

Support for a Nunnery

Several months ago, Buddhist Relief Mission learned about a bhikkhuni, Ven. Nanda, staying in a small hermitage in Wattapathana, a minuscule village of 17 households in tea country about a half-hour from Kandy. She had been living there for about two and a half years, but the Dhamma hall hadn't been completed. In response to our appeal for assistance, several donors sent generous contributions, and our contractor, Nimal, was able to carry out some much-needed improvements. Nimal was very happy to find that on one Sunday, when he went to continue his work, many villagers joined him and helped him put up the roof.

On November 12, we, at last, were able to visit the hermitage with our friend and retired driver, Tissa, and to meet Ven. Nanda. We were glad to find that she can speak quite good English, having worked for many years in Kuwait. She informed us that, that morning, 22 devotees had gathered for a full-moon puja in the Dhamma hall. We were deeply impressed by the calm and quiet atmosphere of the hermitage. During our relaxed and measured discussion, we enjoyed that serenity with her. Everything felt unhurried. Her kuti is very simple. The biggest problem is water scarcity. Recently, pipes were installed, bringing water down from a source on a nearby mountain, but, in the dry season, that source does not provide enough water for her or her near neighbors. She believes that, near her kuti, it would be possible to draw water with a pump if one were to sink a one-hundred-meter tube well. We are investigating the feasibility of that project and looking for someone to undertake it.

The hermitage sits on a hillside, teeming with birds and small animals. Wonderfully quiet during the day, Ven. Nanda said that after eight o'clock, it is perfectly silent. She is not isolated, however, for the nearest house is only about two minutes away. While we were there, several women, children, and youngsters from the village came to pay their respects. She is adequately supported and protected. She told us that, on most days, villagers bring enough food each morning for her breakfast and lunch. On other days, she is able to prepare something for herself in her modest kitchen. Her kuti is surrounded by orchids, zinnias, and other flowers which attract many beautiful butterflies.

We have used all the funds we've received, replacing the roof, laying a cement floor in the little Dhamma hall, and building a half wall. If possible, we'd like to finish the wall in the Dhamma hall, and lay tile in the kuti's tiny bathroom.

We inquired about her health and she said that she's not diabetic. She did admit that she had knee troubles and only one knee support, which she used alternately. We happen to have extra supports which we will take when we next visit.

When we asked what she needed, she asked for Dhamma books in Sinhala, particularly from the Tipitaka. Because the young people seemed so comfortable when they came, we asked if she could use some Dhamma books for them as well. She liked the idea, and we hope to offer a little library. Our friend, Lal, has already begun collecting books in Colombo.

The following pages contain a few photos of our visit.



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