metta in Action this calendar year. We will be sharing your gifts with joyful hearts, knowing they will bring more ease and light into many lives. Without you we could do none of this work, and so are deeply grateful for your open-handed generosity! We thank you, and offer the wish that this generosity brings you great happiness.

Ven. Virañani & Ven. Ariya Ñani

