

Bhikṣuṇī Dhammāvati

I did not know Michael Aris 25 years ago, in 1974, when he and his wife came to Nepal. He left his wife here in Kathmandu while he set off hither and thither to remote villages and to Lhasa in order to carry out his research on Mahāyāna Buddhism. At that time his wife, Aung San Suu Kyi, used to come daily to Dharmakīrti Vihāra to teach English to the students of our study circle. Occasionally, I would see him when he came by the convent to meet his wife.

I had known Michael's mother-in-law, Daw Khin Kyi, from long before. As the Burmese ambassador to Delhi, Nepal was also part of her responsibilities, and so she came on a regular basis, and I would often meet her when she did.

Michael's wife, Aung San Suu Kyi, presented me with a copy of a book about the Buddha's 500 births. For six years, I told the stories from this book in public. To celebrate the completion of the recitation of these stories, a five-foot tall statue of Lord Buddha was set up in the Vasundhara temple on the Ring Road. Michael and Suu assisted in this meritorious act.

Moreover, one year before Michael passed away, he promised to look into cost of supporting the education of the novices at Dharmakīrti Vihāra. Alas, he passed away before he was able to fulfill this intention.

As far as I remember, he came to Nepal three times. Once he came with his wife and three-month-old son. The second time, he, Suu, and the two boys all came. On the third occasion, they took the two boys to Burma to perform their temporary ordination, and came afterwards to Nepal. I can't remember now in which years these events happened.

Later on, Aung San Suu Kyi was put under house arrest for political reasons. Nevertheless, in 1995, when I was in Burma and when I went to Panditarama, she would often come from her house to offer the main meal; whenever she did so, she would come see me as well. Last year, too, when I went with lay supporters to Burma she invited us several times to her house, but out of fear of the political authorities the lay supporter who had invited us to Burma would not allow it. What a pity.

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