

Dhamma Moli Update: February 2010

I wanted to send a report and update much sooner than this but it took a couple of snow days to have the time to put this together. As most of you know, I went to Kathmandu in December with my friend and Dhamma Moli supporter, Pam Conine.



Thanks to you we brought many gifts. Special thanks to Mary Lee Siddons for the blankets and Alaska friends for the long underwear; to Peggy Byrne, Theresa Rembert, Dorothy Smith, Laura Taylor, Donna Caslin and others who donated funds for us to purchase warm clothes for the girls. Pam brought a wonderful assembly of school supplies. You can see blankets, clothing, vitamins, and lotions in this picture.

The girls are truly wonderful. There are six, ranging in age from 8 to 20 years old. They are, Sumana, Karunicka, Sukita (standing) and Tushita, Chandra Shree, and Kemicka (sitting). They all speak English, some very well, as it is the language used at their school.



Here they are in their much needed new jackets we were able to buy for them in Kathmandu.

Kemicka (seated, far right) arrived this past year with a very serious ear infection and had to have surgery immediately. This was very expensive. Though they have public health care, to wait until the surgery could be done would have endangered her (the infection would spread to her brain) – the surgery needed to be done right away. She is recovering from that and will start school soon, we hope. The other girls are all in school and doing well. Sumana (standing far left), who is 20, is finishing her English language classes so that she can take college courses. Sumana is a novice nun. The sisters are considering sending two of the girls to Burma for Buddhist education but that will not be for a couple of years.

We had a very good time with the girls who are so eager to learn and very sociable. Pam, who is was a middle school teacher for 35 years, took to them, and they to her, immediately! Here she is doing some teaching:



We also were honored to participate in wedding festivities of our friends Mandira and Suman, the sisters' nephew.



As you may know, the situation in Nepal is very difficult. There is no constitution yet and the Maoists are still calling strikes that shut down the entire country for days at a time. Electricity is sporadically provided. Water is at a premium and is quite a burden to buy. The sisters buy bottled water to drink and city water to cook with, and use their own captured water in cisterns for sinks and toilets. No water is ever wasted. Food has also increased in price. Supporting the vihar with the six girls, three nuns and the “didis” who help with all the work is not easy. This Pam and I saw quite clearly during our stay there. Though the sisters originally wanted to have 10 girls, that does seem to be way too ambitious, both financially and practically. They are committed to having a family atmosphere and not to become an orphanage. Their experience is that orphanages are not good places and that there is a lot of corruption in the NGOs that run them. Six dependents, along with funds to pay one “didi” and an after school tutor ,are quite a handful for them now. They hope to bring in more girls when

these girls are old enough to take some responsibility for the younger girls and for cooking and cleaning as well.

The vihar had an ancient small temple on the property (if you have visited, you have seen this) with the parinirvana Buddha (reclining). A donor wanted to memorialize his recently deceased mother by building a new temple around the statue. His mother used to come to the temple frequently. So, a replica of the Kushinigar Temple in India is being built in the Vihar. It is quite grand and beautiful. The sisters hold monthly meditation/teaching days which are now held in the Dhamma Moli building but will soon be held in the new temple. The new temple can accommodate up to 300 people; it is really large.



With this new temple, the sisters will be busy with more visitors. It is looking more and more like a very special landmark that you can see from Soyambhu and it stands out in the neighborhood. It is a beautiful design that incorporates elements from the MahaBodhi Temple in BodhGaya, Kushinigar and Lumbini elements. It will likely bring in more donors to their vihar as well which will help with the overall expenses of the vihar. When the new temple is completed, the girls will move up to the second floor of the Dhamma Moli building (the old Buddha Hall) for their dormitory. The meditation room will be on the top floor then and only open to Dhamma Moli residents. All visitors will be attended to in the temple. This will be a positive improvement so that the Dhamma Moli project will have some separation from the usual vihar activities, making it more like a home.

We discussed finances with the sisters. We asked them what they thought would be a “per girl” estimate of costs. It is very difficult to estimate as there are so many variables! There are solar water heaters on the roof and they have a battery back-up system (for electricity outages) with lights to each room but these batteries have to be taken in every 3 months for recharging. The health crisis with Kemicka meant that they had to borrow money for her hospital stay. They will soon be getting a computer repaired for the girls to use and they are redesigning their current bedroom to a classroom for after school work and tutoring. They pay a young woman, Miss Russo, to work with the girls after school with educational enrichment activities. They also pay a living wage to one of the women, “Didi”, who helps out everyday with cooking, cleaning, and looking after the girls.

Given the rising costs of everything, the sisters estimated that \$2000 per girl per year is a reasonable figure for covering the costs. We hope that donors can think about supporting one girl for a year, or going in with a couple of people to support one girl for a year.

Sister Molini is in Burma until March. The sisters will go to Bodh Gaya for the Antioch Program in September through October. Then they will be coming to the US to teach at University of Dayton and at Wilmington College, January – April, 2011. For most of that time, they will be living at the Yellow Springs Dharma Center. We would like to plan ahead for this US stay so that people can arrange for the sisters to come to visit, hold a retreat or have a fundraiser for the project. They will have semester break in mid-March and UD and Wilmington College can work around other dates if necessary. This is a great opportunity to support their work and to bring them to your area. Please give this some thought. I would be happy to work out details with you. They usually stay in the US until June so there is also time at the end of their teaching duties to arrange a visit.

Here is most of the gang on a cold and sunny day:



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Financial Summary:

The small account we keep in Yellow Springs Credit Union for Dhamma Moli cash donations had a balance of \$200.20 in August 2009 when it opened. Donations received totaled and additional \$650. Blankets, clothes and vitamins that we brought totaled \$547.00. The P.O. Box is \$60.00 for the year. We spent about \$60.00 for the coats for the girls and the sisters in Kathmandu. The account balance is approximately \$185.00.

Through Buddhist Peace Fellowship “pass-through” we sent \$9500 in tax-deductible donations to the sisters in 2009. So far this year, we have raised \$1250 and have a total balance in the BPF account of approximately \$2680. We will be wiring most of that to them this month.

We understand it is difficult to fundraise without the sisters' actual presence. However, they will need funds this year to carry them through. If you know people that are interested in supporting the sisters in their work, please share this update with them. As always, tax-deductible donations can be made through Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Checks should be written to BPF with Dhamma Moli in the memo line, then mailed to Friends of Dhamma Moli, P.O. Box 628, Yellow Springs, OH, 45387. I send out acknowledgement letters then forward the checks to BPF. When we have at least \$2000 in the account, we wire funds directly to the Dhamma Moli account at Nabil Bank in Kathmandu.

Finally....as you all know, Sister Dhamma Vijaya and Sister Molini have created this beautiful place and home from the trashed ruins of a former temple. It was literally a garbage dump when they were given the land by their teacher. It has taken many years, generous donors, and lots of hard work to create this place. When you sit on the tiled veranda and look up at Soyambhu, you can feel what a very special spot this is. It is clean, beautiful and happy. The little temple dog, Labo, is loved dearly by the girls. The sisters work tirelessly every day to manifest this positive environment. Please keep them in your meditations and prayers. They send their gratitude and their strong metta for you.

If you have ideas for fund raising or for having the sisters visit, please let me know and I can help to arrange their calendar during their next US visit.

Thank you so much for your support of the sisters and the girls!

*Katie Egart
for Friends of Dhamma Moli*



Labo, Temple Protector