

Metta In Action Update 2023

## *And Still, They Persist!*

Dana to Nuns



Times are hard now in Myanmar, everywhere – with so many different flavors of *dukkha* (a loanword in Burmese from the Pali scriptural language meaning painful, unsatisfactory, or just plain suffering). In Yangon the experience of *dukkha* is less intense than what we described in our last update – not so dramatic but more corrosive; there is unrelenting stress about making ends meet, safety, and dealing with collapsing infrastructure and services.

We were concerned about how the nuns would be doing, in the face of all these additional challenges. It has never been easy to run a nunnery let alone a nunnery school. But now?? We learned that somehow these amazing women are managing, with great perseverance and patience. They are making do with little in the face of incredible inflation and shrinking support; dealing with sometimes dangerous conditions on alms rounds; with increasing crime rates (even now on municipal buses); and they face a bottomless need to provide education for nuns and lay kids because it no longer exists outside.

So we felt especially glad to be able to offer the nuns generous support this year. When we exchanged your dana for kyat, we came home with a ricebag full of currency – slightly nerve-wracking in these fraught times! But it was worth the nervous laughter: because of that, we could respond openhandedly to the many stories we were told.

Thanks to your ongoing generosity we could offer more to nunneries (and monastic schools) this year than in any previous years. Roughly three-quarters of that went to six large monastic schools. These schools now play an critical role in providing education for everyone, both lay and monastic. Each of the schools is also a nunnery, taking on the added burden of running a school – paying for supplies and

teacher salaries. It's a real headache for the nuns in charge, a cause for much worry and lost sleep. So our offerings for teacher salaries are three gifts in one package: ease from worry for the head nuns, education for the kids, and a livelihood for the teachers!

Our offerings to individual nunneries were for whatever they most needed to keep going. Mostly, that meant food. Basic staple foodstuffs like rice and oil are two to four times as expensive as they were a year ago, with no end in sight to the inflation. It also meant safety – offering for transportation (so nuns can go to Yangon for their twice-weekly alms rounds without dealing with the unreliable and increasingly dangerous municipal bus system) and construction (so they can feel safe from theft and intrusion, and build badly needed new toilets).

Again this year (because of safety concerns) we were not able to visit the nunneries in person. They came to us, and it was such a joy to meet again – for Ariya the first time in three years, and for me since last April. At the time, I thought I might now be able to return, so the meetings felt like a deep joyful blessing.



The nuns keep going somehow. And inspired by them, so do we – one way or another *we* will persist, too, in bringing your kindness to so many.

So we are *very* happy to relay the heartfelt boundless thanks from the nuns to you! They often tell us they are radiating metta to all of you every day, kind wishes and gratitude to everyone, all around the world. What follows are some photos given to us by the nuns, of what your donations have gone.





Prizegiving from monastic examinations, from the Sayanagonyee nuns (above), who have done very well in their oral exams, even the smallest ones.

They will use our dana to start a school for nuns, taught by retired teachers.

Below: Teachers and students at the annual school celebration, Appamada School.



“It is harder now, we only get few donations - but we can see the good side, no matter what happening”



*At Appamada School, training young women to speak out, and to be at ease in leading.*

Right: The students and teachers from Appamada School enjoying a field trip to a newly built local pagoda in Mingaladon. In spite of hardship the kids have a chance to just be happy kids seeing something new and exciting.



Young nuns are given home, love, education, and health care. Those who care for them act as parents – which comes with all the headaches of parenthood.

The Laputta nuns told us, laughing, “The little ones eat a lot and are growing very fast – after just a few months their robes are too short!

It is not easy because we get alms but nothing close to what we used to get.”



Going to school, and getting ready to go on alms rounds early in the morning, the line car that Chanmyaygonyee Nunnery now has offers safety and ease:

“Bus drivers no longer like to let us on the bus, and my phone was stolen by someone who cut my shoulder bag. You have to take great care now on the bus and in the streets.”

A special meal dana at Sukhacari Nunnery, one of the bigger nunneries in the village, with over 100 young nuns. Like all the other nuns, their support is always precarious, because donors are no longer regular nor guaranteed.

From one of the Nunnery schools: “Our regular monthly donor had to go into hiding [because of the current situation], so now we have to do with far less support than we had before. It is very difficult.”





Construction of buildings can take a very long time when they are being built little by little, as funds are available. So we were very happy to contribute more to some of the nun’s projects for dry and safe accommodation. “Before, when the rains came we had water up to our knees. Now it no longer floods and we are dry.” “We have been able to build thanks to all your dana over the years.”



Thanks to all of you for your wonderful metta in action! It makes a very real difference every day.

Ayya Virāṇānī