

First ALOHA from Burma

Dear friends,

I arrived in Yangon (Rangoon) on the 11th of December, 2002. It was very exciting to see my family and very depressing to see the country and how it has not changed in four years. Even though I have changed in the last four years, Burma (Myanmar) cannot keep up with the rate I have changed. An immigration officer asked me if I brought back some chocolate (meaning he wants some as bribery.) I do not want to blame him for asking that, though, because he has ample reasons to do that, putting his character aside. Feeling as if all my dreams and hopes were flushed in the toilet, I went ahead to baggage claim and got my luggage. After spending about a couple days in Rangoon, I headed back to Mudon, a place where I grew up and spent my childhood.

It has been quite a reverse culture shock for me. I feel like a stranger at my own home. Since there is no electricity, a lot of houses use inverters, which can convert DC current from a battery to AC current. I have to get used to equipments that are used at my house. Many houses have small generators because electricity from the government is not reliable.

The mentality of the people has also gotten low. There have been ripple effects in all areas of lives. Since it is very important to solve the very first problem of day-to-day living, people started to live a corrupted life, which seems to be normal because everybody is living it. Many people are evicting taxes and lying to the government with the help of corrupted government employees. I am wondering what we can do to change the mentality of all these people and help them understand the ripple effects of their actions in the economic system.

Visiting some relatives and friends gave me insights into lives in Burma. A life for a grassroot in Burma is not easy. Making ends meet is not an easy task for somebody without an education and a lump of money to invest. I found many people in Burma to be very thin and look unhealthy. I am pretty sure that what they are eating is not up to par with daily requirements for vitamins and minerals. There may be many people who would be happy to eat just rice soups for their meals. The cost of living is not a burden for people whose income is in U.S. Dollars and those who are extremely rich. My own parents make enough money to live on and support my brothers and sister who are all students.

It broke my heart to see the living conditions of all these people who are my friends and relatives. I also visited Mon Bible School in Moulmein (Mawlamying) and saw the living conditions of all these students at the school. They have six toilets for forty-five students and five professors, who live in dorms.

I still have lots and lots of stories to tell but have no space for them now. I will tell more in the next letter. May God bless you all.

Love in Christ,

Lwin Moe