

Daw Gunavati Guruma in NEPAL

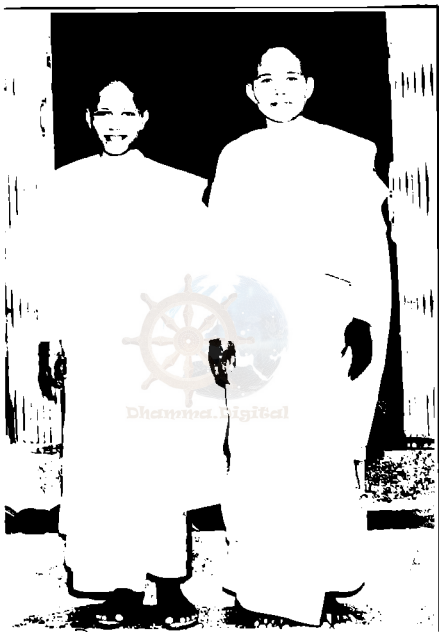


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Editor
Lochan Tara Tuladhar
Dr. Reena Tuladhar





Daw Gunavasi Guruma and Dhammavasi Guruma
on their return to Nepal in 1962.

*On the occasion of Golden Jubilee Celebration of
Dharmakirti Vihar*

**Daw Gunavati Guruma
in
Nepal**



Editors
Lochan Tara Tuladhar
Dr. Reena Tuladhar (Bania)

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Editorial

The Dharmakirti Vihar was established in 1966 AD (2022 BS) when the foundations of the Theravada Buddhism were still not firm and strong after its revival in Nepal. Having contributed to the Buddha Sasana for the last fifty years, the Dharmakirti Vihar just recently celebrated its Golden Jubilee. The important role played by the Dharmakirti Vihar in its challenging mission to uplift the Theravada Buddhism is known to all in Nepal. Venerable Dhammavati, Sasanadhaja Dhammachariya, the founder of Dharmakirti Vihar, has played a vital role, under whose able leadership the Buddha Sasana prospers today in Nepal.

We must not forget the contribution made by the Burmese nun Venerable Ma Gunavati, Sasanadhaja Dhammachariya, who accompanied the Nepalese nun Dhammavati after completion of their higher studies on Buddhism in Myanmar. With full-hearted support to each other, they succeeded in changing the prevailing conservative traditional outlook of the Nepalese society of the times then. It is the rightful duty of the Nepalese people to duly respect and recognize the goodwill of such a messenger of the Dhamma. In recognition of her selfless sacrifice, devotion and efforts to stabilize the forum of the Buddha Sasana, the Dharmakirti Vihar Golden Jubilee Chief Celebration Committee has decided to bring out this book. This book, released by Dharmakirti Vihar family on the auspicious occasion of the Dharmakirti Vihar Golden Jubilee Celebrations, is to pay due respect to and as a mark of remembrance of Venerable Ma Gunavati in honour of her generous toils .

Venerable Ma Gunavati is truly a Burmese flower flourishing in the Nepalese garden lavishly diffusing away the fragrance of the Dhamma to the Nepalese community. After completing higher studies on Buddhism in her home country (Myanmar), she put into practice in Nepal what she had learned, thus becoming an exemplary noble lady, a messenger of the Dhamma. As proof of her deep faith in the Buddhaland, Nepal, she visited Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, more than eighty times. Replete with faith, discipline, concentration, goodwill qualities, she bounds in elegance, forbearance, humbleness, the four Brahma Vihar qualities (loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity), craftsmanship, benevolence and many other noble qualities - most of which are clearly reflected in the articles in this book.

No wonder Venerable Dhammavati has compared her as an equal to King Ashoka's daughter, Bhikkhuni Sanghamitra. Remembering a few droplets of her goodness has given us the opportunity to shower our gratitude to her who possesses an infinity of goodness. This small effort of ours to

remember her goodness, we believe, will be highlighted and inscribed in golden letters in the annals of the Buddhist domain in Nepal. After dedicating 35 years of her valuable life to illuminate Buddhism in Nepal, she today resides in Myanmar with pleasant nostalgic memories of the bygone days in Nepal. She whole-heartedly labored to strengthen the bonds of friendship, religion and culture between Nepal and Myanmar.

We revere Venerable Dhammavati with deep gratitude for giving us relevant advice in bringing out this book. Similarly, many venerable nuns have contributed by highlighting Venerable Ma Gunavati's goodness in their articles. The articles in Nepal Bhasa and Nepali have been translated into English to make them presentable to the Burmese audience and readers, where Venerable Ma Gunavati today resides. We are very thankful to Venerable Bhikkhu Upatissa, Intellectual Soongma Tuladhar, Prof. Nirmal Man Tuladhar, Prof. Mahendra Jib Tuladhar, Country Specialist Raju Tuladhar, Lisa Ranjit, and Lekh Ratna Shakya for the precious time and effort they put into the translation.

In the process of bringing out this book, we are grateful to the necessary advice, suggestions and direction given by our Dhamma friend Madan Ratna Manandhar. We also wish to thank Deena Kansakar (Bania), member of the Dharmakirti, for her efforts in the press-works at home and Arun Siddhi Tuladhar, member of the Dharmakirti, for the cover design in accordance with the subject matter.



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The editors duo

Publisher's Note

Ma Gunavati Guruma had come to Nepal as a messenger of the Dhamma. Fifty years ago, she had left her native country and came to Nepal to teach the ways of the Buddha. She was always here to help and support me in my effort to spread the Dhamma. During more than thirty-five years of her stay in Nepal, she taught Buddhism to the people and took active part in all the activities sponsored by Dharmakirti Vihar. By leading example, she set herself as a role-model for others and she succeeded in inspiring the people of Nepal to live a righteous way of life. We can go on and on about all the invaluable services she did for Nepal and the people of Nepal.

This book is published on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of Dharmakirti Vihar. The contents of this book are articles by different people who have known Ma Gunavati Guruma closely during her stay in Nepal. Although Ma Gunavati Guruma did not attend the jubilee function, the members of Dharmakirti Vihar feel honoured to publish this book as a fitting tribute to her invaluable services on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee Celebration.

The financial needs for the publication of this book has been met out by some savings made from the account provided by donors for the conduction of various programmes during the Dharmakirti Vihar Golden Jubilee Celebrations and from the remaining profit generated from the sale of tickets for the Buddhist Cultural Show. For this reason, I would like to thank all of the contributors, donors, who helped us to make the Golden Jubilee celebrations a grand success and also to all of the Dharmakirti members who actively helped out in the sale of the tickets for the Buddhist Cultural Show. Therefore, I offer my sincere *sadhubad* to all those people who donated generously and to all the members of Dharmakirti Vihar.

I offer my special thanks to Reena Tuladhar, Lochan Tara Tuladhar, and Deena Kansakar for their special effort in bringing out this book. I also thank Arun Siddhi Tuladhar for his cover design and Madan Ratna Manandhar for his valuable suggestions and help. I would like to heartily thank New Nepal Press family for bringing out this book on time, just as they have been doing for all previous Dharmakirti publications.



Bhikkuni Dhammavati
Sasanadhaj Dhammachariya,
Aggamahaganthawachak Pandit
Founder
Dharmakirti Vihar.

Date: B.S. 2072 Poush



*Ma Gunavati Guruma with the first batch students of
Dharmakirti in the first prize distribution programme of
Bouddha Pariyati Sikshya at Dharmakirti Vihar*

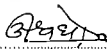
*Goodwill Message from Sangha Nayaka
Bhikkhu Ashwaghosha Mahasthavr*

Greetings to Ma Gunavati Guruma

Ma Gunavati Guruma is a really virtuous Buddhist nun. When Dhammavati Guruma returned to Nepal from Myanmar, she accompanied her as her friend. According to the Buddha, someone that propagates his doctrine (teachings) needs to be honestly virtuous.

Ma Gunavati Guruma is an honestly virtuous nun. Due to her decent behavior and noble efforts, the Buddha's teachings were disseminated widely in Nepal. I always remember her and her contribution to Nepal. I express my good wishes for her health and wellbeing.

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Bhikkhu Ashwaghosha Mahasthavr
'Aggamahasaddhamma Jotika Dhaja'
Sangha Nayaka
All Nepal Bhikkhu Association

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Ma Gunavati Guruma and Nepal

by Dhammavati Guruma

Translated by: Reena Tuladhar



Ma Gunavati Guruma is a citizen of Myanmar. But she looks like a Nepali by origin, do you know why?

I am a Nepali woman. But since my childhood, I have been very unhappy with the extreme discrimination against women in Nepali society brought by prevailing conservative traditional beliefs.

I was born when Rana rulers were ruling the country. Discrimination against women was excessive in the Nepali society of the times then. Women were treated as if they were not a mankind. *Sati Pratha* was then a prevailing tradition. Under *Sati Pratha*, a widow is cremated alive with her dead husband. People had a misconception that educating a girl child means letting her become a prostitute or a witch. If a girl attempts to become literate or educated, Nepali society views her negatively as if she were taking an immoral path.

However, my own mother was against this kind of backward misconception and tradition. She understood the importance of education for women. She was of the view that women should not be treated as a slave in front of men. So, she took me to Buddhaghosh Bhante and requested his help for my education. After teaching me for a year, Buddhaghosh Bhante went to Kushinagar for his own further study. He had taken Rudra Raj (Bhikkhu Sudharshan) to Kushinagar along with him. We (my mother, my friends, and I) were all disappointed as our studies were terminated by the venerable's departure.

At that time, venerable Dhammavudha, a prominent Bhikkhu from Myanmar, had visited Nepal. He did not understand either Nepali or Newari language. But I could communicate with him as I had learnt some of Pali language with Buddhaghosh Bhante. I was able to translate the teachings of Dhammavudha in Pali into Newari language for other disciples.

One day, Venerable Dhammavudha asked us, "What are the problems and difficulties of Nepali people at the moment?" As I was the only daughter among the five siblings in my family, I was very pampered. I never felt any kind of misfortune. My only regret was that there was no opportunity of learning Buddhism in Nepal for us. So, I responded to the venerable from audience, "I have no other grief or sorrow. My only distress is that there is no opportunity for us to learn Buddha's teachings in Nepal."

Venerable Dhammavudha sympathized with me very much. So, a day came when he actually took me to Myanmar via the route of Assam jungle. While in Kushinagar, we could not manage to obtain a travel visa for me because of some administrative difficulties. But we nevertheless travelled through the Assam jungle. I was imprisoned in Myanmar as I had entered the country without a visa. I was somehow freed and then taken to Moulmein. Finally, I got enrolled in Khemaram Nun's Study Center where hundreds of Buddhist nuns studied Buddhism. Venerable Ra we Thon, who is a scholar, later wrote a novel entitled, '*Tami Chhet*' (Yomha Mhyaye in Newari) on the story of my struggles for ordination and adventures of my travel to Myanmar.

The education system in the Khemaram Nun's Centre was very strict and tough. It was not enough to simply understand concepts. Students are required to recite the whole texts and memorize every word. We had to make huge efforts for that. During the day time, we followed the teachers' instructions. And at nights, we recited texts to memorize. If someone was found asleep before 11:00 p.m., she was punished. She was beaten with a stick on the spot, and the following day, she had to cut grass in the farm. To escape from punishment, we had to use different measures to stay awake.

When the topic of Nepal came up during my discussions with my contemporaries, I explained how oppressed women were in Nepali society. I particularly described how married women were cremated alive along with their husbands when they (husbands) die, as per the prevailing *Sati Pratha*. In response, some of my contemporaries used to criticize the very superstitious Nepali society, while others sympathized and suggested abolishing such tradition by educating the people.

In response, I used to say to my friends, "Therefore, let us go to Nepal after completing my studies on Buddhism even if we have to face difficulties, to teach and raise the awareness of such radical people to eliminate their superstitious beliefs. In your society, women enjoy equal rights as men. Women in your society are fortunate. But in Nepali society, women suffer as they are forced to leave their maternity home after marriage. They are illiterate, not being able to write even a letter to parents in case they are in trouble. If by some misfortune, they are married off to a ruthless family, there is no way for them to escape from their in-laws' tortures. People lack righteous knowledge. So, please accompany me to propagate Dhamma in Nepal."

In response, some of them would say, "Why should you go back to such a backward society. You can stay here in Myanmar and be a Burmese citizen." So, they suggested me to stay in Myanmar, but did not make up their mind to come to Nepal. While several of my contemporaries indicated their readiness to come to Nepal to help abolish such superstition and radicalism through teachings. But they were actually not serious.

It was only Ma Gunavati Guruma who used to listen to my conversation about Nepal with deep and genuine interest and seriousness, and assured me of her commitment to come to Nepal. I considered her as a very kind and forbearing person, among the hundreds of other Burmese nuns I knew while I was in Myanmar. Therefore, I used to often share with her the wide practice of *Pancha Bali* (sacrifice of animals) as a religion in Nepal due to the lack understanding of true Dhamma and the unnecessary oppression of and discrimination against women, largely due to the lack of awareness and education. This greatly touched her and generated deep sympathy within her for Nepali people. She, therefore, made a commitment to come to Nepal, irrespective of any difficulty that may arise. Once in Nepal, she endured all kinds of discomfort and difficulties associated with food, lodging, and other amenities. She was able to endure these difficulties purely because of her compassion and sympathy for Nepali people, just as a mother would towards her child."

Today we are happy that we are celebrating the completion of 25 years of Ma Gunavati Guruma in Nepal.

We find a very distressing situation for women in Nepal when compared to Burmese society.

In Myanmar, parents do not discriminate between a son and a daughter. They are equally happy at the birth of either a son or a daughter. Here in Nepal, the birth of a boy child brings a joy in family, while the birth of a girl child makes a family disappointed and cheerless. "A boy is born" is told in a loud, proud, and cheerful voice. While in case of a girl child, "It is a daughter", told in a disappointing and a miserable tone. Thus, there is a discrimination against a girl child since the time they come out to world from mother's womb.

When they are grown-up, girls are less motivated for education. Parents tend to think that girls are to be married off to others' families; so, it is not worthy to invest in a daughter's education. But a special attention, irrespective of expenses, is paid to a son's education, as he is to be a breadwinner in future. This kind of biased mentality is a big ignorance on the part of parents.

Sons have full legal rights to their parents' wealth and property. But in the daughters' case, they simply get minor dowry at the time of their marriage.

In Myanmar, these things are different. All children in a family, be it a son or a daughter, have equal rights to family property. There is no hard and fast rule for either a daughter to be married off to her husband's house or a son to be married off to his wife's house. It all depends upon their mutual understanding.

So, women in Myanmar are fortunate as they live together with their own parents. They share different circumstances in life with their families. Unlike in Nepal, they do not get into family conflicts among in-laws. Men are also free from getting trapped in quarrels between his mother and wife. Mother-in-laws also do not need to complain about her son's negligence in favor of his wife.

While in Myanmar, I always asked Ma Gunavati Guruma, "Let us go to Nepal, help Nepali people relieve themselves from the pool of misery by propagating Buddha's teachings."

I waited one whole year in Myanmar for Ma Gunavati Guruma, after completing my Dhammachariya degree. I got engaged in teaching juniors until Ma Gunavati Guruma completed her Dhammachariya degree. Finally, I came to Nepal from Myanmar along with Ma Gunavati Guruma. Today, I realize that my choice of Ma Gunavati Guruma among hundreds of other nuns in Myanmar proved to be a perfect one. She has been assisting me in every step of my mission in propagating Buddha's teachings among the ignorant people in Nepali society. I am, therefore, very content today that my mission is nearly accomplished.

It is Ma Gunavati Guruma who is assisting me from behind the scene. I am always privileged by her support. I have become courageous to advance in life. I pray for her good health and long life. I also pray for her prolonged stay in Nepal.

Source: Ma Gunavati Guruma, Nepalye 25 Dan Jigu Lumanti, Buddha Sambat 2531, Vikram Sambat 2044, Dharmakirti Publication, Kathmandu.



On the occasion of Golden Jubilee Ceremony of Dharmakirti Vihar, Token of Felicitation delivered to Myanmar: Being presented to Ma Gunavati Guruma by Danvati Guruma, Mettavati Guruma and other nuns of Dharmakirti Vihar

Daw Gunavati Guruma: A Rare Friend

☞ **Dhammavati Guruma**
Translated by: Reena Tuladhar



I had left home in B.S.2006 for Kushinagar. My ambition was to go to Myanmar for Buddhist studies. I got ordained in Kushinagar. I was then 14 years old. As we could not manage to obtain a passport, we reached Myanmar on foot via the jungle of Assam. I lived in Myanmar for 14 years as part of my studies. My mission was to propagate Buddhism in Nepal, once I complete my studies. But without a company, I was not courageous enough for this mission. The reason is, years back, people in Nepali society were lost in very traditional and superstitious beliefs. It would be challenging to teach them Buddha's teachings. I used to discuss this with my friends "In Nepal, women are excessively discriminated. Women's education is not in practice. People believe that women's character will be spoiled if they become educated. So, women are not allowed to go to school. Women are dependent on men. In a tradition known as *Sati Pratha*, widows are cremated alive along with her dead husband, etc."

Learning these things, my friends in Myanmar used to become sympathetic. Some of them even tried to humiliate me by saying, "Nepali people are superstitious. They should be taught Buddha's teachings immediately. We will come to support you if you do not have enough courage." But they were not serious about what they say. Among them, Ma Gunavati Guruma was the only Burmese friend who supported me with whole heartedly and showed sympathy. I also saw her as a compassionate, kind, forgiving, and sociable person. In view of her qualities, I seriously pleaded her to accompany me to Nepal. I requested her, "Please accompany me to Nepal to propagate Buddha Dhamma."

Daw Gunavati Guruma was sympathetic to Nepali people for these reasons. Therefore, she gave me her word saying, "I am ready to face any kind of difficulties to help propagate Buddhism in Nepal."

Besides being sympathetic, sociable, compassionate, and thankful, Daw Gunavati Guruma has one another notable quality—to write articles and stories. She started to write the facts about my life from the source of our talks. She continued to ask about me in our talks and write them in her notes. In our school, a rule for Dhammachariya students was that those students

who pass Dhammachariya examination need to submit their biographies. So, teacher of Dhammachariya Bhikkhu U Suryabhivamsa used to write the biographies of all students who pass Dhammachariya examination. Before he wrote my biography. Daw Gunavati Guruma had already written and submitted my biography to teacher U Suryabhivamsa. He edited her writing and gave a title "*Nepayamha Mayeju* (The girl from Nepal)". Based on this biography, another Burmese Bhikkhu Ra We Thwan wrote a novel in Burmese language entitled "*Tami Chhet*", which means "Loving Daughter". Later, Venerable Gyanpurnik of Nepal translated this novel into Newari language from Burmese language and gave it a title "*Yamha Mhyaye*". After that, my own young brother Motikaji Shakya translated the novel from Newari language into Nepali and gave it a title "*Snehi Chhori*".

Daw Gunavati, who whole heartedly accepted my request to accompany me to propagate Dhamma in Nepal, completed Dhammachariya degree a year later than me. I, therefore, waited for a year in Myanmar to bring her to Nepal. But when I returned to Nepal with her a year later, my father passed away in the same year. For this reason, I did not have the opportunity to see my father at the time of his demise.

After reaching Nepal, we stayed at my house for six months as there was no Vihar for us to live in. After this initial six months, Venerable Sumangala had got a scholarship to study in Japan who was teaching children at Gana Mahaviahar. So, he handed over his job of teaching children to us. For that we had to shift to Kathmandu from Patan. We, therefore, stayed at Gyan Man Guruju's house at Jyabahal.

In those days, there were not many people who knew about '*Daan*' (offering things) to *Bhantes* (monks) and *Gurumas* (nuns). So, as our (monks and nuns) life is dependent on others' *Daan* by rule, we did not even get a proper meal to eat. Daw Gunavati Guruma, who had come from a prosperous and flourishing country such as Myanmar, easily and delightedly accepted the poor and difficult situation in Nepal. She did not change her mind even in a condition when we had no food to eat and a proper place to sleep. With a determined mind she went ahead in the field of spreading Dhamma. Further, in Nepali society, people were strict with social practices such as *jabhar* (the caste system) and *chipanipa* (used cutleries after eating, considered as impure). So, if we go to someone's house for alms, very few people dared to collect the cutleries used by us. In contrast, in Daw Gunavati Guruma's home country Myanmar there was no concept of impurity associated with used cutleries. Here in Nepal, as people have such deep traditional beliefs, it became very difficult for her to understand and adjust to these kind of social rules. Nonetheless, she willingly and easily accepted all these adverse circumstances, without stopping to treat people with love and compassion.

We lived in Jyabahal for five/six months. After that, upasaka Chaturatna Shakya offered a place in Konshabahal of Patan for us to make a Vihar. But at that time, Keshari Peeta, wife of Maniharsha Sahu; Dan Peeta, (wife of Maniharsha Sahu's brother); and his sister suggested not to choose a place in Kwane (Southern part of Kathmandu). They suggested buying a plot of land at Shreegha in Kathmandu. Accordingly, I bought a plot of land at Shreegha as I had Rs.3000.00 with me which my father had left for me. We stayed in Dan Peeta's house at Taakhachen. Janaba Tole, when the Vihar at Shreegha was being built up. At that time, Dan Peeta, Keshari Peeta, and Laxmi Prabha Sahuni supported us extensively. We should not also forget the support and help we received from Hera Kaji Dai and Ashamaya Sahuni.

During this period, we continued propagating Dhamma through different means such as preaching *Dhamma Deshana* (discourses) at different places, teaching Buddha Dhamma, conducting *Paritran Path* (chanting Paritran), etc. During a period of two and half months, we organized *Tirthayatra* (Pilgrimage) to India for the first time. After that, Dharmakirti Vihar was inaugurated on the day of Ashtami (8th day of Lunar calendar) B.S. 2022, prior Baisakh Poomima.

This is how Daw Gunavati Guruma helped continuously for 35 years in propagating Buddha Dhamma in Nepal. In the initial years, three of us Daw Gunavati Guruma, Ratna Manjari Guruma, and myself (Dhammavati Guruma), started propagating Dhamma. Later, Anagarika Chameli and Anagarika Kamala also joined with us to live in Dharmakirti Vihar. Gradually the number of Anagarikas residing in Dharmakirti Vihar increased. The activities of Vihar also widened. Today, many established branches and units of Dharmakirti Vihar are operating.

Daw Gunavati Guruma has been visiting Nepal frequently. Even after returning to Myanmar, she is still helping with the propagation of Dhamma in Nepal. Today, she is 90 years old and continues to show the same compassion for Nepal. Dharmakirti Vihar has reached this status today mainly because of her contribution. All the *upasaka and upasikas* of Dharmakirti Vihar should, therefore, be grateful for her valuable contribution and pray for her health and goodwill. This is our duty. As the Buddha has said in the *Mangal Sutta*:

"Katannyuta cha Yetan Mangal Muttam"

That means it is a good deed to be grateful to others' kind gestures. So, whoever does this *Mangal Karya*, his/her life will be filled with *Mangal*. May all of us be able to continue this *Mangal Karya*.

Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam

Source : '*Dharmakirti*' Monthly Buddhist Magazine, year 33, No.7, Mangsir 2072.



Ma Gunavati Guruma: In My Heart

by Dhammadinna (Chameli) Guruma
Translated by Bhikkhu Upatissa

When Ma Gunavati Guruma was just 12 years old she took her nun's ordination (in her native land, Myanmar). According to the tradition there she was 'Ma' Gunavati Guruma and now she is called 'Daw' Gunavati. The Burmese people address young nuns 'Ma'. When young nuns grow older and become senior they are addressed 'Daw'. From very earlier stage of my life in Myanmar, I have been familiar with Ma Gunavati Guruma. Then we used to say, "Guruma, you are very patient and wish to help us. Nepal needs a Guruma like you."

In 2020 B.S. Ma Gunavati Guruma and Dhammavati Guruma left Dhammadinna (the writer of this article) and Utpalavanna (her nick name is *Chini Guruma*) in Myanmar and they returned to Nepal. We came back to Nepal in 2022 B.S. After my return from Myanmar, I lived in my parents' house for six months. Later, with the permission of Dhammavati Guruma and Ma Gunavati Guruma, I moved to the Dharmakirti Vihar. Then this Vihar was not completed. Simply brick-walls were built up (and looked almost like a simple hut). Walls needed to be plastered. As we lived for 3 years in this Vihar, Kayo Ma, a generous devotee spent for the plastering of all walls.

When Ma Gunavati Guruma came to Nepal she did not know Newari Language (Nepal Bhasa) at all. However, she tried very hard and learnt to speak a little Newari language in three months' time. Almost every day she also walks outside with Dhammavati Guruma to preach sermons to the local people. I must say that I was very small at that time. While keeping a record of visitors, I did necessary works of the Vihar and passed the whole day. Ma Gunavati Guruma was very curious and often used to ask questions. Whenever she is walking outside, she sees a sign board and immediately asks "What are those letters?" When she is walking through a town she asks "What town is it?" She used to note down in her notebook the name of the town and the street she was walking. She used to learn them by heart. Thus she learnt our language quickly. Soon she learnt our alphabets too. She has Bhaktapur people's accent when she speaks Newari language. The people of Bhaktapur liked when she speaks in their accent and they used to visit her.

Dharmakirti Bauddha Adhyayan Goshthi (Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle) was established in 2028 B.S. Then six years have already passed since my return to Nepal. Ma Gunavati Guruma taught and trained its members in the art of hand making paper-flowers and typical '*paun*' of citron (a type of fruit similar to a lemon). She took teaching classes for many years. She bought flower-making-papers and strings by herself. She knew where she could buy these items. Shopkeepers used to give her more than she required when she went for shopping.

Those days many people came to learn the art of hand making paper-flowers. The entire hall seemed as if papers' factory. Flower exhibitions were also staged for the public. In addition to teaching the technique of making flowers, Ma Gunavati Guruma used to give dhamma talks to her students. "Hi children, you are young girls. Young girls should learn all aspects of science of arts and crafts. Be polite and speak gentle words. Be grateful and respect the good quality of someone that has given you a little knowledge at least. It's not good to show pride just because that you have known the job. The job you have learnt you must teach others as well." Thus she used to encourage her students by giving them instructions.

One day, Loka Darshan Bajracharya saw all beautiful paper-flowers made by Ma Gunavati Guruma with her efforts. Then he took them and presented to Her Majesty the Queen Aishwarya Rajya Laxmi Shah. Her Majesty was very pleased and handed over 25000/- rupees cash award for Ma Gunavati Guruma.

In the process of making '*paun*' she taught of making '*lime paun*' (*lebu-paun*) too. Those days '*lime*' (*lebu*) was cheap. Full many '*dokos*' (a big eyed bamboo basket which is carried on the back) of limes were purchased and brought to the Vihar. In order to make '*paun*' (pungent) we were guided to cut limes round and round. We spread salt on limes that had been cut in round shape and we collected them in pots for preservation. Then we were sent to dry them in the sun.

She used to tell us happily that we should acquire knowledge and understanding while working in the related areas. She made us laughing louder and louder too. We never felt dull when we worked in group with her. We never felt tired either. When we were working with her we did not feel that the time was passing. That was mouth watering and so delicious '*paun*'. She worked a lot to guide resident nuns of the Vihar and sisters of the *Adhyayan Goshthi*.

Our devotees celebrated Grand Silver Jubilee by holding felicitation program for her on the occasion of 25 years of her life in Nepal. The devotees who know her very well are grateful always. There is also a working staff

to support her on behalf of foreign affairs for her passport and visa issues. There are devotees, *upasaka* and *upasikas* who always show their profound faith towards her.

When Ma Gunavati Guruma was in Nepal, we had a good relationship with the Burmese people. They also greatly supported the Dhammakirti Vihar. Occasionally they visited the Vihar and Ma Gunavati Guruma used to prepare plenty of Burmese food and entertained them. On the other hand, they also used to bring various foods to the Vihar.

When we talk about the qualities and her personality, we remember that Ma Gunavati Guruma was tolerant and compassionate; she showed the feeling of her loving-kindness and the nature of her endeavor. She showed her technical skill of arts and crafts and the nature of her generosity. She had all these qualities in her life. The way she used to be patient and tolerant was very much similar to *Sariputra Bhante's* tolerance.

Also in Myanmar she had to work whole day in the kitchen of *Khemaram Temple*. Since she had to spend most of her time in the kitchen she postponed the *Dhammachariya* exam for one year. On the following year she sat for the exam and passed it. Due to utmost patience and tolerance of Ma Gunavati Guruma, Dhammavati Guruma also waited for her until she got through the exam and on the following year she was accompanied to Nepal by her (Dhammavati).

They did not have any Vihar when they came to live in Nepal. So, they lived in the house of Dhammavati Guruma. Sumangal Bhante gave her an opportunity to teach the children at Ganabahal. Although the way that took her to Ganabahal was not clean enough, she did not hesitate walking and teaching the local children. That day, people in Nepal did not know how to serve monks and nuns. So, at a time when she did not have enough lunch she used to say that she had to eat for living. She came to Nepal to impart her knowledge of Buddhism with the relatives of the Buddha. But, she could not find a place to live and she had to move from one place to another. In order to spread Buddhism she left such a beautiful and blessed country-that's her birth place, Myanmar. However, she lived in Nepal enduring all hardships of her life.

Naturally, Ma Gunavati Guruma is gentle and compassionate. She has the feeling of loving-kindness. She knows her job and does it very skillfully. She is a very hard working person. She knows to teach us totally all jobs that we did not know. Cutting and sewing clothes, proper method of cutting raw vegetables, cleaning and cooking them and sweeping the floor - she does all these things by herself and teaches us as well. While growing in her shadow we have the opportunity of learning about jobs and listening

to instructions of her knowledge too. She never allows us to have a break at a time when she makes us working. She used to preach us sermons while we are working and we do not feel tired at all.

If we were sick she would bring us medicines and hot water so as to make us fit again. Just as a mother she would treat us with her profound love. The feeling of her loving-kindness was very firm and strong. Therefore, we felt very cool when we were working and living in the shadow of her directions.

Ma Gunavati Guruma works hours and hours in the kitchen and sets out for shopping in the evening. She knows almost all shops. Shopkeepers did not know to address her 'Ma Guna.' Instead, they used to say that 'Ma Ma' has come and greeting her they send her back with more 'items' than she expected. When she was walking together with me, someone who did not know her used to ask us whether I was her daughter. Then she used to say that she is the daughter of *Sasana*.

Ma Gunavati Guruma wants to draw the attention towards her bag. So, she carries a bag always. Those seeing her might not know what she was carrying in the bag. She had in her bag were chocolates for children, and many varieties of items for young girls and elders. Then she would say, "Take it, take it" and give away suitable things to suitable persons. She would satisfy all of them. Therefore, all would smile at a time when Ma Gunavati Guruma had come to their presence. We lived together, but, we never knew that she had eaten anything privately. Whatever she had she shared with us. So, we guessed that she might have descended from Dev Loka.*

Also, she has exceedingly helped Dhammavati Guruma. She is a very tolerant and qualified person like the Bodhisattva.

One day, due to pain in her stomach she was severely sick. At that time, we did not have Burmese ambassador/Embassy in Nepal. She had medical checkup and suggested that she might need to undergo an operation. Mani Harsh *Sahu* and some other *Sahus* brought doctors. Some doctors said she had 'stomach ulcers.' Some doctors said she had an 'appendicitis.' Doctors could not diagnose what was her exact disease. So, Ma Gunavati Guruma wished that they might not suggest her to go through the operation. Then she prayed at the premises of the *Shree Gha Chaitya*. She saw vividly the hairs and the robe of Lord Buddha circumambulating inside the *Shree Gha Chaitya*. She thought to herself that she should pay her utmost respect to the *Chaitya* and her disease would be cured. So, she continued daily walking round and round the *Chaitya* until one year. On her happy occasion of the completed circumambulation of one year, she made a very grand offering to the Buddha of the *Chaitya*. Since then she did not feel any pain

in her stomach. She must have got it cured for the result of her unwavering faith in the Buddha.

When writing about Ma Gunavati Guruma, some teachings of the Buddha stroke my mind. Certain deity approached the Buddha and asked him the following questions.

**“Kinsu yava jara sadhu, Kinsu sadhu patitthitan,
Kinsu narana ratan, Kinsu chorehi doohara”**

What is conducive to the benefit of *Sansara*? What is the greatest wealth in *Sansara*? What is the most difficult thing to acquire in *Sansara*?

Then the Buddha answered thus all his questions.

**“Silan yava jara sadhu, Saddha sadhu patitthitta
Pannya naranan ratna punnya chorehi dooharan ti”**

Virtue is conducive to the benefit of people until life's end in *Sansara*. Faith is the greatest wealth in *Sansara*. Wisdom is the most prestigious gem in *Sansara*. To be a blessed person is the most difficult thing to acquire in *Sansara*.

Ma Gunavati Guruma also has all these qualities in her life. She is very virtuous and tolerant. She is learned, endowed with wisdom and perfect in the arts and crafts. For possessing of all these precious qualities, wherever she visited she was honored and treated with due respect. She is/was a really intelligent and wise person. For the reason of her transparent wisdom she supported Dhammavati Guruma skillfully to spread the Buddha's teachings in Nepal. Ma Gunavati Guruma is a really virtuous nun. As she spoke so she did.



The Symbol of Loving Kindness: Ma Guna Guruma

by Dr. Anoja Guruma
Translated by: Reena Tuladhar



I bow thousands times to you, Oh Ma Gunavati Guruma, the symbol of love and kindness. Your face is always smiling with full of Metta. Day and night you remain busy in serving others, forgetting yourself. You abandoned your motherland for the sake of Nepalese people. You preached Nepalese Upasaka and Upasika and me with Buddha's Gyan (knowledge).

I had the opportunity to learn Dhamma from Ma Gunavati Guruma. She has always been my ideal. I learned from her the practice of compassion, forgiveness, living a healthy and hygienic life, and I even learned a proper way of eating and sleeping.

First of all, I salute Dhammavati Guruma thousands of times for bringing Ma Gunavati Guruma to Nepal overcoming all kinds of difficulties and facing lots of hardships. It is only Dhammavati Guruma, who made it possible for us to be associated with this legendary personality Ma Gunavati Guruma. Dhammavati Guruma stayed 14 years in Myanmar for learning Buddhism. She returned to her motherland with a mission to impart Buddha's Dhamma to Nepalese people who were then lost in superstition and blind faith. We are extremely grateful to Dhammavati Guruma for bringing Ma Gunavati Guruma along with, as part of her mission.

I have known Ma Gunavati Guruma since B.S.2029. During the early days of my ordination. I used to visit Dharmakirti Vihar occasionally. Then Ma Gunavati Guruma used to encourage me to stay in Dharmakirti Vihar. Later, Dhammavati Guruma and Ratna Manjari Guruma also encouraged me. In those days, I was living in Sudarshan Vihar at Banepa. One day, Ratna Manjari Guruma came to bring me to Dharmakirti Vihar. Since then, I stayed in Dharmakirti Vihar. Ma Gunavati Guruma, Dhammavati Guruma and I used to share a common bedroom. Ma Gunavati Guruma trained me to do the kitchen chores. She used to do the cooking and I used to do the cleaning. When Mahasi Sayadaw of Myanmar visited Nepal, Ma Gunavati Guruma taught me to cook *Yagu* with Burmese recipe. Not only that, Ma Gunavati Guruma took me along with her to Dhyankuti Vihar in Banepa, whenever she went. I was very happy to

accompany with her. She used to train me for the daily chores including laundry and even cleaning toilets. She also taught me a proper way to dry heavy towels in the sun. Today, I greatly miss her whenever I engage myself in these daily chores.

Ma Gunavati Guruma never hesitated to clean toilets used by others. To encourage me to clean toilets, she used to say that it is a good deed to clean up dirty things, just as purifying our minds. Cleaning toilets is good deed. I convinced myself to clean toilets used by others by asking myself why I shouldn't do this kind of work if a noble person like Ma Gunavati Guruma does.

Ma Gunavati Guruma, who possesses the qualities of compassion and loving kindness, has one special interest in *dana*. She enjoys giving things to others. And also cooking delicious food to feed others is one of her big interests. Never to get temperamental is her other well-known nature. She would never get upset at anything. I learned from her ways to develop this kind of nature within myself. Ma Gunavati Guruma is a person full of good qualities.

Once when I became sick and was hospitalized, Ma Gunavati Guruma always sent food packs for me. I will always admire her. I am always grateful for her love and care for me. Ma Gunavati Guruma respects senior Bhikkhus and Gurumas, and she is a source of love and care for the juniors. It is actually Ma Gunavati Guruma's love, care, and encouragement which brought me to this position today. The kind of inspiration Ma Gunavati Guruma gives is a great support for us to propagate Dhamma in future also. We need Guruma's blessings forever.

Ma Gunavati Guruma and me (Anoja) have a very close and intimate relationship. I think this is a *Sanskar* of our past life. My own mother is also of the same view that Ma Gunavati Guruma is a mother to all. Her nature is a simple and easy-going type. Whatever success I have achieved in my ordained life, it is due to my stay in Dharmakirti Vihar with the blessings of Dhamnavati Guruma and Ma Gunavati Guruma. Whatever I have learned in my life and the courage I have gathered, I have done so with the help of their ideals, teachings, and blessings.

During those days when I proposed to build Sulakshyankirti Vihar at Chobhar, Kirtipur, Ma Gunavati Guruma became very delighted. She was very pleased with my idea. She motivated and encouraged me in many ways. I have not found another ordained Guruma than Ma Gunavati Guruma in my life who possesses so many good qualities. I am associated with many other Gurumas. If we make mistakes, she never scolds but instead tells us with her soft and loving words not to repeat the same thing later.

Ma Gunavati Guruma's contribution to the propagation of Buddha Sasan in Nepal is uncountable. She lived here for 35 years continuously and many more years later after a break. She had abandoned all kinds of facilities she could enjoy in her motherland, just for the sake of the benefit of the Nepali people.

*Guruma, you have shown us the path of love, kindness, and compassion .
Your inspiration has become a blessing for us which we seek forever.*

Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam





Bodhi-Mind of Daw Gunavati Guruma

by Kusum Guruma

Translated by Bhikkhu Upatissa

Mind becomes very cool, quiet and peaceful at a time when we hear only the name of Ma Gunavati Guruma. Faith overflows towards her from inner heart of each one. It seems nice if we have the opportunity to live again and again together with her. The more we see her the more we love 'seeing' her again and again. It would be very nice if she has come to us once again. The more we talk the more we feel as if we haven't talked enough to her. We feel we haven't lived enough together with her. Owing to her warm radiance of motherly affection, gentle words, pure virtues and decent behavior, inspirationally equal treatment and her face that showed the full radiance of the four sublime states of the mind; we never can forget her. Actually, she is the nun, Daw Gunavati Guruma, a Burmese national blessed with a *Bodhi-Mind* came to Nepal from Myanmar.

Ma Gunavati Guruma was accompanied by Dhammavati Guruma when she came back to Nepal after she had completed her study in Myanmar. Dhammavati Guruma is also really fortunate as she cleverly selected a friend that has a *bodhi-mind*. Due to her '*paramita perfection*' Ma Gunavati Guruma succeeded greatly in helping out to spread Buddhism in Nepal, the birth place of the Buddha. In addition, Ma Gunavati Guruma and Dhammavati Guruma became successful to build a long lasting relationship based on mutual understanding, loving kindness and compassion in International Buddhist World, and in between Nepal and Myanmar. It's not easy for everyone to live in a foreign country. Ma Gunavati Guruma has extra ordinary qualities in her life in tolerating pain and gain. She has successfully lived for 35 years in Nepal and this proves that she has practiced forbearance, the teaching as of the '*khandi paramita*'.

She has very deep faith in the Triple Gem. In a very simple way she used to give *Dhamma talk* on moral behavior, concentration and wisdom. She does not show her unwillingness in imparting her knowledge of Buddhism to anyone. With the teachings of the Buddha she is interested to educate anyone that visits her. She became very much similar to a mother for one and all since she conducted herself with full love and compassion in addition to taking special care of moral behavior.

She has made a great contribution to Nepal by disseminating the teachings of the Buddha. We could say that the reason of invisible spirit and

support that were given by Ma Gunavati Guruma; Dhammavati Guruma succeeded in her noble effort of spreading Buddhism in Nepal. Although Ma Gunavati Guruma did not visibly participate in outdoor affairs, she was behind the curtain of many programs and involved invisibly in every religious affair. She had her deep concern over religious activities and extended her support to Dhammavati Guruma in every possible way.

Ma Gunavati Guruma has never led an idle life. Out of loving kindness, every day and almost every time she is engaged in various activities of the vihar. She has a special quality in her life. She knows to prepare various sweet food items of the menu and share them with all people in the kitchen. Just even a cup of warm water that she gives to us is very sweet.

Ma Gunavati Guruma lives a very clean and neat life. In her leisure, she is engaged in sewing 'clothes', making paper-flowers, preparing a menu of various sweet food items and very skillfully entertains guests. As Ma Gunavati Guruma knows to live friendly she dedicated her entire young life in Nepal for propagation of Buddhism. However I write about her noble qualities on this paper, I feel it's not quite enough. I should write more about her life. We Nepali Buddhists are indebted to her. Today, she has completed 90 years' long journey of her life. She is still well and healthy. According to the words of the Buddha: "*Dhammo have rakkhati dhammacari*" Protecting the *Dhamma* protected by the *Dhamma*. Ma Gunavati Guruma conducted herself in accordance with the *Dhamma* and the *Dhamma* protected her. Really blessed is the *bodhi-mind* of Ma Gunavati Guruma.


Dhamma.Digital



Buddha Putri Daw Gunavati Guruma

— Viriyavati Guruma

Translated by Prof. Nirmal Man Tuladhar

Arise! Rouse thyself by thy Self; train thyself by thy Self. Under the shelter of thy Self, and ever watchful, thou shalt live in supreme joy.

The Dhammapada 379

Having lived nine decades and followed the above-mentioned words of the Buddha, Daw Gunavati Guruma, a citizen of Myanmar, has made her living a successful. It would not be out of place to say that she is successful in making herself a daughter of the Buddha.

Daw Gunavati Guruma came to Nepal from Myanmar with Dammavati Guruma 53 years ago. Her way of preaching and promoting Buddhism seems to be different. Having studied Theravada in Myanmar, she experienced it and educated herself. Steeped in virtue and inspiration, her knowledge is able to influence those who come to her. She practices what she preaches. She is capable of seeing more virtues than vices in people. She is very good at making friends with all those who come to her. Hence, she says, "Living in harmony with each other is the happiest of all happiness." She would say that in other words, living together in harmony rather than in conflict can be a divine happiness.

While living at Dharmakirti Vihar, what she said is worth mentioning here. She said, "When we are guests of someone it is our duty to help and serve our host as much as possible. Hence, our host would not feel the burden of the guest." Because of her virtuous and kind nature, whichever vihar she stayed as a Burmese guest her hosts regarded her as their mother rather than the guest.

Being tolerant, soft-spoken, fearless, kind, and friendly, she was constantly assisting Dhmmavati Guruma in preaching and prompting the *dhamma* for the past 35 years. Many people who met her were overwhelmed by her all-enduring, selfless, kind and righteous behaviour. That's why the Buddha says:

A man is not called wise because he talks and talks again; but if he is peaceful, loving and fearless then he is in truth called wise.

The Dhammapada 258

We find all these virtues in Daw Gunavati Guruma. Therefore, we can regard her a *Pundit*.

Most of time she is busy preparing food in the kitchen, and she enjoys serving the food to the other. She is dedicated to helping the other. She is concerned with their well-being. Whenever she is free she cleans the monastery. This is what she thinks of cleanliness. She says, "Just as we clean dust and dirt we see outside in the same way we can clean our evil thinking and feeling. Gradually we can make our mind clean and pure."

Fulfilling all her duties selflessly, she is doing very well even when she is now 90 years old. The *dhamma* protects those who follow it as the Buddha said. In the same way the *dhamma* is taking care of her.

Her aging causes her to lose her memory. However, this does not sadden her, and she accepts it as the natural causes. She is enjoying the fruits of her dedication to the path of Buddhism. Being never attracted by pretentious honours and important positions, she enjoys a mental peace. She is successful in proving herself as a respectable and balanced person like a daughter of the Buddha. We would also certainly have the physical and mental well-being if we would follow her lifestyle.





Ma Gunavati Guruma: My Mentor

by Indavati Guruma

Translated by Soongma Tuladhar

Ma Gunavati Guruma is a well known person in the Buddhist community in Nepal. She and Dhammavati Guruma had studied in the same monastery in Myanmar. There they had become good friends. So after completing her studies in Burma, she came with Dhammavati Guruma to Nepal to help spread the Buddha Dhamma. Her pious life, gentle ways, kindness, helpful ways and friendliness won the heart and mind of the people.

After the establishment of Dharmakirti Vihar, a founding member of the vihar, she took part in all the activities and projects sponsored by the vihar. And Dharmakirti Vihar, recognizing her valuable contributions, felicitated her on her fifty year as Buddhist nun. She returned to Myanmar after thirty-five years in Nepal. However, because of her love for people of Nepal, she could not forget the people of Nepal and she could not stay away



Ma Gunavati Guruma was the first to shave hair at the ordination of Indavati Guruma

from Nepal. So, she divided her time between Nepal and Myanmar. In this way, she continued to contribute for more than thirty five years.

It is the costume in Myanmar to add 'Ma' and 'Daw' in front of their names according to their position and age. Although, her name is Gunavati, people in Nepal affectionally address her as Ma Gunavati since 2022 B.S. So when she came to Nepal, because of her motherly love and understanding, people addressed her Ma Gunavati Guruma. The Buddha used to say some people may be learned but they may lack moral character. On the other hand, some people may have good character, but they may lack learning. But, Ma Gunavati Guruma is both learned and possesses good moral character.

For me, she is more than that. She is my mentor and teacher. Today, I am a Buddhist nun because of her help and encouragement. When I was admitted as a novice at Dharmakirti Vihar some twenty-two years before (B.S.2050 Jestha) Ma Gunavati Guruma advised me "It is good to follow in the steps of the Buddha and to become a Bhikkhuni. But one must observe all the rules and regulations properly. The life of a Bhikkhuni is not easy. "During period of my novice life, I would go to Ma Gunavati Guruma if I had difficulty in understanding anything. And she would explain again and again until I understand everything.

I will never forget all the help Ma Gunavati Guruma gave me during my postulancy. My three months of postulancy as a novice were over by B.S. 2050 Shravan . On that day I was to break my tie with my family. So on that day, all the members as family, bhikkhus, bhikkhunis and lay followers had assembled that day for the occasion. The members of my family appeared sorrowful. Seeing that I felt sad, at that moment, Ma Gunavati Guruma standing beside me, advised me "Don't feel sad. Remember that nothing is permanent."

Soon the hair-shaving ceremony began. Ma Gunavati Guruma was the first person to shave my hair. After that Dhamnavati Guruma and other Gurumas shaved my hair turn by turn. After the shaving ceremony, Venerable Ashwaghosha recited the *sila* and following the custom, Ma Gunavati Guruma gave me new name Indavati. In Burmese tradition, name is given on the base of alphabet of birth day of week. My birth day is Sunday (Aitbar). So by following A, Aa, I, Ee my Dhamma name is given Indavati. I was able to reach this stage through the help and kindness I received from her.

She believed that learning alone is not enough. We must also know how to deal with people. Only then our life will be successful. She applies Dhamma in practice. She promotes women in Dhamma life.

In Mangal Sutta The Buddha has told it is a merit to learn skills of different type. So Ma Gunavati Guruma taught others everything she knows such as arts and crafts. She teaches moral education to pupils in Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle.

She is living today far away from us, geographically. But our intimacy has always kept her in our hearts. She will remain with us forever as we are possessed with all the knowledge she gave to us. We have never been away from her inspiration.

I wish her good health and long life.

Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam.



Ma Gunavati Guruma's Unique way of Teaching Dhamma

by Shuvavati Guruma
Translated by Soongma Tuladhar



When I was nine years old, I and my friend Sukhavati (now a house-holder) came to Dharmakriti Vihar located in Naghal Tole to get a good education and study the teachings of the Buddha under the supervision of Dhammavati Guruma. At that time, there were many gurumas at the vihar. Although Ma Gunavati Guruma was the eldest of them, it was Dhammavati Guruma who made necessary arrangements for our study at the vihar, provided us with our four basic needs, looked after us and took charge of our education. For this reason, we small children took it into our little heads that Dhammavati Guruma would punish us if we misbehaved. And we were afraid of her.

But we were not afraid of Ma Gunavati Guruma at all. With her slender body in her loose habit, she went about her business with her face radiating a pleasant-smile. We were not afraid of her but we respected her greatly. Ma Gunavati Guruma could speak Nepal Bhasha and Burmese language but she did not speak Nepali language. Even though we did not know Nepal Bhasha, she would advise us in Nepal Bhasha, "Look children, you must study well and be educated." She never stayed idle – she always kept busy doing something. She taught us by example how to keep the Vihar neat and clean and how to wash pots and pans. She never lost her temper and patience.

In the beginning of our stay at the Vihar, we found it difficult to pass the evenings. At that time we used to be tormented by memories of our home and parents and we would weep silently. At such time Ma Gunavati Guruma, endowed with such parental virtues as compassion, sympathy, tolerance, patience and understanding, would come and try to comfort us by praising us and by giving us toffees, fruit juice and Burmese sweets. Thus, by giving us genuine parental affection, she helped us get over our homesickness and soon we did not feel any lack of parental affection.

She is one of those rare persons who would give herself for a good cause and be happy about it. At the request of Dhammavati Guruma, she travelled all the way from Myanmar to Nepal to help Dhammavati Guruma

in spreading the teachings of the Buddha in Nepal. And she proved to be the right person for this mission. Thoughtful, helpful, sociable and sensitive to the needs of other people and a person of upright character living according to the teachings of the Buddha she not only endeared herself to the local Buddhist lay-persons but also succeeded in establishing herself as a role-model for them.

The Buddhist lay-persons in Nepal will always remember her for her gentleness, simplicity, friendship and understanding. I will always remember her for loving kindness and righteous way of life. I consider myself very fortunate to have come in contact with her. I wish her good health and long life wherever she may be.



The Relationship of Dhamama

☞ **Shraddhachari Guruma**
Translated by: **Lisa Ranjit**



Burma also known as Myanmar is quite far from our country Nepal. The cordial relationship based on the ground of Buddhism is strong between these two nations. Myanmar has got its name after the theme of way to enlightenment (*Dana, Seela, Bhavana*) attained by Siddhartha Gautama. The merchants Tappasu and Bhalluk built the beautiful "Sweta Gong Chaitya" (a Buddhist monument) with the remains of Buddha's hair (*Kesha Dhatu*). Today it stands as the pride of Myanmar.

No doubt, this nation is blessed with utmost natural beauty and economic prosperity. Clean and wide roads, beautiful sea sides and great Islands are some of the attractions here. Myanmar is purely a Buddhist country. The innumerable statues of Buddha and stupas found around this country are the evidences that Myanmar is a treasure of Buddhism. The people of Myanmar are accordingly friendly and co-operative with "*Dhamma Chitta*" i.e. with compassionate nature and wise manners. They are no doubt great friends. The cordial relationship was equally good between Myanmar and Nepal during the time His reverend "Unu" visited Nepal in year 2013 B.S. Actually our Dhammavati Guruma went to Myanmar on year 2006 B.S. to study the Buddhist holy books "*Tripitaka*" at the age of 14 years. She became successful as the environment of Myanmar supported her completely to prove her potential. She first entered the city of Kushinagar (India) and got the nunhood. Then from there she took the route to Myanmar. We can find many such harmonious incidents in history that strengthens the cordial relationship between Myanmar and Nepal. "Dhammavati Guruma" is what she is today as she was nurtured by the support of Myanmar then. She was also greatly helped by the assistance of a young Burmese Buddhist nun Ma Gunavati in her pious mission of her life. Ma Gunavati Guruma decided to accompany Dhammavati leaving behind her family and Motherland during the year 2019 B.S. in mid winter. She was 10 years elder to Dhammavati Guruma and was ready to face any kind of challenges of life to support Dhammavati Guruma in her mission of promoting Buddhism all over Nepal.

Ma Gunavati Guruma was tall and charming young lady with olive complexion, ever smiling face and humble nature. Moreover, she was an

excellent cook. The environment in Nepal was not favorable for this young nun but she never complained. Rather she stood firmly with Dhammavati Guruma with smiling face and supporting hands.

As per my knowledge, Reverend Sumangala helped these two Buddhist nuns to find a residence after they arrived Nepal. They got the shelter at the home of the local resident of Kathmandu Mr. Gyan Man Shakya at Jyabahal, Kathmandu. The house was a far cry from a comfortable dwelling. But yet, these two gentle nuns with pink robes faced it with brave smiles. The scarcity of water, poor toilets and the terrifying number of cockroaches present in that house were few of the discomforts that I could witness them facing then. When I was young my grand mother used to take me there to visit these Venerable Gurumas.

But they continued with their mission of promoting Buddhism and words of Buddha among the people. They started teaching the local children.

Today it is more than half a century passed of that struggle of two brave Buddhist nuns. In time they could establish the monastery "Dharmakirti Vihar" where they continued their pious mission of quenching the thirst of the locals regarding their spiritual quest. Specially the residents of the core areas of Ason, Bhotahiti, Teuda, Wonga, Shreegha were drenched with the shower of "*Dhamma*" and words of Buddha. They did not limit themselves to these core areas. They travelled far east to west, from remote country side to core of city to spread the words of Buddha. They established "Dharmakirti Bouddha Adhyan Gosthi" i.e. the Buddhist academic group to promote their mission. This group which consists of devoted youngsters performed many social activities and spiritual programs.

Dhammavati Guruma and Ma Gunavati Guruma faced lots of difficulties and scarcities in their lives. Today, they have already reached the age where their physical health demands rest and halt. But mentally they are still equally strong and energetic. They are resources of encouragement to many Buddhists till today. They have earned respect and support of big mass of Buddhist in the country and around the world. They can afford good food and luxurious life but unfortunately their age and health allows them only mild food and medicines as their diet now.

Ma Gunavati Guruma stayed in Nepal for many years before she left for her motherland. During her stay, she trained her disciples regarding the personal hygiene, spiritual knowledge and moral science to kitchen skills. Today her disciples are successful in many fields. The credit goes to Ma Gunavati Guruma. The relationship between Ma Gunavati Guruma and

Dhammavati Guruma is beyond imagination. They are like bone and body of a being. The dedication of Ma Gunavati Guruma towards the mission of Dhammavati Guruma is an example of humanity and true friendship. Even today, her concerns are regarding Dhammavati Guruma's health, diet and well being. They are living far from each other but yet inside the deepest core of each other's heart. Far yet, very near. They are no doubt the foundation of Buddhism and an example of the friendly relationship between two nations Myanmar and Nepal.





Ma Gunavati Guruma: A Symbol of Loving Kindness and Compassion

✦ Madan Ratna Manadhar

Associate Professor, Tri Chandra Campus

Translated by Bhikkhu Upatissa

It was such time that we did not have the opportunity to study the teachings of even its founder the Buddha in Nepal where he was born. Just only 14 years old young daughter of Nepal had her growing desire to learn the Buddha's teachings and walked all the way up to Burma (Myanmar) in 2006 BS. She lived there and studied incomparable and advantageous teachings of the Buddha for 14 years for life's well-being. She was none other than Ganeshi Kumari Shakya. She received her nun's ordination in Burma and dedicated herself by learning and practicing the teachings of the Buddha. Having completed her Study on the Buddhist teachings for 14 years, she came back to Nepal in 2020 BS and her name Dhammavati Guruma became very popular throughout the Kathmandu Valley and beyond.

It was not an easy task at all to propagate the teachings of the Buddha in Nepal to Nepali people where his teachings have lost for over hundreds of years. Venerable Dhammavati knew well about this matter and in order to support her impressible 'daring' courage and propagate the teachings of the Buddha, Venerable Ma Gunavati came from Burma to Nepal along with her.

According to the tradition of Burma 'U' is written or addressed in front of the name of a male and 'Ma' is written in front of the name of a female (as a sign of respect). This is how her real name Anagarika Gunavati has become Ma Gunavati. However, those many Nepali people who were not familiar with this title or who did not know the tradition of Burma used to address her (in the sense of mum) Ma Gunavati Guruma. In fact, this Guruma really deserves to be called as a mother. She has all the nature of a mother such as love, compassion, sympathy, forbearance etc.

Owing to the association with Venerable Dhammavati Guruma, Ma Gunavati Guruma became perfect in *Nepal Bhasa*. She can read and write as well. Dhammavati Guruma has informed us that Kabi Keshari Chittadhar Hridaya, a renown poet in Nepal Bhasa who was felicitated even at National level by the State, used to visit Dharmakirti Vihar to teach Nepal Bhasa to

Ma Gunavati Guruma. So Ma Gunavati Guruma could write a book titled **Wasetthi Theri** in Nepal Bhasha. Later she wrote a book titled '**Nepalye 25 dan Jigu Lumanti**' (In Memory of 25 Years in Nepal) which was published during Golden-Silver Jubilee Celebration Programme organized by Dharmakirti Vihar to felicitate Ma Gunavati Guruma on the occasion of 25 years' stay of her in Nepal and completion of 50 years of her ordained life.

With her tireless effort Venerable Dhammavati Guruma successfully established the Dharmakirti Vihar in 2022 BS. Since that year Ma Gunavati Guruma lived permanently in this Vihar. Although she is a Burmese national nun she speaks in *Nepal Bhasa* and treats with loving kindness and compassion to one and all devotees, *upasaka and upasikas*. So, all devotees considered her to be a *Nepali Guruma*. She always speaks politely and admirably. Whenever the Vihar had any obstacle, misfortune or problems of any other nature, she represented herself as a symbol of deep tolerance and compassionate thoughts by providing concerned instructions and her opinions to Dhammavati Guruma. In addition, naturally she used to take the responsibility of any kind and all devotees considered her as the centre post of the Dharmakirti Vihar.

Venerable Sumangala Bhante, Dhammavati Guruma, Chini Guruma and so on were worried about the situation of Buddhism in Nepal. They worked hard with their noble efforts to launch Insight Meditation Programs and they invited Venerable U Panditabhivansa Maha Thera, a well known meditation teacher from Burma to Nepal. On their request and under his instruction a Meditation Centre was established at the riverside of Sankhamul in Kathmandu. They managed to invite Venerable U Panditabhivansa Maha Thera every year to Nepal and further provided requisites to a Burmese national permanent resident meditation teacher. In order to serve these venerable monks in Burmese manner, Ma Gunavati Guruma stayed for several years in Sankhamul Meditation Centre and helped them by preparing typical food and other requisites.

At that time, the writer of this article was the secretary of this meditation centre and had seen apparently all kinds of her works which were being performed by Ma Gunavati Guruma. Since she took all sorts of responsibilities whether they were visible or invisible aspects of internal management of the meditation centre, the committee members of the meditation centre had plenty of time to concentrate on their external management and the government affairs. As the meditation centre was just recently set up, only countable number of devotees, *upasaka and upasikas* visited the centre. Along with the internal management she also took the responsibility of economic management. As of each headline/item she

collected donation separately into a bowl or a bag. She made all wonderful by showing them a highly appreciable exemplary account book.

During that year, with an effort of Dhammavati Guruma a committee headed by Venerable U Sayado Dhammapiya Thera, "Lunch Management Fund" was initiated. It would not be much to say that Ma Gunavati Guruma who was then the advisor contributed her sound knowledge and experience to this Fund. Up to date, if sponsors are not available to bring breakfast and lunch to this centre, the Fund bears all expenses to prepare two meals a day. This is really commendable!

According to the tradition of Burma, the title 'Ma' is replaced by the title 'Daw' (pronounced as though) when a nun is growing old. So, in Burma since she has passed her young age people address her 'Daw Gunavati' whereas Nepali people easily address her 'Ma Gunavati Guruma' although she is now 90 years old. Therefore, even today we do felicitate her by addressing 'Ma Gunavati Guruma.' In memory of her contribution to Nepal we are publishing this felicitation book. She has contributed a lot visibly and invisibly in many areas for growth and progress of the *Buddha Sasana* which we need to accept honestly. Obviously, she has helped us by extending her physical and mental power with the available wealth. Perhaps, it can be very difficult to find out someone that was not influenced and mentally untouched by her lovely treatment.

She speaks very politely to everyone. Maybe no one has heard her advising or speaking harsh words. She does not know speaking with an intention of hurting anyone. She does not have the habit of getting angry although someone to hurt her speaks or mistreats against the ideas of her mind. We always see her smiling mildly, treating us with loving kindness and compassion.

Although we did not see that she has given public speech or official speech or preached sermon in a big gathering; there is remarkable contribution invisibly made by her. Therefore, we all Nepali people should be grateful by paying due respect to her. This is our mission and responsibility as well. Of course, none of us can pay off for her contribution to Nepal. However, the Burmese Government, the Burmese people along with her family members and all those that offered the opportunity to such a suitable person to live in Nepal deserve lots of thank.

Almost all she lived in Nepal for 35 years. During her stay she showed us Buddhist behavior, the Buddhist way of life. Above all, goodwill and sincerity which she has for the birth place Lord Buddha was further promoted by establishing a '*Nepal and Burmese Vihar*' after her return to Burma is highly commendable and *Sadhuvud* to her.

When she was in Nepal, she used to visit Lumbini very frequently. Her target is to visit Lumbini as many times as her own age. Therefore, even after she has settled down in Burma she frequently visits Nepal. During her visits in Nepal more or less she would try to visit Lumbini as well. In this way, she has visited Lumbini more than 80 times. She told me about her 'Visit Lumbini' I still remember.

I feel that I am blessed for this given opportunity of writing a short article on the subject of respectable nun 'Ma Gunavati Guruma.' On this very occasion, I pray for her good health and longevity. May she reach the end of life's suffering through walking on the noble path.





Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma - An Unforgettable Buddhist Nun

✦ **Meena Tuladhar** 'Pariyatti Sadhamma Kobida'
Associate Professor, Public Youth Campus
Translated by Prof. Mahendra Jib Tuladhar

Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma was born at a village called Kopara in the state of Mudau in Myanmar in the month of December in 1924 A.D. The virtues of Maitri (friendship), Karuna (compassion), Mudita (joy), and Upekha (impartiality) were inherent in her character when she was born. Her father's name was U-Me, and her mother was Daw-Atya. Her first entry into Nepal was in September 19, 1963 A.D. She had accompanied Shashandhaj Dhammachariya Venerable Dhammavati Guruma, who was returning to Nepal after a long stay in Myanmar.

According to the Holy Scriptures, it has been written that Brahma and the goddesses are forever instilling the four virtues of Maitri, Karuna, Mudita and Upekha to all living beings. Similarly parents are continuously pouring the four virtues to their children. So parents are also similar to Brahma and the gods and goddesses. The disciples of Dharmakirti Vihar have been quick in discerning or recognizing the four virtues of Maitri, Karuna, Mudita, and Upekha in the character of Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma.

The Contributions of Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma to Dharma Kirti Vihar:

Due to the dedication, compassion and industriousness of Venerable Gunavati Guruma, today we are proud that Dharmakirti Vihar has become a staunch pillar of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal. After the completion of four years of initial education of Buddhism and practice of meditation, she joined Khemaram Nun's Study Center at Moulmien, Myanmar for Buddhist studies. At that time, Venerable Dhammavati Guruma was also at Khemaram Nun's Centre for her Buddhist education. Venerable Dhammavati met Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma at Khemaram Nun's Centre and their acquaintance was to take them together through the ups and downs in life for over half a century in their quest for propagating the teachings of the Buddha.

Both of them have completed the Dhammachariya course of Buddhism. During the course of her studies Venerable Dhammavati Guruma told Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma that many people in Nepal were ignorant and did not understand the essence of Buddhism and were involved in fallacious perceptions (*Mithyadrsti*). After acquiring adequate knowledge

of Buddhism, Venerable Dhammavati Guruma desired to teach Nepali people at home about the essence of Buddhism and their implications. At that instance, Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma took pity on the lay people of Nepal and said that she would accompany Venerable Dhammavati Guruma to Nepal and support her in the Herculean task of imparting and uplifting Theravada Buddhism in Nepal. True to her word, Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma entered Nepal with Venerable Dhammavati Guruma in 1963 and commenced the upliftment of Theravada Buddhism, which was almost lost or in its infancy. Venerable Dhammavati Guruma recalls how she had befriended and chosen Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma from thousands of Buddhist nuns in Myanmar, and the choice was a blessing for Nepal because Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma was a competent and well-suited teacher for the propagation of Buddhism. She had the stamina, courage, and self-confidence to back up Venerable Dhammavati Guruma in any kind of activity, and this strong support satisfied Venerable Dhammavati Guruma exceedingly, and the memories of hard times of the old days are remembered to this day. It was a great sacrifice of a Burmese nun, who left her home country Myanmar to give her services to Nepal at a time when there was no provision or arrangement for her food or lodging. It took an immense amount of patience to go through the hard times of the old days for the Burmese nun. Due to such hard work and tolerance of Venerable Daw Gunavati Guruma and pioneer nuns, today Dharmakirti Vihar stands firmly in the task of disseminating moral Buddhist teachings to the masses.

Some memorable experiences with Daw Gunavati Guruma:

When I was nine years old, my grandmother Champabati Bania used to take me to Dharmakirti Vihar. I first met Daw Gunavati Guruma, Dhammavati Guruma, Ratna Manjari Guruma, Chameli Guruma, and Kamala Guruma out there. Daw Gunavati Guruma and Dhammavati Guruma used to teach us Buddhism in the morning. All the children, who came to learn from them, had to learn Dhammapada and Abhidharma by heart. The next day we had to recite the sutras, and most of us liked to recite the lessons in front of Daw Gunavati Guruma because she showed great love and compassion to all of us children. Even if we didn't learn our lessons well, she used to recite the lines which we had forgotten and pass all the children. Furthermore, she used to distribute sweets and candies to everyone. She loved us like our own mother. Hence we call her Mother Guruma of Dharmakirti Vihar because she was really a motherly figure filled with compassion, sympathy, and kindness. Even today when she arrives from Rangoon, Myanmar and resides at Dharmakirti Vihar, we feel a deep sense of joy at seeing her, as if one is meeting a mother, and we feel very pleased and gratified.

One incident stands out in my memory. Every year Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle used to hold an exhibition of handmade paper flowers,

lapsi candies (*paun*) etc. On the occasion of anniversary of the Vihar, Daw Gunavati Guruma used to train children on how to make paper flowers and lapsi candies six months prior to the exhibition. Then the paper flowers, lapsi candies made by the children used to be collected and sold in stalls during the anniversary celebrations. If any stall had no sales, the compassionate Daw Gunavati Guruma would visit that stall and buy many items from them. Another incident which strikes my mind very much is when we went to Dhyankuti Vihar in Banepa for the *Rishini* camp in 1975 A.D. We were very young then, and a group of girls namely, Prafulla Kamal Tuladhar (Tamarakar), Sama Bania (Tuladhar), Rita Kamal Tuladhar, Nalinee Tuladhar (Rajkarnikar), Suman Kamal Tuladhar, Kishori Kamal Tuladhar, Rama Bania (Kansakar) and myself had participated in the *Rishini* camp. It was in the month of December, and it was bitterly cold. There was a dog suffering from scabies (skin disease) and it was shivering with cold. Filled with compassion for the dog, Daw Gunavati Guruma stitched warm clothes for the dog and put it around the body of the dog. The dog's scabies had erupted and blood was flowing from the wounds. Those who witnessed the scene felt that one should not touch such a filthy dog. Such was the kindness and pity of Daw Gunavati Guruma, and she had a high sense of compassion for human beings, animals and living creatures.

The virtue of *Mudita* (Joy at seeing other's welfare) was at the apex of her character. Although she returned to her home country Myanmar after residing for years in Nepal she used to visit Nepal from time to time. Nepal was a second home for her, and she could even speak the Newari language. In 2012 A.D. she came to visit Nepal again. I was appearing for the Pariyatti Kobid exams in Nepal. I met her and told her that I had topped the Pariyatti Sadhama Palak exam by receiving the highest marks and that I was appearing for the Pariyatti Saddhamma Kobid exams. Daw Gunavati Guruma's joy knew no bounds. She was very pleased and replied "I remember You are very studious and diligent from childhood". She was pleased with my pursuit of Buddhist studies, such as the Pariyatti Kobid exams. Saying this she showered me with presents, fruits, sweets, and candies. It was an unforgettable moment of my life at receiving such wise words and blessings from a great teacher and mentor. I felt fortunate to be her disciple. I will continue to cherish her teachings, and her memories will have a place in the niche of my heart throughout my life.

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Keeping in Mind : Daw Gunavati Guruma

◀ Miss Amir Kumari Shakya
Translated by Lekh Ratna Shakya



Lord Buddha was born in Nepal
Transformed his destiny in neighboring soil
Whereas, Daw Gunavati Guruma born in Myanmar
Transformed her destiny in the birth place of Buddha

Your accomplishment spend over 35 years in Nepal
That successfully spread the propagation on Buddhism
Dhammavati Guruma and you both are similes friend
Expressing our heartily gratitude, O' Ma Gunavati Guruma

We remind your immeasurable kindness
That is a greatest tolerance shown us
A shining wisdom within you
You are as a great lion of the enlightenment.

Your compassion is profound yet simple
This is fully filled in a vessel of compassion
We found you always with joyful faces
That offer excuse if someone do mistake

You are the treasurer of the gold mine
Like a rivulets where all water
Falls from the mountain and snow land
You trained us offering immemorial skills and crafts

Your name is quite suitable with your destiny
That gives us nice comfort and happiness
That has far-reaching influence in our life
We gain valuable true lessons from you

Ask everyone with smiling face saying " are you fine"
Your softness words as medicinal tonic
Yet you are not with us we remember you
We pray for your long life and long live

This is what we hope for your long life, prosperity and happiness.



Ma Gunavati Guruma : A Source of Inspiration

❖ Amita Dhakhwa

Translated by Reena Tuladhar

Ma Gunavati Guruma, a Burmese citizen who stayed many years in Nepal (the birthplace of Buddha) has contributed significantly to the propagation of Buddha Sasana in Nepal. She has been an ideal person and remained a source of inspiration for the Nepali people. She came to Nepal with a purpose to support Dhammavati Guruma in her mission to propagate Buddha Dhamma in Nepal. Dhammavati Guruma herself courageously faced immense difficulties in achieving Dhammachariya degree in Myanmar. Ma Gunavati Guruma served with a sense of commitment from within and joined others in all religious activities. She has achieved a highly recognized Dhammachariya degree of Myanmar in Buddhism. In addition, she practiced meditation seriously. Thus, she deserves high reverence.

She had come to Nepal in 1963 A.D. In B.S. 2044 (1987 A.D.), on the occasion of Ma Gunavati Guruma's 50th ordination anniversary and 25th residing year in Nepal, Nepali Buddhists had organized a Golden-Silver Felicitation programme. On the same occasion, a book entitled "*Nepalaye 25 Dan, Jigu Lumanti (25 Years in Nepal, in My Memory)*" written by Ma Gunavati Guruma was published by Dharmakirti Vihar. This book illustrates her compassion to the Nepali people and her faith in Nepal, the birthplace of Buddha.

People who are closely associated with Ma Gunavati Guruma appreciate her politeness, compassion, good manners, and other such qualities. It is only natural that with so many good qualities, she has nothing but love and compassion for the people. To inspire us, she always told us, "We can do virtuous work everywhere if we know how to keep love, amity, kindness, and mercy towards people."

She tried to empower many girls and women by training them with handicraft skills and cooking, in which she herself is an expert.

Ma Gunavati Guruma is also endowed with a *Satpurush Guna*, quality of being thankful to others' credit. She always expresses appreciation, gratefulness, and gratitude to others even for a small favor.

Ma Gunavati Guruma is always alert about uncertain life as she regularly practices *Marananusmriti* meditation. She also inspires us to

practice *Marananusmriti* meditation and to be alert about uncertain life or *Anitya*. She always told us, "It is not certain when we will die, so be alert and do good deeds without any delay."

I had an opportunity to be associated with Ma Gunavati Guruma when she came to stay at the International Buddhist Meditation Centre around B.S.2044/45. In those days the logistical facilities at the Centre were not as developed as today. But Ma Gunavati Guruma managed to support the activities of the Centre in every possible way. She took full responsibility of preparing food for Kammathanachariya Gurus (meditation teachers) U Asabhachar and U Sujanpiya who came to Nepal from Myanmar on a rotational basis. She also paid full attention in preparing good food for the meditators. She used to translate the discourse of teachers from the Burmese language in to Nepali language.

After 35 years of continuous stay in Nepal, she returned to her motherland Myanmar. Even after that, she visited regularly and stayed in Nepal, moved by her deep faith in the birthplace of Buddha. In those stays, she served for Dharmakirti Vihar and International Buddhist Meditation Centre as usual as before. We always remember her tireless commitment to contribute to Buddha Sasana.

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee celebration of the International Buddhist Meditation Centre, I had written a letter to Ma Gunavati Guruma in Myanmar with a request to send an article for the *Smarika*. She was then 86 years old. But being an energetic person, she sent an article entitled "Ma Gunavati Gurumaya Pau" (Letter from Ma Gunavati Guruma). This article reveals the progress achieved by the meditation centre from the beginning to date.

Ma Gunavati Guruma, who has always been a source of inspiration for all of us, is now 91 years old. Physically, it may not be feasible for her to visit Nepal now. I miss her today. I pay my heartfelt gratefulness and reverence to Ma Gunavati Guruma, bearing in mind all of her unique and exceptional good qualities. I pray with *Triratna* for her good health and long life.

Chiran Jeevatu Ayya Gunavati

Sukhi, Aroga, Nibhaya Hotu

Nibbanassa Pachchayo Hotu





International Buddhist Meditation Centre and Ma Gunavati Guruma

by Sabita Dhakhwa

Translated by Reena Tuladhar

Ma Gunavati Guruma is very well known in the Nepali Buddhist society for her kindness, good manners, and exceptional compassion. Ma Gunavati Guruma had accompanied Dhammavati Guruma, when she came back to her home country Nepal from Myanmar after completing "Sasandhaj Dhammachariya", a highly recognized academic degree in Buddhism in Myanmar. She has contributed significantly to the wide promotion of Buddhism in Nepal by closely supporting Dhammavati Guruma. In those days, propagating Dhamma was challenging for both of them. Ma Gunavati Guruma was determined to live in Nepal despite facing immense difficulties in adjusting herself to Nepali culture. As per her deep faith in Nepal, the birthplace of Buddha, Ma Gunavati Guruma lived here for many years, serving as a key source of energy for Dhammavati Guruma's Dhamma mission. Both Guruma's contributions can be seen, especially in empowering the marginalized women of Nepal by teaching them Buddha's Dhamma. The joint venture of both Gurumas significantly contributed to the wide promotion of Buddhism in Nepal.

The efforts of both Gurumas in running the activities of International Buddhist Meditation Centre in the initial years of its establishment are highly notable. The centre's *Silanyas* (laying the foundation stone) function was done by Venerable Ovadachariya Bhadanta Panditabhivansa Sayadaw of Myanmar on 23 Jestha, B.S. 2042. After the completion of the construction of meditation centre, the first meditation course was conducted in B.S.2044 under the guidance of Bhadanta Panditabhivansa Sayadaw. The duration of the meditation was a month long. Before returning to Myanmar, Sayadaw had instructed Ma Gunavati Guruma to reside here and assist with the activities of the meditation centre. Thus, respecting Sayadaw's instruction, she resided in the centre for a few years. She used to assist mainly by translating the conversations between meditation teachers Kammathanacharia Sayadaw and the yogis (meditators) while checking are done by teachers on the meditators' experience. Ma Gunavati Guruma also extensively took the responsibility of preparing meals for Burmese Sayadaws. She also appreciably kept accounts and notably received visitors at the centre. I used to keep a final systematic account from the basket of accounts which Ma

Gunavati Guruma used to keep in her own way. I actually had the opportunity of being close to Ma Gunavati Guruma with this accounting job. She always said, "People give *Dan* (donations) with an aspiration of attaining Nibbana. So, this money should not be misused. We need to keep the accounts in a very systematic way." In the same context, she also always said, "Our life is very uncertain. We do not know what will happen tomorrow. So, we should not delay in keeping the accounts in a proper manner." This was her ideals.

Ma Gunavati Guruma possesses all the good qualities of a Dhamma messenger or propagator. I saw her good qualities of compassion, forgiveness, good manners, politeness, capacity, and dedication when I was together with Guruma in the International Buddhist Meditation Centre. In fact, all ordained persons dedicated to propagate Buddha's teaching to people should follow her ideals. Today, with the support of those capable, faithful and dedicated people, the International Buddhist Meditation Centre is a successfully established harmonious Institute to practice Dhamma in Nepali Buddhist society. Currently, the regular activities of the Centre are: executive courses under the guidance of Ovadachariya of the centre U Panditabhivamsa, three-month courses during Vassa period (rainy season), temporary ordination courses on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti, ten-day courses per month, short courses for children, one-day courses, Saturday classes with meditation practice and discourses, Pariyatti classes for children, etc. While noting and analyzing the success of the center in the smooth conduct of these regular programs, we should acknowledge the contributions of dignitaries such as Ma Gunavati Guruma and others, who have played instrumental roles in the activities of this meditation centre.

Ma Gunavati Guruma, in her article entitled "*Ma Gunavati Gurumaya Pau*", in Souvenir published on the occasion of Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Meditation Centre has mentioned and expressed her satisfaction with the opportunity she got in the centre to serve Buddha Sasana and the gradual progress achieved by the centre since its establishment. On the occasion, Ma Gunavati Guruma was also felicitated for her exemplary contribution to the centre. Thus, her dedication and contribution to the International Buddhist Meditation Centre will be treasured in the centre's history. She will be remembered forever.





Handiworks of Ma Gunavati Guruma

by Deena Kansakar

"Pariyatti Saddhamma Palaka"

Translated by Bhikkhu Upatissa

Perhaps, very few Buddhist followers of Nepal might not be acquainted with the Burmese national 'Daw' Gunavati Guruma. 'Ma' Gunavati! As her name so she is indeed. She is equal to a mother for all of us. Selflessly, she loves all living beings of the world. Let us say that she is a symbol compassion for all living beings. She depicts a clear picture of Buddhist behavior by her own moral conduct. She is foremost in forbearing, patient and also skill in various handiworks. So her virtues stand firm and unique.

In 2020 BS, along with Dhammavati Guruma she came to step on the Land of Lord Buddha to propagate Buddhism and in particular to awaken women of Nepal. Those days in Nepal, even Buddhists did not have any opportunity to study Buddhism. Racial discrimination prevailed. In male-chief-society, women had to depend on men and they were conditioned by household works only.

Ma Gunavati Guruma thought of well-being of education. "Acquisition of technical knowledge" is a blessing among 38 blessings pointed out by the Buddha, she thought to herself. She encouraged devotees to be active, heedful and work hard. She trained them in various skills of cooking food. She trained them in their skills of handiworks.

In 2029 BS, after the decision was made to celebrate the first anniversary of *Baudha Adhyan Gosthi*, a training program for its members was launched by Ma Gunavati Guruma. On the celebration day of anniversary, handiworks were exhibited grandly. Seeing a range of items made of cloths and scrap-papers made by Ma Gunavati Guruma, Lok Darshan Bajracharya took those flowers to Her Excellency the Queen Aishwarya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah and handed over to her. Then Her Excellency felt very much happy and awarded 25000/= rupees cash. Ma Gunavati Guruma donated that sum of money to the *Dharmakirti Baudha Adhyan Gosthi Fund*. Afterwards, Ma Gunavati Guruma launched training programs of making various flowers and many menus of lime-'*poun*' for the birthday celebration of every year. Products went on exhibition continuously. Then flowers, menu of lime-'*poun*', and menu of pickles were highly on demand. In those days

handiworks' items were not easily found out in Nepali markets. Therefore, the items that were on exhibition were so quickly sold and the flowers, the menu of *poun* and pickles, all that were put on the stage even just before the exhibition closed, would finish off. The profit generated by those sales (products) was used for running various religious activities of the *Dharmakiti Buaddha Adhyan Gosthi*.



Ma Gunavati Guruma, Ratna Manjari Guruma sitting in line while Dhammavati Guruma giving a discourse. Seen in the picture is *Kalpabrikshya* (Tree of Notes) made by Ma Gunavati Guruma

Ma Gunavati Guruma used to go for shopping with her own students to buy necessary items to make paper-flowers, menus of lime-*poun* and pickles. Mostly rose flowers, creeping flowers and *gunakera* flowers etc. were some among various flowers. She had to make by herself all parts of flowers such as leaves, stalks and the pollen staying in the middle of flowers. Today all these items are available in the market. Ma Gunavati Guruma says that her students do not need to throw away any rough material at a time when they are working for creations. All rough materials can be utilized in creating some items even more beautiful. Assembling all pieces of papers, she used to annex them in the middle portion of the flower. Such is a notable quality that we can observe in Ma Gunavati Guruma.

It is memorable that Ma Gunavati Guruma has made flowers out of 5 to 100 rupees notes. She joined all the notes together and made as *Kalpabriksha* (the tree of Indra's paradise that grants all desires when touched) for functions.

The menu of *poun* prepared by Ma Gunavati Guruma includes lime, lemon, mango, *lapsi* (a kind of sour fruit) and etc.

The method of making lime-poun as taught by Ma Gunavati Guruma:

- Step 1:> Wash with water cleanly.
- Step 2:> After washing is done, top the lime.
- Step 3:> Cut into round-shaped-pieces of the rest portions.
- Step 4:> Spread salt on the round-shaped-pieces and preserve them in clean bottles for two months.
- Step 5:> Two months later, limes become soft and dry them in the sun.
- Step 6:> After a little dried, mix them with 'yeast' powder.
- Step 7:> It is good if 'yeast powder' is spread before packing up in shopping papers.

As we had plenty of limes in winter, works got started in this season. The *poun* making process took two months' time and works got started from the first month of winter. *Poun* was made ready for the Annual Day of Adhyan Gosthi of Dharmakirti on May of every year.

Amalaa-Poun Making Process:

- Step 1:> Wash *amalaa* with water cleanly.
- Step 2:> Boil *amalaa* that have been washed cleanly.
- Step 3:> Remove seeds of *amalaa*.
- Step 4:> When seeds are removed, spread salt, chilly, spice and flavours as required to oneself and blend or mix all of them together.
- Step 5 :-> After blending, dry them in the sun.
- Step 6:> After drying in the sun, cut into required pieces and thus *amalaa-poun* becomes ready.

In this manner, Ma Gunavati Guruma used to make pickles of lime (*lebu*), sour fruits of (*amalaa*) and sweat/sour fruits of (*lapsi*) and the pickle of mangoes as well.

Lapsi-Poun Making Process:

- Step 1:> Keep *lapsis* in *chasni* (sugar boiled in oil).
- Step 2:> Remove all seeds and blend or mix all of them together.
- Step 3:> After blending, spread required salt, sugar, chilly-powder, spice and flavours and again blend all of them together.
- Step 4:> Spread oil on plastic boards and allow to dry in the sun.
- Step 5:> After dried, cut it into square shape and thus *lapsi-poun* becomes ready.

Ma Gunavati Guruma does not like throwing away any part of edible things. She used to make pickles out of even barks (outer layer) of *lapsi*-

fruits. She used to make many varieties of pickles of fruits and vegetables such as plum, cauliflower, tomato, chilly, pumpkin. Sometimes she makes pickles of caulis' talks as well.

Pumkin- Pickle:

Step 1:> Cut into many small pieces.

Step 2:> Make it ready by mixing up with the powder of sesame and lemons.

Coconut-Kawaaf (Curry):

First of all pound/grind the coconut in a small mortar (a stone bowl). After grinding is done, take a cooking utensil and fry in oil -- ginger, garlic, and onions. Then put the grinded coconut and required spices and cook it. Thus coconut curry is prepared.

Ma Gunavati Guruma used to make Cadbury chocolates and presented her students as well. Thus she is endowed with her knowledge of arts and expert in handiworks. I bow down my head in respect to Ma Gunavati Guruma who has her love and feeling of kinship for Nepal and Nepali people, who has worked tirelessly to awaken women of Nepal.





Ma Gunavati: A Respected Buddhist Nun

by **Lochan Tara Tuladhar**
Translated by **Bhikshu Upatissa**

Ganesh Kumari Shakya, from very early teenage of her life had growing interest of learning Buddhism for which she could not find any schools in Nepal. In 2003 BS, Bhikshu Buddhaghosh had just returned with Bhikshu Aniruddha from Burma to Nepal and they were staying in Anadakuti Vihara. One day Sun Upasaka invited Buddhaghosh Bhante to take up his residence in Sumangala Vihara of Patan. Accepting his invitation Buddhaghosh Bhante was staying in Sumangal Vihara and Sun Upasaka gathered about 50/60 children and brought them to the Vihara. Then Buddhaghosh Bhante began teaching them *Lokamiti*, *Triratna Vandana*, *Paritran* and *Dhammapada*. Rudra Raj Shakya (Bhikshu Sudarshan) and Ganesh Kumari Shakya (Dhammavati Guruma) were the most intelligent children among them and Buddhaghosh Bhante had thought to himself that he should send these two children to Burma for their higher education.

As a result of her previous fortune and coming into contact with Buddhaghosh Bhante Ganesh Kumari Shakya must have thought of a roadmap of her future life and her interest of learning Buddhism in Burma which was fulfilled by Dhammavudha Bhante in Kushi Nagara on November 2006 and her lay name was changed into 'Anagarika Dhammavati Guruma. (Read for more information: *Chira Sammanita Guruma Dhammavati*)

Ma Gunavati Guruma is a Burmese national nun who came into contact with Dhammavati Guruma when they were following Buddhist Studies at the Khemarama Nun's Study Centre of Moulmien in Burma. If Dhammavati Guruma could not build a long lasting friendship with Ma Gunavati Guruma she might not succeed in her ambition of spreading Buddhism in Nepal. It's Ma Gunavati Guruma who extended her support by offering almost half of her life to Nepal for the cause of Buddhism and Dhammavati Guruma thus became popular and succeeded in her efforts so that all local devotees were benefitted.

Ma Gunavati was very kind in her family and willing to help others since her childhood. She took her ordination in 1936 AD at the age of 12 at the *Bhangu Chyaau Vihara of Moulmien* city. Her grandmother also became a nun in her last stage of her life. The two teachers who ordained

Ma Gunavati were Daw Kesa and Daw Wansachari. Up to four years she studied under the guidance of her senior teachers. After completing her four years' study in 1940 AD, she joined with Satipatthana Meditation Teacher Daw Kushalachari. There she followed her study and practiced meditation as well. In 1949 AD she entered the Khemarama Nun's Study Centre of Moulmien. Right there she passed the Dhammachariya Exam of the Buddhist Higher Education.



In Myanmar, Ma Gunavati Guruma in the centre, being honoured with Dhammachariya Degree.

While Ma Gunavati Guruma was studying in this Khemarama Centre she met with Dhammavati Guruma and these two nuns of two nations became very familiar with each other. Ma Gunavati Guruma used to introduce Dhammavati Guruma to other Burmese nuns. During their discussion they used to inquire her about Nepal. Then Dhammavati Guruma used to say that the Nepali people who were born into Buddhist families did not have any opportunity to study Buddhism in Nepal. Racial discrimination, male-chief-society and social injustice still prevail. Due to some of these reasons most parents consider that they do not need to give education for their daughters and women have been deprived of their education right since very long time ago.

Burmese nuns were surprised when they were listening to Dhammavati Guruma. Sons and daughters are equally treated in Burmese society. In their behaviour, parents do not show any gender discrimination towards their children. There are great academic institutes of Buddha's teachings. There are Viharas furnished with basic facilities that were required for monks. All these are of the Buddhist atmosphere seen almost in every city of Burma.

So, those nuns who listened to Dhammavati Guruma and people over there guessed that Nepal's education situation would be in a very lower position than of theirs. Nevertheless, on listening to their talk Ma Gunavati Guruma used to show her boundless compassion.

Since her childhood Dhammavati Guruma was very courageous. She had her ambition of propagating the teachings of the Buddha in Nepal. When she passed her proposal to Ma Gunavati Guruma to support her adventurous courage of propagating Buddhism in Nepal, she accepted it happily. Without considering the socio-religious condition of Nepal, the problem of foreign language and disagreeable food, Ma Gunavati Guruma along with Dhammavati Guruma and Ratan Manjari Guruma came to Nepal on September 2020 BS. Those few years they had many problems as they could not find out a living place. Despite their struggle for food and living places, they successfully established Dharmakirti Vihara in 2022 BS and eventually they began preaching sermons and other sorts of activities from the Vihara.

Ma Gunavati Guruma got used to live specially in the Newar society of Nepal. Also she got used to the habit of taking Nepali food and continued learning the language. Ma Gunavati Guruma went to those places together with Dhammavati Guruma where she was expected to preach her sermons. Ma Gunavati Guruma used to preach very rarely. Nevertheless, through her behavior she depicted widely a clear picture of the Buddhist way of her life. Love, compassion and tolerance are exceedingly some of her higher qualities that we could notice in her life. She is expert in cooking various sweet foods. She is expert in handicrafts. She trained her students in various arts and handiworks. She taught them the technique of making paper-flowers, flowers of cloth, fabric painting and *lime's - poun* (pungent) making process. Those days in Nepal handiworks' items were not easily found out in market. Therefore, those handmade paper-flowers and flowers of cloth were exceedingly beautiful and they were loved by one and all. Young ones were hanging around Ma Gunavati to get trained by her. "Vast learning and skill in handicrafts are also highest blessing" - being thoughtful of these words of the Buddha; Ma Gunavati Guruma encouraged devotees to be active and heedful. In the presence of Ma Gunavati Guruma, when a big lunch was organized for many monks and nuns, devotees had enough time to offer them lunch in order on the scheduled time. Deliberately, she involves herself in any work without thinking big or small. This is a special characteristic of her life.

Ma Gunavati is enormously talented and rich in her area of handiworks. Just even within five years' time since the date of her arrival in Nepal, she learnt *Nepal Bhasa*, *Devanagari* alphabets and scriptures. She wrote a book in *Nepal Bhasa* titled "*Vasethi Theri*" and published in 2025 BS.

In 2044 BS, Dharmakirti Vihara held simultaneously the golden jubilee of her ordination day and the silver celebration of her arrival in Nepal on her 64th birthday occasion. On this very important day she published another book in memory of her 25 years in Nepal titled “*Nepale 25 dan jigu lumanti*”.

Ma Gunavati Guruma, a *dharmadut* for Nepal from Burma lived for 35 years with Nepali people contributing all her knowledge to us and returned to her home country in 2059 BS. She still has her love and feeling of kinship towards Nepal and Nepali people as before as now. She has her opportunity to visit Nepal from time to time.

In 2061 BS, on the 80th birthday occasion of Ma Gunavati Guruma, Dharmakirti Vihara organized a very grand felicitation ceremony to express our gratitude in honour of her remarkable contribution to Nepal and Nepali people. It is a really memorable event for all of us.

Source: *Nepalma Theravada Dharma: Ek Adhyayan* (2559 BE/2072BS) – Nepal Academy.





A Pillar of Yoma Mhyae

by Dr. Reena Tuladhar

Translated by Raju Tuladhar

On the 29th of January, 2005 Dharmakirti Vihar organized a special function to mark the 80th birth anniversary of Ma Gunavati Guruma. On this occasion, Dhammavati Guruma said, "I would not have been able to promote Buddhism in Nepal when I returned from Myanmar some 42 years ago, without Ma Gunavati Guruma's support." She added, "Ma Gunavati Guruma has contributed significantly to the wide promotion of Buddhism in Nepal. Without her strong support and contribution, I and my work would have been marginalized. There are many in our society who like to undermine each other." Dhammavati Guruma's status as 'Yoma Mhyaye' in Nepal and in faraway places like Myanmar is largely attributable to Ma Gunavati Guruma's noteworthy contribution and support.

In her address, Dhammavati Guruma further said, "Knowing her as an exceptionally compassionate, kind, and forgiving person when I was studying with her in Myanmar, I chose her as a close confidante and request her help in promoting Buddhism in Nepal, although I had many other good friends in Myanmar." According to Dhammavati Guruma, she waited until Ma Gunavati Guruma completed her Sasana Dhaja Dhammacharya degree a year later than her, to bring her along with her to Nepal. During this time, Dhammavati Guruma's father passed away in Nepal, and she was not by his side when he passed away.

As we all know, Yoma Mhyaye left her home at the age of 14 for Kushinagar where she was ordained. She tried very hard to go to Myanmar but could not, as she could not obtain a passport. But with a strong determination, she managed to eventually travel there through the jungles of Assam, with the help of Dhammawudha Thera of Myanmar. She then spent 14 long years in Myanmar studying Buddhism, leading to Sasana Dhaja Dhammachariya. Dhammavati Guruma, a courageous person who took up such challenges in her life to study Buddhism, candidly shared her lack of confidence in promoting Buddhism in Nepal. She expressed that in this context, she sought Ma Gunavati Guruma's support and help in taking up this challenge. It is unimaginable how challenging it must have been 42 years ago for Guruma to impart Buddha's teachings to the still very traditional and superstitious Nepali society. The kind of challenges Dhammavati Guruma

faced and the ways she tried to overcome these challenges is a clear reflection of Ma Gunavati Guruma's important support and exceptional personality.

Upon her arrival in Nepal, Ma Gunavati Guruma faced immense difficulties in adjusting herself to the Nepali culture, language, and tradition. Often times she could not even have a proper meal in a day due to the rare practice of alms giving to Buddhist monks and nuns in those days. Dhammavati Guruma once recalled a very pathetic and unforgettable incident in her and Ma Gunavati Guruma's early days in Nepal. They had to eat the same rice porridge in which a cockroach had fallen while cooking, as there was nothing else to eat. Ma Gunavati Guruma is a person who has made immense sacrifices in her life for promoting Buddhism in Nepal. Despite the very comfortable and fulfilling lifestyle she was enjoying in Myanmar, which was much more economically advanced in those days, she chose to come to a poor country like Nepal with the sole interest in promoting Buddhism. She lived in Nepal very happily and harmoniously, without any complaints and resentment whatsoever.

An amusing narration by Dhammavati Guruma in a book written by Ma Gunavati Guruma, entitled *Nepalaye 25 Dan Jigu Lumanti* (memoirs of my 25 years in Nepal): "In those days the tradition of caste system in Nepal was very radical and strict. Buddhist monks and nuns were strictly prohibited from household kitchens as they accept alms from the untouchable lower caste people. Very few people dare touch our used dishes after meals. Ordering lower caste people to clean up our used dishes was the usual practice. Coming from the Burmese society where there is no such tradition and beliefs, it was very odd and difficult to get Ma Gunavati Guruma to follow these. It took her peers nearly 4-5 months to help her get used to such tradition and culture in our society."

Ma Gunavati Guruma's book further describes Dhammavati Guruma's following experiences in Myanmar: "When the topic of Nepal comes up during my discussions with my contemporaries, I explained how oppressed women were in Nepali society. I particularly described how living married women were cremated along with their husbands when they (husbands) die, as per the prevailing *Sati Pratha*. In response, some of my contemporaries used to criticize the very superstitious Nepali society, while others sympathized and suggested abolishing such tradition by educating the people. In response, I used to say to my peers—Therefore, let us go to Nepal after completing my studies on Buddhism even if we have to face difficulties, to teach and raise the awareness of such radical people to eliminate their superstitious beliefs.

While several of my contemporaries used to indicate their readiness to come to Nepal to help abolish such superstition and radicalism through

teachings, they were actually not serious. But it was only Ma Gunavati Guruma who used to listen to my conversation about Nepal with deep and genuine interest and seriousness, and assured me of her commitment to come to Nepal. I considered her as a very kind and forbearing person, among the hundreds of other Burmese nuns I knew while I was there. Therefore, I used to often share with her the wide practice of *Pancha Bali* (sacrifice of animals) as a religion in Nepal due to the lack understanding of true Dhamma and the unnecessary oppression of and discrimination against women, largely due to the lack of awareness and education. This greatly touched her and generated deep sympathy within her for Nepali people. She, therefore, made a commitment to come to Nepal, irrespective of any difficulty that may arise. Once in Nepal, she endured all kinds of discomfort and difficulties associated with food, lodging, and other amenities. She was able to endure these difficulties purely because of her compassion and sympathy for Nepali people, just as a mother would towards her child."

Ma Gunavati Guruma has returned to her own country after completing 35 years of long service to Nepali people since she first came to Nepal 42 years ago. In the present day, Nepal has progressed economically and physically, although at a snail's pace, compared to its situation 42 years ago. As for Myanmar, it used to be one of the most prosperous Asian countries. In addition, it used to be a place where Buddhism had prospered widely and the ordination of Buddhist monks and nuns takes place only after identifying a donor, such that they are well supported during their monkhood and nunhood. Given her sacrifice of such a comfortable and secure lifestyle in her motherland, and her noble contribution to promoting Buddhism in Nepal under the very challenging Nepali context marked with the very pathetic and stressful lifestyle of women, Ma Gunavati Guruma deserves the status and respect of a 'Sangamitta' of this era. A firm commitment to serve humanity and skills for imparting knowledge and awareness to fellow human beings are important traits of a '*dharma doot*' (Dhamma messenger). Endowed with these special qualities, Ma Gunavati Guruma is a true '*dharma doot*' with the ideals of a Sangamitta.

From the perspective of *maïtri*, *karuna* (compassion), *mudita*, and *upechhaya*, the widely known Ma Gunavati Guruma is indeed a "Karunamaya", a god of compassion. From the perspective of the Mahayana Buddhism, Ma Gunavati Guruma has the qualities of a "Bodhisattva".

Every person has his/her own interest and passion. In respect of Ma Gunavati Guruma, her interest lies mainly in serving other people. Her passion is to welcome and respect guests. It is said that due to her interest in and preoccupation with helping friends and serving teachers during her student life, she had little time for her studies and was, hence, weak academically. People say she is exceptionally passionate about welcoming

and serving foreign guests. She is always seen keenly serving senior Buddhist monks at any opportunity she gets.

In terms of academics, she is qualified with a Dhammachariya degree. But she believes in promoting *Dhamma* through demonstration of good practice, rather than showing off one's academic qualification. Hence, her style is to preach through brief but highly significant discourses on Buddhism.

As a person who gives greater importance to 'practice' rather than principles, Ma Gunavati Guruma provided 35 years of strong and continuous support to the work of Dharmakirti Vihar and Dhammavati Guruma, as their main pillar. As a key pillar of Dhammavati Guruma, Ma Gunavati Guruma also played the role of a mother to other nuns in Dharmakirti Vihar. I recall a statement by Dhammavati Guruma during the course of a sermon at Padma Kirti Vihar. "I tend to like only good-mannered people, but not with ill manners. Unlike me, Ma Gunavati Guruma loves anyone, irrespective of his/her character. She has a big heart. Our hearts are incomparable to hers."

She has yet another quality. She never gets angry. Nor has she ever scolded anyone. Even if anyone makes a mistake, she hardly raises her voice. She tries to guide that person politely in her own way. She has a habit of commending a person for a good deed even if it is a minor one. That is why she used to always praise me and my peers for being mannerly during our childhood. We used to joke about it among ourselves that to be considered really mannerly Ma Gunavati Guruma's compliments alone are not adequate, and that we should strive for similar recognition by Dhammavati Guruma. Ma Gunavati Guruma is one special person who has successfully won the hearts of all. The saying that 'no one can please everyone' is clearly not applicable in the case of Ma Gunavati Guruma.

In the context of the 80th birth anniversary of Ma Gunavati Guruma, a Burmese citizen who dedicated 35 years of her life promoting Buddhism in Nepal: Editor

Source: 'Dharmakirti' Buddhist Magazine, Year 22, Issue 11, 2061 B.S.





A Letter to Ma Gunavati Guruma

Dr. Sumon Kamal Tuladhar

October 26, 2015

**Dear Venerable Ma Guna Guruma,
Koti Koti Vandana!!**

I was just going through my important documents. All of sudden I found your letter written to me and Sidhartha back in 2011. You have addressed me as “*Mayeju Sumon*” in this letter, this really took me back to my good old days with you when I was a high school girl. I used to come to Vihar with my cousins. You used to attend to us in such a way, we feel very comfortable and close to you. You give us “*Burmese Paun*” and other snacks and make us feel very “homely”. When I met you in 1964, you have already learned *Nepal Bhasha* and was easy for us to talk to you, although you used to make mistakes while speaking. We were at the age, when everything makes us laugh, so we used to tease you and laugh to our hearts’ content. You also laugh with us and shy away like a teenager.

When we had a long school vacation, you taught us how to make artificial flowers from crepe papers and cloths. You also taught us to make *paun* and other snacks. Some of us became really good and professional and even started their business. In 1972, Dharmakirti Vihar for the first time in Nepal’s history, had organized an exhibition of colorful artificial flowers prepared by the young members of the vihar under your guidance and very capable leadership. Do you remember, you were the Chief Guest to open that exhibition and we all clapped. We sold the flowers and *Burmese paun* and other snacks as the first income-generating activities in Dharmakirti Vihar. We all realized that you are never sitting idle, and were so creative, you keep yourselves busy doing something, encouraging others to do the same. I remember *upasak-upasikas* used to call you a “*Laxmi dya*”.⁴

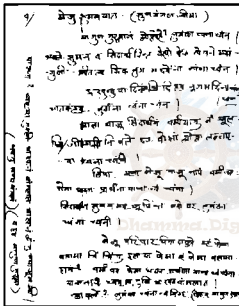
Thanks to your initiation, encouragement and dedication, we were able to take the first initiation of *Rishini Prabrujya* in 1975 in Dhyankuti Vihar in Banepa. You not only became a warden in this retreat but also do all the cooking and used to be like a “mother” to all of us, making sure that

⁴Laxmi dya is a goddess worshipped in Nepal and India for her knowledge and skills and also believe that she preserves the wealth in the family.

we get up on right time, have healthy meal on time and also used to teach us Buddhism. That's the time, I learned some *Paritram Suttas* which is still in my memory and that's the time, we learned meditation, too.

Another noble work that you have started in Dharmakirti Vihar was the Blood Donation in the year 1983 to commemorate the *Vaishakha Purnima* (Buddha's Birthday). This was the first Blood Donation campaign started by any religious organizations.

Your kind heart is the source of *Metta* that you create an aura around you. You are as pure and simple as a fresh running river water. You do not care past nor you do the future, except that you used to say, you like to return back to Myanmar when old and want to die in your motherland in future.



Letter of Ma Gunavati Guruma to Suman Kamal scanned as it is: Editors duo

When we do something good for you, you show your love and happiness, but you moved on just like a river, and do not dwell on that happiness. When something wrong happens, you just make a frowning look for a moment and again, you move on. You do not respect someone just because he/she did something for you or hold grudge on anyone even when s/he makes a mistake. You just become mindful on the *Catu Aaryasatya* (Four Noble Truths) and move on. I have seen you caring, loving, displaying kindness to all you meet which is *Metta* in Buddhism. When you see somebody who needs help, I

have seen you taking care of the person with lots of compassion or mercy, the special kindness shown to those who suffer. That is where I observed you are full of *Karuna*. When we come and share with you any good news you rejoice like a mother. I realized it was not only with us, but with anybody you are sympathetic, being happy for others, without a trace of envy. Isn't that what is called *Mudita* in Pali?

Life is not always a "bed of roses" so was true with you, Ma Gunavati Guruma. When there comes some stressful moments, I have seen you not being disturbed at all You have ability to accept the situation

as it is and follow the Buddhist principle of equanimity (*Upeksha*). Looking at you and getting opportunity to be with you, I feel like I have seen someone who in reality practices "the *Catu Brahma Vihar*" (Four Sublime States).⁵

I knew you only as a soft hearted, compassionate and caring *Guruma*, but I was not aware that you also have passed sacred *Dhammacariya*. You are that simple and no trace of your pride even attaining that level of education. Then I realized this is what Buddha has said that it is one of the *Mangalas* to be emotionally mature and not to be moved by any worldly changes (*lokiya*). You used to inspire and encourage everybody in academic excellence, especially to the female by giving examples from women in Myanmar. I was so much influenced by what you used to talk about women's empowerment in Myanmar (at that time), I chose to do a research on Women's Education in Myanmar for my M.Ed paper, which became a guiding principle throughout my career and even today, I am focusing on girls' education and women's empowerment in UNICEF.

I also remember you had a wonderful habit of documentation of any event and memoirs. I have seen you scribbling in your note book when you are resting. Most amazingly, you can also write in *Nepal Bhasha*. You came to Nepal—learned *Nepal Bhasa*, not only to converse with people, but even writes in Devnagari! You have written quite a few articles in *Nepal Bhasha* and published in the Buddhist magazine. You are also congratulatory that you are even able to publish a small booklet, named *Vasethi Theri and a memoir*, "*Nepalaye 25 Dan Jigu Lumanti*" (English: 25 years in Nepal: my memory) in *Nepal Bhasha*, which is not your language. This shows your academic excellency!

Today, when I saw this letter, I was really amazed to see you still being able to write in *Nepal Bhasha* with such a perfection! This is you Ma Guna *Guruma*, you always look for perfection in what you do, but tolerates others' mistakes.

I also remember how funny you were! You talk like a child without any hesitation and reservation. You were like a child in the story "Emperor's New Cloth" where the child dares to say "the emperor in naked". I remember Venerable Dhammavati *Guruma* feels very embarrassing when you say something in a straight forward manner where the Nepali culture seeks some diplomacy. After the fact, I do remember how Venerable Dhammavati *Guruma* also enjoys laughing at your straight forwardness.

You were always worried about my weight and every time you meet me, you were never tired of telling me to do some exercise.

⁵Four Sublime States are Metta, Karuna, Mudita and Upeksha which are called *catubrahma vihar* in Pali.

One day, I was waiting to talk to you while you were busy talking to a middle aged gentleman. All of sudden you looked at my face for a while and said right away, "it will be so good if some of his eyebrows can be put in your eyebrows". I looked at his face, it was true he had such a bushy eyebrows while I have a very faint one. We all laughed. This is you. You care about people so much in every way. I remember you were a medical nurse when somebody is sick.

One thing you were shy when you have to preach or do a *dhamma prabacan in Nepal Bhasha*, as you were very conscious about how you pronounce some sounds, although you can speak the language very fluently. Some people even do not know that you are a Burmese. Because of your way of pronouncing certain sounds, people used to think that you were from some adjoining district of Kathamandu. Jokingly you told them that you were from Banepa.

I am not sure how long should I go on writing, but one more thing that I wanted to remind you is how much you love to feed everybody. You enjoy the food and loves tasting new food. We became so addicted to Burmese food, we even started to make it at home. But food does not taste the same, as you have some secret ingredients from Myanmar. Your cooking was not limited to Vihar, you even go and help the *Upasakas* at their homes when they have *Bhojan* offering to monks and nuns.

You are one person who is a living legend of Buddhist philosophy; I can see Buddha's teaching in your life and your everyday practice. As I mentioned earlier, I can see Four Sublime States in your emotional intelligence, I can see eight-fold path being practiced in your daily life. And now when I visited you last time in Myanmar, I even saw one of the Four Noble Truths that is challenges of old age (*jaraa*) – your forgetfulness! You have very selective memory. You know me and Sidhartha, you know we are guests in your vihar and you make sure we are well attended by all the people in vihar. You make sure there are plenty of food for us, you make sure we go for sightseeing, but you keep on forgetting what you said now. Do you remember, one time, you were calling a taxi driver 3 / 4 times to pick up us to go for sightseeing? Even in this forgetfulness, you do not forget your responsibility and duty. I saw you cleaning the vihar premises every day as your routine. You are not perturbed that you are having the challenges of forgetfulness and other old age problem. You just accepted it and keeps smiling. That must be the reason, everybody loves you. One genuine evidence was that, while we were in your Vihar in Yangoon, so many people came to celebrate your birthday!

At the end I would like to wish you a more prosperous and blissful life ahead and please keep up your great smile which lightens everybody's

life forever! I wish you for an excellent health condition and hope to see you back to Nepal sometimes!

*With all my Dhamma wish,
Sumon Kamal Tuladhar*

Daw Gunawati	
December 1924	Born in Kobara in Madau, Myanmar
Parents	Father - U Me and Mother Daw AeyTyeng
Ordination	In 1936 she was ordained at the age of 12 years by two teachers – Daw Kesa and Daw Wansachari in Bhangu Chyaun Vihar in Moulmein.
Meditation Practice	In 1940, she started practicing meditation with Daw Kushalacharya who was the senior teacher of Satipathan.
Educational Attainment; Dhammachariya Entitlement	In 1949, she joined Khemaram Nun's Studies Center Moulmein and passed all the tests and got the entitlement of Dhammachariya.
Mission In Nepal	In 1963, she came to Nepal for the first time with Ven. Dhammavati and Late Ven. Rainamanjari
Nepal Celebrated Golden Jubilee of her ordinance	In 1987 Nepal celebrated Golden Jubilee of her Ordinance, silver jubilee of her arrival Nepal and her 64 th birthday
Left Nepal after completing the Mission	In 2002, She left Nepal to live her life in Myanmar
Nepal Celebrated her 80 th birthday	In 2005, Dharmakirti vihar celebrated her 80 th birthday in grand way in remembrance of her invaluable and very well treasured contributions to Nepal Buddhist communities.
Her Unique Achievement	87 times Visits to Lumbini, the birth place of Nepal. Her ambition was to visit Lumbini as many times as her age.
Source: Tuladhar, L. 2072 B.S. "Nepal ma Buddhadharma ko Pracharprasarma Theravadi Bhikshuniharu (Anagarika) ko Yogdan" in <i>Nepalma Theravad – Buddhadharma ek adhyan</i> . Edited by Dr. Reena Tuladhar.	

*Prepared by
Dr. Sumon Kamal Tuladhar*

Venerable Ma Gunavati Guruma The Benevolent Burmese Nun

Dr. Chandresh Ratna Tuladhar



My first acquaintance with Venerable Ma Gunavati Guruma (the only Burmese nun residing in the heart of Kathmandu, capital of the then Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal) in the Dharmakirti Vihar, a Theravada Buddhist Nunnery, Shreegha, Naghal tole, Kathmandu, dates back to the late 1960's. It was a strange coincidence that I met her. At the time I was a high school boarder. My beloved father (late Kul Ratna Tuladhar), being the pioneer of Engineering Education in Nepal, was always busy with his pioneering works and consequently had little time to be with us except on holidays. My caring mother (late Chini Maya Tuladhar) looked after the household matters and domestic chores and as a result had ample time to spend with us. Being inclined to Dhamma works, she could afford time to visit various Buddhist monasteries and nunneries in Kathmandu and Patan in those days. She used to visit the Dharmakirti Vihar occasionally at first and frequently later onwards, as it was located not far away from our house.

One cold December morning, at the start of our winter vacation, I accompanied my mother to the Dharmakirti Vihar. It was a holy day and there were many devotees in the Dhamma hall of the Vihar. They were all chanting prayers, paying homage to the Buddha statue mounted on a pedestal in the front side of the hall. Four-five ladies with shaven heads and wearing special pink uniforms were all seated in line towards the front right corner of the long hall. With upright hands joined together in reverence to the white marble Buddha seated on the decorated golden platform, they took lead in the prayers. After the chanting was over, one of the pink attired lady faced the devotees and started to give the Dhamma discourse in the Newari language. The discourse was new to me and I could not understand the specific Dhamma words and the serious talk she gave but understood the Buddhist story she related afterwards which ended with a moral conclusion. After the discourse was finished, the devotees dispersed. I however followed my mother while she offered some paper money and coins to the pink-dressed ladies. I had a close glimpse of the calm peaceful faces of the ladies in pink. The foremost among them, I noticed, was quite different from the others, as she had a Tibetan look. Later onwards, I came to know that they called her

Ma Gunavati Guruma alias "Burmi Guruma", meaning the Burmese nun. This was my first encounter with Venerable Ma Gunavati Guruma, the modest Burmese nun, who was residing in the Dharmakirti Vihar, together with her companions, who had all returned from Burma after completing their religious studies on Buddhism. The young nun who had given the interesting Dhamma talk, I came to know afterwards was addressed as Venerable Dhammavati Guruma. In this way, I gradually became familiar with the Dharmakirti Vihar family -Venerable Ma Gunavati Guruma, Venerable Ratna Manjari Guruma, Venerable Dhammavati Guruma, Venerable Dhammadina alias Chameli Guruma and Venerable Kamala Guruma.

Although Ma Gunavati Guruma could not speak fluently in the Newari language, she made great remarkable efforts to give the Dhamma talks in Newari, and we all rejoiced to hear her deliver the talk program in broken Newari, occasionally aided by Dhammavati Guruma to translate a few difficult Burmese words and phrases in Newari.

My only summer/winter " vacation -time " visits to the Dharmakirti Vihar gradually transformed into regular weekly holy day and holiday visits after graduating from high school. I became more close and familiar with the venerable nuns and began to appreciate and participate in most of the Dhamma activities at the Dharmakirti Vihar. I joined the Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle and increased my association with Dhamma friends who used to come there to study Buddhism from the senior monks and nuns during the holidays. During the annual Dharmakirti Vihar Anniversary days, the Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle used to organize outstanding Dhamma activities. Many a time Venerable Ma Gunavati used to lead the Dharmakirti youth group members to build up team spirit, teach and share craftsmanship knowledge. She used to lead the exhibition shows of paper-flower making craftsmanship, sour-sweet candy making art, Burmese sweet dish making programs, handicraft making workshops, etc. In those days, the anniversary exhibition cum sale programs were always a grand success and they gave us the opportunity to boost our team spirit, leadership abilities, management tactics and friendship development—all with a solid moral impact. Ma Gunavati Guruma never hesitated to teach us what she knew about Burmese craftsmanship and Burmese traditions and culture.

The Dhamma talks for the Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle were mostly conducted by our chief teacher Venerable Ashwaghosh Mahasthavi and occasionally by Venerable Dhammavati Guruma and sometimes by Venerable Ma Gunavati Guruma. These Dhamma discourses and teachings moulded our young minds and changed our hearts to commit good deeds, avoid evil deeds and thus helped us to become "good" Buddhists from the start. Our outlook and vision of Dhamma became more liberal and our view

and interpretation of the true nature of things broadened and changed. We gradually altered our ways of living from the traditional age-old Buddhist principles to the more practical and beneficial Theravada principles with an understanding not based on blind faith as used to be. The Dhamma doctrines taught during the discourses were very meaningful, practical and simple to comprehend.

In the meantime, the Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle organized many Dhamma propagation activities like holding Buddha Dhamma quiz contests, speech contests, publication of Buddhist Magazine and books, free health clinic, interaction programs with foreign Buddhist Scholars, and pilgrimage tour programmes to the neighbouring villages within Kathmandu valley and sometimes to the Buddhist heritage sites on the mountainside of the Kathmandu valley and occasionally to different districts outside Kathmandu valley. We were young and active in those days and Venerable Ma Gunavati and Venerable Dhammavati always supported our initiations and aspirations to propagate the Dhamma to the village folks and the mountain folks. The Vesaka Full Moon Day festival was always observed with a festive ceremony in a big way at the Dharmakirti Vihar. We always looked forward to celebrate it in a new way each and every year. New ideas and new activities always used to crop up and take shape and we learned to observe most of the Buddhist festivals in a special way according to their significance.

Venerable Ma Gunavati and Venerable Dhammavati were our foremost guides in the Buddhist activities and functions we organized and Venerable Bhikkhu Ashwaghosh Mahasthavir was our chief advisor under whose leadership we framed our auspicious celebrations. In short, it was a happy and prosperous Dhamma family that we the members of the Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle enjoyed singularly in those days.

I very much love to dwell in the nostalgic recollections of those bygone days when our young lives were being changed and infused with Dhamma ways and Dhamma activities. I very much feel fortunately blessed with my past *Sanskara* for this coincidental opportunity to mingle with Dhamma teachers and advisors, relatives and friends in the Dharmakirti Vihar—all mutually interrelated like a cordial happy peaceful Dhamma family in a Dhamma Vihar...the Dharmakirti Vihar.

Our inspiration and motivation one day opened up the way for becoming novice monks, with full support and necessary help from Venerable Ma Gunavati, Venerable Dhammavati, and our chief monk Venerable Ashwaghosh Mahasthavir in the year 1978 towards the end of July. I along with 12 others from our Dharmakirti Vihar and one from Dhyankuti Vihar,

Banepa went to our chief monks' monastery in faraway Banepa to get ordained as novice monks (*Shramaners*). During our 10 days' monks' life in Banepa Venerable Ma Gunavati and Venerable Dhammavati Guruma looked after us with motherly care. They took the responsibility to make suitable and sufficient breakfast and lunch for us, served us fruit juice in the evenings and Burmese herbal tea before going to bed. I will never forget the self-sacrificing service Ma Gunavati Guruma offered us in order to facilitate our monks' life in every possible way. It was a unique experience to all the fourteen of us, to each in his own way. I regret it was for a very short period—only for ten days.

My father, I remember, was very much worried with my hesitation and unwillingness to disrobe and return home. Two months after the disrobing program, the cessation of our ordination, I was sent to Russia (the USSR) for my medical studies. My father, I noticed, very much feared lest I divert from my school-time ambition of becoming a medical doctor and end up becoming a Buddhist monk instead, under the strong influence of the Venerable nuns in Dharmakirti Vihar.

After a long gap of ten years in Russia, I returned home in 1988, having completed my medical studies and post-graduation in Paediatrics. During the ten years' gap I noticed many changes had taken place in the Dharmakirti Vihar. The senior nuns Venerable Ma Gunavati, Venerable Ratna Manjari, Venerable Dhammavati had all undergone through a physical change in their looks—they looked more matured. But the venerable nuns were still actively conducting the promotion and propagation works of the Buddha Sasana. The Dharmakirti Vihar building also had a new outlook and the Dharmakirti family as a whole, had increased in size and the Dhamma activities were also more expanded and extensive. But the Dhamma atmosphere in the Dharmakirti Vihar still remained the same to me... unchanged! The old Dhamma feeling was still in the air, in and around the premises. I still remember taking a class one Saturday afternoon at the Dharmakirti Vihar to relate my experience as a medical student during my ten long years in the USSR to the Buddhist Study Circle members and explained to them the positive influence and impact made by the Dhamma knowledge I gained from the Dharmakirti Vihar during my decade-long stay in Russia.

Soon after I returned from the USSR, I heard a great deal about the International Buddhist Meditation Centre (IBMC) in Sankhamool, Kathmandu. My mother and my younger sister Chitra were devotees at the Centre then. They encouraged me to visit the Centre one Saturday. I followed them and visited the Meditation Centre. Later on I frequently visited the Centre and I met Venerable Ma Gunavati there. She used to serve the chief

monk, a Burmese, Venerable U Asavacara there with great devotion and was In-Charge of the kitchen, preparing breakfast and lunch for the Burmese monk in Burmese flavor. She was expert in preparing tasty Burmese dishes and she won great merits in serving the meditation master with dedication for long periods, sometimes for several months continuously. Venerable Dhammavati Guruma used to accompany her occasionally in this meritorious duty.

Ma Gunavati Guruma was very fond of serving to the Burmese guests from the Burmese Embassy who frequently visited the IBMC for meditation, especially on Saturdays and Sundays. They used to help each other in preparing lunch for the Sayadaw and other invited monks and nuns. Burmese language was the chief medium of conversation in the kitchen and Venerable Ma Gunavati very much felt at home at such times. However, she never thought for her own convenience and comfort, but always looked after the convenience and comfort of others, especially the senior monks and nuns who used to visit the IBMC and also the Burmese and Nepalese devotees who used to come there during the holidays to listen to the Dhamma discourses and occasionally sit for meditation. In the Meditation Centre, Venerable Ma Gunavati Guruma always looked after meals-well prepared or not, tasty or not, sufficient or not and in the evenings served fruit juice and Burmese herbal tea before the meditators went to bed. Most of the time I visited the IBMC for the meditation course, Venerable Ma Gunavati was usually there and this really provided me the necessary moral support I so much needed at the time. I was very grateful to Venerable Sayadaw U Asavacara for his guidance and patience to teach me the techniques of meditation and to Venerable Ma Gunavati for looking after my food, lodging and well-being.

Another event I need to be grateful to Venerable Ma Gunavati is for her generous help in preparation for the august commemoration to mark our first "Monkhood Day" in Dhyankuti Vihar in Banepa in July-August. She always took pains to go there a few days earlier to clean up the monastery, to prepare food and lodging for us and to make the celebration a grand success. It was an annual event and I occasionally used to go there with a few willing friends to stay overnight in preparation for the next days event. Our chief monk Venerable Ashwaghosh Mahasthvir always took delight whenever we visited his monastery in Banepa for the commemoration. With full support and dedicated help from Venerable Ma Gunavati and Venerable Dhammavati the event was always a success, participated by most of the Dharmakirti Buddhist Study Circle members.

Venerable Ma Gunavati's support, efforts and contributions during the construction period of Vishwashanti Dharmakirti Vihar in Basundharadole, Gautami Vihar in Lumbini, and Dhyankuti Vihar in

Banepa are also highly commendable. She always accompanied Venerable Dhamnavati Guruma wherever and whenever she went to these construction sites and together they have joined hands to build these Dhamma places in the course of propagation and promotion of the Buddha Sasana in Nepal.

In short, she took motherly care of all who came in contact with her, very appropriate and befitting for her name. She truly is endowed with noble qualities befitting a genuine and trustworthy mother. She was very dedicated to her duty and toiled hard with a special devotion to serve the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, whether in the Dharmakirti Vihar, in the IMBC, in the Dhyankuti Vihar in Banepa, in the Gautami Vihar in Lumbini or in any other place. I have never seen her stay idle or lazy. Wherever she is, she is on the move and busy doing some work not for her personal sake but for others. Ever ready and eager to help others, she is never without intimate friends or company. She never seeks or looks for a return for the help she has given. She is moulded in this "helping hand character". I always rejoiced to meet her at the IBMC after lunch and share with her our past memories, which are all history now.

It is in my stars to visit Yangon, Myanmar once a year. I frequently go to see her while I am there. If anybody is sick in the Nunnery, I usually get a call and the next morning I am there to provide my service. Ma Gunavati Guruma rejoices at my sight and we talk in plain Newari language. She is always eager to feed me lunch and I get a strange feeling that I am in Dharmakirti Vihar in Kathmandu and not in her Nunnery in Yangon. Whenever a pilgrimage group arrives from the Dharmakirti Vihar or any other groups from Nepal her happiness knows no bounds. Those are the moments she can carry on a conversation in Newari just as if she were in Kathmandu in the Dharmakirti Vihar. She delights in feeding the pilgrimage tour group as much food as she can. Once the tour group departs, the Nunnery settles down to its previous solitude.

From the first day I met her in Dharmakirti Vihar in Kathmandu till the last time I saw her in Myanmar -Nepal Nunnery in Yangoon, I have personally observed in her the four noble *Brahmavihara* qualities in its most elated form viz. *Metta* (loving kindness), *Karuna* (compassion), *Mudita* (sympathetic joy) and *Upekkha* (equanimity). Venerable Ma Gunavati always looked towards our well being, protection from evil, encouragement to perform noble deeds, being well fed and well cared for - just like a mother towards her children—all with tender motherly loving care. In those early days at the Dharmakirti Vihar we always thought of her as our dear mother. "Ma" means mother in Nepali and Newari language. "Gunavati" means full of "guna" or noble qualities, just as "Dhamnavati" means full of "dhamma" or moral qualities. Today I have come to know that "Ma" means "miss" or

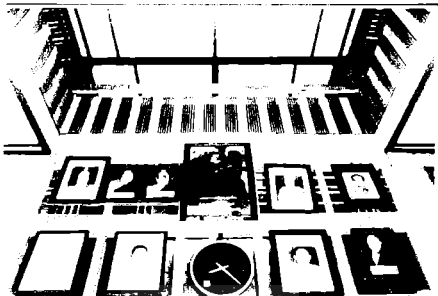
a "young lady" in Burmese. So in those days she was addressed as "Ma Gunavati" meaning "a young nun" when interpreted in Burmese way or "a motherly nun" when interpreted in Nepalese way.

After serving for the Buddha Sasana in Nepal for more than 35 years continuously Venerable Ma Gunavati today resides in the Myanmar-Nepal Nunnery in North Okkalapa, Yangon, Myanmar. She occasionally visits Kathmandu, Nepal to spend her time with her bosom friend Venerable Dhammavati Guruma and spends three or four months. She usually goes to visit Lumbini whenever she comes to Nepal. She has spent the most active years of her life in Nepal, serving the Buddha Sasana in its propagation and promotion with unabated dedication. She always worked and toiled in company with Venerable Dhammavati Guruma, and the Dharmakirti Vihar has become her second natural home. From the day she placed her feet on the soils of Kathmandu, Nepal, there is no Theravada monk or nun who does not know about her dedication and contribution to the Buddha Sasana in Nepal. Were it not for her presence, company and care, the Dharmakirti Vihar may not have achieved the popularity and fame it has gained today. With her moral support and physical presence, Venerable Dhammavati Guruma succeeded in highlighting the Dharmakirti Vihar as the centre for disseminating Theravada Buddhism in Nepal from the time of its inception.

Today she is ninety years old and lately she is gradually suffering from absent mindedness, a degenerative disease that comes of age. She has orientation of people and places but has lost orientation of events to a certain degree. She is still active physically but has slowed down mentally to a certain extent. Otherwise she is perfectly normal in manners and behavior. I personally wish her good and sound health and heavenly happiness as long as she lives! Long live Venerable Ma Gunavati Guruma, her noble deeds, her dedicated devotion to the Dhamma, her selfless service to the Sasana!

Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam!





Khemaram Nuns' Study Center where Daw Gunavati Guruma and Dhammavati Guruma studied Buddhism.



**Ma Gunavati Guruma, today, at the age of 91 Years
in front of Myanmar-Nepal Vihar Gate, Rangoon**
Downloaded from <http://www.dhamma.digital>



**Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha
where Daw Gunavati Guruma
has visited 86 times.**

*(Her target is to visit Lumbini as many times
as her own age.)*