

Donations to the Vision



Supporting the World Dharma Online Institute

*Its Teachers, Present Services, Volunteers,
and Operational Development.*

Many of you know the stories of my life, my passions, and my adventures. From ordaining as a Buddhist monk in Burma 29 years ago to the reportage 19 years later of “ethnic cleaning” in my first book, “Burma: The Next Killing Fields?.” Which led me back to Burma in 1995 for months of secretive conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi—and a penetrating look into her country’s “revolution of the spirit,” forming the foundation and the inspiration to create the World Dharma Online Institute, and provide the basis for my most recent book, “Instinct for Freedom”—The Art and Practice of Finding Liberation through Living.”

While you and I have had different life experiences, I am confident that we have come to care deeply for others, and feel a growing responsibility for issues beyond our own personal peace. My experiences in Burma showed me what’s possible when conscience is stirred—when good people care deeply enough and are empowered to act on behalf of the greater good. That’s why we are seeking your support.

The World Dharma Online Institute is a dream come true—exploring the frontier of social, scientific, political, ecological, and spiritual discovery. Combining modern technology to access ancient teachings, the Institute’s prime focus is to provide high-quality courses and services that explore “Freedom”—perhaps the most important (and abused) value of our times.

Your support will make possible the ongoing stability of our existing courses and services as well as invigorate the future—with development of innovative new courses and services “empowering new visions of insight and freedom.”

We are asking you to partner with us and together co-create a better world with a sacred future. While sowing the seeds for another generation of revolutionary seekers to emerge, furthering the legacy of the “great mystical adventure.”

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING IN BURMA

Many of you know that I consider Burma my spiritual home. When I look back at those years of my life I am easily moved to tears, both by the tragedy of a country gripped by military dictatorship and the grace of a peoples—an ancient wisdom culture—steeped in 2,500 years of Buddhist values, attitudes and practices, where the landscape is dotted with thousands of monasteries and meditation centers, with hundreds of thousands nuns and monks.

Ironically, what first drew me to want to stay in Burma was not the teachings of the Buddha. Rather it was the people. More precisely it was their remarkable capacity to give. Here was a country under siege—suffering, physically, emotionally and economically—with an average annual income of \$75, and yet, the people—came out of their huts and homes with warm smiles and open-hands, inviting us in for food, conversation, and a night’s rest. I had never seen such expressions of giving and caring anywhere else in the world.

Further, I learned that Burma’s lay population supported all 5,000 monasteries and meditation centers in the country; giving food, money, medicines, and services—to keep the centers thriving. All this, despite their

own economic hardships—the 4th poorest nation in the world.

And to my further surprise, after I ordained as a monk in 1979, I learned that Burma’s monasteries were not home to just Buddhist monks and nuns. Rather the majority of inhabitants were laity. The Mahasi Meditation Center in Rangoon—the monastery where I lived in the 1970s and 1980s—housed between 2,000 and 12,000 lay men and women year around; all practicing silent intensive meditation. Ninety percent were women. And in the summer we had upwards of five-hundred teenagers practicing meditation as well.

Even more astonishing, was that all food and accommodations were provided freely, by donations offered by others throughout the year. Whether one stayed a week or a year, all people were treated equally. Of course, during the time of one’s stay at the center donations of either money and or meals were often given, as well as an offering at the conclusion of one’s retreat.

THE SPIRIT OF DANA—GIVING

This ancient tradition of giving is known by the Buddhist Pali word Dana (pronounced “dah-na”). Traditional speaking, Dana is a spiritual practice that dates back to the time of the Buddha in Northern India, and relates to the conscientious interdependence between those who offer teachings into the nature of freedom and those who receive them.

According to the tradition, generosity, or sharing what we have, is one of the pillars of the Dharma life. In the act of giving we develop openness—evolving our capacity to truly care for the welfare of others.

Dana is both an intimate and immediate expression of wisdom. Born from a direct sense of feeling of our inherent human inter-connectedness, one gives to others, as one would give to their own child.

Of course, the practice of giving is not only found in the Buddhist tradition. It is a universally recognized quality of heart that testifies to the depth of one’s humanity and one’s capacity for self-transcendence. Since we truly need each other to survive, Dana is said to be the bedrock of a dignified and civilized society.

DANA IS THE GIFT OF FEARLESSNESS AND FREEDOM

Dana in a World Dharma sense, points to giving as something larger than the material gift itself. Dana also gives the gift of fearlessness and freedom. In other words, through this gift ‘it is my wish as the donor that it support your courage to feed the actualization of your highest aspiration, and make real your most enlightened dream.’

Aung San Suu Kyi once told me that giving dana was an action that brought her the greatest sense of happiness. “I know of no higher happiness,” she said. “Dana that frees one from fear and frees one from want, is the essence of giving.”

This is why we feel that ‘how one gives—the quality of one’s consciousness—is more important than what one gives.

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Jeannine Davies, my long-time colleague, and I co-founded the WDOI because of our love of the Dharma—and the desire to co-create an international non-sectarian Sangha-community devoted to exploring the nature of freedom, consciousness, creativity, and activism.

In so doing, we are aware that after a successful first year we are now consciously choosing to raise the bar on the vision—seeking the required funding to manifest the full breadth of the vision, and in so doing develop WDOI into a financially self-sustaining entity.

In recognition of the complex and often confusing connection between economics and spiritual work, commerce and consciousness, philanthropy and activism, we would like to make clear our financial reality.

World Dharma received no regular grants. No endowments. No government funding. Nor do we own

properties that are either leased or rented for income. There are no investments in stocks or other financial instruments. No salaries are paid. All aspects of our operation are provided by World Dharma volunteers.

All proceeds from my work go directly to support the work of World Dharma, the World Dharma Online Institute, and The Burma Project USA/Canada, as well as sponsoring World Dharma Forums, public talks, and benefit performances to raise awareness of Aung San Suu Kyi (and her ongoing incarceration).

Enrollment fees from WDOI cover less than half of our annual operating expenses. No money is spent on fundraising; it all goes to our programs, services, and utilities.

Because Program fees do not cover our annual costs to run our Program and provide the services we do, we rely on the generosity of good people who genuinely resonate with our World Dharma work, our vision, services, community aspirations, and online Program. Your contribution to our World Dharma Operating Fund keeps the World Dharma Online Institute and our growing number of other projects thriving.

In addition, the development of World Dharma and The World Dharma Online Institute has been funded almost entirely by donations from individuals as well as the volunteer services of a number of remarkable people. The completion of the planned developments of the Institute—both stabilizing and securing our present services as well as expanding our scope and services—will depend on the continued generosity of committed supporters.

In closing, it is the ancient heart-practice of *dana* that has kept Aung San Suu Kyi's revolution of the spirit alive in Burma, the monasteries flourishing, and many of the greatest spiritual traditions alive in the world, whether Buddhist or otherwise. It is only from the kindness of committed supporters who give generously that we have thus far been allowed to make available our humble understanding of teachings that support "fearlessness and freedom." As these ancient teachings broaden, evolve, and expand, merging with more contemporary expressions of wisdom, we hope to keep alive this joyful tradition of giving *dana* to keep available the Dharma, making the world a better place for all.

Your support of the World Dharma Online Institute—its teachers, staff, researchers, and volunteers—will allow the Institute to flourish and others to benefit from the Program and Community.

Your generous support is deeply appreciated.

World Dharma is under the umbrella of The World Dharma Network, as is The World Dharma Online Institute (WDOI) and The Burma Project USA/Canada. The "World Dharma" Network is the human rights, broadcasting, long-distance learning wing of The Buddha Sasana Foundation. The BSF was founded by Alan Clements in 1986 and is a California registered, tax-exempt, non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

**ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE TO THE FULL EXTENT OF THE LAW.
THE BUDDHA SASANA FOUNDATION TAX ID # IS 77-0130196.**

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your donation please email me and we can arrange a time to speak.

From my heart,

Alan Clements