

## *The Nunneries in Yangon (II)*



*The shrine of the Paññayaungkyi Nunnery*

In this update, I will take you to the **nunneries in Nwe Kwe**, a neighbourhood a bit further outside Yangon. Many years ago, Daw Ñāṇa Dassana, a nun working in the office of the Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Center (CMMC), told us about them. We discovered that these seven nunneries, some very small, others larger, faced many challenges. One of these challenges was that during the rainy season the water flooded their ground floor knee-deep. This was a real nuisance and a major problem. The nuns had simply accepted this adverse condition, as they had neither the means to do anything against it nor to relocate. Initially, Metta In Action helped to alleviate some of their problems. Later, the solution came from outside. In 2018, a factory next to that neighbourhood wanted to buy more land. They offered a large sum for the land of the nunneries including funds for relocation, i.e., for the demolition of their existing buildings (bamboo or wooden structures) and the construction of new ones.

In this way, all the nunneries have now solid brick buildings and are no longer flooded during the rainy season. These seven nunneries, consisting of 2 to 44 nuns, are independent communities, but they form a unity by caring for and supporting one another. It is always heartening for me to see that this sense of community still exists and is actively practiced.



*Six of the seven head nuns,  
Daw Dhammananda is missing*



*With some of the nuns in 2019*

### ***Paññayaungkyi Nunnery II***



*Daw Dhammananda (left) and  
her daughter*

This nunnery consists of a mother and daughter. Daw Dhammananda is 90 years old, her daughter 61. In October 2025, the mother was hospitalised and underwent heart surgery. She has now a stent and requires oxygen. We saw the huge oxygen tank in the room. A young laywoman, who turned out to be the old nun's granddaughter, is there helping to take care. Also, two young nuns from the Paññayaungkyi Nunnery I are helping, one of them is this woman's daughter, so the old nun's great granddaughter! We were really glad to see that she has so much family around her, caring for her.



*From left to right: the two caregivers  
(nun & laywoman), Daw  
Dhammananda, her daughter*

The daughter, who has a mild intellectual disability, seems much the same. She goes on alms round in the neighbourhood and gets around 15'000 Kyats and some rice. The caregiver told us that she has a very good memory, remembers people's birthdays and brings them little presents like a bar of soap. With last year's dāna, they fixed the roof of the awning and made the entry stairs, which are quite steep, stable and safer.

## ***Kyesinaye Nunnery***

During the last year, three nuns left the nunnery to go to a study monastery, now there are 40 nuns living there.

The nuns go to the Zaloon Monastic school. The younger ones leave after lunch at 11.30 am. The older ones (grades 6,7, and 8) at 8.30 am.



*Daw Soma Theri and the young girl*

The baby orphan they adopted is now a cute young girl. Soon she will be ordained as a nun. The Burmese charity Parahita has offered them a pickup truck, which they use to travel to Yangon for their alms round. They pay the driver 10'000 Kyats (2.15 Euros) per trip. They receive enough rice and money to support all the nuns.

There are two construction projects under way. One is a new kitchen & dining hall, the other is the new living quarters on the upper floor. We saw big piles of floor tiles on the ground floor. Daw Soma Theri collects them from other construction sites. She will use them for the floors in the dining hall, kitchen, and living quarters. The outer walls of the building are finished, there is still much to be done before they can move in. As usual, it will take time to complete everything depending on the donations they get.

Another issue is the water: they have a well, but the electricity to pump the water has become very expensive. Daw Soma Theri is interested in a solar-powered pump. However, she would need a bigger pipe for that. Anyway, she will definitely look into the costs and the additional work involved.



*The new kitchen*



*A fuel-saving stove*



*The top floor*



## *Aye Mya Yaungkyi Nunnery*



*Daw Aye Suvati with her nuns*

foundation for the kitchen. Until the kitchen is finished, however, they are still cooking in the front yard.

As she poured us hot water for coffee, she told us that they only have one thermos left, as they had given the other one to a monk in the hospital.

She showed us a large scar on the head of one of the young nuns, who had fallen out of a bus while going on alms round about seven months earlier. It has now mostly healed. As a result of this accident, Daw Aye Suvati accompanies the nuns on their alms rounds.

The young nuns go to the Zaloon Monastic School, which is a 15-minute walk away.

We noticed barbed wire around their compound. She explained that her phone had been stolen and that is why she put up the wire for protection.

Daw Aye Suvati was one of the two nuns who lived and studied together. They lived in what seemed to us a very tiny shack near the pond. The other nun left quite a while ago, and now she cares for 9 young nuns.

When asked if she was still studying, she answered, 'Yes.' She had completed her third year of studies with Sayadaw U Nandamala (a well-known teacher) and was now in her first year of a bachelor's degree program. In addition to her own studies, she teaches the nuns at her nunnery.

With last year's donations, she had laid parquet flooring upstairs and did the



*The foundation for the new kitchen, now a place to dry the longyis*

## *Maukasuvanna Nunnery II*



*Daw Nyanedi and her friend*

Daw Nyanedi lives with another nun in the small, well-kept building with a lovely front garden.

She can only go on alms round when she is healthy and when her knee is not hurting. When all the daily chores are done, she and her friend practice meditation.

They also want parquet flooring upstairs; however, they still need more donations for that.



*The nearby pond*

### ***Shwechanda Nunnery***

Since we had announced our visit, all the nuns were there. Daw Susandar sent them to school once we had left because she wanted us to see all the nuns. She also wanted all the 41 nuns to meet us, the donors of MIA. When we arrived, they came down the stairs in a very orderly line, which I found very impressive. Because there are many young nuns, and many of them do not go on alms round, they do not receive enough rice and cash. So they need to buy rice.

A few years ago, a wealthy Burmese donor offered to build their three-story building. It looks quite imposing and big, but for the many nuns it is very crowded. Daw Susandar told us that there is no space for the young nuns to play. They have to study, sleep, and play inside the building. Unfortunately, there is no land available nearby.

At night, they lock the gate and all the doors –that way, they feel safe.



*The group picture in front of the shrine*



*Their three-story building*

### ***Maukasuvanna Nunnery I***



Of the 12 resident nuns, seven, along with the abbess Daw Yuvati, were present when we visited. The other nuns were already at school. Their biggest problem is the flooding of the front and back yards during the rainy season. Daw Yuvati wants to fill in the back yard with earth, then cover it with sand, and finally add a layer of concrete with a drainage pipe. One bag of earth (a large

bag) costs 70'000 Kyats (15 Euros) – many bags of earth are needed!

From the rice they receive on alms round, they can only take 1 viss home, they sell the rest.



*The back yard as it is now*

## *Paññayaungkyi Nunnery I*



With last year's dāna, a beautiful wooden floor was laid in the large hall on the ground floor. A concrete floor is cold in winter and gets wet during the rainy season, which is not good for one's health.

28 nuns live here. Some go to the 'Thai School' (established by Thais) run by a monk, while others go to the Zaloom Monastic School. Both schools are within walking distance.

Last year, 20 refugees from Daw Khema's village spent 3 months in the nunnery. One woman had to undergo emergency surgery. Since she had no money, Daw Khema paid the bill of 5'000'000 Kyats (1064 Euros). So far, she has not received the money back. Most of the refugees have gone back, except for a couple for whom returning to the Rakhine area is too dangerous.

Since space is limited, Daw Khema wants to add a second floor above the kitchen to serve as living and sleeping quarters for the nuns. All go on alms, except 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students because the school does not close on alms round days. They go to the area around Insein (where the infamous prison is located). Daw Khema has been going there for over 20 years and so people knew her. Some of her supporters have since passed away, and since she no longer goes there herself, she does not know the new supporters. She showed us a photo of herself receiving her bachelor's degree in Dhamma from the Sangha University in Yangon.



*The beautiful new wooden floor*





Many of the Nwe Kwe head nuns, along with some other nuns, undertook a pilgrimage to Bagan. This was a well-deserved break of the busy day-to-day life at the nunnery. These and all the other nuns MIA supports are true multi-talents and take care of countless tasks: they teach the younger nuns, care for sick nuns, organize the construction workers, cook meals, shop, advice parents or widows, sew robes, go on alms round, weed the ground, give Dhamma talks, memorize texts, chant, give meditation instructions, and much more. They are CEOs, managers, mothers, event-planners, financial experts, gardeners, teachers, spiritual companions, or simple nuns. But above all, they are inspiring and beautiful women/human beings who deserve great respect and support.

**My deep bows to all of them!**

Ariya Baumann  
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