

The Start of Prajna Vihar School

Back in 1989, during the Thai Temple retreat, one Indian monk living at the Thai Temple, named Ven. Anuruddha, was working with some very poor children from the local village. He was teaching them some simple chanting and some basic Dharma along with some basic alphabet, etc. Children came half naked, dressed in rags in the cold January winter in Bodh Gaya. Little ones were carrying their younger brother or sister. It was very touching, and many of the retreatants took an interest in them, bringing fruits, biscuits, clothes, etc for the children. Ven Anuruddha said he would like to hire 2 teachers who could teach the children some basic studies: Hindi, math, English, etc. for a couple hours a day. So we raised \$100 to hire the teachers to pay them \$4 per month.

However when I returned the following January, 1990, I found the money had not been spent but instead Ven Anuruddha had formed a committee (with Kabir Saxena from the Root Institute, a Professor from the local university, Lord abbot of the Vietnamese temple and one Tibetan Lama) to start a school in another local village. He explained that the people from the village, named Mastipur had requested him to start a school there as they had no school available to them and their village was illiterate.

We found space in the local Sakya Tibetan Temple, so we hired a room there starting March 1st. We hired 2 local teachers, Preyag Prajapati and Sumitra Devi paying them very small salaries. We had our opening day ceremony at the Temple and Lama Zopa Rinpoche blessed the new school. We enrolled 25 of the poorest children from the village, but when classes started, 40 children showed up so all were included.

We had to leave the Sakya Temple when the pilgrimage season started in the fall and we moved into a house in the village. In March, we added a second class and moved again to 2 dormitory rooms in the Root Institute. And our school stayed there until we bought a small piece of land the small tents where our school is presently located and we put up 2 tents and classes were carried on under. It was from those tents that the school grew to the three story building it is now.

