

Myanmar Literature Project

မြန်မာစာပေစီမံကိန်း

Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.)

Working Paper No. 10:17

**Nu, Early Plays
and
Ba Thoung, Adaptation of “An Enemy of the People”**

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About the Contributors

Kyaw Hoe studied Library Science at Yangon University and received his M.A. degree with a work on the Nagani Book Club. He later retired from the library field and became a merchant.

Gunnar Peters studied physics and South Asian studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. There he started to learn the Burmese language with Dr. Uta Gärtner. In 1997-98 he studied Burmese at the University of Foreign Languages in Yangon, Burma. After getting his degree in physics, he worked for five years as a Burmese interpreter for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Burma, later also as Thai interpreter in Southern Thailand. At present he works as a freelance translator and compiles an English-Shan dictionary.

Htay Htay Myint was born in 1967 in Yangon. She got her master degree of art, Myanmarsar (Myanmar language/literature) in 1996. She is now serving as an assistant Editor in Department of the Myanmar Language commission, Nay Pyi Daw.

Thakin Hla Kun was born 1922 in Central Burma. He is a former member of the Burmese Communist Party (White Flag). For his biography see Working Paper 1: 50-54.

Tin Hlaing, born 1941, comes from a rural background, being born in Thakutpinle village, Monywa district. He studied physics in Mandalay University and from 1972 on did graduate work in London University where he got his Ph.D. degree. and did his doctorate there. – Tin Hlaing taught in universities in Burma for 30 years and later became a Director-General in the Ministry of Science and Technology. Since retirement, Tin Hlaing writes books and articles on science, technology, culture, history and education. His translation of Abdul Kalam's book 'Ignited Minds' won the National Literary Award for Translation

Kyaw Nyaing (pen name: Htet Myet) was born on November 12, 1940. He failed to sit for the final exam for his B.A. of the Workers College due to political detention. He began writing articles and critiques in Pyithu Kyai (The People's Star) journal in 1972. He later worked as an editor, translated books such as the song of Oyan Hai and Nguyen Van Troi and continued writing critiques. He was detained in 1967 under Section 5; sent to Cocogyunn Island. He was released in 1972 but detained again in 1978. He was detained in 1978 and released in 1980. He was under detention again in 1982 and released after five years in 1986. He was arrested in 1987 and released in 1988. From that time onwards, he concentrated on writing. His other pen names are: Maung Yoe, Mawriya, Moe Ye, Min Ein Zin, Ye Kaung Htet and Go Go. He is a regular contributor of articles to the journals and sometimes translates novels.

I. Introduction (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

Plays on the Fringe

The two books introduced in this volume are the only ones holding the text of plays published by the Nagani Book Club and its 'sister enterprise', Tun Aye's Myanmar Publishing House. Looking for more similarities, one may point out that Nu's "Modern Plays" is the second book published by Nagani whereas Ba Thoung's adaptation of Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People" is the second last book brought out by Tun Aye's venture.¹ Both are thus located on the fringes of the two book clubs' activities.

This marginal role can be illustrated manifoldly. The publication of Nu's plays can be seen as a stopgap resulting from the difficulties to match the book club's great aims. As the first issues of the monthly Nagani News show,² a number of "readjustments" had to be made. It is rather likely, that the translation of Sun Yat Sen's "Nationalism" was the first original production of Nagani. Thein Pe's biography of Saya Lun and Ba Khaing's "Political History of Myanmar" might have been written (and, maybe, even published) before. Nu's plays had been printed before in the Deedok journal of Nagani's "patron" U Ba Choe.³

At the other end of the publication history of the two publishing houses documented in his series, Ba Thoung's translation of the play of Ibsen was regarded as premature by the author in retrospective.⁴ The Burmese audience was not capable of understanding the message of the play at the pre-war stage of Burma's history.

These particularities fit into the greater picture of the genre's history in Burma. In his book "Burmese Drama" published just one year before the beginning of Nagani's activities and based on the author's Ph.D. dissertation, Htin Aung states a decline of this art form beginning in 1866 when Burma's last great poet, U Pon Nya (1807-1866), died after his participation in the Myingun rebellion against king Mindon.⁵ U Pon Nya – as writer and dramatist U Kyin U before him – expressed political themes in his plays.

¹ In Kyaw Hoe's bibliography, „The Enemy of the People“ is given the number 99 from 101 books. But book no. 101, "The M.L.A." was published much earlier (see vol. 2 of this series).

² See vol. 1 of this series, pp. 61-63.

³ Vol 1 of this series, p. 19.

⁴ See Kyaw Nyaing's review of the Book, below p. 189.

⁵ Htin Aung (1937) *Burmese Drama. A Study, with Translations of Burmese Plays*. Calcutta, Oxford University Press: 109-142.

The impact of the abolishment of the Burmese monarchy by the British in 1885 for the Burmese drama is compared to Cromwell's closure of all theatres in England in 1642. The main difference was that in Burma no revival of stage performances had happened until the publication of the book. Plays – both Western¹ and Burmese – were printed and studied at school and university but not any more performed.

[...] the interest in the drama, even though spread beyond the university walls, remains academic rather than practical. And as far as I can see, there are no signs of the coming in the near future of a new national drama.²

The history of plays in Burma – as elsewhere in the world – is connected to political and societal history. As the decline of the Burmese drama was connected to the decline of independent royal Burma, a “new national drama” was tied to the emergence of a new Burmese nation.³

Ba Thoung's Vision and Nu's Dream

a) Ba Thoung

The author's of the two books under review here represent the close association of literature and politics in a similar way theoretically but very differently in practice due to their dissimilar personalities and life careers.

Ba Thoung, born 1901, very early in his life discovered his interest in national politics and his talent for translations. He participated in the strike of 1920, served as a teacher at national schools and took part in the translation competitions of the magazine “World of Books” (*Ganda Lawka*) founded in 1924 by J.S. Furnivall. After winning the first prize for five times, he was banned from further partaking. He moved to Rangoon and for a short time worked as a translation tutor in the Department for Burmese Literature.

In May 1930, after a riot between Burmese and Indian workers, he engaged himself as a political activist. He wrote a first series of nation building articles as comments on the strike⁴ making the

¹ According to Htin Maung, two plays written by Shakespeare – Romeo and Juliet and Othello – were translated into Burmese in 1912. In 1928, Burmese adaptations of plays by Molière and Tchekov appeared in the magazine “World of Books”.

² Htin Aung 1937: 142.

³ Htin Aung (1909-1978) was a strong nationalist himself as his later books on Burmese history (*The Stricken Peacock: An Account of Anglo-Burmese Relations 1752-1948*, Martinus Nijhoff, 1965; *History of Burma*, New York, Columbia University Press 1967, *Burmese history before 1287: A Defence of the Chronicles*, 1970) and his articles in the *Journal of the Burmese Research Society* in which attacked British historiography, show. He was rector of Rangoon University between 1947 and 1958 and became Burmese ambassador to Sri Lanka in 1959.

⁴ For a translation see Hans-Bernd Zöllner (2000) *Birma zwischen* : 580-510

term “We-Burma” (*Do-Bama*) popular that should become the name of the *Do-Bama* Association (*do-bama asiayone*), the most radical nationalist organisation. The organisation was propagated by the *Do-bama* song. Ba Thoung wrote the songtext,¹ his school mate Saya Tin composed the music. The song was first publicly sung at the Shwedagon Pagoda on July 20 and was a tremendous success. It was later transformed into Burma’s and Myanmar’s national anthem. Some weeks later, Ba Thoung published a second series of eight short articles that can be read as the credo of the author and the programme of the new organisation. The first article is about translation:

The Business of Translation

When will Burma, our country, a land of pagodas, become free? The answer is simple: it will get freedom when it gets the brilliance of the sun. When will it get the brilliance of the sun? It will get it when it possesses the eye of wisdom. When will it get the eye of wisdom? The eye of wisdom will come when the Burmans have read and studied plenty of foreign literature; the stuff that has the potential to open eyes. Opponents may ask, “Is it only possible to open eyes by reading foreign literature?” We don’t mean to say it is absolutely necessary. But we say there is the fact which the majority cannot deny: the currently available literature in Burmese is not sufficient to make our nation a modern one, the equal of others. *Lokaniti* is good as a book of advice; *paritta sutta* is good for chanting to brighten our minds and cool our hearts. But neither *Lokaniti*, nor *Paritta sutta* can teach us to make motor cars and airplanes which enable us to move fast on the ground and fly in the air. Nor would it teach us to weave fine clothes, like velvet. Times have changed. We are in a new age. Long, long ago, a walled city surrounded by moat, is safely protected. A country surrounded by seas and mountains and deep forests had nothing to fear about enemy attack. But those days are now far in the past. A city wall, with water ditch around, could guard against the enemy forces with swords, spears and guns, and elephant-mounted troops, and cavalry. But those days are gone long ago. These days such a walled city may not withstand the assault of big guns with range up to 73 miles. It’s true, the seas and oceans can guard against attack from boats with oars and sails; but how can they stop today’s battle ships. High mountains like the Himalayas can discourage foot-soldiers and cavalry with horses and mules; but they will not tell today’s airplanes, “Don’t fly over us.” If they did, it’s entirely useless.

What do we do then? Don’t worry, it’s quite easy: fry fish in fish oil! We’ve only got to tie the monkey with its tail! Cannons which don’t heed city walls and moats, however, would not dare to be impertinent when airplanes fly over. Battle ships, which don’t heed seas or oceans, are likely to

¹ For the text see Working Paper 6 of this series, pp. 85-87.

take care of submarines, and under-water mines. Intruding airplanes don't care mountains and ranges, like the Himalayas, regardless of how high they are; but they do wouldn't be reckless with anti-aircraft guns.

Thus, only by relying on superior weapons can we make our lives lovely. Life is a continuous struggle which can be won only with constant attention and hard work. The rule is: 'survival of the fittest.' As in all battles, there can be only one result: loser, or winner; there's no stalemate, no draw.

Friends, fellow citizens, you Burmans; how are we going to do in this struggle for existence? We will fight for liberty and maintain our independence. We will seek the eye of wisdom. We will do our utmost in this business of translation. Be prepared to do your part. We can depend only upon ourselves; who else is there to help us? We have no one to rely on, but ourselves. Do rely on yourselves; do the good job of translation; printing only slogans and declarations in dailies and monthlies will not do the job. We don't see any benefit in relying on foreign rulers. We must do what we should, by ourselves.

We shouldn't regard translation as a business too big for us. There is no job we ought not to tackle. For a brave soul there is no task too big for him. "A really able man can certainly grab a star in the sky," says our proverb. Is translation as difficult as catching a star in the sky? Even if it is like the star in the sky, let us go on with the task. Let's begin right now. A hard job is a happier task than an easy one. A hard earned meal tastes sweeter.

Therefore, let us bear in mind that every Myanmar should take part in the noble task of educating the Myanmar people in their own language. (Every Myanmar ought to remember the Pali stanza: "*Attahi attanaw nataw; kawhi nataw paraw therā.*") It is a high duty. We must do it, by physical act, rather than by lip service. Friends, how will you take part in this noble endeavour? Will you contribute by means of your effort, physical, or intellectual? Or, by financial contribution?¹

In the last article – The Way to Success² - Ba Thoung comes back to the language issue by explaining the real meaning of *kamma* (deed) using the example of memorizing English vocabulary as a precondition of reading English books.

The quoted article is as programmatic as prophetic and therefore deserves to be fully cited. It anticipates the endeavour of Nagani's founders to open the people's "eyes of wisdom" through literature translated or adapted from English books. And, using an example taken from the

¹ The text is taken from Ba Khaing's „Political History of Burma“. See vol. 5 of this series, pp. 89-90.

² Ibid., pp. 98-99.

military domain, it foresees the way Burma's independence was achieved – in a life-or-death battle which only the fitter combatant could win.

Ba Thoung's life cannot easily be labelled a success story. In 1933, he contested a by-election in Shwebo, the place of origin of the last Burmese dynasty where he had worked as a teacher for some time. He was soundly defeated and imprisoned shortly because of his fiery speeches against the British.¹ The Dobama Association became a success only after he had left. The rest of his life, he continued writing and translating besides dabbling in various businesses as an entrepreneur. After the takeover of the military in 1962, he accepted the invitation to return to the field of linguistic competence lecturing about the art of translating. He died shortly after he was decorated by the Socialist government for his contributions to the wellbeing of his country.

b) Nu

Ba Thoung left the political arena early and – like many other Burmese nationalist of the pre-war era – concentrated on private business and writing later. Nu, born 1909 and eight years younger than Ba Thoung, started as a writer and was drawn into the political world from 1936 onwards until most of the rest of his life. His intention was to become the George Bernhard Shaw of Burma,² a playwright with a societal impact based on a sound political morality. Shaw was one of the early members of the Fabian society advocating gradual social reforms. Nu joined the Burmese Fabian party founded by Nagani's patron U Ba Choe before he became a *thakin* and a member of the Do-bama Asiayone.

As a co-founder of the Nagani Book Club, Nu could have seen the chance to realise his dream of transforming Burmese society through literary means in a twofold way. First, he created a platform to publish his own writings. Second, he could promote the writings of others to contribute to the aim of changing society.

Shaw, born in 1856, had already completed his oeuvre when Nu commenced his career as a writer cum social-political activist. The three plays introduced in this volume are the only ones known which might allow a comparison to the writings of the great model. Later, after having become Burma's Prime Minister, he wrote two more plays, "The People Win Through"

¹ See Nemeto, Kei 1987 *The Dobama-Asiayone and the Shweibon Bye-election (1933)*, The Burma Research Group. *Burma and Japan. Basic Studies on Their Cultural and Social Structure*. Tokyo: Toyo Publishing and Printing Co. Ltd., 1987, 247-256.

² See below under II.5.

(published 1953) and “Wages of Sin” (published 1961). Both were political plays in the narrow sense of the word written to influence public opinion in face of upcoming elections.

Besides these plays, Nu wrote some prose. Nagani published two translations, each in two volumes, on rather different subjects: A history of the Russian revolution¹ and Dale Carnegie’s bestseller on how to become economically successful in an ethically responsible manner.² In 1940, Nagani published his travelogue about the journey of a Burmese delegation to China.³ During his imprisonment under the Defense of Burma Act between 1940 and 1942, he wrote a novel entitled “Man, the Wolf of Man” which was published in English language after the war in the Guardian Magazine.⁴ After gaining independence in 1948 under Nu’s premiership, he ceased to write any literary works. Instead, his many speeches given at different occasions were printed. The playwright Nu changed into a speaker who stressed the importance of Buddhist morality as the foundation of any political action. In a way, he became an actor in one of the plays he had wanted to write.

Nu’s autobiography, published in 1975,⁵ includes some indications that Nu viewed his life alike. He writes about himself in the third person and includes many dialogues between Nu and a variety of people he met over the years. The most telling part of the book with respect to Nu’s self-perception is its end that presents a – fictitious – exchange of letters between “U Nu” and “Maung Nu”:

From: U Nu
Payagyi Road
Wakèma
Myaungyma District

To: Maung Nu
42 Pyidaungsu Lane
Goodlife Road
Rangoon

27. October 1966⁶

My dear nephew Maung Nu:

Your aunt and I are overjoyed to hear you have been released from prison.

¹ See vol.9 of this series.

² Books no. 8 and 20 of Kyaw Hoe’s Nagani bibliography.

³ See vol. 6 of series.

⁴ The novel was published in seven sequels from June to December 1954. For the introduction of the novel see below II.5.

⁵ Nu (1975) *Saturday’s Son. Memoirs of the Former Prime Minister of Burma*. Translated by U Law Yone. New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

⁶ The day of Nu’s release from custody after his arrest on March 2, 1962 (editor’s note).

Nu and Ba Thoung, Plays

I enclose the manuscript of *U Nu – Saturday’s Son*, the book of your life which I have completed writing. It covers the period from the day of your birth to 2 March 1962, when the second coup d’etat took place.

I have tried my best to be factual in all things relating to you. If errors have inadvertently crept in, please forgive me.

As for what has happened during your incarceration and thereafter, I trust I may be able to put it into narrative form at an appropriate time-

Blessings on you and your family. May you find contentment of body and mind.

Sincerely,
U Nu

From: Maung Nu
42 Pyidaungsu Lane
Goodlife Road
Rangoon¹

To: U Nu
Payagyi Road
Wakèma
Myaungyma District²

4 January 1967³

My dear uncle:

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of *U Nu – Saturday’s Son*.

As author you have the right to freedom of expression, and I have no comments to make except in one respect.

It is said in a certain chapter that I am quick to believe others. This judgement and the inferences that would be drawn have come as a surprise.

Those who have had close relationships with me, in particular my wife and children, make the same charge against me.

The truth of course is that I know myself best. That you, or my friends, or my wife and children should have a better insight into my character is an impossibility.

If there is one person in this world who does not take anyone on trust, that person is me.

With best wishes to you, Auntie, and your family.

Sincerely,
Maung Nu

In this exchange, Nu splits his person into two. An older – U – Nu has written the biography of his younger nephew – Maung – Nu during the time of the latter’s imprisonment. The younger Nu confirms the accuracy of the biography except one detail on his character. ‘Real’ and ‘virtual’ reality is thus inextricably intertwined as in Nu’s plays which depicted the realities of Burmese life in a fictive way.

Nu did not write about his life after 1962. How he assessed his failed attempt to topple Ne Win after his release from imprisonment is thus unknown. But his actions in the turmoil of 1988, he

¹ Address of Nu’s Rangoon residence (editor’s note).

² Address of Nu’s home (editor’s note).

³ Burma’s 19th Independence Day (editor’s note).

proclaimed himself the legitimate ruler of Burma and formed a cabinet, indicates that until the end of his life he was convinced that only Nu really knew who Nu was.¹

c) Playing with reality

Ba Thoung and Nu have in common that both were writers cum politicians and that their lives oscillated between the imagination of reality and the attempt to change political realities. They represented a special type of a Burmese public figure which heavily influenced Burmese history on the turn between colonialism and independence. Thakin Kodaw Hmaing, Ba Choe and Thein Pe are other representatives of this kind. All of them were professional writers and never became professional politicians. Nu who named himself an “amateur in office” in his autobiography was no exception. It was the tragic accident of Aung San’s assassination that caused Nu to assume a leading political office. Therefore, an analysis of his first plays might shed some light on Nu’s premiership and the whole period under the parliamentary system labelled the “democratic” one.

Nu’s five plays deal with a variety of current issues of Burmese society in the late 1930s: The role of monks, the need of national unity, democracy as practiced in Burma under the rules introduced by the British and family life. All five plays have in common that they convey a moral message. The observance of Buddhist based morality will cure societal problems and help the country to cure the present ills of its society.

Nu envisaged that his plays could educate the Burmese people in the way Shaw had influenced Western audiences. He might have dreamt of a future Burmese theatre serving as a “moral institution” in the succession of the program announced by the German playwright and contemporary of the French revolution Friedrich Schiller at the end of the 18th century.

Ba Thoung’s vision was as idealistic as Nu’s but with a different emphasis. He stressed what today could be called transfer of technology. Almost all examples illustrating his demand for modernising Burma were drawn from the fields of natural science which in his understanding included the laws of history.² The plot of the play he translated into Burmese fits into this pattern. It is about a medical doctor who through his scientific methods discovers a health risk posed by the pollution of the public baths that were built to attract tourists and thus to raise the income of the local community. In his play, morality meets science.

¹ In the internet, two letters of Nu written December 24, 1989 are published (<http://peoplewinthrough.com/> [15.10.2010]). They can be found at the end of the “Centerpoint” section of the homepage of Nu’s friends.

² See vol 5 of this series, pp. 89-99.

Unplayed Plays and Unrealised Visions of Modernity

Ba Thoung's adaptation of Ibsen's play was never performed on a stage. Neither were Nu's plays. Htway Myint classifies them as "drama stories", dramas to be read in printed form. These plays may thus serve as metaphoric commentaries on the fate of the visions and dreams of their authors. Ba Thoung's vision and Nu's dream did not become real, neither in their personal life stories nor in their country's history.

Of course, an investigation into the plays introduced here will not expose the reasons for this failure. But it may help to identify a part of the problem. As a starting point, the title of Nu's collection might be suitable: "Modern Plays". What does "modern" mean here and what does Ba Thoung mean when he writes that Burma needs foreign literature to become a "modern" nation? In both cases, the word ခေတ် is used. It is derived from a Pali word and denotes "period, era, times" in a general sense. Nu thus intended to write "timely" plays fitting in the present era by criticising the behaviour of monks, politicians and families of his present times. Ba Thoung, on the other hand, was fascinated by the contemporary scientific achievements that helped the protagonist of Ibsen's play to oppose a plan he had helped to promote earlier. The preface to the first edition of the book makes clear that it is in line with Ba Thoung's programmatic proclamation of 1930. He wants the university students who are not able to read the English play, to know about the story. Moreover, the allusion to his adaptation of Upton Sinclair's novel "Oil!" published shortly before¹ shows the critical stance of the translator towards Western "modernity" which leads to the exploitation of both nature and man.

Both Ba Thoung and Nu seem to share the same idea about a "modern" Burma in which the progress achieved in the present era worldwide is implemented in Burma in an unspoilt manner.

A look at the development of Burmese literature shows that another concept of "modernity" had developed earlier using the term ခေတ် in a more specific way. The "Kitsan"-movement (ခေတ်စမ်းစာပေ) meaning a "test of times" by literary means started at Rangoon University in the 1930s. The works were published in the Ganda-Lawka (World of Books) magazine.² Here, Western influence resulted in the writing of short stories on Burmese daily life in a new, rather

¹ *Yenan* (Oil) is book no. 97 in Kyaw Hoe's Nagani bibliography.

² See Anna Allott (1982) *The Short Story in Burma: With Special Reference to Its Social and Political Significance*. Davies, Jeremy and Helen Cordell (eds.) *The Short Story in South East Asia: Aspects of a Genre*. London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 101-136; 239-245 (Sources).

dry style. Notably, these authors like Zaw Gyi, Sein Tin, Maung Htin and Man Tin, did not contribute to the Nagani publications. They might be labelled “unpolitical”¹ while concentrating on a “modern” way of writing rather than of transforming society in a comprehensive manner.

Most likely, there were more than the two concepts of “modernity” represented by the two Nagani authors and the Kitsan writers. The visionary model of an amalgamation of purified indigenous Burmese values and contemporary timely knowledge prevailed. The aim of winning independence through education of the people could not be achieved. It was military training under Japanese supervision that paved the way for the creation of a Burmese nation. The military’s leader of the military, Aung San, had chosen to become a professional in the sphere of politics rather than continuing a military career. After his death, the void created by his death in the political domain could not be filled. On the other hand, the military developed into a technically modern army and later took over political power and thus giving a special meaning to Ba Thoung’s programme of modernising Burma.

The statement of Htin Aung about the correlation of literary culture and political development in Burma and Myanmar holds still true. The resurgence of the Burmese drama and the establishment of modern Myanmar nation still lie in the future.

About this Volume

Without doubt, the highlight of this volume is the translation of Nu’s five “drama stories” assembled in the early Nagani publication. It may help to shed some light on Nu’s early ideas up to the time of his entrance into the political arena. In this regard, the introductions to each play are particularly instructive. They explain the author’s motives of writing the pieces and put them in the current context at the time of the reprint by the Nagani Book Club. The first play, “U Kalein”, for example, is preceded by some remarks on the still topical subject of “Monks and Politics”.

As usual in this series, the translation from Kyaw Hoe’s bibliography gives some bibliographical details about the book. A “critique” published in the Nagani News shortly after the book came out gives an impression on how it was perceived at the time of publication. Htay Myint’s book reviews provides an analysis of the Burmese plays and short summaries of Nu’s works. Finally,

¹ Anna Allott (ibid. 112) writes: „The Hkit-sàn writers, though westernised in their outlook, were not and have not been openly committed to any particular political ideology, unlike certain of their near contemporaries, notably the writer-politician U Thèin Hpei Myín.”

Nu's own version of how he became a playwright and his attitude to both politics and writing can be studied from his foreword of his only novel "Man the wolf of man" written in prison and serialised after the war. His narrative can be compared with the account of his early life put down in his autobiography.¹ Neither here nor there the early plays published by Nagani are mentioned.

The material on Ba Thoung's work provides insight on the genesis of the work and the author's reflections on it on the occasion of the second edition in 1963.

¹ Nu 1975 *Saturday's Son*. Translated by U Law Yone. Edited by U Kyaw Win. New Haven and London, Yale University Press: 31-58.

II Material on Nu, *Modern Plays*

1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information¹

Translation : Gunnar Peters

2) Nu, U: *Modern Plays*. U Kalein, Naung Taw Chut Kham, Husband with a bad Wife, Wife with a bad Husband, Linnaysa- Hsinthayhma, Thukarya – Yamin. Author: Maung Nu. Rangoon, Nagani, 1937. 290 p.

Bibliographic information: First edition, 2000 copies, Month of Tabaung 1299 M.E., Tun Saw Publishing, Rangoon. We learn that the author wrote a lot of plays and also directed them himself. It is not explicitly said whether these plays were intended for the fight for independence. The script is very special, in that it contains detailed descriptions of the stage settings, of where exactly what kind of people should be put and what they should wear, even where to put a drinking water pot. Six plays by Thakin Nu (U Nu), who was famous as a playwright, are only mentioned by title at the beginning of the book, but had to be left out due to lack of space. So the book contains only six plays. The plays are written with social and political objectives, they are a mirror of the time and contain the social criticism of the author. They are about human betrayal and the fight for independence. Decoration and arrangement are described in detail, up to the final scene and the way in which the curtain should fall.

(1) *U Kalein* is about groups of false monks that are a disgrace to the religion. (2) *Naung Taw Chut Khan* is a critique of women losing their honour among the female political students of that time. (3) *A bad Wife's Husband* is about adulterous women. (4) *A Bad Husband's Wife* is about the difficult life of women of that time. (5) *Linnaysa-Hsinthayhma* is a comedy. (6) *Thukaya* is political propaganda written in form of an animal play.

1

ခေတ်ပြောင်းလဲရေးအတွက်

ဦးကလိန်၊ နောင်တော့ရွတ်ခမ်း၊ မယားဆိုးလင်း၊
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မောင်နု-ရေးသည်။

ထွန်းစေတနာပြန်ချီရေးဌာန

ရန်ကင်းမြို့။

(၁)

Title

2. Critique of “Modern Plays” in the Nagani News¹

Translation: Ye Nyunt

Selection for the Month of March

Writer: Ko Nu (Honorary member of the Nagani Book Club)

Critic: Naganet

For outsiders K2/-

For Members of Nagani Book Club 10 *pe*

I am going to write my impression of the play rather than about the content of the book.

During my school days, Ko Nu gave me U Ka Ling Play and I had the chance to read it. It was written to discredit dishonest monks. If the people I hate are discredited, I am happy no matter whether it is true or not. I don't want to enjoy how the play was acted out. I liked the idea that some of my enemies have been disgraced.

Some references were included so that the Modern Plays could be acted out properly. He prayed that the members of Nagani Book Club act the play according to the reference or the guidelines.

At the end of the book Ko Nu admitted that he had some affairs with some girls in the past. Some of my friends blamed him for admitting his faults in this way. They reasoned that it was not yet the time to do so. But I did not blame him. I even praised him for his courage to do so.

In writing a play, I don't know what the attitude of the writer was. But I used to see it in a different perspective. In reading Thukhara Wetmin Play, if one wants to fight imperialism, we should organize those who want to fight imperialism and do so.

[p. 23]

When we read the play called Naungdaw Chuatkhan, we thought that we should kill those people we do not like. When we read U Ka Ling play, we had the impression that those wicked and dishonest people should be discredited and humiliated. I don't know how others think.

Before the publication of the Modern Plays, I was asked to write an advertisement for it. Since I liked the ideas in the Modern Plays, I wrote the advertisement in the following ways.

“How should we fight imperialism?”

“Who is destroying the strength of those who do not like imperialism?”

“How should we annihilate those wicked and treacherous people?”

“You can know the answers by reading Thukhara Wetmin Play, Naungdaw Chuatkhan Play and U Ka Ling Play”

¹ Vol.1, 2: pp. 22-23.

Nu and Ba Thoung, Plays

They never used that advertisement. I don't know why. Whether it was because it has nothing to do with the plays or because I wrote it in the way I like.

I think that it would be worth writing the plays if all those who read them interpret them the way they see them and follow the ways they like.

3. Htay Htay Myint, Book Review on Maung Nu, *Modern Plays*

Translation: Thakin Hla Kun

Introduction

Like the most essential quality in a gem stone is its having fire, the fundamental value in art lies in its giving aesthetic enjoyment. The richest of that value can be had from a poem than from any other genre of art, as it possesses full and wholesome aesthetic value and its life is really long. There are two kinds of poems, i.e. the kind to be listened to and the kind to be enjoyed by seeing it (come to life). The second kind is called a play or drama. The play or drama for just reading only does not give the reader any solid images to his eye, not providing him aesthetic enjoyment in full.

On the contrary, the play or drama for enjoying by eye sight gives the audience all the images. The sensational feeling of the audience becomes mixed with that play, sinking into it completely. Therefore, a play or drama is a poem of high standard.

That high standard is expressed by its vivid portrayal of the plot with scenes of love, beauty, violence, sorrow, joy, etc, the embodiment of aesthetic enjoyment. Ancient traditions include drama in the 64 kinds of art. Moreover, drama also possesses the sum of these arts. The dramatist provides the audience general knowledge of all those arts by means of his dramatic skill. Therefore, the drama constitutes not only science, but also gives all kinds of art to eye and to the sensations.

There is another significance.

That is when it portrays events and people of the early age when the world was first formed it portrays also the present to the mind's eye of the audience. All the issues came to that eye. People like the drama or play more than any other kind of art because it can make one and all, including children, understand the events and issues easily.

For these seasons, scholars of old give good care to the drama, giving it the name *thabin*. (Theatre). According to the diary kept by the palace official named U Po Phyu, the drama or theatre helps the good causes relating to the political, religious and worldly affairs as it presents them to the ear of the monarch in a direct or indirect way, Therefore it was a custom to employ theatre leaders as part of the palace personnel and also theatre rules were enacted. Thus one can size up the stand of Myanmar people in relation to art. They said U Po Phyu was a *Thabin Wun*, minister for theatre.

During the reign of Myanmar kings the court dramas were quite popular. Among such dramas, the Maniket, the Enaung, the Ramayana, the Thinkhapatta, the Thamodagawsa and some others figure prominent.

Nowadays, drama has an extremely weak role in the world of Myanmar literature and art. This weakness exposes the utter lack of progress in the field of art. Although the Myanmar people of these days have the ability to understand and talk well about the foreign plays, they cannot tell even the name of a native play. However good the foreign plays are, one has to love his or her own traditions. One has to seek that to come up to the new age. Only then it will mean raising the dignity of the nation through cultural advancement, People of ancient time wrote the plays. Plays are called theatre, in another way, there are two kinds of theatre: the theatre on stage and the theatre presented on the ground, which is called *Aneit Thabin*, The theatre on stage is presented with marionettes. That theatre is known as *Amyint Thabin*. That means the theatre on the stage built on the ground. *Aneit Thabin* is performed by male and female dancers.

This theatre is also called *Myaywaing* theatre. The development of this theatre is like that of the Greek theatre. Since the Konbaung period plays are performed in the palace.

In the Sanskrit classic, there are shown eleven characteristics and ten kinds of plays. The characteristics are:

1. Eight flavours such as (loveliness, pitifulness, savagery, courage, happiness, terrorism, thrilling and wonderfulness)
2. Demonstration by body movement what were felt in the mind.
3. Demonstration of the will.
4. Animal dialogues apart from human dialogues as well as travel underground and in the air.
5. Ministers' discussions and demonstration donations, pity and love.
6. Founding of the country.
7. Inclusion of various characters such as humans, nats and ogres.
8. Demonstration with seven kinds of voice.
9. Playing of many kinds of musical instruments.
10. Singing of songs and
11. The building of stage.

These are eleven features of plays.

Apart from them there are ten kinds of plays.

1. Ancient historical stories.
2. Dramas created in the mind with characters performing high quality about love.
3. Solo narration for various characters.
4. Male performers showing individual fighting skill.
5. Show of battles between horse and cats ogres.
6. Ogres demonstrating fearful and thrilling ants.
7. Love between human prince and celestial princess and fighting for love and ending with happiness.
8. Supportive small plots addition.
9. Funnyman demonstrating comic ants about love.
10. Imaginative story with characters of hermits, monks, Brahmins, gate-keepers, beggars and servants.

In presenting these plays both male and female artists have to take part and resented on the ground because the audience includes older people and males. In the performance thirteen and ten musicians make music, the performance lasts one hour to four hours in the day or in the night. The garments must not be fully like those of authentic kings, monks, and others. Before the performance starts offering must be paid to nats. This is for prevention of dangers to the presentation. In ancient days there was the theatre minister appointed. Actors and actresses could not be punished by criminal court for their crimes. Only the theatre minister had the power to decide the punishment. Artists were honoured with the royals' left-over food in banana-tree leaf, People became drawn to movies later because both adults and children like them better.

People understand movies more easily. Then modern plays appeared just before the second world war. Especially, these modern plays came on the stage as a first part of the presentation. It is called "Lu-biscope" (human-bioscope). That one was an invention copying a movie. A screen with a picture of garden representing a garden was placed hanging. Likewise a hanging screen with a picture of a drawing room including hollows as windows and verandahs represent an actual drawing room. Technical facilities became scarce during Japanese rule, lack of electric power and frequent moving from world dangers combined to make Myanmar movies fadeout.

There are two kinds of plays, one is the play presented on stage and second one is drama story in book form. This modern story by Mg Nu, the late former Prime Minister (Thakhin Nu) falls in the category of drama story. He wrote the story 'U Klein', 'Naung Daw Chut-Khan' and 'Sukara' are political dramas, Mg Nu also wrote educational about family and social affairs.

Play 1: U Klein

The story 'U Klein' portrays a monk who makes money using his religious status and fortune telling. His name is U Thawbita. He was about fifty years old and he lived at Nyaung Bin Tha village. All villagers showed respect for him. Flower plants abound at the monastery.

He led an easy life. He had a handy man named 'Pho Ba', his life-long friend.

The monk also had a wife, One day a young villager, Aung Tha, caught red-handed 'U Thawbita' drinking liquor from the cup 'Pho Ba' gave him. The young man came to offer food. The monk seized the liquor bottle when the young man caught his act.

Aung Tha exposed the monk's wrong-doing. But village elders and other people including his wife and his great-uncle did not believe Aung Tha's words. These people considered Aung Tha had made an insult to the monk amounting to sacrilege. U Thawbita made Aung Tha suffer hot torture to the young man's nose. Great-uncle intervened to follow the advice of other people. Although Aung Tha stood on the side of truth, the intervention by the great-uncle was a kind of taking time for a later more opportune exposure.

This play came out before Thein Phe's novel. Self-seeking political leaders were harming the country with their making religious alliance to line their pocket. Thein Phe's novel entitled 'Tet Phongyi' came out with the aim of eliminating enemies of religion disguised as monks. It was hoped that the true members of the religious order would support the aim of novel, On the contrary, because of untrue monks' instigation, misunderstood the intention, no support was forthcoming. In the interest of religious purity a section of the youths try to explain about the novel. Nevertheless, the book suffered the wrong mark. For this novel Mg Nu's play 'U Klein' became popular.

This play was written in 1934. At the very period, politicians in the country used the religious influence of the monks for their own ends, giving those monks honours and titles for that reason. The prestige of Burma's politics was adversely affected. Politicians needed no worry for votes. They could heighten their selfishness. The monks followed these politicians' advice because they don't know politics. A vicious circle of deceiving the monks by the politicians and also decreeing the people by the monks developed.

In the history of the country when the politicians split into two parties Sayadaw U Ottama, a very prominent monk, declared the '21-party' as an enemy. He made enemy with the party because it accepted positions in the government. At another time this very reverend U Ottama changed sides and allied with the '21-party' and declared those against it as national

rebels. This situation showed the politicians' misuse of the members of religious order.

The play U Klein made an attempt to educate the people to and to advise them to study politics and to learn. The play also advised the monks not to enter genuine politics effectively.

Play 2: Naung Daw Chut-Khan

Another play *Naung Daw Chut-Khan* by the same author tries to show some peoples' misdeeds using politics in various forms at the time when a Shan ruler defeated the Burmese King during Innwa Dynasty.

It was a very bad time. Some monks broke religious laws taking female disciples as bed-mates. Some politicians also committed adultery, molested young girls and did very ugly acts. The story Naung Daw Chut-Khan focuses on such moral degeneration with a lot of instances to avoid bad politicians and bad monks, The title of the story means 'The Deliverance of the Brother'. In this play Bo Pho Htin, Bo Pho Thin and their group are the followers of Min Gyi Yan Naung, formed to hatch a plot against Shan rulers. Bo Pho Htin was the first leader. He used to hold secret meetings with his followers at his house, Bo Pho Thin was his younger brother and Ma Khin Sein was their sister. Bo Pho Htin was secretly in liaison with a married woman Ma Khin Htar Mya.

Bo Pho Htin's house situated at the edge of Innwa City. As the house belonged to a Buddhist, the temple was quite pretty with fresh flowers. Only a window was kept open and the main door was closed. Pho Htin was looking at the swords hanging on the wall with keen expectation for the Thingyan festival to fall. He was thinking of the arrangement to rise up and assassinate the Shan ruler, Thohanbwa. At that moment Pho Htin's paramour Khin Htar Mya came in, Pho Htin was having fun when his younger brother Pho Thin came out from inside the house and shouted "You a harlot having fun here. This is our home, It is not a penthouse. Get out at this minute." When Khin Htar Mya left he closed the door. Then he told his elder brother about the follower of an Irish political leader, who complained how one can trust an immoral leader to lead the revolution, when he was taking advantage of a married woman. Pho Thin was referring to the Irish leader Parnell. Pho Thin told his brother that he should not do such shameful thing, "While we are striving to get our own country at the cost of our lives. I don't want to become the younger brother of a man so immoral seeking fun with other man's wife. We have a younger sister. She would lose dignity in the society as a sister of an immoral man like you. You will suffer for this sin". At first Pho Htin got angry but at last when his younger brother tried to commit suicide with the sword shouting it is better than to die than witnessing the elder brother's

misdeed.

Pho Htin stopped him and repented. The two brothers embraced one another. At that moment Pho Htin's trusted followers came in. Pho Htin told them that Min Gyi Yan Naung will assassinate Thohanbwa using the famed 'Yein Nwe Ba' sword. While he was discussing this, some Shan soldiers sang 'This is our land. This is our home.' At this all Burmese men were incensed and tried to chase the Shans, But Pho Htin successfully prevented the sudden outburst of anger. A young man by the name of Lu Wa on the street stoned the Shan soldiers and entered Pho Htin's house, Shans came into the house to search for Lu Wa, in vain. But they found Pho Htin's younger sister. Two soldiers drew the young girl's hand and two other Shan soldiers drew the girl's two legs. Only when the Shan commander scolded his men the girl Ma Khin Sein was freed. At that moment Lu Wa came out to give himself up as the girl was molested because of him. Pho Htin and Pho Thin were arrested for hiding the criminal. The two brothers were sent to Min Gyi Yan Naung. On their way Min Gyi Yan Naung met them and they were freed to go back home. At that moment Shan commander fell in love with the girl at first sight and inquired about her relatives, He came to know that the two men he arrested were the girl's elder brothers, Then Shan commander said her two brothers would have no way to be free as they had hid the criminal. Ma Khin Sein fainted and fell down to hear that, The Shan man tried to make Ma Khin Sein recover, holding her in his breast, At that moment the two brothers came in. They misunderstood the affair and fought with the Shan man. Finally Shan commander was defeated. Pho Htin, thinking the sister had fallen in love with enemy, was about to kill her with the sword. Pho Thin shouted "If you punish the girl with the sword, I also will kill you for adultery, only then there will be no one in the family falling in love with an enemy and also the man in the family committing adultery. Pho Htin was nonplused. At that time Khin Htar Mya entered to give money Pho Htin wanted.

Pho Thin drove her off. Pho Htin threw away his sword to embrace his brother calling the young man teacher "Saya Thin". The story came to an end here. Pho Thin deserved to be called by his elder brother 'teacher'. He pointed out the mistake of his way-ward brother to protect the young sister and to protect the prestige of his nation. That act was a true spirit of the Burmese people.

Play 3: Sukara

Now about the play Sukara. This play was written especially for young students. It is a satirical story.

It likens the action of politicians with those of the pigs. The story begins about the time the Legislative Assembly elections were held in November, 1937. In this play only pigs acted, not the humans. Pigs can speak and they have clothes and ornaments on them. For boars, striped shirts, a long tail and shoes were given. For sows pearl necklaces on the neck and golden rings on their noses were given. Naturally, these animals can speak like humans.

In ancient time King Brahmadat was ruling the Varanasi. One carpenter family living in a wood there had a young pig by the name of Sukara. He had to flee from the dangers of becoming meat for the nearby liquor drinkers. He reached a forest where a meeting of pigs was taking place. The pigs attending the meeting were then had an enemy in one tiger. The pigs were facing starvation. They could not move about for food. The tiger was there to attack them. Some pigs were killed by the tiger. This situation led them to a meeting to seek ways for repulsing the tiger's attack. The meeting was held under the leadership of four pigs named Wek Wungala, Wek Barla, Wek Natti, Wek Petalu.

The meeting started. The four leaders went up a hillock and paid respect to the audience bowing their heads. The meeting was unruly as some pigs in the audience made criticism against the leaders. So the meeting could not proceed at that moment.

Sukara went up and told the audience to listen to the leaders' advice, maintaining peace, he told the audience criticism should come after leaders' speeches. But those who were criticising the leaders knew their leaders' bad habits, attacking one another. They replied these leaders were no good. Then Sukara said the meeting could not start if it is not peaceful. He said a chairman was needed to manage the meeting. All pigs agreed to elect Sukara as chairman. Sukara told the audience to listen to the speeches peacefully.

The meeting started. Sukara asked Wek Natti to explain his intention. Wek Natti told the meeting that pigs lived in the Seindotra forest three thousand years ago as independent pigs under own kings. So we would be able to live peacefully again.

Although we are facing troubles and poverty, I will fight this tiger to remove his danger, After his speech Wek Wungala rose to tell the followers that he would carry out his duty for the good of his compatriots because he was not a hollow talker but a practical worker. After he had thus given promise Wek Petalu took his turn. He told the audience that his fellow pigs would not sink in the mud if all unite and act taking the advice of venerable hermits. Then the last speaker, Wek Barla gave his speech attacking Wek Petalu He said to wipe out the danger of the tiger was his duty and call on all to follow the advice of the hermit in their national affairs.

After the four leaders delivered their speeches, Sukara presented his. He said leaders are divided now and the followers also have split into many groups. The situation is more fearful than the enemy tiger because of such sectarianism. Not only that, even the hermits have been siding with this group or that group. They were not like this before. They lived in amity and maintained good mutual relations. In the last analysis, the danger came because of disunity among compatriots. National victory will come about on the basis of unity. He closed his speech urging unity for victory.

Then one pig asked permission to speak. Sukara let him come up. That pig informed the audience that Wek Petalu has been in good contact with the bad tiger. A group of his fellow pigs and he himself felt suspicion about that. So they kept a watch near Petalu's place every night. One night at about two a.m. the bad hermit who was the teacher of the bad tiger was seen going into Petalu's place. Then that hermit was seen coming out in a couple of minutes. The watching group chased the hermit but could not catch him. The hermit fled but the watchmen picked up the hermit's bag. A letter came out. The letter was written by Petalu to King tiger expressing thanks for the tiger's gift of a thousand pieces of silver. Petalu's letter also promised to carry out the duty he has been assigned.

Another pig also came up to the dais to tell that there is a letter from the tiger in Barla's pocket. Bala denied he had no such letter. Upon this, Sukara ordered a search. The letter was found as the accuser said. The accuser also told the meeting that his own sister Sondari and Wek Barla's nephew Ori were in love. Soon Wek Barla will become the owner of bad tiger's Myaing Malar garden. Then Ori will serve as a sort of manager of that garden. When that time comes Ori will marry his sweetheart Sondari. Even now the bad tiger and Wek Barla are communicating on the first day of every month. The nephew had to go and collect the tiger's letter buried under a tree. The accuser's sister Sondari wanted to read the letter. So Ori showed her the contents. Ori handed over the letter to his great uncle Wek Barla on the latter's way to the meeting. The accuser could tell accurately as he saw the letter being handed over. According to the accuser's sister the letter from the bad tiger said he wanted to see the Wek Barla secretly at midnight on the second day of the month to discuss an important issue and the tiger also supported Wek Barla's actions but the tiger said very important to keep the secret.

Upon this, Sukara asked the other two leaders if they would confess their own sins by themselves or if they want other accusers to tell about their secrets. These two leaders confessed their guilt and told the meeting they have been receiving five-hundred silver pieces every year to

create disunity and division among the pigs. The two confessors were freed from punishment but Petalu and Barla were sentenced to death by hanging.

Then Sukara discussed with the group of pigs for wiping out the danger of the tiger, With the group's help, he made a pit near a big molehill. Sukara stood at the edge of the pit and waited for the tiger's arrival. Some strong pigs waited in the pit.

The tiger came and roared fiercely. All the pigs made a return shouting in unison. The tiger did not know what to do. So it sprang up to attack Sukara. This act sent him into the pit. Sukara's fangs opened the tiger's belly and the entrails came down together with its body falling into the pit and so the tiger died. The hermit, ally of the tiger, also lost his life in the fight with the pigs. At last the pig community, thanking Sukara gave him the young daughter of the healthily pig in marriage.

Play 4: The Husband of a Wicked Wife

The play, named "The Husband of a Wicked Wife", gives family lessons. The essence of the play is very beautiful. The institution of marriage existed since the world came into being. There are three reasons for the marriage. The reasons are: 1. for reproduction, 2. for sex and 3. for overcoming life's difficulties, Whatever the reasons for the marriage one has to know the importance of the parental teaching. These days parents do not follow the advice on their duty. In fact parents must stop the evils of their children; point out the good ways; give education; establish capital; and give marriage, Parents used to choose wealthy or high positioned man. These parents do not care to ask the would-be son-in-law if he is a healthy person. To ask that question is very important. The daughter will suffer when married to a unhealthy person, however the person is wealthy or high positioned. Sexual troubles will occur when the daughter is married to a person lacking health and normal standard. These days, men who are not healthy and lacking normal standard are quite many. The population of such men is greater in urban areas than in the villagers. Men in rural areas have to work hard without time for rest. They sleep well and do not eat soft food. They marry in early age. On the contrary, urban males do not marry early. They eat good soft food. These reasons made them more inclined to sex and they seek sex in undesirable ways such as having sexual fun with prostitutes. This situation harms their health and normal growth.

Marriage is something like partnership transaction for trade. If one secures more profit than the other partner who suffers a loss or if that weak partner does not bear the loss the partnership fails. If man takes greater profit making the woman lose all deserving shares, she will

suffer. Even if she does not leave the transaction she would die from diseases after lengthy attempt to get back her normal health. The reason for a woman getting diseases for long is the husband's weakness. So the author of the play advised such husband to stop trying the wife's health to get back. The author said such a husband needs medical treatment first.

He cited a couple living in Pantanaw town to enlighten the leaders about family life. The boatman Ko Pho Sein and his wife Ma Thin had a young son. They lived peacefully in a wooden house together with Ma Thin's mother, Daw Shwe Phi. Ko Pho Sein is much older in age than the wife. He had complete trust in his woman. But he could not satisfy the wife's sexual want. So Ma Thin took liberty with liquor - loving Sein Pho. Boatman Pho Sein met an accident on the boat. He fell down from the top of the mast into the water and died. This happened because the wife was having sexual joy only after a few hours her husband left for work. Burmese people have a belief that a husband must divorce his wife when he has to go on a journey or work on a log raft or hunting in the jungle or going for timbers in the forest. The belief is when such man's wife strayed for sex during his absence, he meets death or has to face a danger. In this case Ma Thin, thinking that her sin of having sex with Sein Pho to fulfill her desire, had made her lose a good husband. She thought she committed the sin but she did not lose love for the husband. So she placed the burden on her paramour and stabbed him to death,

The author presented this story to show the importance of health of the would-be son-in-laws when giving the daughters in marriage. He advised people to learn a social lesson from this story.

The play named "The Wife of a Wicked Husband" gives lessons on family life. Burmese peoples take the issue of family life very seriously. There is a Burmese saying "If one is not careful about marriage, about building a pagoda and about making tattoos one can not repair the error later". Burmese young men choose their wives with their own ideas. Some men marry girls who are poorer than themselves with the idea the chosen ones will be obedient. Some choose girls who are chaste, some others choose the daughters of cultured mothers well-versed in home keeping and management.

Likewise, women choose men who stay away from drinking. Therefore family building means the fate of individuals, so to be considered. For instance, a girl placed complete trust in one boy without trying to know his ways which are extremely undesirable but after marrying him the boy became one who had abandoned his bad ways, He became a very likeable man. That means this particular girl is in good luck. There are many such instances. What is important in

family life is the man stay as a good husband and the woman stay a good wife. Whatever their situation before it is not important for a husband to live without following the wife's ways and fulfilling her events. But when a wife does not live to the liking of the husband, she would be thrown away by the husband. As the saying goes "Thorn falling on dry leaf will make a hole and when a dry leaf falls on a thorn it will get hole again". Only females are to suffer. A woman separated from her husband becomes a serge cloth fire has made holes and her value fell. Therefore a married woman has to become humble forgetting her own self and obeying the will of the husband. That way is the best for a married woman and her will would be fulfilled following his way.

There is a girl named Ma Than Tin in Danubyu town. She is a daughter of a wealthy man and she has a sweetheart since childhood. She had to obey her parents' decision to marry a police station officer named Ko Nyo Maung who is alcoholic and has very bad ways. Ma Than Tin followed the husband's wishes since the time she married that man. She lost a great many property in the married life. She lost all her jewellery and also a rice mill. She had to mortgage her plot of land to a money- lender. Although she obeyed the husband ten times, she had to lose her life for the one time she refused to obey. He never gives in to her will. Ko Nyo Maung was a womanizer and visitor to immoral Win Win's home. He was drunk at that home and played havoc. The master of that home beat him with a club. Nyo Maung resisted with his gun killing the enemy and another bad woman. Yet another woman was wounded, To save Nyo Maung, Ma Than Tin made the bribe with a rice mill and a plot of paddy land to save the husband from death sentence. So Nyo Maung got a temporary suspension. Furthermore he was involved in a card game case. That case was handled by the chief of police. The case happened when police raided the house of a man who was father of his lesser wife. He was present then at that house. To get himself free Nyo Maung wanted to make a bribe of his wife to the chief of police. This time the wife declined. She said she had lost all her wealth, She cannot give herself again. Nyo Maung killed her for that refusal.

Ma Than Tin's parents felt a great sorrow for the error of choosing the bad man to be daughter's husband. That is the story Ko Nu wrote for the people to learn the error of choosing husband for own daughter.

Play 5: An Elephant Must Lose Its Life

Another play named "An elephant must lose its life at the start of a woman's married life" by Ko Nu vividly presents the image of a lazy husband who lives off the labour of his wife. The

play starts with the scene of a small hut on the strand road in Pantanaw town. There are kitchen and water pot at the entrance of the hut. The family takes their meals at this very entrance. The inner side is sleeping place. This small dwelling belongs to U Ba Myaing and Daw Myoe. The wife is older than Ba Myaing.

U Ba Myaing is the poor victim getting constant torture everyday. He is afraid of the wife very much. He does all the chores Daw Myoe made him to do. But what he does was all wrong. Getting the wife's anger and abusive language constantly. Daw Myoe throws slippers and stick at her husband. The quarrel stopped only when the neighbours came running to intervene. One time the husband got his hands burnt as he handled the earthen rice pot. He got alarmed to hear the wife's scolding as he tried to make fire with kerosene oil. That early morning the couple lost the rice when the pot was dropped and got broken. In anger the wife pulled her husband's hair and hit his head. Ba Myaing shouted for help to call the neighbours. Daw Myoe also used ugly language against the neighbours. At this juncture people around came and threw stones at Daw Myoe's hut. Then the neighbours fled. Daw Myoe ran to the headman to make a complaint. In her absence those who stoned and their stones they threw were removed. The headman could not do anything as there is no evidence. Then a group of villagers tried to help Ba Myaing from his predicament. The villagers made him write a letter. They dictated letter to say that Ba Myaing would leave the wife freeing Daw Myoe to marry another man if she so wished. Then the villagers hid Ba Myaing at some place while other villagers went to fetch his wife from the market. After reading the letter Daw Myoe was very angry. At that moment Daw Myoe's friends Phwar May and Daw Shan were present at the house. Daw Shan suddenly feels chilly and shaking as she became possessed by a nat taking care of the banyan tree. The nat told Daw Myoe that he came to admonish Daw Myoe for showing disrespect to her young husband. Upon this mysterious situation Daw Myoe asked forgiveness. The nat said Daw Myoe must have respect for the husband and give him a happy life. Unless she does so she would face death at his hand. The nat warned that he would be scratching Daw Myoe in the guise of a lizard in her house. Then the nat left. Daw Myoe has become afraid of every time a lizard makes its warning sound. The villagers appeared to send back Ba Myaing to Daw Myoe who asked Ba Myaing's forgiveness for all her sins.

Plays can educate the people also in family and social affairs.

4 Full Translation of « Modern Plays »

Translator: Tin Hlaing

MODERN PLAYS

**U Kalein (Mr Crook); Taming Brother; The Husband of a Bad Wife; The Wife
of a Bad Husband; Take a Husband, Kill an Elephant; ‘*Sukra*’, King of Hell**

Thakin Nu

Published by Tun Aye Publishing Co.

First printing

2000 copies

Tabaung, 1299 (Myanmar era)/ March, 1937.

Instructions

U Kalein (Mr Crook)

For the purposes of this play it would be preferable to have the stage setting arranged as follows

As the acts in the play, U Kalein, take place in a room in a monastery, it should be built with bamboo, with a door in the middle of the background. Install an altar on the right edge, and place there a mini-monastery for the Buddha statue. Place the statue there, with two vases with flowers; flowers available in the rural environment are preferable, and the vases should be earthen-ware. As the altar is a bit off to the side, the audience on the left side of the stage will have only a partial view of it. Hang up a small bronze gong in front of the altar.

There will be a small round table near the stage background, with three books on it, and beside them a writing slate. Make a horizontally hinged window on the left edge, with the window open and supported by a slanted stick. Place an easy chair opposite the window, preferably an old one. At the end of the left edge make a door, with single leaf; people from outside shall enter the room only through that door.

Stretch a wire, one end tied to a nail on the frame of the window in the background, the other end tied to a nail on the left door frame. Place a yellow robe belonging to monk U Sobita, and a towel. Place a stick standing at the corner where the left edge meets the background. Also place a chewing betel box on the floor, a bit close to the right side. When U Sobita makes astrological predictions for people he will sit between the betel box and the right side of the stage.

U Sobita is the main actor in this play. The actor should be chosen to represent him with the following qualities.

He should be able to act to appear real; he must work hard to do so. According to the story he is 45 to 50 years old. Thus the selected actor should be that old, or who appears that old. It is important to avoid the usual weaknesses of local theatre troupes, employing a 15 year-old, camouflaged with long *pasoe*, formal jacket, and whiskers, to play an older man. That will not do, because the

audience will be reminded the action is unreal whenever it sees the 15-year-old acting 40-plus. That is precisely the poison that spoils the play. It would be more realistic to have in U Sobita's place somebody who is a bit on the chubby side.

An important fact to remind actors is that they ought to try to understand the character they are going to play. For example when one plays the role of a wealthy man, it is not sufficient that he is dressed like a wealthy man; characteristics like broad-mindedness or wickedness are important. Is he kind to his servants, or is he oppressive? Is he friendly? Is he stingy? If an actor has studied the nature of the man, he would do much better in his acting.

U Sobita is a happy-go-lucky sort of person. He is creative in the face of danger. A hearty person, he used to laugh loudly. He is not serious in any aspect, but he has keen emotional intelligence. He is very clever.

U Poe Ba is exactly the opposite of U Sobita. So an actor who is thin, with receding eyeballs and prominent jaws should be selected. A 45-50 year-old is preferable. Ma Sein Mya, his wife, should match the man - haughty, clever, greedy, coarse in speech and loud-speaking; she is the type of woman for whom money is everything and money-making is the most important. To represent her, plump or slim is not really important, but her countenance is.

Aung Tha is a 30-33 year-old man, and his wife Ngwe Toke is about 4-5 years younger. Both are simple folks; they have a daughter, 9 years old.

U Kyae Thee, U Sa, Aung Bala and Ba Thein are not important people, but the actors should be chosen to fit their roles. U Kyae Thee, Aung Bala and Ba Thein are a bit dumb fellows, easily believing. It should be recognized that U Sa is a clever man, intelligent and reasonable; his countenance should reflect this.

The author had started writing the play U Kalein back in 1934, when he was in the first year law class in University College. It was written for the presentation by the Social Club of Pegu Hall, upon the request made by Ko Kyi, its secretary. However, due to unfavourable conditions, the play has not gone on stage to this day.

When U Kalein was written, it was not quite known to the public. However, recently it has been linked to the novel Tet Phongyi, written by Thein Pe, and picked up publicity as a book which insults the Sasana, the Buddhist Order.

I would now briefly mention (i) Who actually has insulted the Sasana? and (ii) the relationship of *phongyis* (monks) to politics.

1. Who actually has insulted the Sasana?

The insult upon the Sasana and the insult upon those who have insulted the Sasana are two separate things, quite different in meaning. For example, if one writes, or speaks that the country is reduced to poverty because of Buddhism, it amounts to an insult on the Sasana. The person who does so is one who insults.

But when some one pretends to be a monk, putting on the 'Buddha skin', and lives with a woman, that yellow-robed person has knowingly and directly broken the rules of the Order; he has offended the worshippers, and let them down. If such a situation arises, an author who writes a novel or play, exposing or satirizing the dishonorable acts of such imposters, is actually insulting one who has insulted the Sasana; by implication, he is writing to defend the Sasana.

2. Monks and Politics

Burma can be politically upgraded more by *phongyis* (monks) than laymen; and they can also degrade it. Monks are superior to laymen in this respect.

The reason is that the Myanmar people have grown up paying utmost respect to the 'three jewels' or 'three *ratanas*', and consequently the monks have great influence over laymen. Thus in the beginning of political movements, the political status of Burma has significantly improved because of the role of monks. After that, politics with personal sacrifice had given way to politics for personal gain, and selfish politicians who knew the great influence of monks had gone after self-seeking monks. They created and shared the 'eating areas'.

Such monks who colluded with lay-disciples would work to gain votes for them; the lay-disciples in turn would make offerings to the monks in cash and kind. When they gained power they tried to get grand titles for the monks who had helped them get elected. And they also supported the monks financially to an extent.

[The reader of this introduction should pay attention to the words "some monks", because we cannot say all politically inclined monks are corrupt, or that they are only keen on money making. There indeed are senior monks who got into politics with good intentions. People should be aware of this truth.]

I now want to discuss about the declining political situation of the nation because of corrupt political-monks.

1. A politician doesn't have to worry about getting votes when he has got the support of the power of monks. Such men will be unrestrained in their selfishness.
2. Because monks have not studied politics, they have only to follow the lead, or teachings of politicians.
3. When politician U Kalein (Mr. Crook) has deceived monks, the effect of that deception is propagated to a section of the public which has high regard for the monks.
4. When politicians knew that they can gain influence in the country by colluding with monks, they will no longer work hard to bring prosperity to the country; instead they will spend time contriving ways to cheat and deceive. The country then has only to decline gradually.

The degree to which monks had been misused can be seen clearly in the previous election. There's much evidence. When Sir J.A. Maung Gyee considered introducing an act to enforce the Vinaya (Rules of the Order) in parliament, some monks signed a declaration denouncing him as one who causes damage to the Sasana. After some months when Sir J.A. Maung Gyee ran in the election, the same monks who previously denounced him, some of them, again produced signed statements supporting him. One may argue one ought not to 'brand' a man for life. But in the case of Sir J.A. Maung Gyee, we have not seen any significant change in his stance since he planned to introduce in parliament the Vinaya law. It is so remarkable about the ability (of some monks) to say '*khu sa-galay kyaw, khu si htamin*' ('now fried chicken, then oily-sticky-rice').

And, during the split between 'home-' and 'dyarchy-' factions the Great Monk U Ottama had clearly accused the 21-Group as rebels against the nation. We have known that he made the accusation because the 21-members were not pursuing clean politics; instead they were acting hand-in-glove with the (British) government to gain official posts for themselves. But during the previous election U Ottama himself ganged with the 21-Group, and he accused those opposed them as rebels in the country. We have no intention to get involved here as to whether the 21-Group had been right, or U Ottama had been right when they were against each other. What we want to make clear is if U

Ottama had been right in denouncing the 21-Group as pro-government office-seekers and rebels against the nation, then his declaration, inconsistently urging the people to support the 21-Group, means in effect asking the people to support the nation's rebels.

By pointing out this incidence we have made it clear that by making use of the monk's influence politicians can achieve selfish ends to an unlimited degree.

As long as the monks are influential and powerful, the selfish politicians will misuse that power and influence. With that happening the country will suffer.

To make the nation stronger -

1. we appeal first the monks to entirely stay out of politics, but pay complete devotion to the duties of the Sasana. In case this appeal is unacceptable,
2. we make the second appeal for the monks to systematically study political systems for the sake of the people's prosperity and the nation's independence; not simply to consider speaking tours, in support of disciples and denouncing their opponents, as political business; to be prepared to avoid being deceived by self-seeking politicians, but to be equipped for full service for the country.

Frankly speaking, the author feels that the first suggestion is more appropriate.

Actually, the play U Kalein (Mr. Crook) should have been published only after the nationally famous Tet Phongyi novel was out. If U Kalein were to follow the Tet Phongyi wake, the author believes it would have appeared as the best satire for those monks who had vehemently denounced Tet Phongyi.

In U Kalein, U Sobita is an imposter monk in the garb of the 'Buddha skin'. Because laymen and laywomen who did not realize he was an 'ant-hill' had revered him as a 'stupa'. But one day a young man named Aung Tha caught him in the act, drinking alcoholic liquor. As is usual, young men tend to be rash; Aung Tha hurriedly, but truthfully, accused that the monk 'drank', that he had himself witnessed it. He told people what he had seen. But he didn't seem to realize that U Sobita, a dishonest and dishonourable monk, who could maintain himself as an idol and object of worship of the men and women of the whole village, had great ability to deceive and command respect by ruse. He didn't know the monk was extraordinary in cunning. Even if he had realized that, undoubtedly he was too straight forward, and too insistent on telling the truth, to be able to do good for the people.

There is a saying: '*Ahkyo lo-loe nyaung-yay laung, pat htan twe*' (One goes to pour water at the sacred Bodhi tree to gather merit, but only to find himself carrying a big drum on his shoulder.) Likewise, Tha Aung finds himself bearing the 'burden' of his accusation. U Kyar Thee, Aung Bala and Ba Thein were simple folks who one-sidedly trusted U Sobita, the imposter monk. They could not reason for truth. They were simpletons, who could not bear to see that some foul accusation has been made to insult upon the whole Sasana. So, under instructions from U Sobita, they bullied and humiliated Tha Aung; weighing the evidence wasn't their forte. But Aung Tha was unyielding; he'd rather give up his life than stop telling the truth. He continued telling what he had said. Were it not for Bagyi (Big Uncle) U Sa, a balanced man of good reasoning power, there would have been a confrontation between U Sobita, the great deceptor, and the easily deceived simple folks, U Kyar Thee, Aung Bala and Aung Thein, on one side, and Aung Tha, the good-intentioned man of truth, on the other. Their struggle would have been intense, seemingly only to end with the death of Aung Tha, and U Sobita and his company sent to the gallows.

When U Sa spoke, Aung Tha relented, but not necessarily because he was scared of the harm posed by U Sobita, who was wearing the 'Buddha skin', and committing all kinds of acts, dishonourable and incompatible with his monkhood. He realized that being so straight forward was not a very clever act when he became convinced of the wisdom of waiting to find undeniable evidence against U Sobita.

Prior to the publication of the famous novel Tet Phonehyi, its author as well as the publisher had seen and heard about dishonourable monks. They were colluding with self-seeker politicians, their actions degrading the nation more and more. There were monks who did not give a damn about right and wrong, but gave political speeches in support of selfish politicians. They had personally met such monks; and they also had heard similar stories from respectable friends. Such are the monks who did not have the slightest regard for the Buddha. Their evil deeds amount to a heavy burden for their future existences through *Samsara*. With noble intentions, hoping to eliminate to some extent such rebellious monks, I had published the satire Tet Phongyi. Had I known that the book would make the author and the publisher the subjects of ridicule and discredit, I wouldn't have done the job. After the book came out, monks held meetings to denounce the author and publisher. Loud protests came out. Obscene novels and pornographic materials were sent to the author and publisher. Monks made angry remarks at meetings. All these consequences had been unforeseen before the book was published, but their only vision then was that the novel would suppress those dishonourable imposter monks. They even hoped that monks and laymen alike would applaud the

publication. However results came out poles apart with the expectations. The publisher had been snubbed and ridiculed just like Aung Tha. If it were not for the wise counsel from somebody like the reasonable Bagyi Sa, the battle over Tet Phongyi would see no end. Now the struggle has just stopped, but not the end yet. Because of the influence of monks who are the rebels against the Sasana, some honourable senior monks have sided with them. To confront the honourable senior monks would bring great loss for us (the author and publisher). There is a Myanmar proverb: *Phet paw su kya phet pauk; su paw phet kya phet pauk* (The thorn drops on the leaf, the leaf is pierced; the leaf drops on the thorn, the leaf is pierced.) Getting entangled with those honorable senior monks would bring them loss in two ways, socially, and spiritually. In confronting the imposter monks, an individual's efforts cannot be effective; only organized move, supported also by honorable senior monks, can succeed. As this is impossible at the present time, we have temporarily stopped the struggle that had begun with the publication of Tet Phongyi. We will make use of every chance to pull to our side the honorable senior monks, who had been misled to the other side in the last encounter. We have to approach them and give reasonable explanations for our convictions. We have to make it clear for them that the menace of those monks who have put on the 'Buddha skin' is continuously growing. The great struggle will have to be led by the pure senior monks; and those young men who desire to fight against the enemies of the Sasana need to put themselves at the disposal of the senior monks. This is the humble appeal we make. This appeal may yet irritate some senior monks; and upset, they may kick us. If that happens we will only grab and hold on to the leg that kicks. We will hold aloft our aim. On the other hand, true monks, those revered by all Buddhists, will never wage the struggle, nor dare to do so; and they will not tolerate being deceived into the struggle.

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U KALEIN (MR. CROOK)

The Characters

1. U Sobita the abbot of monastery
2. U Phoe Ba laydisciple
3. Ma Sein Mya a bad woman
4. Ko Aung Tha monk's supporter/donor
5. Ma Ngwe Toke female supporter/donor
6. Ma Yin their daughter
7. U Kyar Thee village headman
8. Aung Bala village young man
9. Maung Ba Thein village young man
10. U Phoe Shan villager who lost his bull
11. San Phe his son
12. U Sa Ko Aung Tha's uncle

Time: 8:00 am

Place: Nyaungpintha village

Location: Inside the monastery on the edge of the
village, the residence of monk U Sobita

There is no one in the room when the curtain rises. After about half-a-minute U Sobita comes into the room; he is singing an Ayodhaya-tune song, and dancing. He has no upper robe on; his upper part is bare. The upper robe is on the clothe-line inside the room. U Sobita has just had a shower; his body is still wet.

[In low melodious tone: *Saw thwin myoo hansa bwe shwe nan oo tu tu twela gna pa pyinsin tan mhwar (khayar than son kyu ktaw nyan hon x2) -----*]

[He follows the song with verbal music]

When verbal music ends he reverts to singing, starting from the chorus. He remains dancing around the room. Then he fetches the towel from the clothe-line at the back of the room, and wipes his body. He takes the upper robe and puts it on. Looking a bit tired he heaves a sigh. He goes to fetch a cigar and lighter; lights the cigar and comes to the chair. He sits down, smoking, with fumes of smoke rising.

He gazes at the ceiling as he sings a new song, his hands marking the tune's rhythm.

La mai la mai ma kyi yei lo dage saunte achein Malwe pauk nee ein-----

[U Phoe Ba, the lay disciple enters the room; stops at the entrance, looking with disgust at U Sobita]

U Phoe Ba: [in anger] You haven't given up this bad habit till now. Aye, go on doing it, you'll one day fall into shame - - bloody shame. You will understand then.

U Sobita: [still sitting, winking mockingly at U Phoe Ba] Ha ha - of course I'll give up, Phoe Ba. But slowly, slowly; isn't it the teaching? I am the *Sayadaw* (chief abbot) here; and you are my lay-disciple, and you are in the role to listen to me. Ah, what has come upon you? What change, why?

U Phoe Ba: Don't ever do these childish things again. If our bad habits become known, we'll have to roll down from this monastery; get out not on legs, but on our heads.

U Sobita: Don't worry too much. A happy man dies rarely, so goes the saying, Phoe Ba. [Whistles the tune of *La pa la pa ma kyi ye-lo ---*. Phoe Ba is extremely upset; as U Sobita's whistling comes to *ma lwe pauk hnint ein*, he picks up a book near by and threw it at U Sobita's head. U Sobita lowers his head to evade. As Phoe Ba is about to throw another book --]

U Sobita: [hurriedly standing up] Hey, hey. That'll be too much. You will cause injury.

Phoe Ba: Just tell me if you are giving up your bloody bad habits. Are you going to stop or not?

U Sobita: Alas, why the fuss about this trivial thing? Why so upset? Why violent when you can talk to me? Habit is second nature. Isn't it? When habit agitates, one can't help dancing - must dance, otherwise nerves are stiff, and there's uneasiness, a block inside the chest. Dance, dance only dance can give relief, Phoe Ba.

[Phoe Ba looks out the window, gazing in the distance]

Phoe Ba: [abruptly] Hey, there's someone coming here, while I am telling you to behave. Seems a woman, but can't recognize yet.

U Sobita: [As reflex action, he adjusts his upper robe, to make himself look smart.] Hey, hey. That red bull; he's beside the hedge, behind the big tree in Phoe Thar Khwe's farm.

Phoe Ba: Um

U Sobita: Well, well. You take care of your self; better if you stay in the backroom; go in there.

[U Sobita picks up the book thrown by Phoe Ba and puts it in place; then he goes to the shrine and picks up the bead-string. With the bead-string in hand he prepares to begin prayer. The sound of someone coming is heard and U Sobita begins to chant prayer, *aseinteya, aseinteya* – in an assumed intonation.

Ma San Mya enters when U Sobita arrives at *Arahan ahsa Bhagava ahson*. U Sobita does not turn back for a look, apparently in intense devotion at prayer. Ma Sein Mya looks around. As U Sobita begins *Okasa Okasa* –

Ma Sein Mya: [With a mocking expression] That big brick, destined for Buddhahood, please turn and look here.

U Sobita: [Turns back in alarm. Alarmed even more at the sight of Ma Sein Mya] Sein Mya

Ma Sein Mya: [Impertinently] What? Oh, sorry sorry, reverend sirrr [in a long voice]

U Sobita: [Walks to the window looking here and there.] Well, what's the matter coming here? [Looking perplexed, he raised his joined hands upon his forehead, as if paying homage to the woman] Oh woman, for god's sake, please get out of here quick.

Ma Sein Mya: No, I can't go. I am not going.

U Sobita: What's your business then? Hasn't U Phoe Ba told you everything. Here I am having to think what to do. If you come here and interfere frequently I'd rather die.

Ma Sein Mya: With an air like this? All the time you have cheated me. No, not this time.

U Sobita: [With a pathetic look] No, no.

Ma Sein Mya: [Interrupting] What's that no, no? Men like you – you treat women like marrow-leaves, or watercress, after you have had pleasure. You do not value a woman as much as marrow-leaves. Do you mean to gradually cut of the relation? You are a double-tongued man; say one thing now, another then. Never truthful about your own words. A liar, you always cheat, - the type of man who washes feet whenever he finds a puddle. Going around villages, doing mischief. Haven't you heard that the wheel that turns too fast hits shit. Is 'if I run away, what can you do' is your sort of attitude? That's hare brain. You escaped when I hadn't been aware. Is that what you do? But let's see, you know! [A bit passionately] This is Sein Mya; see, there's only one Sein Mya! Test me if you dare. When one has become a hog, there's no point to be repelled by shit.

[She would say these words, continuously, with finger pointing straight in U Sobita's face.

U Sobita tries to interrupt; Sein Mya continues, nonstop. During Sein Mya's respite ----]

U Sobita: [glancing here and there.] Oh, you're such hot stuff; quite violent.

Ma Sein Mya: Yes, hot, I am. So what?

U Sobita: You are too much –

Ma Sein Mya: 'Cause this is in other people's place. This is Sein Mya, with courage - dare to tuck up the *htamein* (the skirt).

U Sobita: Oh no.

Ma Sein Mya: Mind you! This is the woman who draws the attention of 37 deities, without even touching a flower. This is the only time a scoundrel had cheated her. What a loss she suffers!

U Sobita: What I am saying is –

Ma Sein Mya: Away with what I am saying is. This time you can't deceive this woman. [She raises her jacket sleeve] Will you come down from the monastery now and follow me? Come with me or not? Just answer this. In one word, - yes or no. Sein Mya cannot tolerate any more.

[U Phoe Ba comes out]

U Sobita: [With a look seeking support.] Maung Phoe Ba, please take charge of the affairs. This time we are headed for shame. Great shame to come.

U Phoe Ba: [With a look of amazement] Ma Sein Mya. –

Haven't I told you we are trying to save something significant; and once we have saved, and everything is going smooth, I told you, I'll come and fetch you, and go to up-country. Didn't I make that clear to you?

Ma Sein Mya: Yes you did.

U Phoe Ba: Then why have you come here? You ought to stay there calm.

Ma Sein Mya: 'Cause I want to.

U Phoe Ba: Speak like a nice lady.

Ma Sein Mya: If I'm not speaking like a nice lady, how else?

U Phoe Ba: No

Ma Sein Mya: Mind your own business. There's nothing that concerns you to say anything.

U Phoe Ba: [Showing impatience, raises hand] Theeee

Ma Sein Mya: [Looking with wide eyes at U Phoe Ba and adjusting her skirt, says sarcastically] OK, what do you want to do then? Don't be acting. Come on, you'll know me.

U Phoe Ba: Ohh – this good for nothing woman, you'll die if I am to have my way.

[U Sobita hurriedly comes in between the two; stops U Phoe Ba]

Ma Sein Mya: [Getting closer behind U Sobita] Release him, release him. [Very loudly] Release him. You ready-born son. It hurts me to be snubbed by a foot-wear bearer. [Jumping] Dear, dear. What a world! Bottom-turned-upside.

U Sobita: [Looking very worried] For God's sake, you please stay in the room. I've got you close to me hoping to rely on. Now the 'big novice' is worse than the 'tiger'. Go, go inside.

[U Phoe Ba enters the room as he struggles. Ma Sein Mya, behind U Sobita, shouts, "Come, come on." She follows U Sobita, who's busy calming down both U Phoe Ba and Ma Sein Mya. Near the entrance, Ma Sein Mya stays behind when U Phoe Ba and U Sobita get inside. Ma Sein Mya remained looking very angry. After a moment U Sobita comes out.]

U Sobita: Sein Mya

[Ma Sein Mya looks back with an unhappy expression]

U Sobita: [In a soft voice] You just think of the situation. You're -- you're an intelligent woman, you've got reasoning. [From her unhappy mood Sein Mya looks down on the floor.]

'He who loves his wife shall keep her away so he can earn;' haven't you heard this before? Although not married yet, you and I are almost man and wife. Looking forward for a happy future for us, I have come here to earn money and save, haven't I? In this world, money is everything, Sein Mya. If one has money, it's easy to become an M.P., or a pagoda trustee. And one can become an honorary city judge, a prominent member of official elite, provided there's money. Everything becomes easy with money. That's why I'm trying hard to get money, Sein Mya.

Ma Sein Mya: What a world! You've gone away, it will be five months long when the ninth day of waning-moon arrives. Just think about what you have done.

U Sobita: Aye, aye. You will blame me before you understand. Who can I send to you. Phoe Bagyi, since he came, had been busy – he has been taking the cow from that grazing ground there, that bull, from there to there; fully occupied. Everyday he got tired.

My mind is always with you Sein Mya, even though I haven't come to you. It's not yet time I can do what I want to. If I have my way I'll shuttle between your place and this; that's how I want to spend days.

Sein Mya, if I am allowed to stay where I am happy, I will not move a step away from you. But I can't. I have to persevere; you know that, to live where it's appropriate. It's hard, but I had to live like that. If possible I want to slit my chest to reveal what I think about you. Oh dear, can I slit my chest rather than say more?

Ma Sein Mya: Am I to trust all these? Can you say a vow?

Say, 'may God strike me; may I lose my manly existence!'

U Sobita: [With a serious countenance] Let thunder strike me! Or the scourge of plague! Believe me my dear.

[U Phoe Ba comes out]

U Phoe Ba: Hey, U Shan and his son coming! There they are.

U Sobita: They are coming, are they? Well, well, you two get inside the room. For God's sake go in. Please, please, and don't quarrel.

Ma Sein Mya: Hem, hem. Whatever happens --- I don't mind. I have come here to scold you. Mind you – the future, the future; remember what you said.

U Sobita: OK, OK

[Ma Sein Mya and U Phoe Ba go inside.]

[Saying to himself] See. Think that's why people say women have no nose; spread shit on the bread and give them, they'll eat. [Sighs]

[Loops the bead string round the wrist and sits before the shrine, pretending to be meditating.]

[Then U Phoe Shan and his son enter]

U Phoe Shan: Hey, you bloke – step softly; the abbot is saying prayers, be careful not to disturb with your foot-steps.

[They pay homage to the Buddha image, and then the abbot; they sit on the floor in respectful postures.]

[U Sobita chants steadily, *sabbe satta*, the Pali verse of 'love propagation', followed by Myanmar translation. After a while he gets up and begins to pace in the room.

[Sees U Phoe Shan and son --]

U Sobita: [Looking amazed] Oh – my supporter, the great lay-disciple and son. How long have you been here? I did not notice you as I have been saying prayers.

Em - good, good. It pays to visit monasteries and pagodas. At your age, one should hold a stringed bead and take the shelter of a pagoda.

Oh – the *Samsara*, the cycle of life and birth, is the most horrible thing. Lay-disciple, do strive to escape from this machine-like cycle. Work hard to cut this vicious circle.

By the way, there's the saying, '*Dana hnint thila mapa hlin thayga hma thei*,' (One knows after death when he does not bring the merit of *dana* (charity) and *sila* (morality)). So when one has got this extremely rare human existence, one should make the most from it. Keep up awareness then; work hard, work hard. You get the point!

U Phoe Shan: Yes reverend, I appreciate your words; I'll try my best.

Right now I am suffering the 'hot flame' of worries; I wish you help me to extinguish it, please.

U Sobita: What ‘hot flame’ great lay disciple?

U Phoe Shan: Yes, reverend, my problem is this. I left my bull, tied with a long rope, to graze in Shwe Kyin’s pasture. At the time to take it home, when this son went to fetch it, it’s not there. He looked around, but did not find the bull. Then we made enquiries the whole night, but there’s no trace. That’s why we come to you this morning.

U Sobita: Em – it’s a bit difficult thing for me to say.

U Phoe Shan: Why? What’s the matter?

U Sobita: I have thought that I’d give up those businesses of the laymen’s world – things like astrology. I should fully devote to spiritual matters only. I have discarded the laymen’s world because I hated it. If I go on being busy with temporal affairs, that will be like ‘chopping with the sword-blade at one place, but cutting a cut at another.’

U Phoe Shan: Consider it as an act of salvation. Please look after me, reverend. This is the bull that is my source of bread. Its loss would be like my one hand cut off. Hey – San Phoe, approach the abbot with this money – three kyats to offer in reverence.

U Sobita: [Pretending not to hear U Phoe Shan] Hey – Phoe Ba - Phoe Ba, where are you? [San Phoe offers three kyats to the abbot] Hey, disciple, what’s that? That’s ridiculous, fellows – money is incompatible with monks; you shouldn’t offer money. Monks must not even touch gold, silver, or money.

U Phoe Shan: Hey – San Phoe, leave it near the abbot.

[San Phoe puts the money on the floor beside U Sobita.]

[U Phoe Ba comes out.]

U Sobita: Hey, Phoe Ba.

U Phoe Ba: Yes reverend.

U Sobita: Bring me the slate and chalk from the shelf.

U Phoe Ba: Yes reverend. [He glances at the money. Brings slate and chalk to the abbot. Then goes into the room.]

U Sobita: Well, well; tell me, what was the day you lost the bull?

U Phoe Shan: The evening, yesterday, reverend.

U Sobita: What's the colour of the bull?

U Phoe Shan: Red, with two black spots behind the left ear.

U Sobita: That's not really important. Em –

[He makes numerical calculations on the slate; draws astrological charts and diagrams, while making verbal chants incessantly. Points here and there with the chalk. U Phoe Shan and son keep gazing at the slate.]

Right, great disciple, the bull is made the target because of hatred for the man. [Taps the slate with chalk a few times.]

U Phoe Shan: It's true, reverend, your vision checks with our opinion; we have thought that. It's the work of Tay Naw, the village headman's brother-in-law. Four or five days back, he came to my place to borrow money; but I didn't lend him. That's why he had done it.

U Sobita: Em – but finger-pointing, accusation like that, is not commendable. I'm afraid the saying, 'property lost, owner goes to hell,' will apply to you. But – your bull is safe, still alive. Search for it in the direction due north-east from here. But at this time your bull is across a stream, or beyond a river.

U Phoe Shan: A moment please, reverend. North-east means that way. [Points in the direction.]

U Sobita: That's right.

U Phoe Shan: You said across a stream, or beyond a river. There's no river this way, but one walks three miles, there's a stream. On the other bank there's Phoe Thar Khwe's farm-land. If Phoe Thar Khwe were at the ranch, he might find the bull. Even if he does not bring it, he would have sent someone to give the news. Can't say anything if he hasn't found it.

U Sobita: Em – if you go there, you will definitely find it.

U Phoe Shan: My respects, reverend. Must hurry to follow the bull. I'll come again when things have calmed down.

[Father and son paid respects and leave the place.]

U Sobita: OK great disciple. But don't forget my words. Remember, 'easy death comes from a hard life.'

U Phoe Shan: Yes reverend [as he is leaving]

[They go down from the monastery.]

[U Sobita hurriedly picks up a one kyat note from the pile and tucks it beside his hip, and twists it with the part of robe. U Phoe Ba sees it by chance as he comes out of the room. U Sobita pretends to scratch his waist.]

U Phoe Ba: [With a serious countenance] How much money did they leave behind?

U Sobita: [In a soft voice] There's the money [Shaking his chin in that direction.]

U Phoe Ba: [Picks up the money] Is that all?

U Sobita: What?

U Phoe Ba: [Looking angry, pointing his finger in U Sobita's face] Mind you, don't think of playing nonsense. [Goes to fetch the walking stick in the room corner]

Come on, take out that stuff tucked beside your waist.

U Sobita: Oh my pupil, dear, dear. I'm just teasing, but you do not tolerate.

[Takes out the money and gives it to U Phoe Ba.]

[Ma Sein Mya comes out.]

U Phoe Ba: [Takes the money; takes out 12 kyats from his pocket; gives Ma Sein Mya 15 kyats.] Well Ma Sein Mya you take 15 kyats now and leave this place. In future, if things improve and the situation is well, I'll come and let you know. But don't come here; I'm saying this for your good.

Ma Sein Mya: [Turning toward U Sobita] O.K. But keep your promise; if you don't, you'll know about Sein Mya. Now I go, bye. [Ma Sein Mya gets out.]

U Sobita: Oh, the woman. [Squatting behind Ma Sein Mya, he motions respect sign to her from the back. Just then, Ma Sein Mya re-enters; U Sobita is caught in an awkward position.] What's the problem? Not going yet?

Ma Sein Mya: What urges you so much to want me to leave? Why?

U Sobita: No, no. Just asking you're not going yet? Anything to say?

Ma Sein Mya: Give me 5 kyats more. I want to pay the debt I had taken since last year.

U Sobita: O.K. Phoe Ba, give her. [U Phoe Ba goes into the room to fetch the money.]

Ma Sein Mya: I tell you Mr Crook, remember your words; if you don't keep it, you'll know what happens.

U Sobita: Why? Hard to convince! You –

Ma Sein Mya: What you - ? Should look back what you have done. [At this point U Phoe Ba comes out of the room and gives 5 kyats to Ma Sein Mya.]

Ma Sein Mya: Now, the woman, who you want so much to see leaving, is leaving. Ko Phoe Ba, bye. [U Phoe Ba, pronouncing 'Um-' looks on disgustingly.]

[Ma Sein Mya goes away.]

U Sobita: See, she's done this much.

U Phoe Ba: Stop, say no more. Did I not tell you before? You wanted to provoke the 'criminal pot'.

U Sobita: Oh – what has happened has happened. No use ruminating. Go, go take the 'Sakka's enlightening medicine'. I'll have it before lunch, with little appetiser.

U Phoe Ba: No, no. Don't do that. Disciples bringing lunch are arriving in a moment.

U Sobita: Just a bit, a bit, only a preliminary for the meal.

U Phoe Ba: No, not now. Do it in the evening, as is usual.

[U Sobita comes to U Phoe Ba; kneels down and embraces his legs]

U Sobita: [While embracing U Phoe Ba's legs] Phoe Ba, allow me a little. Unhappy day today, you know. That woman has come to make me confused, muddled. I need to clear up my mind. You have been my friend for years; my stomach is tame, don't you know?

[Gazing up in U Phoe Ba's face, appealingly, as he speaks.]

U Phoe Ba: Just a little amount then. I am afraid people will know we are drunkards.

U Sobita: O.K. Just a bit, enough to make me eloquent. After lunch, female disciples will ask to give a sermon. I need warming up. [U Phoe Ba enters the room to bring whisky bottle and glass.]

U Sobita: [To himself] Need to flatter this fellow; he likes flattery, stubborn he is though..

[After a while U Phoe Ba comes out with whisky bottle and glass.]

U Phoe Ba: I'll pour.

[U Phoe Ba pours out half a cupful of whisky. As he is pouring, Aung Tha comes with lunch boxes. He sees U Phoe Ba pouring liquor; twitched his nose after sensing smell; he steps back and hides behind the door, and watched the two in action. U Phoe Ba, paying attention to the whisky, does not notice Tha Aung's presence; neither does U Sobita, who takes the glass from U Phoe Ba and gulps the whisky.]

U Sobita: [Immediately after drink] Ha, *Sura pa naw, sekkaw baweitsati*, says the Pali. 'He who drinks alcoholic liquor shall become the Sakka, the Supreme Lord of the Deva world.' Now, let me chew *pun*, betel with nut and lime; get me one mouthful please.

[U Phoe Ba drops the bottle, to prepare *pun*; U Sobita picks up the bottle. Not trusting U Sobita, U Phoe Ba turns back to look, and sees him picking up the bottle.]

U Phoe Ba: Hey – I said enough.

U Sobita: Just a little [Intending to bottom-up the bottle]

U Phoe Ba: No, no. [He hurries toward U Sobita. U Sobita hasn't begun drinking; he abruptly stands up, grabbing the bottle. He walks backward to the door where Aung Tha is hiding, while gulping the liquor. He approaches Aung Tha very closely. Aung Tha, with lunch packs in one hand, embraces him. U Sobita, with bottle in hand, is surprised. He turns and looks at the person who embraces him from the back. Aung Tha quickly grabbed the bottle in U Sobita's hand.]

Aung Tha: [Smells the bottle.] *Twe*; horrible. [Throws bottle away] Believing he's a true monk, I have revered him. He's a dog actually; I know now.

[Aung Tha throws away the lunch packets through the window; he goes away in anger. U Phoe Ba remains staring at U Sobita; then the two, facing each other, become dumbfounded.]

U Phoe Ba: How now, monk? I told you not to do it; you don't listen [pointing his finger at U Sobita in the face.] I will kill this son-of-bitch and get out, away from this monastery. [He hurriedly takes the walking stick in the room corner. U Sobita wrestles to take away the stick.]

U Sobita: [Pulling U Phoe Ba] Wait, wait; calm down please. You always break into anger at the slightest problem. I will tackle this crisis. I wouldn't have become the 'stage director' unless I know 'my own play'. [With a sign of hurry] Now Phoe Ba, you take the short-cut and go to Aung Tha's home; go running to get there ahead of him. Tell his wife, Ngwe Toke, "Aung Tha has gone insane; he threw away the monk's lunch bowl; he wreaked havoc in the monastery, and assaulted the abbot." You come back after telling his wife. Is that clear?"

[Phoe Ba goes out. U Sobita disposed off the bottle. Then he wipes the floor to clean the spilled whisky. Worried that his mouth would smell, he chews *pun* incessantly. He goes to the window to look out; he's restless; hears sound of people. He sits down in a composed manner, with the bead-string in hand, counting. After a while Phoe Ba comes in hurriedly, followed behind by Ngwe Toke and daughter.]

U Sobita: Hey – madam disciple, has Phoe Tha Aung returned home?

Ngwe Toke: No, not yet, reverend. What happened to Ko Tha Aung? He was alright when he left home. It never happened like that. He's pious; reveres the three *ratanas* (sacred jewels). I just can't understand. He wasn't home till we came out.

U Sobita: May be it happens because he does not make regular offers to the ancestral guardian gods. Isn't that possible?

Ngwe Toke: I don't think so. And I have no faith in such matters, and our parents have not worshipped ancestral gods. [To U Phoe Ba] Great lay-disciple, please go to the other village, and bring our uncle U Sa. Tell him what happened here. Quickly, please.

U Sobita: You go; help her please.

[U Phoe Ba goes out.]

U Sobita: Look at the big mess. He has thrown out the lunch bowl out the window; there it is; see!

[Ngwe Toke and daughter go to the window to have a look.]

U Sobita: I didn't know it's going to happen this way. He came in when I was meditating. Just stopped meditating a moment, to greet and briefly chat with him. As we chatted his expression abruptly changed. So I called Phoe Ba and told him, "I am not happy with Tha Aung's changed expression – the errant demeanour." And as I said that, he began to be violent. I was surprised. So I sent Phoe Ba to tell you.

Ngwe Toke: Yes, reverend, I see. He may be home by now. [She sat down and gave respect, a customary act of respect before leaving. As she is about to go out, Ko Tha Aung comes in.]

Ngwe Toke: Why are you here. Come. I have revered him as a *phaya* (god), because I thought him so; but he's really a *phut* 'monitor lizard'. Come, let's be away from this place.

Ngwe Toke: No, Ko Aung Tha, how can you go; we shouldn't?

U Sobita: Oh – lay-disciple, calm, calm. Control yourself.

Ko Aung Tha: What? Control myself! why? Do you think you can go on deceiving the world for ever? No, not this time, not with me.

U Sobita: Oh my god.

Ngwe Toke: [Turning to Aung Tha] Reverend, please pardon Ko Aung Tha. Something's wrong with him.

U Sobita: I think it may be the disturbance caused by the village witch.

Aung Tha: What? The village witch? Oh, you bastard, will you stop your bloody deeds. Stop or not?

[Aung Tha steps forward. Ngwe Toke restrains him, embracing.]

Ngwe Toke: Ma Yin, go, hurry to the village. Immediately bring Aung Bala, Ba Thein and U Kyar Thee. Tell them to come urgently, --- to the monastery.

[Ma Yin goes out.]

Ko Aung Tha: Give way, step aside.

Ngwe Toke: Ko Aung Tha!

Ko Aung Tha: I said step aside. Come on, keep away. And you, will you reveal your bloody mischiefs. Tell me, otherwise I will – Oh! – move aside, I say.

[He pushes Ngwe Toke, who falls down on the floor. He tucks up his *longyi*, sarong, preparing for aggression. U Sobita gets up to run away. Ko Aung Tha grabs him. The two wrestled; U Sobita is flattened down, Tha Aung pressing over him.]

U Sobita: Help, help! Madam disciple, please help me.

Ko Aung Tha: Is that all your mischievous habits?

[Hitting U Sobita's back with his elbow.]

U Sobita: Alas it hurts; I'll die. Help me; save me. Come.-

Ngwe Toke: [Hurriedly comes to the wrestlers; pulls out Ko Aung Tha, but in vain.]

Ko Aung Tha, Ko Aung Tha, beware, watch –

[She runs to the window] Please come and help; help, help. Otherwise, the monk will die.

[Comes back and pulls Ko Aung Tha up; no success. Ko Aung Tha keeps hitting the monk's back with his elbow, asking him to reveal his mischiefs. Ngwe Toke pulls him; then runs to the window seeking help; shuttles back and forth. After some time, the group of Ba Thein, Aung Bala and U Kyar Thee come running into the monastery.]

Ngwe Toke: For God's sake please; Aung Bala and friends, help. The monk is about to die.

Aung Tha: [Still hitting the monks back with elbow, and asking to admit mischief]

Come on, admit, you; say what you did; say it. I'll hit harder. Now you know me.

Aung Bala: Oh, what a commotion? What's happening?

[Aung Bala and party rushed in to separate the two. Aung Bala and Ba Thein restrain Aung Tha; U Sobita is still on the floor, face down, and suffering intense pain. He cannot rise up immediately.]

U Kyar Thee: What's happening here, reverend? [helping U Sobita to rise.]

U Sobita: *Ah -la-la.* Oh my god! Great fortune saves me, great disciple. A moment late, I would be dead.

Aung Tha: [Still struggling] Let me off. Let me off. Come here, U Kyar Thee. Oh, this bloke, leave him to me. I'll teach him lesson. Let it be my duty. You keep away.

U Kyar Thee: Maung Aung Tha, you used to be a different guy; not like this before.

U Sobita: The village witch has inflicted him; by means of a dope, great disciple.

Aung Tha: Hey, you plain liar. You want to convert real man into carrot; is that your intention? No, you can't. Are you afraid your secret misdeeds revealed? Where's the whisky bottle you were enjoying a while ago.

[U Kyar Thee, in amazement, looks up at Aung Tha]

U Kyar Thee, you smell this bloke's mouth. He's gulped whisky just before you came.

U Kyar Thee: Forgive him please, reverend. It's the work of the village witch, definitely. How shall we tackle it. I can't imagine a way. Hey, Ngwe Toke, send some body to bring U Sa here.

Ngwe Toke: Disciple Phoe Ba is going there already.

U Sobita: I've got potent alchemic snuff. It can overcome all forms of witchcraft.

Ngwe Toke: The power of your sympathy please.

Aung Tha: Hey – Ngwe Toke, I’m alright; there’s nothing wrong. You’ve also gone crazy. [The monk goes into the room to take snuff.]

Ngwe Toke: Ko Aung Tha, be careful; be aware. If you insult the monk, you will go to the deepest hell.

Aung Tha: Oh God! Ngwe Toke. You are not worshipping a god, it’s an ant-hill. He’s an imposter, really an evil.

U Kyar Thee: [To Ngwe Toke] *Om* – let the gods protect my words. Have you had a row with Lady Daw Zin of your village?

Aung Tha: We have nothing to do with Daw Zin. U Kyar Thee, I am perfectly normal. When I arrive at the monastery this morning, this fellow was drinking whisky; his disciple was pouring out. When this bloke grabbed the bottle and ran away I snatched it from his hand; then I smelled it. It’s strong smell of whisky. That’s why I threw away the lunch bowl through the window and came back home.

Aung Bala: We’re going to lose this man. [To U Sobita, in the room] Reverend, please hurry. [The monk comes out with the snuff bottle.]

U Sobita: Now let’s treat him. Disciple Aung Bala and Ba Thein, you keep Phoe Aung Tha lying on the floor. Press him. Disciple U Kyar Thee, you blow snuff into Aung Tha’s nose.

Aung Tha: Hey – don’t do it. I tell you don’t do it; You will become stuff for my chopping knife, when I am free. [Aung Tha struggles. Aung Bala and Ba Thein overpower him down on the floor.]

U Sobita: Lady disciple, you hold the two legs.

[Ngwe Toke keeps pressing hard Aung Tha’s legs. Ma Yin weeps, shouting aloud, ‘Father’.

U Kyar Thee: Hey –girl, why are you crying? Your father will become healthy in a moment.

[U Kyar Thee takes the paper cone containing the snuff from the monk; he sits beside Aung Tha’s head to blow snuff into his nose. Aung Tha is struggling.]

U Kyar Thee: Now, Maung Aung Tha, what did you see when you came to the monastery this morning?

Aung Tha: I saw that bloke, named U Sobita, drinking strong liquor. May God punish me if I tell lie. Or May I die on the way home for treacherous words. Release me please, I am perfectly normal.

U Kyar Thee: Reverend, you secure the head.

[The monk holds Aung Tha's head tightly.]

Aung Tha: Hey – you bugger, don't hold my head with your cursed hands. Don't touch it, don't touch it.

[U Kyar Thee blows snuff into Aung Tha's nostrils.]

Aung Tha: Oh God! Unbearable [sneezes - *hut cho*] I am dying, *hut cho, hut cho*; flames burning in my eyes. *Hut cho*.

[Ma Yin cries aloud.]

U Sobita: Now, help him to stand up, don't release him yet.

Aung Tha: You do your worse. [sneezes]– *hut cho*; Ngwe Toke, *hut cho*. Ah-la la, U Kyar Thee, I am well, perfectly, *hut cho*; this beast - *hut cho, hut cho*. Oh, no; God save me, *hut cho*.

U Sobita: Ask him again, senior disciple.

U Kyar Thee: Hey – Aung Tha, do you still see the monk drinking from the bottle this morning?

Aung Tha: I saw it, I see it – *hut cho*, May God *hut cho*, may God strike me if I, *hut cho* I swear, may I disappear while sitting. I *hut cho*, I don't lie; I say I saw it because I saw it – *hut cho*. Alas, I am breathless, going to die – *hut cho*.

U Sobita: He is softened a bit. Let's inject another dose.

Aung Tha: Don't blow snuff into my nostril; just kill me – *hut cho*-

[Aung Tha raises his head, then collapses. U Sa and U Phoe Ba come in]

U Sa: What are you doing now?

U Kyar Thee: Blowing in monk's snuff; he's softened a bit. Look at your nephew here.

U Sa: Now, let him free a while.

[Aung Bala and Ba Thein let Aung Tha free. Aung Tha embraces U Sa; U Sa embraces in return.]

U Sa: [Staring intensely in Aung Tha's face] Tell me what's happening.

Aung Tha: Uncle Sa, *hut cho* - this morning I came here to deliver monk's lunch, *hut cho* - that so called monk *hut cho*

U Kyar Thee: The attack hasn't subsided.

Aung Tha: [continuing] he's holding the whisky bottle, gulping. His disciple tried to grab the bottle, then near the door – *hut cho* – I was hiding, - *hut cho* they came near me. I snatched the bottle. Surprised, he gazed at me. I – *hut cho*, abruptly threw the lunch bowl out the window, and came back home – *hut cho*. For that action he accuses me of being attacked by the village witch – but that's his deceptive invention. Everybody's now taking part in torturing me. Uncle, you keep away, I'll kill this creature.

U Sa: [Still embracing him] Wait, wait. Quiet.

U Kyar Thee: The attack is recurring. Another round of snuff, Ko Sa.

Aung Tha: What snuff? Do you also want to die?

U Kyar Thee: See, see.

Aung Bala: Let the reverend go ahead.

Aung Tha: You keep silent, if you don't know.

Ba Thein: *Phwa-ha*; seems to be the work of the great Daw Zin.

U Sa: No, it's punishment by the *nat* (deity), the attack comes through the *nat*. I will cure my nephew. You all go to the back of the building. Don't come until I call you. Reverend, you also please leave. I will handle my nephew.

[U Kyar Thee, U Sobita and others leave the place. U Sa looks at them through the door, then comes to Aung Tha, after closing the door. During this time Aung Tha sneezes occasionally.]

U Sa: [Brings Aung Tha away from the door, to the front of the stage] Now tell your uncle everything.

Aung Tha: Every thing I said is true. There's nothing wrong with me. May death strike me instantly if I tell lies.

U Sa: I trust you, my nephew; but you have been wrong from the beginning. Everyone reveres this monk, and you are alone saying the monk drinks liquor. That makes you a lunatic. 'When people drink bitter rainwater, you've got to drink it too.' I also had suspicions since I saw his appearance first. I suspected much. But, these are his rising days, so I have to keep quiet. Now, when others are mad, you follow them, - be mad. [Whispers into Aung Tha's ear.] Alright, this is the situation. Our

turn will come one day. Stale stuff is always exposed. Wait until then. If my nephew and I find a way, the solution will come. He can't resist.

[U Sa goes to the door and ask the people to come in. They enter.]

U Sa: Now, will you ask him, U Kyar Thee?

U Kyar Thee: How are you now? Do you still see the monk drinking?

Aung Tha: Reverend, please forgive me. I don't know why I behaved erratically this morning.

Ba Thein: [Shaking the tip of his hand] Such wonder! Bagyi Sa is the 'Sakka' (Lord Supreme of Deities).

[All present look at Aung Tha, approvingly.]

Ngwe Toke: [With joy] Ko Aung Tha!

U Kyar Thee: Now, now, to get pardon for your sins, pay homage to the reverend.

[U Sobita sits in front, with the bead-string in hand, counting. All people sit down and prepare to pay homage. Then they start homage.]

U Sobita: May this act, the *kamma*, of submission to the three *ratanas*, the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, bring you merit; may the eleven fires be extinguished; and may you all be headed for *Nibbana*, the Golden Kingdom, where suffering ends.

[Curtain falls while they bow down in respect.]

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Taming Brother

Instruction

This story takes place in the sitting room of Bo (army officer) Pho Htin. For background, hang three swords on the wall. On the left is a door; there is another door on the left wall, for entry from the outside, which is latched with a wooden lever. In the middle of the room is a circular table about 18 inches high. The right wall has a window, which is horizontally hinged, and lifted up and supported by a wooden bar to keep open. Between the window and stage centre there is a Buddha shrine. The shrine and flower vases are visible only for part of the audience on the left of the stage.

It is best if the actors in this play have *yaung don* (men's long knotted hair.)

The Motivation for Writing This Play

The Burmese usage *Pasup ka paya paya, let ka koe yoe kar yar*, meaning 'He who is a Buddha worshipper by mouth, but actually mischief maker,' is quite common. This is the type of person who speaks respectable words, but behaves quite the opposite. One can interpret that such men are dishonest. This is an effective description of imposter gentlemen of religious pursuit.

We have a few words to say about such men, referred to as *kyaung thudaw*, literally 'harmless, virtuous cat'. Once upon a time there was such a cat which wanted to eat chickens in the vicinity. It pretended to be a virtuous one, and deceived the chicken, but never the less, finally ate them. This is the background story for calling 'gentleman-pretender' as *kyaung thudaw*. (For simplicity we will call them 'noble cat'.

'Noble cats' are numerous in Burma. One type wears the 'Buddha skin', but does everything the Buddha dislikes. There are also those who disgrace the Buddhist Order, the Sasana, by breaking its rules, but wear the garb of the Order. And, the 'political noble cat' promises to work for the prosperity of the people, but in practice only enriches himself. The 'patriotic noble cat' says he loves his people, but is ignoble, for he in fact belongs to the type who destroys the chastity of, domestic maids. Plenty indeed are the 'noble cats' in variety.

This play does not concern all types of 'noble cat', but does deal with the 'patriotic-political type', who claims to love the people, then treats domestic maids without kindness, and even harass and violate their modesty.

The Irish patriot named Parnell, acknowledged as the uncrowned king of Ireland, was indisputably the great leader of its independence movement. But the leader lost his righteousness; he had an

adulterous affair with a married woman. Despised so much, he ‘swims in the spit pool of the people’. Before his death, this leader claimed that the nation should understand and allow him to gratify his desire. As wise men forget, Parnell made that unwise statement. A monk revered for his *sila* (morality), and *samadi* imperturbable fairness of mind and attitude, may be taken as an example. People submit and pay homage to him because he is considered much nobler than the ordinary folk; he does not eat in the afternoon, he does not marry; unlike us, the monk has less greed (*loba*), anger (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*), where as we are greedy, angry and ignorant to a degree. The people recognize the moral superiority of the monk by revering and paying homage to him. However, in the case that the monk’s *samadi* is shaky, and he gets into an affair with a female disciple, he breaks the most serious *Vinaya* Rule, *parajika*, of the Order. One who wears the Buddha garb, and has broken this rule, will not care to heed about abstaining afternoon meals, or to check his anger, or to moderate his greed and ignorance. How can people revere such an imposter monk who behaves just like the common folk? And he has no right to say, “You ought to recognize my previous good conduct; people should understand.” Such complaint on the part of the monk is very unwise.

If one of Parnell’s followers would question him, ‘Are we to trust an adulterous person, one we cannot be sure he will not steal someone’s wife, with the affairs of our state?’ A perfectly legitimate question.

Today we hear chilling stories about political leaders, who shout with waving hands that they love the country. A number of house maids and poor sales-girls have been ‘destroyed’ by them; and poor girls have become mother-of-unnamed-fathers, because of them. Don’t these girls belong to the group of people they say they love so much? We would like to point finger in the face of such a political leader who steals another man’s wife and ask him the same question that Parnell was asked by a follower: “Can we entrust the affairs of the state to one whom we cannot entrust a fellow man’s wife?”

When the people have chosen a leader, they have done so not only because he will lead them in the independence struggle. It is because they trust his other qualities, *sila*, *samadi*. How much of such qualities have the leader who ‘destroys girls’?

One of the most important attributes of leadership is the ability to control oneself when he has opportunity for sex. How weak is the will power of the leader who cannot resist sexual urge.

One who breaks the 'Precept' to abstain from alcoholic drinks, one of the basic five, will easily break other 'Precepts'. Likewise, one who easily goes after other women will not hesitate to break the leadership rules. Like a building upon a poor foundation, which crumbles after a short time span, when a leader breaks the foundation rules of character, he is liable to fall soon. All leaders should seriously pay attention to this fact.

The Characters

1. Bo* Pho Htin Mingyi Yan Naung's assistant, a major
2. Bo Pho Thin Bo Pho Htin's brother
3. Ma Khin Sein their sister
4. Khin Hta Mya a married woman, having an affair with Bo
 Pho Htin
5. Bagyi Sa
6. Pho Toke
7. U Tha Byaw Bo Pho Htin's trusted men
8. Lu Wa a bachelor
9. An Officer of Shan Army
10. Shan soldiers 12 men

The Place: Innwa (Ava) 15-18th century capital of Burma

The Location: a home in the suburb of the capital

The period: time of war between King Shwenankyawtshin
 and Shan Thohanbwa; Mingaung had been
 defeated and Thohanbwa, a Shan national, was
 powerful in Innwa.

Mingyi Yan Naung and a group of Myanmar were conspiring to remove Shan Thohanbwa from the throne. Their plan was to anoint Thohanbwa in a *Mangla Thingyan* (auspicious new year ceremony) and a *Zeya beikheik taw* (Royal Coronation); in the ceremony marquee, Mingyi Yan Naung would draw out his 'Yein New Par' sword and assassinate Thohanbwa. At the time of this story Thohanbwa was not killed yet. On orders from Mingyi Yan Naung, groups of Myanmar were making plans.

The curtain rises

[Bo Pho Htin enters the room through a back door; he goes straight to the swords on the wall, and takes them off and puts on the table. He draws out all three and tests the sharpness of the blades. He securely holds the one he thinks sharpest. Sternly gazing ahead, he makes a drawn-out sigh.

Pho Htin: [speaking to himself] *Thingyan* is far away; I wish it comes soonest. My hands are itching to slash with this sword.

[Somebody knocks on the door]

Pho Htin: [With a rather stern voice] Who's that? [After hearing somebody outside, his stern voice softens] Oh, is that Khin? Aha. [Merrily, he hurriedly opens the door; a fine looking lady of about 35 years enters the room.]

Khin Hta Mya: [As soon as she enters the room, Khin shows dislike with her twisted lips and her eyes looking upward.] Such a stern voice asking who's there! It scares me.

Pho Htin: [Closing the door with one hand] It's because it's Khin. [Khin Hta Mya's expression appears a bit older. Pho Htin instantly corrects his words.] No, no. I mean to say, because I did not know its Khin; I was too much in a hurry to say some thing, so I erred. [Khin Hta Mya looks smilingly at Pho Htin. Pho Htin with sword in hand comes to Khin.]

Khin Hta Mya: [With frightened look] Oh, I am scared of your swirling sword. Drop it for the moment.

Pho Htin: Oh, a lady who's to become the wife of a major shouldn't be afraid of the sword, Khin.

Khin Hta Mya: Ko Pho Htin, you are saying such words; aren't you afraid of the sins associated with adultery.

Pho Htin: If it's for Khin, I don't mind going to *Avizi*, (the deepest hell). But are you trying to deceive this man like a small kitten? Tell me please.

[Khin Hta Mya, slightly turning her head, walks to the wall where the swords have been suspended; she lightly scratches the wall.]

Pho Htin: [Still standing still, and staring at Khin Hta Mya] Khin, -

Khin Hta Mya: [Without turning to look at Pho Htin] What, Ko Pho Htin?

Pho Htin: I have thought there are things to expect. When will it come? Tomorrow, day after tomorrow? That I will be encouraged one day. I have put the greatest trust in you.

Khin Hta Mya: Oh, Ko Pho Htin, what are you saying? Who told you what?

Pho Htin: Oh, talking with Khin is like grabbing the air; nothing is ever specific. Now tell me, do you love this man or not?

Khin Hta Mya: [looks back with a slightly bemused smile] I told you I love you as my brother. [Turns back again.]

Pho Htin: But how about the days past? Seems there's a deliberate intention to befool this man. O.K. then. Good to know early. Now look at this man's face so you never forget. *Piye hei vippayogo dhukkho*, says the Pali, 'it's a suffering not to live with a person one loves.' So Nga Pho Htin – [pointing the sword tip at his chest] such a loveless life –

Khin Hta Mya: Oh, oh, Ko Pho Htin, Ko Pho Htin [hurriedly pulls the sword; Pho Htin not looking at her,]

Pho Htin: [Looking serious] Keep away Khin. Life separated from the loved one isn't worth living – worthless life.

Khin Hta Mya: Holding his hand, with slightly narrowed eyes] If you wouldn't be separated? Would it be any different?

Pho Htin: [Turning toward Khin] This man can't understand what Khin's saying.

Khin Hta Mya: Hasn't Ko Pho Htin said he doesn't want to live a life separated from the loved one? Didn't he say he'll kill himself?

Pho Htin: Em – yes.

Khin Hta Mya: Ko Pho Htin, Khin has asked a counter question; what difference will it make, if Ko Pho Htin doesn't have to be separated from the loved one, but would live together? Ask again, your highness, if you need clearer answer. This royal sister is ready to answer [in a stretched tone].

Pho Htin: No, no, Khin, please give way. This man doesn't want to be a fool again. [Gathers strength to pierce the sword in the chest.]

Khin Hta Mya: [Releasing Pho Htin's hand with a jerky push] *Kai*, (well then,) if so many words don't have effect, do what you like. Before Ko Pho Htin kills himself, Khin will kill herself. [She goes to the swords on the wall, draws out one, and points it at her chest.]

Pho Htin: [Instantly pushes down his sword on the floor, and swiftly embraces Khin Hta Mya from the back.] Khin, are you really going to be that cruel?

Khin Hta Mya: Keep aside please. Life is worthless if it's separated from the loved one; not worth being a human.

Pho Htin: But if there's no need to be separated? What then?

Khin Hta Mya: Khin can't understand Ko Pho Htin's words. [smiling]

Pho Htin: Doesn't Khin say, 'If separated from the loved one – '

Khin Hta Mya: Enough of that - just repeating the other person's words.

Pho Htin: [Releasing his embrace, knocks tenderly on Khin's forehead] Khin, Khin's so clever!

Khin Hta Mya: [Slightly shrinking her body, and with partially open eyes, says in unclear voice] What?

Pho Htin: [Stares at Khin approvingly; pulls her hand with slight aggression] Come then. You can't make this man a fool today. [He lets Khin sit on a mat spread on the floor. Pho Htin sits face to face with her, closely.]

Khin Hta Mya: [Putting her hand around Pho Htin's neck] Oh, love so much, Ko Pho Htin.

Pho Htin: But there's the fickle mind, changing now and then. How can Pho Htin trust Khin's words?

Khin Hta Mya: Ko Pho Htin is asking unnecessarily. Ko Pho Htin is a man; when a man loves, he has only to wait in expectation; but when a woman like Khin loves, she comes straight – now she is here, highness. [stretching her voice]

Pho Htin: If so, if you love the man here, say so.

Khin Hta Mya: [With lips slightly rounded, standing erect and shaking her chin] You are saying like ‘*Kyar kaik par de so-hma na ta shay lar may*’ (You’ve been told it – the death - was due to assault by tiger, but you ask if it was chronic illness.)

Pho Htin: I don’t understand these words, but you must say what I ask; must say it, - hem – you love, don’t you?

Khin Hta Mya: Em, em (Yes, yes); ridiculous, this person is losing patience.

Pho Htin: [Gazing seriously at Khin, and feeling very happy, with restlessness, raising his left eyebrow] [in a slow tone] Are you serious and committed?

Khin Hta Mya: [After looking at Pho Htin’s face some time, smiling] Now, [motioning her fingers, counting] love, yes; like, yes; attached, yes; adore, yes; generous, yes; approving, yes; and can’t bear to miss a day – and close by –

[The sound of door opening is heard inside the house; Khin Hta Mya and Bo Pho Htin instantly turn toward the door. Bo Pho Thin enters; Khin Hta Mya and Pho Htin change their looks, they separate to keep a distance. Bo Pho Htin comes in with a steady look.]

Khin Hta Mya: [Putting a sweet expression] Bo Pho Thin can remain so aloof; comes out only now to greet a visitor in his place.

Pho Thin: [Staring at Khin Hta Mya, keeping a stiff posture, and stern look] Where’s your husband?

[Khin Hta Mya, shocked and shaking, dare not look at Pho Thin, but looks in his face, appearing to seek help.]

Pho Thin: [Getting very angry] Hey – you fellow.

Pho Thin: [Not turning to look] A woman of pleasure; leaving alone one’s sitting-husband; having an affair!

Pho Htin: [Scolding in a stern voice] Hey – you fellow

Pho Thin: [Quickly picking up the sword Pho Htin has put on the floor, and tightly gripping it and wielding it] Let’s see your skill and courage; move just a bit. [Bo Pho Htin, caught by surprise moves slightly back. Khin Hta Mya stands up abruptly. Pho Thin is staring at Khin Hta Mya.] Do you think this place a *zayat* (public rest house) built by your mother’s husband; this is a home, a

home, residential home; not a place for indecent behaviour without slightest regard for guardian deities of the home. [Scolding] Go, get out now. [With sword in hand, he comes a few steps toward Khin Hta Mya; Khin Hta Mya walks to the door. Gripping the sword tightly, Bo Pho Thin looks at Khin Hta Mya. Bo Pho Htin, now like a caged tiger, is angry, but incapable of action. Khin Hta Mya opens the door and leaves. Bo Pho Thin quickly closes the door and jams it with a wooden lever.]

Pho Thin: [Throwing down the sword near Pho Htin] I have betrayed, take any action you like; kill me if you must.

Pho Htin: [Looking alternately at the sword and Pho Thin] You are a really foolish fellow. You put me to great shame.

Pho Thin: I don't ashame you; I only stopped you to prevent you putting us to shame.

Pho Htin: What was that you said?

Pho Thin: One can refuse to deal with relatives, but you can't disown the relationship. I'll be a totally useless fellow if I become an adulterer's brother. You ought to pay regard for young sister's face. Should she become an adulterer's sister; would she be treated by the social circle with respect? Right now we are engaged in an adventure, with our lives at risk. Isn't that a task to liberate our nation? You are a leader. Just imagine; if you cannot be trusted with another man's wife, can you be trusted with the business of the nation? Who will trust your words? So, you understand your current plan will not only give shame to other people, it will also harm you greatly. And be ware of that.

Pho Htin: This is none of your business.

Pho Thin: [With rising temper] Why not?

Pho Htin: Your duty is to obey my orders. Why do you give me order? Don't you know I can kill you for insubordination? [Picks up the sword thrown down by Pho Thin.]

Pho Thin: Do you think I am afraid to die? If I were, I wouldn't have thrown out the sword for you.

Pho Htin: [Wielding the sword and aiming at Pho Thin] You stubborn fellow. [makes clicking sound with his tongue]

Pho Thin: [Moves one step forward] Kill me! After I die, you'll become known not as a man, but a dog-like creature.

Pho Htin: [His flesh vibrating] Should you speak to me like that? Is that appropriate?

Pho Thin: [Looking seriously in the face] And how about you? Is your behaviour appropriate?

Pho Htin: [Holding the sword high and shaking] You should tell me nicely and reasonably.

Pho Thin: Have you once given up your ways because of our reasoned pleas?

Pho Htin: [Drops the raised sword, eyes swelling with tears, and voice shaking] Pho Thin, you are the brother I love most, and I have relied on you so much. But what you have done now is like kicking me in my chest with both legs; it hurts my heart. [Head bowed, and hands fisted, Pho Htin breathes heavily. Pho Thin looks kindly at Pho Htin, and goes to him, puts his hand on his brother's shoulder; Pho Htin, in return puts his hand on Pho Thin.]

Pho Thin: Brother, I intervened not because I don't love you, but you ought to have watched your actions. In this country, *Burmapyay*, woman is not a rare commodity. There are plenty of girls, more beautiful, cleverer and nicer; but you chose one who isn't free. I just can't imagine why you get so attached to this one. Now, suppose she becomes your wife, do you think you will be happy? When she has been adulterous, do you think she will be good in your possession? More than that there's the sinful offence called *pradhara kamma* that you commit. I won't tell you its bad consequences. Brother, you just think about that. [Bo Pho Htin keeps silent, while breathing heavily.] If you would do such things, I had decided to die; I had prepared for any outcome, and had taken the risk. That's because, it's better to die than to see my brother become a social outcast. I have --- [Knocks on the door at this moment. The brothers release their embrace; they look to the door knock. Bo Pho Htin is rubbing his eyes; Bo Pho Thin tightly grips the sword on his shoulder, and peeps through the hole in the door.]

Pho thin: Oh, Uncle Sa, come in, come in. [He opens the door; a sixty-year-old man comes in.]

Bagyi Sa: How are things going, captain? I have been waiting for the big festival. If the Burmans are freed from Shan domination, I will think I can die happily. Haven't those fellows, Phoe Toke and Tha Byaw, come here yet? I was worried they may be ahead of me here.

Phoe Thin: Hey – Ma Khin Sein, will you get us plain tea? Now, Uncle Sa, take your seat. [*doc, doc, doc*, knock on the door] May be Pho Toke and Tha Byaw coming.

[Goes to the door and looks through the hole.] Yes, they are. Ko Tha Byaw and Pho Toke arriving. [He opens the door. Two men, 25- and 40-year old, enter the room.]

Pho Toke: Uncle Sa, when did you arrive?

Bagyi Sa: Just now. Which way have you come? I had been looking for you on the way. I thought you may be here ahead of me, because I couldn't see you on the way.

[An 18 year-old girl comes in with a tray of green tea. Her presence disturbs their conversation. She puts the tray in their midst and goes into the other room.]

Bagyi Sa: Hey, Pho Toke, move forward. Why are you scared; you haven't lived in your father-in-law's home, have you?

Pho Toke: I am moving. [He moves forward.]

Pho Htin: Every body move forward, come on. Hey, Maung Phoe Toke, you pour green tea. You can listen while drinking tea. [Pho Toke pours green tea.]

Pho Htin: [Drinks tea and others listen to him as they drink.] I will tell the situation. Last night we had a meeting at Mingyi Yan Naung's place and I came back home at nine o'clock. Thohanbwa had suffered defeat by Tabinshwehti at the battle of Pyay. He's restless for that and is looking for revenge. He is looking for another battle. His plan is to collect a very strong Myanmar army for the engagement. Thohanbwa had discussed this plan with the ministers and advisors. It was adopted when Mingyi Yan Naung agreed. Now they will form the Myanmar army. [Sips the tea.] Ha, Thohanbwa admires Mingyi Yan Naung very much and is promoting his role. When Mingyi Yan Naung accepted the proposal to form the Myanmar army, some Myanmar ministers who did not understand his proposal asked him privately why he accepted that. Mingyi Yan Naung explained them that the new Myanmar army is not to fight the Myanmar army under Tabinshwehti; when the army is strong, it will fight the Shans and drive them out. [He takes another sip of tea and fills his cup.] The ministers, who were initially worried, got peace of mind from this explanation. Now, Mingyi Yan Naung has given the order to organize the army to his trusted aides, and I am going to Shwebo, and I need money for the plan. I have also promised Mingyi Yan Naung to contribute three thousand kyats. I have found the source of money, Khin Hta Mya [looks at Bo Pho Thin, and continues calmly]; I have asked Khin Hta Mya to borrow the money, and I am going to get it. So the formation of the Myanmar army will go ahead smoothly. Then we considered the plan to get rid of Thohanbwa. We have asked Brahmin astrologers to advice Thohanbwa to build a temporary palace in Manawayaman Park, and to hold an astrological ceremony there; they will tell him the celebration will enhance his power and glory. We have told them to tell Thohanbwa that he would win battles

after the ceremony. These Brahmins are easy to approach; just give them presents, they'll do anything we ask. [He takes another cup of tea, sips and pours another.]

Mingyi Yan Naung will also support the Brahmin's advice. Thohanbwa is mad to gain glory and power, so it's certain he will accept the Brahmin's advice. A temporary palace will then be built in the Manawayaman Park; the Brahmins will tell Thohanbwa that this is going to be an auspicious civil occasion, where Myanmar and Shan will attend in separate groups, and that weapons should not be allowed there. Then one day ahead of the ceremony weapons will be concealed in the sand at the site reserved for the Myanmar. When Thohanbwa arrives, the Brahmins will begin presentation about the benefits of the astrological ceremony, including the prospect to win wars. That moment Mingyi Yan Naung will make the advisory address with the remark, '*Dat tu nan tu sae bat yu; nan tu thut-ka athay ya*' (similar representation of stars is medicinal; if the equivalent star representative kills, he will get the corpse.) With this address he will tell Thohanbwa he should get a 'royal sword of state'.

He will continue to explain about the powerful attributes of the sword once used by his uncle, Shwenankyawtshin King Narapati. This sword, called the 'Yein New Par' has been greatly admired; when one struck an elephant's neck with it, the neck got neatly chopped off. When the man on elephant's back was the target, the sword cut through not only the man's back, but also slit the elephant's back. When Mingyi Yan Naung draws Thohanbwa's attention to the Yein New Par sword, he will say he wants to see it. That's for sure, because he cannot help being interested in such a power-enhancing sword. When he asked to view it, Mingyi Yan Naung will approach to offer the sword; but once he is within reach, he will cut down Thohanbwa. In coordination the Myanmar will dig out the hidden swords and attack the Shans. But I wouldn't be present there, but will be in Shwebo to manage the forces there. And I will have to take Bagyi Sa with me.

Bagyi Sa: [With vigorous action] Captain, I'd like to make one request. Please leave me here; I want to be present for the great moment. I have seen a monk, who used to accept *soon* (monk's food) from my home, killed by two Shans, in my presence. I want to revenge them; I will kill them with my own hands and drink the blood from their throats. Captain, allow me; I am thirsty for their blood.

Pho Htin: I rely very much on Bagyi Sa.

Bagyi Sa: This is a difficult situation for me. Since I had seen Shans killing a monk, I had vowed to the Buddha image that I will make revenge; that I will die only after drinking their blood from the throat.

Pho Htin: If you insist so much, I'll let you stay here.

Bagyi Sa: [Stands up and raises the lower part of his *longyi*, pulls it through his thighs and tucks it up behind.] This is Nga Sa, let every one know him, [He picks up a sword.] the manly man; he will not relent until the monk-killers are revenged.

Pho Toke: Captain, the plot is planed, but we hear that the Myanmar ministers in the court are disunited.

U Tha Byaw: That's true. While the country is burning, they don't care a damn.

Pho Toke: They are busy scrambling for their meat plates. The big shots are like the blind man who isn't afraid of the ghost. With death today or tomorrow threatening them, they cannot fear about the loss of national independence. But we are praying to die young, because once people become grown ups they cease to be patriots.

Bagyi Sa: [Getting agitated and standing] Enough of that. Your words imply criticism. This is Nga Sa, over sixty years old. About the courage of you young fellows, I can easily match yours, while I keep my arse split wide open, you know. Would you like to test it? I'm ready.

Pho Htin: Maung Pho Toke, you have provoked Bagyi Sa. Well, well, Bagyi Sa, please sit down. I have more to say. [Turning to Pho Toke] Don't think every young man is reliable, you know. There are plenty of young people who are not good enough. They are making a merry time, gambling and drinking, while the country is burning. Such fellows are the majority. They don't think of working for the country, they think they have no duty for that. But don't think all elderly men unpatriotic. We can't allow 'the whole boat to become stale because of one or two *nga khon ma*, those putrid fishes. Men like Bagyi Lun Baw and Bagyi Sa will venture no less than young folks like you. If they do less, you can cut my throat; that's my guarantee. The present problem is young people don't respect the elderly; all sorts of problems, the elders swear at young people, breeding grievance. The elders on their part are jealous of young people; in case young people earn the respect of the people, the elders are worried they will lose influence. That's another problem, which makes them oppress young men. If the two groups remain apart, the Myanmar nation will find its independence a distant reality. If this continues, our effort cannot be effective. It's wasting time fighting one's own folk. So

you young folk should mend your ways; don't abuse the elders, work harder. And elders should reduce their ego and selfishness. If the two teams would work together, Mingyi Yan Naung's plan would go ahead smoothly. Maung Pho Toke, we will emerge victorious, wouldn't we, Bagyi Sa?

Pho Thin: That's true. If the Myanmar are disunited that will be for the happiness of the opponents.

Pho Htin: Bagyi Sa, look at that sword [pointing to the sword he was holding a moment ago], sharpened only yesterday. [Bagyi Sa rose to look at the sword; before he reaches the sword, sounds come from outside.]

Da doe pyay, da doe myay

(This our country; this is our land)

Da doe pyay, da doe myay

(This our country; this is our land)

[They hear the singing of Shan soldiers. Led by Bo Pho Htin, they all go to the window, and open it to look outside.]

Pho Htin: Who gave this song to those fellows?

Pho Toke: [As soon as he sees the Shan soldiers] We must chop down all these bastards. [He rushes to grab a sword.]

Bagyi Sa: Cut them down, those bastards. [He also pulls out a sword.]

[Bo Pho Thin goes to the door, stretches out his hand across, to halt people.]

Pho Htin: Halt, beware. You got to wait. [Pho Toke and Bagyi Sa, with swords drawn are standing, and gritting teeth. In the mean time, the song is heard again,

Da doe pyay, da doe myay

(This our country; this is our land)

Da doe pyay, da doe myay

(This our country; this is our land)]

[The song comes recurring.]

Pho Htin: You've got to be patient until the time is ripe. If you act rashly it will disrupt our plans. Think about that.

[Bagyi Sa and Pho Toke grit their teeth with a click, and restraining their temper, go back.]

Pho Thin: The passion of young men! It's always like that; one blunder will bring disaster. When they got things right, great things follow. I would like to see the young men's passionate enthusiasm guided by the wisdom of elders; that will reduce mistakes and will take us fast to our goal.

[The song fades into the distance.]

Pho Htin: Well, well, - oh, these Shans are very disturbing; Ba Gyi Sa, you wanted to inspect this sword, but you haven't. It's made and sharpened only the other day. It's not been tested yet, but I think it will easily cut a bundle of twenty five bamboos.

[Ba Gyi Sa handles the sword and carefully inspects it.]

Ba Gyi Sa: [Wielding the sword] Just the right size. You should have let us go a moment ago, Captain. We would have it tested then. But, you should also give me a fine sword.

Pho Thin: Maung Pho Toke bring that sword in your hand to me.

[Pho Toke steps forward to hand over the sword, but before he could --]

[Captain, Captain, open the door please; hurry please open the door, hurry. Urgent knock on the door is heard. Every one is surprised; Pho Thin rushes and opens the door. Bo Pho Thin quickly picks up a sword from the table. As the door opens Lu Wa comes in panting. Every one is shocked by his presence.]

Lu Wa: [On entering the room] Close the door. They are coming; I have thrown stones at them. They are chasing me. [Bo Pho Htin closes the door.]

Pho Htin: Steady Lu Wa. Tell me what's happening.

Lu Wa: Shans – Shans-

[Voices heard, 'Encircle this place; he runs straight there; he rushes into this house etc.']

Pho Thin: [Looks through the peep-hole.] Alas, Shan soldiers coming.

Pho Htin: What's happening, Lu Wa? [There is loud commotion out side.]

Lu Wa: These bastards came walking while they sing *Da doe pyay, da doe myay*. It infuriated me so much, I picked up broken bricks and threw at them.

[Hey, whose home is this? Open the door; quick, open it.] One hit a fellow on the head, and as he fell down, I came rushing to escape.]

[Encircle the place; don't let him escape. Who's side? Open the door, or else. Loud voices mixed with bang on the door.]

Pho Toke: We won't accept arrest, come what may. I'm ready to chop down the fellows.

Pho Htin: Patient, wait a while. [Loud commotion outside, with men pushing to open the door.] Hey- Lu Wa, you go into the kitchen. Get up on the shelf above the stove; hide there. We will take care of this place. [Lu Wa goes into the back room; at the entrance, men are still pushing the door.] Hey- Pho Toke, bring me the sword.

Pho Toke: Captain, stay where you are. I'll do the chopping this time.

Pho Htin: [With a stern voice] Bring it. [Pho Toke begins to hand the sword to Pho Htin.] Pho Thin take the sword from Bagyi Sa; hide all the swords under the couch. [As Pho Thin is about to pick up the swords, a hard push from outside opens the door; six Shan soldiers, with swords drawn, come in.]

Shan Officer: [As he hurriedly enters the room, he is taken aback upon seeing men holding swords. Hey- fellows, put down your swords.]

Pho Htin: What's the problem, Master. Come in please, take your seat. We have picked up the swords as we heard commotion outside. Not for any purpose, we got the swords ready because we don't know what it was happening outside.

Shan Officer: One Bama hit our Shan soldiers with stone and ran away. The soldiers saw that Bama running into this house. Come on, give up that man to us.

Pho Htin: Make me swear anything you like. I really don't know anything.

One soldier behind the officer: This bastard is cheating us. [Instantly Pho Toke runs toward him and cuts him with the sword in his hand, but Bo Pho Htin rushes his sword in, to meet Pho Toke's; the swords clash, and Pho Toke sword dropped from his hand. There's great chaos inside the room.]

Pho Htin: How can you match me, Pho Toke. Is your grievance on me so great? Pho Thin, bind this fellow. [Pho Thin is gazing in amazement.] Come on, bind him. [Pho Thin takes off the scarf from his head and binds Pho Toke's hands together behind his back.]

Bagyi Sa: No, Captain, Pho Toke is –

Pho Htin: [Sternly] Shut up you old man. No talking. Bring your sword to me. [Perplexed, Bagyi Sa gives up the sword.]

Pho Htin: My Lord Captains, please understand us. If you don't trust us take all these swords. This fellow [pointing at Phoe Toke] has a grievance on me; I hit him during the Kaung Hmu Daw Pagoa festival, to teach him a lesson. Your presence seems to embolden him; he tries to strike me down for revenge. It's my good fortune that saves me; otherwise my head would have been chopped off. [Bagyi Sa and others seem to have an understanding; heads bowed, they remain still and silent.]

One Shan Soldier: [To his boss] Captain, it's sure, that fellow ran inside here; we want to search.

Shan Officer: Hey, one of you pick up all those swords. [One Shan soldier takes away Bo Pho Htin's sword] Now you search inside. [Four soldiers enter the room.] It's definite he must be inside. You give him up easily, if not you will be criminals. Do you know the seriousness of your crime?

Pho Htin: Give me any swear you like, and I will pronounce that swear. We [Khin Sein's shrill shout comes out. As the people outside are about to go inside, Khin Sein is taken outside, two soldiers lifting her by the hands, two by the legs. Khin Sein is struggling.]

Shan Officer: [In a scolding tone] Hey, fellows, release her. I told you to search the criminal. What have you done? [The Shans let Ma Khin Sein free. As she rushes toward her brother, one Shan pulls her hand. She slaps him hard. He releases Ma Khin Sein's hand and starts to draw out his sword. Pho Htin looks at a sword lying on the floor in the corner. Bo Pho Htin looks sternly at the man, but restrains his anger.]

Shan Officer: [Standing between Ma Khin Sein and the soldier] What are you doing? This is the weaker sex, you mean fellow. Filthy spirit, intending to use sword against a woman. Shame on you. [He looks at the man seriously.] Get back, instantly. [The Shans get back.] Don't you find that fellow?

One Shan Soldier: No Sir, we don't see him Sir. [At this point Lu Wa comes out of the room, to the surprise of every body.]

Shan Soldiers: There he is.

Shan Officer: Arrest him. [He turns toward Pho Htin.]

Lu Wa: Wait a moment. [Pho Htin looks back, appearing innocent.] All men have a day to die. I'd rather not be in hiding for fear of Shans; I will die, as I have to die, like a manly man. Now, arrest me; you are in power these days. [The Shans arrest him.]

Shan Officer: [Looking at Ma Khin Sein,] Now, my sister, you can go inside. I guarantee these fellows will not even touch you with a finger tip in future. [Ma Khin Sein stands beside Bo Pho Htin.] Well, what do you say? You are guilty for sheltering a criminal; I'll order your arrest. Will you come along peaceably?

Pho Htin: No problem Sir. We'll come, but please tell us where to.

Shan Officer: We have the order to take any guilty Myanmar to Mingyi Yan Naung. So I am taking you all to him.

Pho Htin: That's all right.

Shan Officer: Hey, comrades below, come here. [Six Shans come in. [To one of them] Now, you take charge of these men and take them to Mingyi Yan Naung; I will be there after a while. Let me trust you.

Shan Soldier: Yes Sir. [They go out, with Bo Pho Htin and group walking in front. Ma Khin Sein remains gazing at the men.]

[Ma Khin Sein goes to the shrine, picks up a shawl and puts it on her shoulder. She takes a string of beads, and holding it, sits before the Buddha statue. Beginning with *Asen taeya, asen taeya*, she chants prayer, with systematic intonation. She continues,]

Great Buddha, my lord, I have no parents; I have only two brothers, to rely on. If I no longer have these brothers, I will be like a dog let out on a sandbank, a destitute. With sympathy for me, please save my brothers. And, the Sakka and guardian deities also, please come to my assistance.

[After bowing down with hands coupled on the forehead, she sits counting beads. When she starts 'Sakka and guardian deities' the Shan Officer stealthily opens the door and comes in. Standing behind, and seeing Ma Khin Sein immersed in her devotion, he feels delighted. He keeps standing with respect for Ma Khin Sein, and keeps staring her in the back. Ma Khin Sein is not aware of the Shan Officer's presence. A Shan gives a slight cough to indicate his presence. Startled, Ma Khin Sein turns back. She is even more startled to find the Shan Officer with drawn sword in hand, and staring at her. She rises up abruptly.]

Ma Khin Sein: [Looking perturbed by fear, anger, and anxiety] Why have you come here? [The Shan Officer does not reply, but looks at Ma Khin Sein's face.]

Ma Khin Sein: You are a Shan army officer; don't you feel ashamed to come to a girl like this? You've got bad intention.

Shan Officer: True, I am an officer, the boss of Shan soldiers; but, sister, after I have seen you, love is so tempting, you have so much attracted me, I have given up looking after my soldiers. I am now a captive of love, your captive. And my boys have allowed me to come to you. Return love to a pathetic man; if you don't, it will be like pushing with a pole a drowning man into the water.

Ma Khin Sein: What rubbish are you talking? I don't understand your words. I want you to leave quickly. When my brothers come back, they will kill you.

Shan Officer: [After pondering] I don't hear any other persons in this home? Is the old man, who went out, sister's father?

Ma Khin Sein: [With slight anger] No, he's not my relative. My dad died long ago.

Shan Officer: Oh, how about mother?

Ma Khin Sein: Also dead long ago.

Shan Officer: Oh, you are just like me.

[Ma Khin Sein sympathizes with the man who is parentless like herself. She changed her expression into a kind look, and looked at the man.]

Ma Khin Sein: Did your parents also pass away long ago?

Shan Officer: Yes, that's true. But, sister, may I ask a question.

[Ma Khin Sein gives a welcoming appearance.]

Sister, are your brothers among those arrested?

Ma Khin Sein: Yes, you have spoken with my elder brother.

Shan officer: Oh, is he?

Ma Khin Sein: Because of his order, a man was hand-bound with a scarf, and my younger brother did the binding.

Shan Officer: So you are living with the support of your brothers.

Ma Khin Sein: That's true.

Shan Officer: That is a great problem. [Ma Khin Sein gives a worried look at the officer.] There's no returning home for men who are sent there like that. May be they are executed by now, but I can't be sure.

[Ma Khin Sein feels a severe shock and collapses on the floor. The Shan officer picks her up and embraces her. He does his best to bring back her regular breath. After Ma Khin Sein gets partial recovery, Bo Pho Htin and Bo Pho Thin come back; the Shan officer is not aware of their arrival as he is attending to Ma Khin Sein. The two brothers, on seeing the unexpected scene, are shocked. Bo Pho Htin gives a surprised look.]

Pho Htin: Khin Sein.

[Ma Khin Sein, encouraged by her brother's voice, struggles to get up, and runs to him shouting, "Elder brother." Bo Pho Htin hit her hard on the cheek, shouting, "Traitorous bitch." Ma Khin Sein recoils from the hit and falls down in the room corner. She has no strength left to stand up. As the Shan officer goes to pick up Ma Khin Sein,]

Pho Htin: Hey, bad Shan guy, take off your sword if you want to die like a man. [The officer takes the sword off his shoulder.]

Pho Thin: [Pulling out his sword.] Brother, leave him to me; I'll deal with him.

Pho Htin: Brother Thin, you wait at the door to cover the exit. Don't allow him to run away. Hey, fellow, take out your sword. Are you now scared to die? [He moves forward. The officer pulls out his sword. Bo Pho Htin, hot with anger, fiercely attacks with his sword, while the Shan officer retreats, while defending himself. When he gets to the corner, the officer's sword meets Pho Htin's which comes down hard. As the clash is violent, Pho Htin loses grip on his sword, which falls off. Pho Thin is looking at them. The officer, seriously looking at Pho Htin and laughing runs ahead with his sword pointed at Pho Htin's chest. Pho Htin swerves to evade the pointed sword. Instead of Pho Htin's chest, the sword pierces through the wall, and is stuck there. The officer loses balance; Pho Htin quickly gives him a healthy kick in the ribs. The officer is reduced into a pile on the floor. Bo Pho Thin throws his sword toward Pho Htin, who catches it.

Pho Htin: Aha, you seem to be so sure, but it's bloody poor show for a Shan officer. [The officer rises; the sword battle continues, but Bo Pho Htin hits hard at his sword; the officer loses his grip; the sword is thrown off. Without the sword, the officer is dumbfounded, leaning against the wall.

Pho Htin steadily walks to him, and stabs straight into his heart. As his opponent's back is against the wall, Pho Htin pierces the sword as far as it goes. With only the sound 'em' coming from him, the officer slowly collapses to the floor while he tries to pull off the sword. Pho Htin then pulls out the sword.]

Pho Htin: Whenever we have one on one encounters like this, don't leave these bloody bastards alive. Finish them off the same way.

Pho Thin: We've been extremely fortunate to run into Mingyi Yan Naung coming on horseback. A bit late, we would have lost our sister to this idiotic Shan.

Pho Htin: [Turning to Pho Thin] Well, Pho Thin, the business with this Shan is over; I must now deal with this traitor, I'll kill her. We cannot accept one like this in our clan. Are bachelors so rare for her to like this Shan? No regard for the face of brothers; filthy girl, who lets us down.

[Bo Pho Thin is muddled, and keeps silent.]

Pho Thin: [Looking at his brother's shoulder] Oh, brother, you got a wound on your shoulder. [He pulls off Pho Htin's shirt and looks at the bleeding flesh.] Oh, it's a rather big cut.

Pho Htin: [Looks at his wound; his face turns red.] Take off your hands. [He runs and picks up the sword which has fallen off his hand, and wields it over Ma Khin Sein, to cut her down.]

Pho Thin: Brother, hold your temper. [Bo Pho Htin, with the sword raised, paused to look at Pho Thin.]

Pho Thin: [With a serious look] Do you think being in love with this Shan is a sin worse than taking another man's wife.

[Bo Pho Htin, appearing to be reminded, stands still, pondering. Then he lowers his hand holding the sword.]

Pho Thin: You can kill Ma Khin Sein for the affair with that Shan; then I will kill you for your affair with another man's wife. There's no one in our clan who loves an enemy; and I will not allow any one to steal another man's wife. [Bo Pho Htin is gazing, perplexed. Khin Hta Mya enters the room carrying a cloth bag.]

Pho Htin: [On seeing Khin Hta Mya, he looks at her with wide eyes and furious rage.] You women are [his rage exploding and his flesh shivering] get away you Amazon, get away right now. [He moves with his sword as if he will attack the woman if she does not leave.]

Khin Hta Mya: [With a look of great surprise and fear, steps toward the inner room.] Ko Pho Htin, wouldn't you take the money you've asked for?

Pho Htin: I don't want your bloody money; get out now.

[Khin Hta Mya goes out with the money bag.]

Pho Htin: [Looking at Pho Thin] If they don't meet for some time, they will forget each other. [Pho Thin makes a heavy sigh of relief. Throwing away his sword, Pho Htin walks slowly to his brother, and kneeling before him, embraces his waist.]

Pho Thin: [Looking at Pho Htin from above, with kindness] Elder brother -

Pho Htin: Master Thin -

[Curtain falls while Pho Htin is embracing his brother, with Pho Thin staring at him.]

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The author of this play had once been a wicked man; he has thought pretending to be a gentleman is a mark of righteousness. So in the old days, instead of saving young women who had turned bad, he made them worse, like pushing into the water, with a pole, a drowning man. In the company of friends, he had delightedly 'damaged' young women. And he had attempted to 'damage' one or two brand new ones; but, by the grace of the honour of the Buddha and the Dhamma, he did not succeed.

But the author has realized that such acts, 'destroying' young women, or the intention to do so, will not be pardoned just by a confession of wrong behaviour. However, he is tortured to recall the memory of his bad past; then in order to alleviate this, he contemplates this thought

There would be some one who has read this play, and because of this repents his sins, and abandons his wickedness, which resembles a wild elephant. He transforms into a gentleman, and young girls will be saved from being 'damaged' by him. Then the author's work becomes meritorious for him, and he propagates the share of this merit directed to those young women who had been his victims.

This play and the introduction is dedicated to enhancing the honour of such young women.

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The Husband of a Bad Wife

Introduction

This chapter may be disliked by the readers, because the membership of the Nagani Book Club consists of people from all walks of life, bachelors and spinsters, old men and old women, monks and nuns. Upon superficial scanning, this introduction may appear like ugly like a durian fruit. But take off the shell, one finds the golden flesh covering the seed. In like manner, when one disregards the vulgar terms used here, the lessons of life that are valuable like gold will be revealed.

But durian is not good for the health of some people; so we shouldn't urge everybody to eat it. Similarly, the contents of this introduction are not appropriate for some readers. For example there are monks and nuns who have given up layman's life, which is burdened by the struggle for livelihood. And there are bachelors and spinsters who may join them, and the aged men and women, for whom the 'hot stuff' mentioned here is entirely inappropriate. For them we strongly urge not to read on. For those who would not follow this warning, they do so on their own will, if they find the contents abhorrent.

But there may be people who wouldn't care the 'hot stuff', like those who would go for the fleshy part of the durian. For them there is the skilled person who can demonstrate how to remove the durian shell. This introduction is intended for those who don't care, but would enjoy the taste of the 'hot stuff', particularly for those who have returned to laymanhood from monkhood. It will lead to a new world in which men and women will enjoy the taste of life. But there are unskilled people, like those who throw away the durian flesh. We suggest that such people should get educated by reading this introduction.

Why do people marry?

We do not usually ask this question seriously, nor do we answer it. But the happiness of the lives of millions of married men and women depends upon this question. For this reason, we ask the serious question, 'Why do people marry?' in this introduction. We wish the readers to propagate this question and answer to the wider public.

The answer is that people marry for the following three reasons.

1. For sexual pleasure.
2. To produce children.

3. To get a life partner, working for food and the requirements of living.

The first reason is the most important as it has been evidently witnessed my various classes. These include the monk who breaks the *parajika rule of the Vinaya* (the rule to shun sexual intercourse), i.e. the imposter monk; the hermit named Isena; the queen who went away with a leper; the princess who deserted her husband, who was a king, and ran away with a man with a thigh amputated; the Princess Maipada who ran away with Dasa, and innumerable others.

Consider the type of girl, a sweetheart, who urges her boyfriend to elope with her urgently, and the boyfriend who tells his girlfriend, ‘Come, marry me fast, I’m restless without you.’ These are instances which support the above conclusion, the desire for sexual fulfilment

Parents have five obligations for their kids: to prevent them from doing evil, to teach them to do good, to send them to school, to give them investment, to marry them. According to this set of duties, parents marry their children. Around the time of marriage, parents use to say, "My daughter, behave like this," or, "My son adopt these noble ideals," etc. And learned people would exhort a new couple about the social principles relating to married life. But they would hardly say a word about the most important thing, sex. This is considered taboo, and childish and shameful to discuss.

These days when parents plan to marry their daughter, they make investigations about the prospective son-in-law. Two questions asked most frequently are:

- (1) Is he a graduate?
- (2) Is he a manly man?

The first flaw in the current practice of parents is their negligence about the need to pay attention to sexually transmitted diseases (STD). They never try to make sure the bride groom is free from STD. When it is found out only after the marriage, tragic consequences follow, like disease ridden offspring, the girl contracting the disease, or becoming a young widow.

Before mentioning the second flaw, I would write about the causes of impotency. It is more frequent among town-folk than among rural-folk. In the villages, young man work hard the whole day; they have no time to seek sexual pleasures. They have short time for rest and recreation, and they need hours of sound sleep. And cheaper cost of living in rural areas allows men to marry younger. Because of their healthier life-style, they are less likely to become impotent.

But in towns young men eat rich food; they have less work; and things like the thin blouses of girls, their perfumes and makeup, which are agents that promote sexual desire, are abundant. And, there

are books and movies which also promote sexual desire. Thus urban young men tend to have stronger sexual urge than rural young men. They use to seek fulfilment of their intense urge in either of two ways: (i) masturbation), or, (ii) going for sex with prostitutes.

The first has given rise to many young men becoming impotent. The author has studied this problem while he was a school teacher in two schools in two towns. He has found that eighty percent of young men are sexually unhealthy because of this practice. When these young men marry they usually leave their spouse in distress, because of their inability to do successful sex. There are many wives who do not sleep well and suffer headache, giddiness, indigestion, fatigue, etc. resulting from the sexual dysfunction of their husbands.

The medical practice treating such women should be changed now. Instead of the woman, it is the husband who should be treated by the doctor.

In the west, it is easier for a woman to divorce for the reason of her husband's sexual incapacity. But in Burma, women are more restrained; they can't easily leave one husband and take another. They have only to suffer their 'hot problem' in secret.

In England, a doctor named Paddington has been educating men, young and old, about impotency, with articles in magazines.

This author is not a medical doctor. But, with his own common knowledge, he has helped a considerable number of young men to regain their manliness. Because of the author's instructions, many couples, including prominent ones, have become happier. In case their true stories can be revealed for the benefit of many, the author would be very grateful.

It is not only masturbation that makes young men's sexual prowess weaker. Going with prostitutes is also a cause.

We have said above that the poor health of eighty percent of women is due to the sexual incapacity of their men. We want to add about the remaining twenty percent.

For this discussion, we revert to the example of the durian eater. One who does not know how to eat a durian would throw away the tasty portion. Likewise, married people who do not know how fully to enjoy married life, which is the most important purpose, lose much of the happiness of marriage.

Marriage is like a business partnership. If one gets a big share of the gains, and the other only a trivial part, the unfairness is tolerated only because there's no way out. The likelihood of ending the partnership is large. In marriage partnership too, if the husband enjoys much, and the wife very

little, resulting in her physical discomfort, the system is one sided; she tolerates because her status as a woman of good bearing prevents her from exploding. This is a fact evident like an elephant walking in a paddy field.

With due regard for the readers, the author would like to mention the findings of Mary Stopes, a prominent doctor. She has surveyed 2000 married women with the question, “Do you get happiness out of marriage?” Many of them replied with the question, “What happiness?” She says that it is the women who have never once enjoyed sexual satisfaction who ask this question. Burmese women, eighty percent of them, would surely respond in exactly the same way. The author has asked this question to three divorced women, and they replied with the same counter question.

So I make this appeal to the patriotic citizens who desire to work for the well being of the people. Strive to make normal the unbalanced marriage relationships. The mission to bring full happiness for couples includes the following.

1. Preventing young men from bad habits that will end them with sexual inability.
2. Treating those who are already suffering it.
3. Openly giving sex education through public forums.
4. Family counseling for men.

For lack of space in this book, the author cannot describe fully the details to carry out these plans.

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In this play Ma Thin has great love and sympathy for Pho Sein. But possibly due to Pho Sein’s considerable age seniority, or his poor sexual abilities, or his lack of understanding of techniques, Ma Thin’s expectations remain a distant reality. So she sought the assistance of Sein Phoe. Love alone is insufficient to make a marriage work. One may think, ‘my wife loves me,’ but that’s not all one needs. There are girls who eloped with their boy friend, simply for love, and when reality contrasts with expectations, they returned to parents. In some ensuing cases, some girls give untruthful statements, resulting in the boy spending time in jail.

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The Husband of a Bad Wife

The Characters

Ko Pho Sein	a boatman
Ma Thin	Ko Pho Sein's wife
Daw Shwe Phee	Ma Thin's mother
Lun Mung	Son of Pho Sein and Ma Thin
Daw Win	Ma Thin's aunt
Ko Sein Pho	an adulterer
U Maung Mya Gyi	boat owner
Maung Ba Than'	
Maung Ba Sein and	
Two others	boatmen

The time: a night of Tazaungmon (November), around 10 pm.

The locality: an eastern suburb of Pantanaw town

The place: the residence of Pho Sein, the boatman and
wife Ma Thin.

In the east suburb of Pantanaw town, the houses, built on big estates are distant from each other. The home of Pho Sein and Ma Thin is an old single storey building, on a raised level, of the type commonly known as Madras home. The home faces north, with the stair at the back. The space is partitioned across from west to east. Beyond the partition are two bed rooms, one at the front and the other at the back. Between the two rooms is an isle leading to the stair; a small door in the partition gives access to the isle.

Outside of the partition is the sitting room, which in this play is the stage. The partition is the stage background.

The curtain rises

[Daw Shwe Phee, Pho Sein's mother, is lying on the floor close to the partition. Pho Sein, with his back turned to the audience, is massaging Daw Shwe Phee's legs. Daw Shwe Phee is about 65 years old and is blind. While massaged, she occasionally coughs; Pho Sein brings a spittoon close to her mouth.]

Daw Shwe Phee: It seems you and friends will take a bit longer for the voyage this time. [She coughs; as usual Pho Sein brings the spittoon close to her mouth.]

Pho Sein: With a fair wind, it won't be longer.

Daw Shwe Phee: What is the departure time tomorrow?

Pho Sein: Departing tonight; it's changed because of favourable tide tonight.

Daw Shwe Phee: *Aw*

Pho Sein: After one or two hours, we'll be getting onboard; only a moment ago Hla Thangyi came in and told me. We're sailing with a good night-tide.

Daw Shwe Phee: It's alright son, you have to go; 'when you eat his rice, you have to work for him.' [She coughs again; Pho Sein again raises the spittoon.] Have you prepared your baggage? [Lun Maung, Pho Sein's six-year-old son comes out of the inner room.] You'll forget things, pack up with care. You hear me boy?

Pho Sein: Yes.

Lun Maung: [Getting near Pho Sein] Daddy, mother asks you to come to her for a while.

Daw Shwe Phee: Oh, my grandson, it's quite late. Why are you not in bed yet? [Lun Mung sits beside. Pho Sein gets up to go to the bedroom, but then he sits down again, and carries on messaging.]

Pho Sein: [Toward the bedroom] Ma Thin, will you come here?

Ma Thin: I've got business; I call you for that, come quickly.

Daw Shwe Phee: You go, son.

Pho Sein: [Turning to Lun Maung] Son, you massage grandmother. [Lun Maung prepares to massage. Pho Sein goes inside. Daw Shwe Phee coughs; she reaches for the spittoon, and Lun Maung takes it near her mouth.]

Daw Shwe Phee: My grandson, get me a cup of water. [She tries to get up and sit. Lun Maung fetches a cup of water from the pot placed near the door. Daw Shwe Phee gurgles two, three times; then takes two, three gulps of water. Lun Maung places the cup back in its place. He then sits down beside his grandmother.]

Daw Shwe Phee: [Lies down again] I heard you crying a short while ago. Why did you cry?

Lun Maung: Because mother beat me.

Daw Shwe Phee: Why did she beat you?

Lun Maung: Nothing, no reason.

Ma Thin: [From the bedroom] Hey, Lun Maung, you mischievous boy. You are so clever; what false complaints are you making to grandma?

Daw Shwe Phee: I think you beat my grandson without cause. [She raises her hand to embrace the boy; Lun Maung lies down beside her. They embrace each other.]

Ma Thin: Mother, do ask your grandson to tell the truth. He's getting clever. He's now making things complicated with untruth.

Daw Shwe Phee: Why did you beat him?

Ma Thin: [From the bedroom] Because he was going to eat the baked dried fish which I prepared for his father. I stopped him, but he insisted and wept for it.

Daw Shwe Phee: You should let him eat; he's but a child. He will cry if he cannot eat what he wants.

Ma Thin: No mother, the dried fish is so salty; it's not good for him. His stomach and ribs are bulging because he ate too much dried fish; that's the trouble. We had once brought the doctor home to treat his ailment. Words don't work with him, when his dad is present. When did he listen to us?

[Short pause]

Daw Shwe Phee: My grandson is a nice boy. He will listen if you speak to him. There's no need to beat him. He's a chunk of fine stuff.

Daw Shwe Phee: We have the *Gambithar* 'licking salt' given by Ko Shwe Lan. You take care to give it to him regularly; let him lick it.

Ma Thin: Your grandson likes to eat all kinds of food, but he is fussy about medicine. You should give grandson medicine yourself.

Daw Shwe Phee: O.K. leave it with me. I'll give him medicine regularly. He's a nice boy. Where's the 'licking salt' bottle?

Ma Thin: It's near the head-end of your bed.

Daw Shwe Phee: Alright, grandson, go and take the 'licking salt' bottle.

Lun Maung: I don't like to take it.

[Laughs from the bedroom]

Daw Shwe Phee: Go and take it. I will also lick the 'licking salt'.

Lun Maung: No, I don't want to fetch it.

Daw Shwe Phee: I will buy *Mon-hingha* for you tomorrow morning; you are a good boy; go fetch the 'licking salt' bottle.

Lun Maung: I don't like the 'licking salt' grandma.

Daw Shwe Phee: If you don't listen to me, I will not buy *Mon-hingha* tomorrow.

Lun Maung: I will eat *Mon-hingha* first, and then lick the licking- salt. I don't eat anything before bed-time. It gives stomach ache.

[Laughs from the bedroom]

Daw Shwe Phee: Daughter-in-law, don't laugh. When morning comes I will show you how I give licking-salt to my grandson; you will see him licking it.

[Conversation stops temporarily.]

[After a while Ma Thin comes out, with her mouth biting a comb, and her hands making a hair knot. She enters the sitting room, and puts the comb in her hair. She pulls out the lower end of her blouse which is inside the skirt.]

Ma Thin: Alas, there's great love between grandma and grandson, embracing each other. Ko Pho Sein, come and have a look. Your son is doing a good massage job.

[Ma Thin drinks a cup of water from the pot. Pho Sein comes out.]

Pho Sein: [When he sees grandma embracing the boy, and the boy massaging the old lady,] Hey, son, you are a very good massage-boy. With grandson's nice massage, grandma seems to have gotten asleep. [Husband and wife sit near her.]

Pho Sein: [Pho Sein tickles his son putting his finger in his arm-pit.] Hey, son, what are you bluffing? [Because of the itch caused by his father's tickling, he takes off his hand which has been embracing grandma. The hand turns to Pho Sein, who lowers his head, and he embraces it. Then Pho Sein picks up Lun Maung and comes to the front of the stage; Ma Thin comes along.]

Pho Sein: Son, be a good boy, and behave yourself, while I am travelling.

Lun Maung: I want to come with you, Dad.

Pho Sein: Oh, you cannot come on this journey.

Lun Maung: Why not? I will follow you.

Ma Thin: Ko Pho Sein, on your return home, if you stop in Mawlamyine-kyun, buy warm clothing for Lun Maung; what do they call it? Sweater or something like that, one with a v-neck. Do not buy one which has buttons; buttons quickly get loose and removed.

Pho Sein: I don't like the button-type too. How about one for you?

Ma Thin: Ah, no, I don't fancy wearing one; I may look a bit scruffy in it; it's awkward to wear it.

Pho Sein: You are quite anti-fashion. Ma Mya Yee from the town centre wears a coat like European ladies, although she is a mother of one child; haven't you seen *that kind of coat*?

Ma Thin: [With a grimace, sarcastically] They are Europeans.

Pho Thin: Alright, if you don't like it. It saves me money.

Ma Thin: I know you, stingy man.

Pho Sein: Oh, you say that. It reminds me of old Daw Mya whom we have known years ago. She likes going to theatre very much, but her husband was a simple man. When there's a theatre troupe coming to town, she would provoke her husband. The man has instinct; when his wife becomes sarcastic, he knows she wants to go to theatre, and he would say, 'Oh, my dear, don't attack me; I allow you to go were you please.' Then Daw Mya would roll up a mat, and go off to the theatre, taking the mat.

Ma Thin: How does your story concern what I said?

Pho Sein: No, no. Nobody has said he's not going to buy fashion cloth for you. But you said I don't have the desire to buy one for you. You are attacking me, just like Daw Mya attacking her husband.

Ma Thin: No, there's no likeness. I am I, Daw Mya is Daw Mya.

Pho Sein: [He teases Ma Thin with a kind hit with his fist on her forehead] This is for saying, 'I am I.'

Ma Thin: Son, your dad is hitting me.

Lun Manug: Dad, don't hit mummy.

Pho Sein: Alas, are you on your mum's side? Son, I ask you, 'If mum and dad quarrel, whom will you side with?' [Lun Maung looks at Ma Thin's face; Ma Thin gives him a meaningful return look.]

Lun Maung: I will side with mum.

Pho Sein: You are your mum's son; go to her. [Pushes Lun Maung.]

Lun Maung: [Clinging to Pho Sein] No, I am not going.

Pho Sein: You said, you'll side with mum, so you go. O.K. If you love mum more, I will not buy a sweater for you.

Lun Maung: Dad, do buy it.

Pho Sein: Whose son are you then?

Lun Maung: Dad's.

Ma Thin: [Raising her hand] I'll strike you, little fellow. You're so clever.

Pho Sein: [Protecting Lun Maung, embracing him and moving away] This is my son. [He kisses him.] This is my son. [kisses again.] Don't beat my son while I am away. By the way, Daw Win hasn't come yet; it's already too late in the night. Seems the old woman is getting massage. [He turns to look at Daw Shwe Phee; she is dozing. Pho Sein picks up Daw Shwe Phee and takes her to her bedroom. He speaks to Ma Thin.] Ma Thin, there's a packet on the shelf, with palm-sugar balls. Take out one palm-sugar ball and give it to the kid.]

Ma Thin: Don't feed him anything at night.

Pho Sein: [Standing at the entrance] Oh, palm-sugar is good for health; it relieves chest-jam. It's not harmful, do give him.

[He enters the bedroom carrying Daw Shwe Phee.]

[Ma Thin gets up and goes to the shelf attached to the partition.]

[The shelf is a bit high for her height; Ma Thin stands on a stool. When she is about to reach the palm-sugar packet, the stool overturns; Ma Thin falls off. As she has one hand holding the shelf, her weight brings it down. The objects on the shelf fall on Ma Thin's body, while she is like a lump on the floor. Lun Maung, surprised, looks at Ma Thin. Pho Sein comes running out of the room. He picks up Ma Thin and embraces her.]

Pho Sein: Where are you hurt? [He rubs Ma Thin's foot.]

Ma Thin: The leg is O.K. [She pulls up her jacket sleeve, and shows her arm joint.] I fell on the arm-joint. The injury is here. It hurts.

Pho Sein: [Looking at the bruised arm-joint with kindness,] Show me, show me. [He presses the arm-joint, but she feels pain and pulls away her arm.] You are always careless.

Ma Thin: Don't scold me.

Pho Sein: Come on, show me; where else do you get injured?

[They hear Daw Win calling from the ground floor.]

Pho Sein: Coming, coming; well, boy, you open the door for Daw Win.

Ma Thin: Oh, the door latch is not within his reach.

Pho Sein: That's right. Are you alright to sit?

Ma Thin: Yes, I am.

[Pho Sein pulls Ma Thin up. He takes a cup of water from the pot and gives it to Ma Thin.]

Pho Sein: Drink this water. [Passing the cup, he stands near M Thin.]

Ma Thin: Go and open the door. It's an elder who's waiting too long.

Pho Sein: Yes, yes. [He goes to the door.]

Ma Thin: After drinking the water, she passes the cup to Lun Maung.] Come, take this cup son; put it back in its place.

Lun Maung: [Taking the cup] Mummy, where's daddy's palm-sugar?

Ma Thin: Over there; find it in the pile.

[Daw Win and Pho Sein come in.]

Daw Win: [Looking surprised at the sight of the disarray in the room] Oh, what's wrong? Things scattered here; all chaos.

Pho Sein: Beyond explanation, Daw Win. Ma Thin did a good job of taking the palm-sugar from the shelf, ending in this jumble.

Daw Win: [Turning to Ma Thin] What went wrong?

Ma Thin: [Pointing to Pho Sein] That big daddy. He wanted to feed his loving son palm-sugar, at such a late time in the night. I went to take it from the shelf. As I couldn't reach it, I stood on a stool, which overturned, and I fell off. Lucky, I didn't break my leg.

Daw Win: Why all this mess here?

Ma Thin: Just before I fell down, I was holding the shelf; so when I fell, I pulled it off the wall.

Daw Win: Strange happening. I wanted to come to you early, but I got very busy this afternoon.

Ma Thin: Why? What business?

Daw Win: What else? It's Ma Than Tin getting labour pains; I'd been going to see her.

Ma Thin: Hasn't she given birth yet?

Daw Win: No, not yet. She's feeling pain in the womb since morning, the whole day. I have waited, the baby to come this moment, that moment. I missed breakfast, which I ate only at 4 o'clock. In the evening, she got some pain relief. So I came here as I have told you; I asked them to come here and wake me up if the pain comes again.

Ma Thin: Is the time ripe, in months?

Daw Win: Yes, time's ripe in months. But the pain appears to be due to indigestion. I don't think she will give birth within three four days. I've told her family to come and wake me up here if she gets pain again.

Pho Sein: [Turning to Ma Thin and motioning with his chin, to avoid making Lun Maung aware,] It's quite late now; put him to sleep.

Ma Thin: Now, come here little kid. Take me into the bedroom. [Lun Maung, taking Ma Thin by her hand, goes into the room.]

Pho Sein: Daw Win, please look after my home while I am away. And take good care of my mother. Ma Thin is rather cool and inactive; although she's your daughter, she behaves like a daughter-in-law. She doesn't give good care.

Daw Win: You can trust me.

Pho Sein: Mother used to get serious coughs often. When it comes, other medicines don't work. *Gambira* medicine, with betel leaf dissolved in boiled water is effective. That's her handy medicine.

Daw Win: [Yawning] O.K. I will see to it.

Pho Sein: Well, aunty Win, you seem to need sleep now. I will prepare your bed in the room.

Daw Win: I will sleep outside. Make the bed in this room, in case Ma Than Tin's family sends someone to me. It will be easier to wake me up here.

Pho Sein: Alright.

[He hears Hla Than and Ba Shein calling him from below.]

Pho Sein: I coming. Come up for a while.

[He goes to open the door. In a moment Hla Than and Ba Sein come in. Behind them comes Pho Sein, carrying blankets, mosquito net and pillows for Daw Win's bed. While Pho Sein is putting the mosquito net in place,]

Hla Than: Hurry Ko Pho Sein. You know about your boss. If we go to him late, he will abuse with all curses; he wouldn't be kind to your mother or sister in his curses. You know how horrible he is.

Daw Win: Pho Sein, leave the mosquito net; I'll do it. [She continues smoking a cheroot.]

Ma Thin: [From the bedroom] Ko Pho Sein, come here, just a minute.

Hla Than: Master, hurry; there's no time left.

Ba Shein: Don't be busy with 'Brother has a lot to tell sister before leaving' sort of business. [Hla Than elbows Ba Shein as he begins a rhyme.]

Hla Than: Hey, you bloke, what are you chanting? [He gives a side glance with scorn.] What problem fellow you are!

Daw Win: Men who have married young wives are busy like that.

Pho Sein: [Coming out with a bag on his back,] Come on Hla Than, let's go. Daw Win, bye, bye. Please take good care of them.

Daw Win: Don't worry; you go with peace of mind.

Pho Sein: Ma Thin, good bye. Don't beat Nga Lun when I am away.

Ma Thin: Yes. [Pho Sein, Hla Than and Ba Shein leave the place.]

[Daw Win continues smoking before going to bed. Ma Thin comes out; she picks up the objects scattered on the floor.]

Ma Thin: Didn't Ma Than Tin labour easily with her first born? What's the problem with this one?

Daw Win: It can be like that. Child birth can be easy or difficult; it depends. There's no fixed pattern.

Ma Thin: They didn't go into the sweat-room after childbirth. And they didn't take saffron as medicine; they complained about is bad door. A bottle of rum is all they have. Can alcohol be good medicine after childbirth?

Daw Win: No, how can doing away with age-old traditions bring good results? [She yawns again.]

Ma Thin: Aunty Win, you seem to be sleepy. Well, you sleep now. [She helps Daw Win setting up the mosquito net. After tying the first string, Ma Thin looks for the second one, when she hears sound of whistling three times. As she needs a longer string, she goes into the inner room; Daw Win, sitting beside the mosquito net continues smoking. She looks occasionally at the door. When she doesn't hear anything from the inner room,]

Daw Win: Key Mai Thin, you have gone to get a string, but have you become a string? [There's no reply. Daw Win smokes her cheroot while waiting. Because of the long silence, she gets up and opens the door to look inside.] Hey, the back stair-case door is open. Naughty girl; has she gone after her husband, leaving me to look after the home? She'd miss him so much. She lights a kerosene lamp nearby and goes inside. After sometime, Daw Win's voice comes out, asking, 'Who's running away?' [Sound heard from someone on the ground beneath. A few minutes later, they come in Ma Thin in front, followed by Daw Win, holding the lamp.]

Daw Win: Why did you go down? Who's that who runs away?

Ma Thin: No idea; I just went down for the restroom. May be he's a burglar, intending to break into the house.

Daw Win: Strange thing. Was he a burglar, the man you were standing and chatting with? He ran away when he saw me. Do you think I haven't seen him, and you together. Tell me who's the chap, who ran away. If you don't I will wake up your mother and complain.

Ma Thin: I don't know; honestly speaking.

Daw Win: Well, if you have said the truth – [Daw Win starts to enter the room; Ma Thin pulls her from the back.]

Ma Thin: It's Ko Sein Pho

Daw Win: What has Sein Pho got to do here?

Ma Thin: I owe him some money; he comes here to get it back.

Daw Win: At this time in the night? Is it the time to collect loan money? You are saying so much rubbish. You do this kind of act while husband is travelling; you know it means causing his death. Bad behaviour! What do you know about husbands travelling far out on business? People like raftmen used to temporarily divorce wives when they go out on voyage. If they don't do it, and the wife back home goes with another man, in adulterous act, misfortune befalls the husband; he will die unnatural death. Now mind you, if you act like that, you husband can perish in water. What qualities has Sein Pho got, so you like him? He's a drunkard; is he able to give you more satisfaction than your husband. No, I shouldn't ask such questions. It will be bad for me to ask you. If you take this man you will end up in the whorehouse run by that man, Pho Thin. How old are you?

Ma Thin: 24 years.

Daw Win: And, how old is Pho Sein?

Ma Thin: 42 years.

Daw Win: You are not too young; and your son is growing up. Be a good woman. And, Pho Sein loves you so much; he would like to keep you close to his mouth, blowing out air at you. I think if you were *myrobalan* fruit, he would keep you in his mouth. And you should appreciate that he is looking after your mother like his own. And he washes your blouses. Really, really, he's a very good man. [Someone calls Daw Win's name from below.] Oh, Ma Than Tin's family coming to call me. I'll have a sleepless night tonight. [Another Daw Win call] Coming, I'm coming. [She turns to

Ma Thin.] Pay serious attention to my words. Pho Sein is a benefactor for you and your son. Let me trust you to behave, and let me go now; come open the door for me.

[They both go into the inner room. After closing the door, Ma Thin comes back. She looks closely at Pho Sein's photograph hung on a pillar. Tears welled in her eyes; she rubs the photo and frame with her blouse sleeve. As she is staring in the photo she begins to hear sounds like someone shouting in a nightmare. It's Daw Shwe Phee, shouting, 'Help, help, giants, big black giants; oh, grand son is carried away by giants.' Startled, Ma Thin calls out, 'Mother, mother.' Getting no reply, she sighs. Then she hears somebody whistling below, and little later come knocks on the door at the back.

Ma Thin is frightened, and keeps standing after intending to enter inside. Then, Ma Thin goes inside. After some time, Ma Thin and Sein Pho come into the sitting room. Sein Pho is a bit drunk, and is rather unsteady.]

Sein Pho: [In a loud voice] That old woman Daw Win, how did she meddle in your affairs? [Ma Thin shuts his mouth.] I saw her going down. [Ma Thin again shuts his mouth.]

[After that Ma Thin, with her forefinger close to her lips, gives him sign to speak softly. And, with her coupled palms near the cheek, she tells in sign language that there are people sleeping inside. Sein Pho nods to show understanding. In sign language, Sein Pho tells Ma Thin to run away with him the very night. Ma Thin signals understanding, but shakes her head. Then the boy in the bedroom wakes up with a start.]

Daw Shwe Phee: [From the front bedroom] Ma Thin, Ma Thin.

Ma Thin: [Going inside speedily on her toes] Yes mother.

Daw Shwe Phee: The boy is crying; look after him.

Ma Thin: Yes, mother. [She taps the boy's tummy to make him sleep.]

[Sein Pho who is looking around the sitting room sees the photo which Ma Thin has wiped to clean dirt. Staring at it with disgust, he takes it off, and shows it his fist. Again he stares at the photo with dislike, when Ma Thin, appearing to hold her temper comes into the room. She snatches the photo in Sein Pho's hand and hangs it in its place. Sein Pho takes off the photo again, and twice stabs it with the dagger tucked in his waist. Ma Thin watches in alarm when he throws in down on the floor, making a bang.]

Daw Shwe Phee: Ma Thin, Ma Thin, Hey Ma Thin.

Ma Thin: [Running into the room on her toes,] Yes mother.

Daw Shwe Phee: It seems rats rampaging in the sitting room. Go have a look.

Ma Thin: Yes, mother.

[She comes out again.]

[Turning to Sein Pho, Ma Thin puts her coupled palms on her forehead, in sign of homage, and requests him with signs to go back immediately. Her face shows worry and temper. Sein Pho shakes his head. He asks Ma Thin to follow him; Ma Thin refuses shaking her head. Sein Pho touches Ma Thin's chin and with signs asks her why not follow him. Ma Thin, pointing her finger at her chest, shows Sein Pho that she is deploring. Sein Pho looks at Ma Thin with a wry face. Then counting his fingers, he tells Ma Thin that she has procrastinated days and days.]

Daw Shwe Phee: What do you find Ma Thin? Are there rats?

Ma Thin: Yes rats. One photo has toppled down by rats and is broken. [With a frown, she signs to Sein Pho to go back. Sein Pho shakes his head and again asks her to come with him. Looking with disgust in Sein Pho's face, Ma Thin shows him five fingers, a request to wait five days. Sein Pho shakes his head; Ma Thin shows three fingers. Sein Pho shows one finger, and in a whisper tells her, 'tomorrow night, O.K.' Ma Thin gives a nod with impatience.]

[Sein Pho, looking sternly at Ma Thin, shows her one finger to confirm about the venture tomorrow. Ma Thin gives a serious look at Sein Pho. He signals her, rubbing his face, asking to rub his face with *thanatkha* (makeup paste from a scented tree bark), before he goes back. Ma Thin sighs as she looks into the inner room. She fetches the cup of *thanatkha* paste. She smears paste on Sein Pho's face while he puts his head on Ma Thin's thighs as he lay on his back. Ma Thin gives a scornful side-glance at Sein Pho. Putting her lips rounder, Ma Thin sighs again. She continues rubbing *thanatkha* on his face. In a brief moment, commotion occurs outside. Ma Thin puts Sein Pho inside Daw Win's mosquito net.]

[Loud voices come out. 'Hey, Ma Thin, Ma Thin, open the door. Open it quick.' Ma Thin goes inside. After a short time, shrill cries of Ma Thin burst out, 'Alas, Ko Sein Pho - ' – Instantly voices come out coaxing her to stop crying.]

Daw Shwe Phee: [From the bedroom] Hey Ma Thin, what's happening?

Ma Thin: Mother, come and have a look at Ko Pho Sein.

Daw Shwe Phee: [In a shaking voice] Hey! Where is he? Pho Sein! Ma Thin, come and fetch me. [Four men carrying a cradle-like stretcher, improvised from a blanket, and carried on a thick pole, enter the scene. Behind them U Maung Mya Gyee, the boat owner, follows. Once inside the parlour, the cradle is opened, and the body of Pho Sein, covered with an *hta-mein* (woman's skirt-like cylindrical cloth), appears.]

U Maung Mya Gyee: Hey, that mother----er, what are you gazing. Why don't you remove the *htamein*, covering the face?

[Hla Than removes the *hta-mein*; Daw Shwe Phee and Ma Thin, carrying her by the arm, enter.]

Daw Shwe Phee: Where is Pho Sein? Take me to Pho Sein.

[She is taken to Pho Sein, with U Maung Mya Gyee and Ma Thin, each holding her arm. Daw Shwe Phee reaches out for Pho Sein's body with her hand and weeps bitterly, at the same time muttering.]

Ma Thin: [Ma Thin, holding Pho Sein's hand, looks anxiously at his face; then she turns to U Maung Mya Gyee] Bring me salvation! [She weeps.]

U Maung Mya Gyee: Hasn't that bloody physician arrived yet? Hum, son-of-bitch, like my ass.

Ma Thin: Tell me uncle, what happened to Ko Pho Sein.

U Maung Mya Gyee: Ha, he climbed up the mast, to put up a lamp at the top. He slipped, I think; he came falling down. He hit a wooden beam, then fell on his back, and again the back of his head hit a glazed pot. The pot is broken; the head can't withstand the hit.

Ma Thin: Please save him, if you can.

Daw She Phee: Save my son, my good son. Oh, I will die too, my son.

U Maung Mya Gyee: We don't take him to the hospital, because we are told the doctor is going to Ma-U-bin, to appear as witness in a court case. So I have sent for Saya Sin, the local physician.

Ma Thin: Save him please. Can't you do anything?

[Lun Maung wakes up from bed and comes out.]

Ma Thin: Young son, look at your daddy. [Lun Maung weeps.]

U Maung Mya Gyee: Wait, and silence please. No use being so noisy. The messenger and Saya Sin will arrive soon. This bloody physi-

[That moment physician enters.] Ah-ha, come *Saya*, you arrive just in time. Examine him please. Any hope?

Saya Sin: [Takes out his glasses from the pocket and puts it on. He examines Pho Sein, and carefully peers into his retina.] The case is a bit difficult; the wound is quite large, and serious; on the hopeless side.

Ma Thin: *Saya*, save him, if you can. Please do your best.

Daw Shwe Phee: Save him, *Saya*.

[*Saya Sin* lifts the hand to feel the pulse; then drops it slowly with a sigh.]

Ma Thin: [With an extremely worried look] Can't you treat him *Saya*?

Saya Sin: No, he's dead.

[The hopeful looks of the people fade; they heaved sighs. *Ma Thin*, about to cry aloud, controls herself, and sobs. Attempting great control, she stares straight ahead with lost consciousness. In spite of control, tears drops rolled down from her eyes.

Daw Shwe Phee: Tragic, tragic boy. My dream is true. I saw black giant men dragging him, and I shouted for help in the dream. But, my shouting was no use; they dragged him away. Oh, my dream foretold his tragic end. Oh, son, you have left us; how are we to carry on? Why don't you take us along too, good son? Oh, my son, chunk of niceness. I pity you.

[*Daw Win* comes in.]

Daw Win: Aye, I got the news; I came here as soon as I heard it.

Ma Thin: [Looks up at *Daw Win*; then stares ahead as before]

My fault, my fault; it's I who kill him.

[*Daw Win* looks at *Ma Thin* and then at *Pho Sein*.]

Daw Win: [Turning to *U Maung Gyee*] How did it happen? Tell me *U Maung Mya Gyee*.

U Maung Mya Gyee: It's so tragic; I don't want to tell, Mi Win. I'm cursed. I have been sailing this boat twenty years, without ever having a mishap. I am distressed Mi Win. When shall we get free from these torments?

[Ma Thin, still sitting, puts her hands behind her on the floor, to relieve stiffness. Her mood is unsettled. She does not notice it at first; but when U Maung Mya Gyee comes to 'I am distressed' she feels some thing piercing her hand. When she looks, it happens to be the photo which Sein Pho had stabbed. Her face reddened, and she frowns more, gritting her teeth. She takes the photo into the room. Daw Shwe Phee continues weeping.]

Daw Win: We won't escape these torments until we reach Nibbana.

U Maung Mya Gyee: Aye, men are so much like drunkards intoxicated with palm-toddy. When drunk, they stop drinking toddy; but when he sees a palm tree, he points his finger at it to ask for toddy juice. It's the same with us. When confronted by torments, we talk about Nibbana, but after a time we forget it.

Daw Win: That is why U Pandita, the great Dhamma preacher, compares men with moths.

U Maung Mya Gyee: That's the truth, the great truth.

Daw Win: Oh, we are so ignorant. If only people can learn the Dhamma, the natural laws, there's much to learn. When you are at a funeral, you should become aware that, 'I will die one day.' That's Dhamma. Don't we get lessons in Dhamma?

U Maung Mya Gyee: Yes, we do.

Daw Win: And when we see other people lose property, or become bankrupt, we can learn it can also happen to us. Isn't that Dhamma?

U Maung Mya Gyee: [Nodding] Yes, it is.

[Ma Thin comes out with a harpoon in hand. The people, who are sitting near the corpse, talking, do not notice her. She lifts up the mosquito net where Sein Phoe is hiding inside, with a blanket covering his whole body.]

Daw Win: When we see other people's son or daughter die, can we not get the point of Dhamma that we also will one day be separated from our loved ones?

U Maung Mya Gyee: Absolutely.

[They hear a hoarse, loud shout from the mosquito net. They turn to it, and see that Ma Thin has hit Sein Pho in the neck, the harpoon still stuck there. Sein Pho's body twists and turns in pain. U Maung Mya Gye and group are caught in shocked surprise; U Maung Mya Gye is the first to rush toward Ma Thin and pull her away. Others regain sense only then and they run to assist U Maung Mya Gye. Ma Thin pulls out the harpoon and throws it on the floor. There's great commotion in the parlour. U Maung Mya Gye hands over Ma Thin to other men; he pulls up the blanket, and finds Sein Pho, to his great surprise and horror.

U Maung Gye: What's this mother----er been doing here?

[Daw Win looks at Sein Phoe in amazement.]

Daw Shwe Phee: What's happening?

U Maung Mya Gye: [With a stern voice] Nothing happening.

[Daw Shwe Phee keeps silent.]

Hla Than: Is he gone, master?

U Maung Mya Gye: You idiot, how can he survive when he's hit through the neck?

Hla Than: What do we do then?

U Maung Mya Gye: You all keep calm. I will manage everything.

Ma Thin, tell me, "Why did you strike him?"

[Ma Thin keeps staring at Pho Sein; she shed tears. She struggles out from Hla Than who is holding her, and sits beside Pho Sein. Putting her both hands and face on the corpse, she weeps with uncontrollable sobs. U Maung Mya Gye, Daw Win and others are gazing at her.]

[The curtain falls.]

* * * * *

Introducing

Get a Husband, Kill an Elephant¹

There is some thing called abnormal psychology, distinct from normal psychology, and people characterised by it are either crazy, or outstanding. Daw Myo and Ba Myaing in this play are two people, belonging to this type, regarded by society as crazy. But such people are not very rare, but quite common in all places.

The stage should consist of a hut, close to the background. The girdle around the hut should be moved back about five feet from the edge of the stage. When the horizontally-hinged door is closed, there would be free space in front of it, for one man to stroll freely. And the two sides of the hut will also have free space about three feet wide.

It is best to hire old women to act in this play. The author would like to note that ‘scare of house-lizard’ still exists because he has personal experience.

The henpecked husband

The author has written this play in honour of the henpecked husband. He still remembers a henpecked husband and his wife, who were his neighbours, when he was a youth.

The couple ran a food stall which sells rice and dishes, as well as local-made liquor. When the wife was not watching, the husband used to stealthily drink the liquor, and then he diluted it to keep the original fluid level. When the customers complain about the soft alcohol, the wife knew her husband had diluted it. As usual, after she got a complaint, she would tell him to bring the stick in the corner, and gave him lashes, like a school head mistress who punishes errant students. It’s no use denying his misdeed; he’ll get the punishment any way. Often times the wife would become so upset, she did not remember to get the stick, but would strike him with anything handy, like a broom to beat, or a bowl or chopping board thrown at him. Or sometimes she put his head between her thighs to torture him at will.

The man then used to scream at the top of his voice, ‘neighbours please help; neighbours please help’. Only when neighbours came to separate them would he get relief. But she’s not a crazy

¹ The Myanmar title is *Lin Nay as, Sin Thay Hma* (Beginning with a wife, he elephant must be dead.) The saying means ‘A woman, beginning life with a husband should make sure she is determined to have her way in the family.’ [Translator’s note]

woman like Daw Myo, not the one who would be scared by a house-lizard; but she had to be given lessons by disturbed neighbours with brick-chips and sticks thrown at her house.

The Bully-wife

Some women are originally aggressive with their husband; but some of them, with a weak husband who yields to her all the time, get induced to prove they are superior to the husband, particularly before public. They learn to think such practice 'stylish'. But fewer are the people who approve such stylishness, than those who disapprove.

Actually, balanced husband-wife relationship is the ideal; but it is in the nature of people to deviate from the ideal. A husband may, out of great affection, yield excessively to the wife; but the closeness brings friction with it and the resulting wear and tear on the relationship makes an unhappy marriage. Often we know someone who loves his dog so much that it 'licks his ear and cheek.' There are wives who are wise; they don't take advantage of the husband's affection. But many husbands who yield too much for love have only to repent and regret later. This shows the importance for the husband to understand his spouse's psychology, right from the beginning, and to deal with her appropriately.

The Husband's 'Winning-recipe'

The author would like to share a winning-recipe for those henpecked husbands, a proven one, from a treatise; but we recommend it only for the worst cases.

When the wife is a big bully, the man should provoke her, by pretending to have a running affair with another woman.

For example, he can plan to let his wife discover his correspondence with another woman; he can fake such letters to her by writing with his left hand. It may be more effective to have souvenirs, perfumed handkerchiefs, or a badge, or an autographed photo.

When she finds these articles, he should tell her, "I am not in relation with other women; you are my only one." But he must make her more suspicious. To get that effect, he can mention a name or two; or, the purported letter, he has written to 'the other' should contain sentences like: "(insert wife's name) is really my wonderful wife, who loves me very much. But love breeds envy, and envy breeds passion, and that is the reason for her aggressive tendency to me. Is (insert 'the other's name) also going to be the 'pea from the same silo,' my torturer of the same kind? I am afraid of a situation described by the saying '*Kyar kyauk lo shigyi koe, shigyi kyar det soe*' (One relies on the

great guardian god, for fear of the tiger; but the menace of the guardian god comes out worse than the tiger.) This is my worry; this is my fear. If you will be one like that, forgive me, your Ko Ko.” The letter should praise the virtues of the wife, as well as the new one’s, and also contain her promises to you, and yours to her. This letter should be deliberately planted for the wife to discover. But it is important not to apply this recipe carelessly, for it may bring the unwanted result. One uses it to get wife’s better regard, but the probability is there, that he may find himself kicked out of the home.

Get a Husband, Kill an Elephant

The Characters

Ba Myaing	henpecked husband
Daw Myo	bully-wife
Ko Bala	town head-man
Ko Sein Net	town head-man’s assistant
Ko Toe Hlaing	head of ten-households
Daw Gyan	Daw Myo’s friend
U Sein	
U Myit	
Maung Po Wa	
Ma Htike	
Ma Pwa May	neighbours of U Ba Myaing and
Ko Ba San	Daw Myo
Ko Lu Hla	
Ko Pho Tha	
Ma Shwe Toke	

The Place: Pantanaw town, East Strand Road

Location: Ko Ba Myaing and Daw Myo's residence, a hut, roofed with used corrugated iron-sheets, and built with timber; it is a single-room home; water pots and cooking stove are placed in the front part of the house; the veranda is used as kitchen as well as
The rear part of the hut is the area for the bed.

The Time: About 5:30 in the morning; as it is a long summer day, there is good morning light already.

The curtain rises

[Ba Myaing is wearing a *lungyi*, with lower end slightly raised up, and has a towel round his neck. He is stirring an earthen rice-pot with a ladle. In a minute, he places the ladle on a pot; the fire-wood-stove is not burning well, but is smoking profusely. He fetches split-bamboos and breaks them to make fire-sticks, and puts them in the stove; as he breaks a third bamboo, which makes a bang, Daw Myo gets out of the mosquito net.]

Daw Myo: Ba Myaing

Ba Myaing: [With a blow-pipe in hand, and about to 'nurse' the fire, he stands up quickly] Yes.

Daw Myo: Your stove is putting out so much smoke. [She comes out.]

Ba Myaing: I am making it burn well; I'm about to blow air.

Daw Myo: [Comes near the stove, and looks at it.] There's too much fire-wood, all congested and no ventilation; how can the bloody fire burn? Use your brain [Hollering] Take out those two fire-sticks. [Ba Myaing takes them out.] Now blow air in. [Ba Myaing blows his pipe, but the fire does not come up; only smoke billows out.]

Daw Myo: [Going close to Ba Myaing] Move aside, you bloke; shit in the head. [She juggles the fire-wood pieces.] Give me the blow-pipe. [Ba Myaing passes the blow-pipe, and stands behind

watching. Daw Myo blows the pipe; no fire; she gets raised temper, and gives Ba Myaing a scornful look.] What have you done with the stove? Take it. [She gives him the pipe.] You mend the stove, make the fire. [She looks sternly, with un-winking eyes.] Make sure the fire burns well. [Daw Myo picks up a piece of charcoal, and rubs her teeth with it. Ba Myaing takes out the kerosene bottle near the stove; and as he pours out some kerosene into the stove, the fire ignites instantly in plumes. Daw Myo turns to look; sees the fire, and gets smell of kerosene.]

Daw Myo: You used kerosene to make the fire, didn't you?

Ba Myaing: Yes, I did.

Daw Myo: Do you think it's your step-father's property? How can we afford kerosene for that? Do I have to curse you? [She takes cup with wooden handle, to take water to wash her face. But Ba Myaing gets alarmed, thinking that Daw Myo is going to hit him with the handle-stick. Startled, he raises his hand to protect the head. When he is sure she's not going to hit, he readjusts his *lungyi*. Then he folds up the mosquito net and puts the pillows and blankets in place. He takes the towel from his neck, and places it near Daw Myo, who is washing face.]

Daw Myo: [Wiping her face with Ba Myaing's towel, and looking out,] It's already a bit late. Seems the sun's up.

Ba Myaing: Yes, it is. Ma Aye May and others have gone down to the boat-jetty; I saw them when I got up from bed.

Daw Myo: [With a look of surprise, and changing from the angry look,] Why don't you wake me up?

Ba Myaing: Ma Myo, you told me not to wake you from bed.

Daw Myo: No, no. Ba Myaing, have you grown up eating rice?

[Looking at the rice-pot] Oh, the rice-pot is boiling, give it a look. Ba Myaing hurriedly picks up the ladle and stirs the pot.] This is custard apple season; don't you know one needs to be there early to get good fruits. You don't deserve to live here; Majid's cow-shed, perhaps. [Ba Myaing stirs the rice-pot.] Hey, don't go on stirring too much, the rice liquid will thicken. [Ba Myaing drops the ladle on a pot, and with an absent mind, lifts up the rice-pot with bare hands. His hands burn, he drops the pot, which smashed on one of the tri-pod bricks. The semi-cooked rice is scattered, as also the rice-fluid, meshed up with ash and charcoal. Ba Myaing looks at Daw Myo, with an apologizing expression.]

Daw Myo: [Turning back from going out] Oh, all gone, - gone, you mother-fxxxxx. This is not your sister's-husband's property. Smash it, smash it; here's the lesson. [She takes off the pair of wooden slippers from her feet and makes the double throw at Ba Myaing. Ba Myaing swerves, and evades the hit. Unsatisfied, she goes near the stove, but Ba Myaing slips off. With rising passion, she lifts a tri-pot brick, aiming to hit at Ba Myaing; but the hot stuff burns her hand. With a sigh of, 'shoo' she drops the brick and shakes her hand] Bastard, mind you! I'll kill you today. [Daw Myo chases Ba Myaing, who evades capture. But near the door, she catches hold of a part of Ba Myaing's shirt. Frightened, Ba Myaing screams, 'Help me neighbours; help me, neighbours.' [Daw Myo drags Ba Myaing by the back of the neck, to the middle of the room.]

Daw Myo: Why do all sorts acting now? [She pulls Ba Myaing's hair and jerks it.] This is for screaming; another scream, come on, another scream ---; you remember now – [While jerking Ba Myaing's bunch of hair, Ko Po Wa, Ma Thaike, and Maung Pho Tar come in rushing. They try hard to intervene. Ba Myaing is pulled away by Ko Po Wa and Ko Pho Tar; Daw Myo is in Ma Thaike's grab.

Maung Pho Tar: Frustrating; you're quarrelling day and night; no regard at all for neighbours.

Daw Myo: What regard? Why regard for you? This is my home; none of your business, if I pull my arse apart, in this place. There's no *two-pya* worth concern of yours.

Maung Pho Tar: Hem; this block-head woman – [He clicks his tongue.]

Daw Myo: Hey, Pho Tar, you immature guy. You are my son's age. You are impertinent to one as old as your mother. Why that rudeness? Clicking tongue and the like. Hem – not sure you're offspring of human.

[Pho Tar exclaiming '*dae*', raises the stick in his hand, about to swing to strike, but Ba Myaing seizes his hand.]

Daw Myo: Let him strike; strike if you must. Look, every one, to witness. [Pointing her finger] Now you come into my home and aim to strike me. Let's see if you don't go to jail. [At this point, stones begin falling on the roof; the people are startled with fright.]

Maung Pho Tar: [Smiling] That's very good. [He goes out.]

Daw Myo: [She moves to the window.] Hey, you bastard mother-xxxxxx; born of stray dogs. Are the missiles for your mother and sister, for going out with other men? [One hits the wall by the

window, where Daw Myo is standing. Daw Myo shrinks, shirks, while another comes in through the window. The barrage continues pounding the roof and the walls.]

Ko Po Wa: I am scared to stay in your place. {Ma Thaïke and Po Wa speedily leave the place.}

[The rain of stones continues; some enter through the front door, and some through the window. Daw Myo and Ba Myaing, with actions, rather akin to boxers', try to evade the missiles.]

Daw Myo: Ba Myaing, close the doors quick. [Ba Myaing, with fright, closes the front door and windows; the sound of one or two stones is still heard falling on the roof. After a while, Ko Po Wa, Ko Ba San, Ko Lu Hla, and Ma Thaïke arrive at Daw Myo's door.]

Ko Ba San: [In raised voice] Hey, Daw Myo, - Daw Myo; Ba Myaing,- Ba Myaing, - let us in please. What was the commotion we heard in your place? [Ko Ba San takes his ear close to the door and listens inside.] Hey, Ko Ba Myaing, it's us; I'm Ba San; with me are Lu Hla, Po Wa, and Ma Htike. Will you let us in? [The door opens.]

Ma Thaïke: [Surveying the scene] Where's Daw Myo.

Ba Myaing: Off to see the head-man, just a minute ago.

Po Wa: Which way?

Ba Myaing: [From the back alley] Says she must go herself, 'cause if I go, I might not do things right. And so she left.

Ba Myaing: Look here, the stones hurled at the house, many on target.

Lu Hla: Still less than you deserve; just consider what your old woman did.

Ma Thaïke: I wonder how you got married to a woman much older. And she's a bully, and you're so submissive. What sort of *kamma* from your past have you carried over. I can't imagine it.

Ba San: This bloke must have been 'love-induced by doping.'

Lu Hla: Hey, fellow, if this case goes to police and the court, it will do no good. So I suggest this idea, and it's just the right moment with your old wife's absence. When the head-man comes and investigates, all the neighbours are sure to say they are not aware of anything. Ba Myaing, if only you side with us, the case will pass peaceably. As you know, the neighbour's intervention has been on your behalf.

Po Wa: He's a pretty dumb fellow, you know; there's no use negotiating with him.

Ba Myaing: What? I have to join you! How do I do it?

Po Wa: Oh, you dummy; when the head-man comes around, you say favourably for the neighbours.

Ma Thaike: You're asking him to do something more difficult than pulling a tiger's tail, you know.

Lu Hla: Wait a moment. Let me ask the man. You are making things confused. No, Ba Myaing isn't that dumb, right? And you, Ba Myaing, will you do as we tell you? [Ba Myaing is pondering.]

Po Wa: You're scared of your old woman, aren't you?

Ba Myaing: Yes, of course. [Laughter]. I am really unhappy; but excuse me, spare me from doing it.

Ba San: Oh, it's a very simple matter to overcome fright. [He pulls out a rod from his pocket and gives it to Ba Myaing; and Ba Myaing takes it.] Keep this with you. I'll tell you a true story. I guess you've heard about our grandfather, U Mya Thee. Your fright is nothing compared to his. I'll tell you. When General Maha Bandoola marched to Arakan (now Yakhine) each household had to send one national serviceman, and that's compulsory. Our grandfather was then in trouble; if he dodged national service, he will be executed; if he were to go, he didn't have the courage. But his dilemma became known to the abbot, his teacher. The abbot summoned him, 'hey, Mya Thee, come to me.' Then he gave him this magic rod. It worked; as soon as he grabbed the magic rod, he became militant. He grew passion for slashing and striking. When the Arakan soldiers confronted his company, our grand-dad simply stood ahead of his unit, with great effect. The enemy was repelled by his presence. When General Bandoola heard about his exploits, the general praised him personally, and made him an officer. That magic rod has come down to me through my parents. I want you to keep it in secret. Have you heard about devil-may-care courage of great Htein Win? Why is he so courageous? It's because of this magic rod, you know. So when you confront Ma Myo, you grab this magic rod in your hand; keep a strong will, and call her, 'Ma Myo' with a serious voice. She will be scared then. It's your chance to order her anything. She'll obey, once and for all; I assure you.

Lu Hla: That's very well, but you got to rehearse your friend.

Ba San: Why not?

Lu Hla: Come on, try; rehearse now.

Ba San: Now, Ba Myaing, get back one step. [He steps back.] Grip the magic rod firmly. Turn to that wall, not facing us; otherwise your magic will work against you. [Ba Myaing turns his back to Ba San and Co. and looks toward the wall. Ba San winks to his partners, and signals to them with his hand.] [To Ba Myaing] Now, have you gripped the magic rod firmly?

Ba Myaing: Yes.

Ba San: Now you say this with a confident voice. Say, 'Ma Myo, listen to me; follow my instructions,' and fix your eyes right between her eyes. O.K. try it now.

Ba Myaing: [In a rather soft voice] Ma Myo, listen to me; follow my instructions.

Ba San: In a stronger voice. Repeat.

Ba Myaing: [Voice rather stronger] Ma Myo, listen to me; follow my instructions.

Ba San: Excellent. But fix your eyes on the point between her eyes. Don't forget that.

Lu Hla: Make sure you get rid of fear, and speak for the neighbours; otherwise, the neighbours will fight you. And you'll have no easy way then. You must side with the neighbours.

Ba San: He'll come out alright. [Turning to Ba Myaing] Hey, Ba Myaing, haven't you become braver, since you have that magic rod in your hand?

Ba Myaing: Yes, I am.

Ba San: Now, every thing seems set to go. [A boy enters.]

Boy: U Ba San, Daw Myogyi and U Ba San are coming.

Ba San: Hey, pick up all these stones, take them away; hurry clean the mess. [All present in the room pick up the stones and take them out the back door. Only Ba San remains in the room.]

Ba San: Hey, Ba Myaing, don't forget my words. Hold the magic rod tightly. If you have fear to do what we told you, the neighbours will fight you.

[The head-man comes walking, followed by Daw Myo and his assistant, Sein Net, who carries a double-barrel gun on his shoulder. They come up the floor of the hut.]

Daw Myo: Maung Ba Myaing, where are the stones littering the floor?

Ba San: Beg your pardon. [Ba San, close by says, 'hey' and shows wide-open eyes.] [With a rather strong voice, and staring straight between Daw Myo's eyes] Ma Myo, listen, - [At this instant, Daw

Myo looks at him with a frown. He loses courage to continue, and stammers.] I, I, I say; Ma Myo, while you were going to the head-man's place, Lu Hla and others have cleared the room.

Ba San: [In a whisper] That's right.

Head-man: Sein Net, leave the gun here. You go to the head-of-ten- households; tell him I summon him.

Daw Myo: [To Ba Myaing] I told you not to open the door until I come back. Why have you allowed your step-fathers inside? Ko Bala, these are scheming people, hatching a single plot.

Head-man: [Showing dislike at being addressed Ko Bala] This is the Head-man, Head-man, you know.

Daw Myo: Yes, yes; Head-man, Mr. Head-man.

Head-man: Hey, you fellow, Ba San, who else with you, [He turns to Ba Myaing.] apart from Lu Hla and Po Tar?

Ba Myaing: Ma Thaike and Ko Po Wa.

Head-man: You hear Ba San? Bring Mi Thaike and Po Wa; it's my order. [Ba San shows a wry face at the Head-man and goes out; the Head-man, looking down, does not see him.]

Head-man: [Picks out a piece of paper from his pocket, and also a fountain-pen; he prepares to write.]

Daw Myo move ahead. [Daw Myo sits on her folded knees close to the Head-man.] Do you remember the time when the stones were hurled at your place?

Daw Myo: Yes, it's about six o'clock this morning. [The Head-man repeats Daw Myo's words as he writes them down.]

Head-man: Em, at the time stones came down, who were with you?

Daw Myo: I, myself; and Ba Myaing, Ma Thaike, and Po Tar -

Head-man: Wait, wait; say slowly. I, myself; and - [He jots down.]

Daw Myo: and Ma Thaike, - [The Head-man repeats 'and Ma Thaike', as he writes.]

Head-man: Em.

Daw Myo: And Maung Po Wa, - [He repeats Maung Po Wa, while jotting.]

Head-man: Em.

Daw Myo: That's all

Head-man: So, total five people.

Daw Myo: Yes, in addition to that, before Ma Thaïke and Po Wa, Pho Tar –

Head-man: [Interrupting] Wait, wait; just answer my question. Did you see the men throwing missiles?

Daw Myo: I dared not go out to look, Head-man. The missiles were coming from all sides, banging, on the roof and floor.

Head-man: I warned you to answer only my question; don't you get my point? While I am carrying out the business of his Majesty, the King Emperor, you cannot be impertinent to me. Tell me what I ask you; no rubbish talk like 'smearing bamboo with shit'.

[Ko Pho Hlaing, head-of-ten-households, and Sein Net come in.]

Head-man: Come; sit down, head-of-ten-households. And, Sein Net, take down notes. [He gives him the note sheet and fountain-pen.]

Head-man: So you did not see who threw the missiles?

Daw Myo: Yes. [Sein Net takes note of the question and answer.]

Head-man: Is there anyone in the quarters who hates you?

Daw Myo: I have goodwill for all. But people are envious when you are better off than ---

Head-man: [Interrupts and reprimands.] You're too long-tongued, old lady. Don't beat about the bush. Is there anyone who hates you; yes, or no?

Daw Myo: [Rather curtly] No, why do I have to answer that?

Head-man: No counter question; do you know who you are talking to now?

Daw Myo: Of course, you are the Head-man.

Head-man: Do you understand what that means? [Daw Myo looks straight at the Head-man.]

Head-man: Listen; the Head-man means the representative of the King Emperor. You hear that. Don't try to befool me; remember you can get into trouble. Hey, Sein Net, do you bring the cartridges.

Sein Net: Yes sir. [Daw Myo turns to look at the gun.]

[Ba San, Pho Tar, Ma Thaike, and Lu Hla enter. Pho Tar is rubbing his left cheek with his hand.]

Head-man: What do you know about the stoning of this house?

Lu Hla: No sir, we don't know anything.

Head-man: Think carefully before you say anything. If the culprit is not identified, I'll have to take you to court.

Po Wa: We were not here when it was happening.

Ba San: We arrived only later; - - to find out what's happening.

Head-man: If so, why did you remove the stones, i.e. the evidence?

Lu Hla: Because, Ba Myaing asked us to help clean up the place. [Daw Myo looks at Ba Myaing, and he returns the look.]

Ba Myaing: No, I didn't ask them.

Head-man: What's that you all are saying? Are you applying the motto: *Bu ta-lone saung, oh-aung ma sin-ye* (Adopt a 'No', and you'll never become a poor fellow, even in old age.)? Pho Tar, you will understand me, mind you.

Pho Tar: Beg your pardon. This plaintiff has said, you came into her place, and threatened to beat her with a stick. What do you want to say about that? [He turns to Daw Myo] Who's the witness present then?

Daw Myo: Ma Thaike and Maung Po Wa.

Head-man: How about that? Can you explain? In your defense.

Pho Tar: [Beating his chest with the fist] Oh, that's *dein-nyin-thee*, awful-smelling vegetable, accusing shit as foul-smelling. 'Action first' seems to be a rule of life. She'd been jerking her husband's head, pulling up and down a bunch of his hair; that's in the presence of Po Wa and Ma Thaike, here. And when I stepped in and separated them, she slapped me in the face. It's still painful. [He rubs his cheek.]

Daw Myo: Look, look, look. [She looks at the Head-man; after face-to-face with the woman, the Head-man looks at the gun; Daw Myo also looks at it.]

Daw Myo: [Restraining her intense temper] Please ask Ma Thaike and Maung Po; it's before them he threatened with the stick. If Ba Myaing hadn't pulled him away, he would have hit me.]

Head-man: [Turning to Ma Thaike and Maung Po Wa] Did you see it.

Po Wa: [With a calm voice] I saw Daw Myo slapped Pho Tar's face.

Daw Myo: You do your worst; do – [Staring at the Head-man's gun, she controls her temper.]

Head-man: Pho Tar, Do you want to make a complaint against her for slapping?

Pho Tar: No Sir, No. My policy is to tolerate because this clash is between a senior and a young person; and I'm the young one.

Daw Myo: No, Head-man, Sir; this is all wrong. Hey, Ba Myaing, why are you tight-lipped, like a dull bull? Say what you should. Hem – [She stands silent, looking at the gun.]

Head-man: I can't take statements from you now about the case of stoning the house. Aye, you go back to your own business; but at four o'clock in the afternoon, you all come to my place. You hear me?

[After saying a simultaneous 'yes'; they all left, except Ko Pho Hlaing, the head-of-ten-households.]

Head-man: Now, head-of-ten-households, after you go back, you have the task to further investigate this case. Do your best; to be dutiful is a man's obligation.

Head-of-ten-households: You are right, Mr. Head-man, Sir. I will do my best.

Head-man: O.K. then; you may go. [The head-of-ten-households departs.]

Daw Myo: Pho Tar and Po Wa are unfair witnesses; they told wilful lies. I can swear on oath, taken with a drink of water from the vase in front of the Buddha statue. What I said was the truth; he raised a stick over my head, and it's only because Ba Myaing pulled him away, that he didn't physically hurt me. This is true. Hey, fellow, say your part.

Ba Myaing: Yes, that's correct.

Head-man: [Shaking his head] Don't you know that in the justice system under His Majesty's British government, witnesses are important. Come Sein Net; let's be off. [The Head-man goes off, and Sein Net follows him with the gun on his shoulder. Daw Myo keeps her eyes on the gun.]

Daw Myo: Silly bloke; you shouldn't get the name Ba Myaing; rather, you should be called Dummy. You don't know what to say. They have all rehearsed their statements. Oh, you do your worst for me, but God knows. The sun's quite high up. Don't make this home a rowdy, crowded place with your brothers-in-law, while I am going to the market. Don't cook rice again; I'll buy it in the market and send it. [She changes dress; the colour of her dress, with a bit lighter shade, does not match her physique. For makeup she smears *thanatkha* on her face, as well as powders it. Before going out she picks up a perfume bottle from the small wall-shelf, and sprays perfume on the coconut, suspended from the wall, an offer to the 'nat', the guardian god of the house. While spraying perfume, she chants with a partially audible voice. Then she leaves.] [Ba Myaing picks up the pieces of broken pot, examines them, and dumps them in the backyard. Then he examines the spots in the house that had been hit by stones, and later, he sits by the side of the bed, gazing at the floor.] [Ba San, Pho Tar, Lu Hla, Po Wa and Ma Thaike enter.]

Ba San: Hey, Ba Myaing, we shouldn't look on like this; we'd rather do something for you. You remember our saying, '*Ein shay pu-sa ein nauk ma chan-tha*' (When there's quarrel in the front of the house, there's no happiness in the back.) You know, as neighbours, we share your woes. So we must make a plan today to free you from the woes, to get your relief; will you follow our plan?

Ba Myaing: No, please don't.

Lu Hla: You fool, don't understand we're here to help you.

Ma Thaike: You're talking not like a man.

Lu Hla: [He picks up the stone slab and *thanaka block* (accessories for preparing makeup) and puts them in front of B Myaing.] Now, here are the makeup accessories, make *thanakha* paste, for face makeup. Come on, do it now.

Ba San: Now, we can't go on like this. Let's get Pwa May over here. Call her name aloud. [Pho Tar goes to the window and shouts, 'Pwa May'; reply comes from her.

Ba San: Listen, Ba Myaing. Our plan is this. You come with us, and we will keep you in hiding in a suitable place. Then we will send Pwa May to the market to bring back your old woman. When she comes back, she'll explode to find you are away from home. Her angry moment will be the moment for us to take a step. [Ba Myaing, appearing frightened, looks at Ba San.] Hey, there's nothing to fear. I assure you, your old woman will not touch you even with a finger tip. Come with us. [Pwa May enters.] Now, Pwa May, you please haste to the market, by the back lane, and find Daw Myo.

Tell her that her home is deserted, with doors open, and Ba Myaing has gone out, his where-about unknown. Tell her as I tell you. You get what I said? O.K. make haste. [Pwa May departs.]

Ba Myaing: Do you want to see me killed? Don't go ahead with that.

Po Wa: [Gives a wink at Pho Tar and Lu Hla.] Now –

[Pho Tar and Lu Hla pull along Ba Myaing by force.]

Ba Myaing: [Struggling] For God's sake, please stop. I request with my coupled-palms-on-forehead, ten times.

Po Wa: Oh, wait a minute. We must write a letter. [Pho Tar and Lu Hla let Ba Myaing free.]

Po Wa: [Takes a sheet of paper and pen and gives it to Ba Myaing.] Take this, and write down as I dictate.

Ba Myaing: What's that?

Po Wa: Hey, bloke, don't be long-tongued. There's no time; if the old lady is back, we'll be caught here.

Po Tar: [Pulls out the dagger from his waist, and pointing it at Ba Myaing] Hey, man, will you write, or not.

Ba Myaing: [Hurriedly] I will; I will.

[He prepares to write.]

Po Wa: Now, begin; 'Ma Myo, I left home, to suicide, because of great unhappiness; For you, I allow freedom; you may remarry, or get children. You have complete choice; but I want you not to be too bad a wife with your new man, as you have been with me. Ba Myaing'

[Pho Tar looks on, with dagger at the ready, as Ba Myaing takes the dictation. He occasionally looks up as he writes.]

Po Wa: Now, give me the paper. [Ba Myaing gives the paper and pen.] Can't write a line straight. Poor handwriting. Take him away. Ba Myaing is taken away by Pho Tar and Lu Hal, one on each side grabbing his arm, and Pho Tar has the dagger pointed at B Myaing's side.]

Po Wa: Good-for-nothing, this bugger; he loser's the price of man. Don't we have the proverb, '*Mayar nay sa kyaung thay hma;*' - (when one starts life with a wife, he should have got the cat

dead.) One got to suppress a wife right from the start. One slip in the beginning, he'll suffer husband-bullying the whole life; wife wouldn't know how to respect him.

Ma Thaïke: Also, '*Lin nay sa sin thay hma.*' (Get the elephant killed, when you start life with a wife.) Isn't that also a proverb?

Po Wa: [Sternly] Shut up. You don't have a role here.

Ma Thaïke: I am telling the truth.

Po Wa: This is what you get for telling the truth. [He slaps Ma Thaïke in the face. She rubs her cheek out of pin.] Now, you go back home. [Ma Thaïke goes out with a painful look.]

Ba San: You are too aggressive. This is not the way husband and wife deal with each other; one is not to bully the other. There's husband-ethics, and wife-ethics.

[Pho Tar enters.]

Pho Tar: Friends, the old woman is coming back.

Pho Wa: Is it Pwa May's home we go? [He spreads Ba Myaing's letter on the floor and puts a piece of fire-wood on it.]

Po Wa: Yes, Ko Lu Hla is waiting there.

Ba San: Now, the demon-like woman is coming; let's be off; come, hurry.

[They all leave the place. After two three minutes, Daw Myo and Pwa May come in hurriedly. Daw Myo picks up the letter and reads it.]

Daw Myo: Alas, he tries my nerves.

[As she rolls the paper and is about to throw it away]

Pwa May: What's that Ma Myo? Show me.

[Daw Myo passes the letter and Pwa May reads it.]

Daw Myo: [Pacing the room] You got to run to get free. You test my nerves, and you got to pay for it; that's not free. I am Ma Myo. He follows his brothers-in law, who provoke. Do what you can; see if I don't kill you this time. [She stops a moment.] He couldn't go far yet. [She opens the trunk behind the bed, and looks inside.] He's still around with neighbours; he hasn't taken away his shirts and *lungyis*. Pwa May, you stay here and look after the place; I'll track him down.

Pwa May: All right. [As Daw Myo is about to go out, Daw Shan enters.]

Daw Shan: Hey, Ma Myo, wait a moment. What's your problem? I hear Ba Myaing has deserted. Is it true?

Daw Myo: Look there, the letter he wrote. Haughty fellow. [Daw Shan takes the letter from Pwa May and reads it.]

Daw Myo: He says, he allows me to take another husband, or get children. *Phoo*, what should I say to him? I will turn the world up side down.

Daw Shan: There's conspiracy for sure; his friends, who conspire. Your worse-half has not the guts to go this far. We haven't got any fellow who's good in our quarter.

Daw Myo: Shameless hussies, do they want to snatch my husband? Or those mother-fxxxxxx bastards, do they want to marry their mother with him?

[As Daw Myo speaks, Daw Shan yawns a few times; then she stares ahead, quivering. Gradually, quivering turns into turbulent vibrations; Daw Myo, looking with amazement, calls, "Ma Shan" and rushed to embrace her. But Daw Shan, in a very angry mood, pushes her away, saying, "Go away." Daw Myo falls down on her tummy. She is staring at Daw Shan.]

Daw Shan: [Vibrating vigorously] Do you know who I am?

[Daw Myo looks on with greater amazement. Pwa May shouts from the window, "Daddy, daddy," three four times. An 'aye' is heard in reply. Pwa May watches Daw Shan as she continues standing by the window.]

Daw Shan: [In a stern voice] Hey, don't you hear my question? Do you all get into trouble? [U Sein and U Myit come in, running.]

[Daw Myo, shaking more, and getting more aggressive] I say, do you know who I am?

U Sein: [Appearing very frightened] Yes; please say which of the great gods you are.

Daw Shan: I am the guardian god of the banyan tree on the west of Tavatimsa Temple.

U Sein: What is the business you are here for, most excellent guardian god?

Pwa May: Rubbish. What guardian god of banyan tree? Just a plan to get good lunch for the company of devils!

Daw Shan: [Anger exploding] Hey, what an insult, you, - you? [She thumps the floor with her heel, making a bang.] Hey fellows, why look on? [Pwa May exclaims, 'Daddy, daddy, I'm gone!' She covers her face with hand, and falls down. U Sein rushes in to pull up Pwa May and keeps her in his arms.]

U Sein: Oh, daughter, my dear, daughter, [Pwa May is still covering her face with hand and remains in U Sein's arms] All guardian gods, please forgive these foolish kids. They're so ignorant, I apologize for their words.

Daw Shan: Ha, ha; now you know, it's no joke. You know a crocodile from fire-wood block. [Pwa May yawns a little; then, looking here and there from her dad's arms, she struggles to get up.]

U Sein: Daughter, daughter, my dear - -

Daw Shan: [With a strong voice] Ma Myo; [Daw Myo moves one step forward in a respectful way.] take Pwa May home; then come back swiftly. I've got things to tell you.

Daw Myo: Come, Pwa May; let's go.

U Sein: [When they are about to get out] Daughter, make homage to the gods.

[Pwa May does homage]

Daw Shan: Bear in mind, never to be disrespectful. { Daw Myo and Pwa May leave.}

U Myit: [Looking from the window] They are leaving.

Daw Shan: [Stopping the god's role] Oh, it's quite a job. I get pretty tired. [She sits down.]

U Sein: But you have done very well. And you are the only one in the community that she trusts. You've got to persevere; the guy is pathetic.

U Myit: The virago, the scolding woman is quite impressed; and Pwa May went with her eyes wide-open. Good job, Ma Shan.

Daw Shan: I will say everything when she comes back. Hey, some one, look out the window; in case she catches us like this, our plan will get exposed. {Heaves a sigh} I'm tired; breathless almost.

[U Sein is looking out occasionally.]

U Myit: Yes, you got to tell. But how did these two lunatics get married?

U Sein: Ha, that's a nutty job by U Ba Ohn, the township officer, who moved to another town. Em, she's coming.

Daw Shan: You keep on jumping for the time being; make noise, to make her think I'm still rampaging. That will frighten her.

[U Sein and U Myo thumped the floor.]

Daw Shan: Stop, stop.

[She returns to the god-possessed state.]

U Sein: [Rather loudly] Lord Banyan-Protector, pardon her this time. Another insult on you, we will not tolerate. {Daw Myo enters.]

Daw Shan: Do you remember Than Shwe, from Up-hill quarters, last year? All sorcerers had to give up. Do you know who did it, inducing the suffering?

U Sein: How can we know? Please tell us Lord Banyan-protector.

Daw Shan: I, I did that. Mi Myo, come here. [Daw Myo approaches her.] Sit down. [Daw Myo sits on her knees. Daw Shan had her temper rising.] You are very bad; you take a young husband and bully him. Is that good woman's behaviour? I have come today to stop your folly. [Daw Myo attempts to apologize, but was speechless.] Hey, Ye Gaung.

U Sein: So sorry Lord Banyan-Protector; please pardon the silly ones. Just once, this time. Forgive their mistakes.

Daw Shan: Why do you meddle? Not once is her result. How many times, do you know?

U Sein: If she promises not to bully her husband, we make appeal on her behalf. Please forgive her.

Daw Shan: Mind your own business. I am getting impatient.

[U Sein approaches Daw Myo and in sign language tells her to apologize.]

Daw Shan: Stupid woman. I can't spare her; she shouldn't live; this rice-exhausting woman, a heavy burden for earth.¹

[U Sein again makes gesture.]

Daw Myo: I will not, in future - - [Daw Shan thumps on the floor hard. Daw Myo is taken aback.]

Daw Shan: What was it you're going to say? 'I will in future -' what?

¹ The Myanmar saying is: *San kon myay lay* (literally, rice spent, earth heavy.)

Daw Myo: I will not behave badly to my husband.

Daw Shan: But you have been bad, until now. I should finish you off. Where are the four ogres? –

U Sein and U Myit [Simultaneously] Please spare her this time. Only once.

U Myit: [Looking at Daw Myo with kindly passion] Speak now; say it properly. A small default may cause you life.

Daw Myo: [Bowing down on knees, hands coupled on forehead, in posture of obeisance] Spare me lord; pardon me this time; if I am silly again, you kill me. Now I know I have done foolish things; yes I have been foolish. [While Daw Myo makes her apology, Daw Shan interrupts her repeatedly, with hot temper.]

Daw Shan: You're foolish at your age?

Daw Myo: Punish me if I misbehave next time. I'm serious to mend my ways.

U Sein: May I request final pardon on her behalf, Lord Banyan-Protector.

Daw Shan: *Tae*; [Changing to look satisfied] Come near me. [Daw Myo approaches near Daw Shan with frightened appearance.] There are a lot more women in Pantanaw who bully husband. They think it's nice behaviour. It can land them as charred-food stuck at the bottom of *Avizi*; the deepest hell, you know. Hey, Ma Myo.

Daw Myo: I'm at your feet, revered lord.

Daw Shan: I want you to change in many ways. You hear me. You must keep Ba Myaing happy; you must keep good terms with folks in the community; and you must give up your arrogant ways. Be polite in your speech and actions. Do you get my point?

Daw Myo: I will do my best.

Daw Shan: And, to watch if you keep your promise, I am staying in your home, transformed as a house-lizard. One step wrong, I will have you killed.

Daw Myo: Ba Myaing is –

Daw Shan: That's rude. Put Ko and call him Ko Ba Myaing. Although he's younger, you must respect him; he's the head of household. Oh, how you made problems. Ba Myaing has been so unhappy, he went to the river to drown himself. I have to invoke my powers to stop him. Do you

know that? Now he's in Pho Thar's home; I sent him there. Pho Myit, go fetch him. [U Myit goes out. Daw Shan, trembling, falls on her back. U Sein catches her, and keeps her in embrace.]

U Sein: He has left. He has left. Press hard over Ma Myo's gallbladder.

[Daw Myo presses on Daw Shan's gallbladder. U Sein, holding Daw Shan in his arms, blows air from his mouth, at Daw Shan's head. After a while, Daw Shan yawns with 'ha, ha'. With a look of surprise, she surveys the scene around.]

Daw Shan: Why am I embraced, and why the pressure on my belly?

U Sein: Oh, Great Daw Shan; the Lord Banyan-Protector came to cause havoc. You were the medium.

[The house lizard chirrup from the wall; he looks to locate the sound, *kyut, kyut*.] Oh, sorry Lord Banyan-Protector, I have misspoken, and I apologize for that.

Daw Shan: What, what happened, Maung Sein?

U Sein: [Keeping his composure] Says he's the guardian god of the banyan tree to the west of the Tavatimsa temple; the Lord Banyan-Protector. Says he can't bear to see Ba Myaing so much bullied by Daw Myo, and that he was going to wipe out Daw Myo. And he possessed you for the medium. My daughter Pwa May spoke a word he didn't like, and I don't know what he had done, when Pwa May fell down crying, 'daddy, daddy'. [He acts to demonstrate Pwa May's fall.] Then, when Daw Myo went to send Pwa May home, Pho Myit said some thing wrong, provoking him. At that you jumped up and down so violently, I thought the house might collapse. Once you jumped up from sitting; went as high as the ceiling, then came down with a bang on the floor.

Daw Shan: I don't know that. What I remember is instant loss of consciousness. Then, what did he tell Ma Myo?

U Sein: Oh, he was very upset with her; he threatened to kill her, and we had to appeal for clemency. We said, 'Have mercy on the foolish on Lord, etc.' He seemed to be very determined, but showed mercy in the end.

Daw Shan: Yes there's something M Myo; you're quite notorious, so much, the message has got to the Lord Banyan-Protector.

Daw Myo: That's not for my own will. You know these are bad times. There are women aplenty, especially young ones, who are envious that I have married a young husband. I have to protect, so

hat he doesn't become their property. I don't even send him to do shopping, because I don't feel he's safe from such women.

Daw Shan: Oh, if that was your problem, you ought to have discussed with be from the beginning.

U Sein: That's right; Daw Shan is the expert on family problems.

Daw Shan: To get husband's devoted love, you have to use soft approach; be nice to him; speak sweet words; coax him again and again and again. Haven't you heard about a clever wife, who won over very aggressive man, with big sharp *dama*, (chopping knife)? The *dama* was his favourite piece, which he sharpened himself, and kept ready for use. One day when he was away, his wife took it to chop fire-wood. Unfortunately she damaged the *dama*; a chip splintered off its sharp blade. That was sure to infuriate the man. But the wife approached him smartly when he came back. She began with sweet affectionate talk. When she sensed the man was softened, she revealed the disaster with the *dama*. "Darling, I have a worry, but I have to tell you. I chopped fire-wood with your *dama* when you were out, and it got a chunk of the blade chipped off. I am sorry to have damage something you cherish. Forgive me, darling," she said. Not surprisingly, the man's reply was, "So what, I'll get a new one."

This is a lesson. A woman can secure her man's love only with tender words; speak with him affectionately. Men like coaxing; do it.

That is a prescription for married women; use that, and he will not leave home even if you eject him with a lever. [Daw Shan whispers into Daw Mayo's ear.]

Daw Myo: Oh no; it's embarrassing to do that. [The house-lizard chirrups again.] [Looking in the direction of the house-lizard] O.K., O.K., I will adopt it.

Daw Shan: Now, we must visit Pwa May to see how she's doing.

Daw Myo: She's getting better. You stay with me for a while; I'm still scared.

Daw Shan: It's in plain day-light. He wouldn't harm you unless you don't take his words.

U Sein: We will join you, coming by the short path, when Ba Myaing and others come back.

Daw Shan: Hey, remember my words.

Daw Myo: Yes. [Daw Shan and U Sein go out.]

Daw Myo: [She utters alone.] It's difficult. [The house-lizard chirrups; she's frightened.] I promise, I promise to do it. [She puts makeup of *thanatkha* on her face; looks at house-lizard spots around

the house. She is scared whenever the house-lizard chirrup. She fans her face to dry out the *thanatkha*; then remakes her hair-do. She puts on light collared dress, and looks in the mirror; she scans every part of her body in the small square mirror. She paces to the front of the house, then shuttles back and forth, paying attention to herself all the time. The company is returning, Ba Myaing at the front, with a long portion of head-scarf dangling. Behind him are Ko Pho Thar and wife Ma Shwe Toke; neighbours Daw Mya and U Myit; and U Sein and Daw Shan. On confronting Daw Myo, Ba Myaing stops in front of the house, keeps standing, and looks at her with wide eyes.]

Ma Shwe Toke: [Pushing Ba Myaing from the back] Come on, go in; what makes you shirk? [Ba Myaing goes up with slow steps, with some fright,]

Daw Shan: Ma Myo, have you forgotten my words. [*kyut, kyut* from the house-lizard]

Daw Myo: [Startled, she turns from Ba Myaing to the house=lizard.] Ko Ba Myaing.

Ba Myaing: Yes. [He steps forward sheepishly.]

Ma Shwe Toke: Well, well; everybody sit down. [She takes the roll of mat from the corner and spreads it on the floor. They all sit. Ko Pho Thar and Ma Shwe Toke take Ba Myaing by the hands and bring him to sit beside Daw Myo. Ba Myaing is scared.]

Ma Shwe Toke: Daw Myo, you're looking pretty pretty.

Daw Myo: Don't tease me.

U Sein: Well, Ma Myo, we have brought back Ba Myaing as we have an obligation. And as you and the Lord Banyan-Protector have – [The house-lizard chirrup; U Sein looks in that direction.] The Lord Banyan-Protector hasn't gone anywhere. [Turning to his companions] Watch your words.

[He turns to Daw Myo] That's it; you have promised the Lord Banyan-Protector, and you got to keep that promise. If you err next time, there's no chance of pardon. Even if you might get it we are not going to appeal on your behalf. You will get what you deserve.

Daw Shan: Mai Myo is not that stupid. [She turns to Daw Myo.] Now, what's that I told you? [Daw Myo is embarrassed and reluctant to respond to Daw Shan, who glance at her with a look meaning to say, "you are stubborn. Why?"] [In the mean time, the house-lizard chirrup again; and every one looks at it. Daw Myo is shocked.]

Daw Myo: Ko, - Ko, - Ko Ba Myaing. May I pay homage to you to get pardon for my excesses. [She kneels before Ba Myaing and makes obeisance. Ba Myaing is in awkward mood, not sure

whether to run away, or remain sitting. He moves back slightly; then he stares at Daw Myo with surprise. Pho Thar is itching to laugh, and stops it with a feigned cough. The curtain is gradually falling since Daw Myo kneels down, to end when Daw Myo has made three bows.]

* * * * *

The Wife of a Bad Husband

There are no specific rules that describe the techniques for a man to get a good wife. Some men believe one should marry a girl of lower financial status to make sure she is obedient; but some time after marriage, many learn that the truth varies from expectation. Not all girls from poor families are mild tempered, and not all girls from rich families arrogant. People used to say that girls with good looks tend to become women of loose morals, but there are plenty women with loose morals who are not good looking. Many girls who flirt before marriage become composed and demure women when they are married; and there are many married women who flirt, but were once composed and demure girls. There are also cases like demure daughters of flirt mothers, and vice versa. Some girls are easy going before marriage, but after marriage, they become good wives who look after the family with motherly love; but there are the opposites of this type too. Some girls are very considerate for the relatives of their fiancées, but some change to become wives who have no regard for the in-laws.

Girls find the same difficulties in choosing a husband. Some young men who are great drunkards become husbands who are tame like an elephant controlled by a goad. But some are exactly the opposite of this type. Some young men went mad because of love, but once he marries her, he becomes a bad husband, who only gives her great distress.

Many from arranged marriages become bad husbands; but there are also girls who end up with a bad husband although they have chosen to marry the man for love. We cannot give simple rules in this regard.

For these reasons, the author has no wish to write about the techniques of getting a good husband; and even if he does, he has to confess his lack of ability.

However, in this introduction, the author likes to write about how a woman can tackle a husband, in particular, about:

1. Transforming a bad husband into a good one.
2. To make a husband keep his wife happy.

***Atta* [the self, or I]**

Humans (both men and women) are self-centered. Their attachment to 'self', 'I', 'mine' is perpetual. This attachment is the sole cause of all problems in human relations. When we find the cause of conflicts between individuals, this thing called *atta*, the self, or I, is evidently found to be the root cause. Two men both having one *tical*, weight measure, of *atta* will definitely collide. If we

look at a friendly pair, we will find that one has one *tical* of *atta*, but the other has only *half-a-tical*. For example, when both Maung Sein and Maung Hla want to become the president of an organization, there is no way they can get along in harmony. But when there is one, Maung Mya, who is happy to become its vice-president, then Maung Mya and Maung Sein are friendly. Maung Ba wants all his associates to listen to his words, and everyone, except Maung Kha listens to him. Then Maung Ba will be friendly with everyone, except Maung Kha. It is a sure natural law that if one can fulfil the desires of the whole world, he will be friendly with the whole world; and if he disagrees with one today, he will instantly lose that one's friendship.

The Prescription to Win Over a Husband

The above discussion guides us to the fact that if a wife wants to get on well with her husband, she should comply with his desires. A husband may relax his self-centeredness in dealing with other people; but he is likely to persist with his *atta* in his relations with his spouse. Thus the reason for most marriage problems stem from the *atta*, the self-ness of both partners. [Remark: In the play, 'The Husband of a Bad Wife', the author has written about the man who did not satisfy his wife's needs. The author directs the reader's attention to it.] A woman is like a leaf, as in the Myanmar saying, '*Phet paw su kya, phet pauk; su paw phet kya, phet pauk*' (literally, when the leaf falls on the thorn, the leaf gets pierced; when the thorn falls on the leaf, the leaf gets pierced.) A woman who would choose divorce, if she thinks her husband does not care for her, is generally the loser. Thus a woman who wishes to preserve family harmony should give up her *atta*, her self-centeredness; instead, she ought to adopt the motto: "Although my husband does not comply with my desires, I will, with his." Women may think, the author, a man, to be one-sided, and reject these words. But I say that this is the best prescription to repair troubled marriage.

"The husband should yield to the wife, and the wife should not oppose the husband," is a fair advice; but it is quite like telling Japan not to attack China. (Translator's note: At the time the author wrote this play, Japan had invaded China.)

I give the advice, "Comply with husband's desires" not without reason. True, it is one-sided; but, equally true, there is no alternative.

Consider a woollen cloth of good quality; the fabric is fine, and the pattern is beautiful; people fancy it, and the price is good. However, if its owner does not handle it with care, it may be damaged, such as by getting stained or creased; and that will degrade its quality and the price as well. Unless it is marketed at a severely reduced price, no one will buy this damaged woollen cloth.

Likewise, a divorced woman cannot fetch a good price. Even if she does, changing from one husband to another is a taint on her personality. For this reason, a woman should teach herself to disregard fairness or unfairness, whether it is balanced, or one-sided. She should understand that it is in her interest to try to compromise. The author believes this is the best advice.

Some girls have qualities to be proud of, like, “I am a rich man’s daughter; I am a graduate, with a B.A. degree; I am beautiful; etc.” But these factors, which contribute to the ego, only worsen the wife-husband relationship.

As the saying ‘*Phet paw su kya, phet pauk; su paw phet kya, phet pauk*’ applies to women, it is the woman who is always the loser in any marriage dispute. So a woman should remain single, or if she cannot, give up her ego and yield to her husband’s wishes. And, this is the author’s serious advice.

There are women who are wise and nice with their husband; but in some such cases, there can be a meddling sister, or mother, to influence her. If they succeed, and she turns egotical in her relations with her husband, then it is her grave mistake.

(b) “He/she who gratifies another, will himself/herself get gratified,” is a true saying, strange it is though.

Once there was a man who loves his *dama*, a big chopping knife, so much. He sharpened it and kept it against the wall, at the head of his bed. When his wife used it one day, a chip was torn off the blade. She knew what peril would befall her, as the damage could greatly upset her husband; she would surely be beaten, because he cherished the chopping knife so much. But the woman was wise and clever. She first said loving words to him, and gave him all he wanted. Then she told him about the chipped-off big chopping blade. The husband’s response was, “So what? I’ll get a new one.” She got pardoned and spared the beating. All women should carefully bear this story in mind if they want a happy marriage. However, there are husbands, who are worse; no amount of gratification or compliance on the part of the wife would work. With such husbands, there simply is no remedy. For the best approach, we suggest three strategies. (i) The *Mangala Sutta* contains the maxim, “*Asevanasa balanam,*” (Shun horrid persons.) Accordingly, the best way out with a horrid husband is divorce; the sooner, the better. (ii) If divorce is not practicable, the alternative is to retaliate, or (iii) to accept the bad situation as the result of one’s *kamma* from lives past, and so to tolerate. With a husband like Nyo Maung, we say that the first option is the best.

The Wife of a Bad Husband

- The Time:** Around 1295 Myanmar Era;
About 7:30 pm, one night in the month of
Thadinyuth (October, 1933)
- The Place:** Thongwa town; inside the police station compound
- The location:** The sitting room in the residence of
Ko Nyo Maung, police station chief,
and his wife Ma Than Tin

The curtain rises

[Ma Mya Yin, Ko Nyo Maung's elder sister, is smoking a cheroot; Ko Nyo Maung is standing near her.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [With an angry face] This is a simple case which will pass if she goes and explain the matter, sister.

Ma Mya Yin: [Raising her eyebrow, and making a wry face] A wife who does not love her husband is like that; why would she go and tell? She doesn't love you.

Ko Nyo Maung: [Gritting teeth and raising fist] Well, the unloving wife will realize tonight.

Ma Mya Yin: But, has your master, the District Superintendent of Police (D.S.P.) arrived in this town?

Ko Nyo Maung: He's here already; I have been to the guest house a few minutes ago.

Ma Mya Yin: [With a worried look] The case is in his hand; if he saves you, it will be over. Am I right?

Ko Nyo Maung: Yes, you're right. He's the king of police in this district. He has authority to deal with cases like this one. He's the first and last for this one. But Aung Myint and group are meddling; that's why the master is so angry with me.

Ma Mya Yin: [With an angry expression, raising forefinger] These bastards, oh, I apologize the deity guarding the house; they don't seem to be content with offering their wife for his pleasure; may be they want to add their sister as supplementary offer.

Ko Nyo Maung: This fellow has been aiming to take my post a long time ago. Every time the D.S.P. comes here, he nags him giving all kinds of presents.

Ma Mya Yin: His wife Hla May is an awful woman, a prostitute; I'd love to hit her cheek with a wooden slipper, strike after strike. It's not one month yet since she became the wife of station chief that she got conceited, seeing neither rain nor wind.

Ko Nyo Maung: One who hasn't seen a river thinks *Mu* is a river. She's exactly this type.

Ma Mya Yin: When I went shopping yesterday, I spent some time at Ma Hla Tin's shop; she invited me. After a few minutes I had sat down, that woman came. Oh, she's got awful makeup and hairdo. Her hair knot was more than one foot high, top on the head. And a lot of make up whitened her face. And she'd got a cigarette between her fingers. Did she ever smoke a cigarette before? Hateful to see her walking chest out, followed by policeman's wife, Mi Thein, carrying her shopping basket. When she saw me they turned toward Ma Aye Mya's shop. Mi Thein also looked haughty, you know; the type of slave who feels well-fed after seeing the master is gratified. She sees neither rain nor wind. She didn't have the courage to look up in our face before.

Ko Nyo Maung: All wives of policemen are good-for-nothing. They spend whole days carrying tales to breed hatred among people.

Ma Mya Yin: A few minutes after they left, Ma Tin Nyunt came and joined our conversation. You know what she said? She told us that Hla May came to her shop yesterday morning and said that your case was clear with all the evidence against you, so evident, you're sure to be sacked. She said, she saw no way you will return to the post, and her husband will become the permanent station chief, in your place. She claimed the D.S.P. likes them very much. She said this house is the station chief's residence. He's not moving in here because of sympathy for you; and the D.S.P. had asked them why they haven't moved to the official residence, more than once; that's what she said. Oh, there's much that Ma Tin Nyunt retold us, too much to remember all.

Ko Nyo Maung: Why should they like to move into this house? The D.S.P.'s steam boat is much more luxurious as residence. Why don't they go up and be happy there?

Ma Mya Yin: Hey, by the way, rumour is going around that her middle daughter, that young girl, is the child of Rowe Company manager, who had moved to Rangoon.

Ko Nyo Maung: I have heard that.

Ma Mya Yin: And there's a scandal with the new law officer. Is that true?

Ko Nyo Maung: She's not a good woman.

Ma Mya Yin: Leaving those things aside, I think you got to pay serious attention about your case, brother. Otherwise, 'a trivial may end up with your nose bleeding.'

Ko Nyo Maung: I don't need to do anything actually, if only she would go to the D.S.P. and make an appeal, giving all the facts. She needs to tell him to understand.

Ma Mya Yin: If that's the whole business, why don't you explain her? Why not tell her now?

Ko Nyo Maung: Oh, how many times must I tell her?

Ma Mya Yin: Not a bit she cares? Right? Well, what does she have to worry if you lose your job? You'll earn for her anyway.

Ko Nyo Maung: [After keeping silent and pondering] Hey – Mai Chit, Mai Chit.

Mai Chit: [From the kitchen] Yes, master. [She comes out running.]

Ko Nyo Maung: Tell your 'Sister' to come here.

Mai Chit: Very well master.

Ma Mya Yin: Tell her to come quick; we have important business.

Mai Chit: Very well aunty. [She goes inside.]

Ma Mya Yin: [Looking inside, she sits down on a chair, and straightening her body speaks within earshot of Ko Nyo Maung.] This is what you must tell her. Tell her seriously to go and see the D.S.P. tonight, and warn her you will divorce her if she doesn't. [Ko Nyo Maung gazes straight ahead.] What else? If she moves one way, you can go another way. How can the bloody woman be useful, if she has no kindness for husband? [Ko Nyo Maung continues staring.] Women are plenty. You can knock on one's head and pick up –

[Ma Than Tin comes out; Ma Mya Yin stops her words. She sits in a steady posture, but with a stern face. She lights a cheroot and continues smoking. Ma Than Tin looks about 28 years old, a slim woman with fair complexion, and pale lips, appearing a little in poor health. She also looks unhappy. Ko Nyo Maung who has been standing now takes a seat. Ma Than Tin sits down on a chair in the corner. They don't start talking immediately; Ma Than Tin looks down at the floor, Ma Mya Yin puffing the cheroot, and Ko Nyo Maung contriving ideas.]

Ma Mya Yin: Well, why not begin your issue? It's an important case; you can't take it lightly.

Ko Nyo Maung: Ma Than Tin, [He stares at Ma Than Tin, who is still looking at the floor. She does not reply for some time, and Ma Mya Yin gives her a scornful side-glance. With a wry look she shakes the cheroot.]

Ko Nyo Maung: You go and see him. –

[Ma Mya Yin is still giving a side-glance at Ma Than Tin; Ma Than Tin, still looking at the floor, shakes her head, but without a word. Ma Mya Yin puts the cheroot in her hand in the ashtray. Ko Nyo Maung with an angry face stares at Ma Than Tin.]

Ko Nyo Maung: I Have never spoken to you before with cursed vows. [He puts his coupled hands on the forehead.] ‘Wherever I go, may I die after vomiting boiling blood, if I do things like this in future.’

Ma Than Tin: [Staring at the floor.] You do it or don’t do it; that’s your business

Ma Mya Yin: [Intervenes in Ma Than Tin’s speech.] You mean you’re not going?

Ma Than Tin: [She raises her head and looks Ma Mya Yin in the face.] No, I am not going.

Ma Mya Yin: That means you are trying to be nice and clever?

Ma Than Tin: Yes of course. [With an impertinent look]

Ma Mya Yin: [Looking very angry] Don’t retort like that. I am not one you can disrespect.

Ma Than Tin: If you don’t like such retort, you should behave like an elder sister; keep your status. Why meddle in husband-wife affair? Don’t meddle.

Ma Mya Yin: If you are doing things wrong, I can’t keep mum. I must talk about all things from shit and urine.

Ma Than Tin: What have I done wrong? Tell me.

Ma Mya Yin: Every real human knows you are doing things wrong.

Ma Than Tin: If that’s the truth, I want humans to tell me what wrong I am doing.

Ma Mya Yin: The husband is in trouble; his wife refuses to help him; do we need to tell her how she’s wrong? Hem - is there a need to mention? Don’t you know yourself?

Ma Than Tin: Oh, my parents have lost one rice-mill; I have sold all my jewel ornaments; and ten acres of paddy-land pawned to the *Chettier*, and we are unable to repay for it. In spite of all this --

Ma Mya Yin: Don’t be haughty because of your riches.

Ma Than Tin: This is not haughtiness; I mentioned them because you said I have done nothing to help husband in trouble.

Ma Mya Yin: Not giving a damn care this moment; aren’t you blatant? If only you go and tell the D.S.P., the case will finish. Are you helpful at all?

Ma Than Tin: Em - after spending property for him, I can’t spend my body. I’m not stuff for complimentary gift.

Ma Mya Yin: [Gets angrier] It’s for your husband; you should even give up your life.

Ma Than Tin: That much valuable husband? Is he so good a husband?

Ko Nyo Maung: [Standing up with increased anger] You, daughter of bloody-xxxxed mother - . If I am too bad, have I turned you into a prostitute?

Ma Than Tin: Don't be rude; speak like a man.

Ko Nyo Maung: Rude! So what? Go to hell, you – [Rage rising as he speaks, he walks to Ma Than Tin.]

Ma Than Tin: [Standing up] Hit this bitch; hit hard on the cheek.

Ma Than Tin: Don't provoke my husband; you come, come hit me.

Ko Nyo Maung: You got too far. [He hits Ma Than Tin on the cheek, and pushes her; she falls on the chair, sitting.]

Ma Than Tin: [Abruptly rising up and standing beside Ko Nyo Maung] Kill me, kill me. You'll be happy only when I die. [She sobs, and covers her face with her hands, and sits on the chair. She weeps bitterly with her face resting on the chair's back-rest. Two servant girls come out running, and look at Ma Than Tin.]

Ma Mya Yin: Hey – bloody wanton girls! Are you here to watch your mother's death? [Servant girls run inside.]

[With a distressed mood, Ko Yin Maung looks at Ma Mya Yin; then he comes back to his chair. Ma Mya Yin gives sign to make a new attempt. She readjusts her *htamein* (Burmese skirt). Ma Than Tin is still weeping. Ma Mya Yin goes near Ma Than Tin and stands there.]

Ma Mya Yin: [Changing to a sweet face, she calls Ma Than Tin's name, and taps on her back. Ma Than Tin turns up and looks in her face.]

Ma Than Tin: [In great anger] Don't touch me.

Ma Mya Yin: No, no.

Ma Than Tin: [Interrupting, and scolding] What's that no, no?

Ma Mya Yin: [Staring at Ma than Tin] Don't be silly, sister. Listen to husband, once, this time –

Ma Than Tin: You go then; you are a free woman, and he'll prefer you. We have no mother-of-fatherless-child among relatives. No, we are not used to such behaviour.

Ma Mya Yin: Neither do we have women relatives who are adulterous; the type who goes out with another man, in the presence of a 'sitting' husband.

Ma Than Tin: Who's she, who takes a lesser-husband?

Ma Mya Yin: I don' know. But, I do know one, who was beaten when her lesser-husband's photo was discovered.

Ma Than Tin: So what? He's my lover. A man came up and married me, knowing that I had fiancée. Whose fault? Didn't he know that before marrying?

Ma Mya Yin: You threw sand in my brother's eyes to marry him. How can he know your status?

Ma Than Tin: Who threw sand into whose eyes, to plan marriage? Ask you brother if he hadn't read my letters to him, explaining I had a fiancée, and not to take me. The photo's been there in the silver powder tray since a long time ago; I have forgotten it. When he saw the photo, he beat me and accused me of keeping a 'lesser-husband'. Is that sufficient proof of adultery? Ask him if I had exchanged a single love-letter since marriage; do ask him. If I had a single letter coming or going, I'll have my head chopped off. I am not that shameless type of woman.

[A policeman enters, and gives Ko Nyo Maung a yellow sheet of paper. Ko Nyo Maung reads the letter, then puts on his uniform, and the hat.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [Turning to Ma Mya Yin] I've got to go; it won't take long. [Policeman and Nyo Maung go out.]

Ma Mya Yin: Hey- Mai Chit and friend, have you got dinner ready?

Mai Chit: [Coming to the dining room entrance] It's ready, aunty.

[Ma Mya Yin enters the dining room.]

Mai Chit: [Comes to Ma Than Tin] Ma Ma (sister), are you not eating?

Ma Than Tin: No, I don't want to eat.

Mai Chit: Why? You should eat at least a little, sister. You will have stomach ache, if it's empty.

Ma Than Tin: I am not worried about that; If I die, the sooner the better, because I am so unhappy right now. I don't want to live.

Mai Chit: I understand. '*Lin so maya ta far far*' (A bad husband's wife is always in a flurry), is a saying. I have gone through the 'flurry'; thanks to my great fortune, 'the benefactor' died early. If he were still living, I can't imagine how much woes he'll create for me.

Ma Than Tin: Is your worse-half so worse?

Mai Chit: Alas, there's no comparison to his badness; 'this brother' will be runner-up. Before he got up from bed, I had to run to the pub to buy a pint of liquor for him. Unless the liquor was ready there, when he woke up, he beat me. Then I cooked, and then I had to roll cheroots in the workplace, to earn money. But sometimes, I didn't have work, for shortage of materials, and had to come back without money, to buy drink for him. He got infuriated on such days and beat me; I've got to prepare for death. Daw Win, the cheroot-business owner, knew my situation; so she used to give me wages, even for my unemployed days, to enable me to buy drink. Of course, I had to repay it. When I was six months pregnant, he asked me to bake dried beef, for appetizer to go with his drink. But, when I stayed lying because of stomach ache, he threw a stick at me, which I stopped

with my arm, to protect the womb. I was fortunate, it didn't hit there. And, one day, soon after child-birth, when I was still in confinement in sweat-chamber, he came back drunk, and behaved rowdily. My blood pressure rose, almost to death. Hell; life had been hell for me. I escaped it only when 'the benefactor' died.

Ma Than Tin: Don't you intend to remarry?

Mai Chit: Oh, double salaam, Ma Ma. Once bitten, twice shy. By the way Ma Ma, I have heard Ko Sein Tun telling your story. Is it true that you married 'brother' because of your father. Is it correct that you father threatened to take poison, if you refused to marry him? [Ma Than Tin gives a nod.] Oh, isn't he informed about 'brother'?

Ma Than Tin: Of course we knew; but parents hoped he would mend ways when he got married, and built up a family with children. That's why they arranged to the marriage.

Mai Chit: Ba Ba Gyi (Grand-uncle) is so unkind; If I were Ba Ba Gyi, I would have found for you a better husband than Ko Ko Gyi (Brother).

Ma Than Tin: Not unkind; we can't say that. Parents like to see their children riding elephant, escorted by horses. Would they love to see son or daughter stampeded by elephant, or kicked by horse? No, they wouldn't.

Mai Chit: The saying is ridiculous, Ma Ma. When parents think they have found a match for their daughter, they use this saying to induce her to consent. I think there are countless couples who got into hot waters for believing in this saying. By the way, people say your former fiancée, Ko Ko Nyunt, is very handsome; isn't he?

Ma Than Tin: I want to forget these things; don't ask me. [Her face becomes pale, and as she gives a sigh, tears come down. At that point a man enters the parlour.]

Ma Than Tin: [In great surprise] Ko Ko Nyunt.

Ko Nyunt: [Laughing] Ma Than Tin, you seem to be a bit older. I can't recognize you very well.

Ma Than Tin: [Pointing to a distant chair] Take your seat. [The servant girl sitting near the dining room entrance goes into the dining room.] Mai Chit, bring the betel box; I have a guest here. We've been talking about Ko Ko Nyunt only a moment ago. How's your family, kids and all?

Ko Nyunt: They are fine. [Ma Mya Yin comes out, chewing a lump of rice. She looks at Ko Nyunt from head to foot, back and forth. Ko Nyunt intended to greet her, but finding her strange behaviour, he gazes at her with surprise.]

Ko Nyunt: Who is she? How's she related to you, Ma Than Tin?

Ma Than Tin: Ko Nyo Maung's elder sister.

Ko Nyunt: Aw, is she?

Ma Than Tin: What's your business visiting Thongwa?

Ko Nyunt: I didn't know you were here. I got information that there's an oil-mill for sale in Thongwa. I left Pathein yesterday. Do you know that we have moved to Pathein?

Ma Than Tin: I heard it about two years ago.

Ko Nyunt: That's true. We moved to Pathein about two years back. By the way, how's your husband?

Ma Than Tin: He went out about fifteen minutes ago.

Ko Nyunt: Aw – [Sein Tun comes in.] Hey, Ko Sein Tun.

Sein Tun: Saya (Master) Nyunt, when have you come here?

Ko Nyunt: This afternoon. Ko Sein Tun, you look like following Ma Than Tin's every move.

Sein Tun: That's true. And, your business here?

Ko Nyunt: I heard that here's an oil-mill for sale. So I came from Pathein; I left Rangoon about 2:30 pm yesterday after visiting pagodas. I have never been to Thongwa; this is my first visit. And I haven't known that you are here. But after business talk with my hostess, she asked me my native place. When I said I am a native of Danubyu, the lady asked me if I know police station chief Ko Nyo Maung and Ma Than Tin. She gave me information that Ma Than Tin is living here, and I have found out this place. Now, let me ask about Ko Nyo Maung's status. He's a Deputy Superintendent of Police now, isn't he?

[Ma Than Tin keeps her head down.]

Sein Tun: Saya, you haven't got the news yet, have you?

Ko Nyunt: Oh, since I left Danubyu for Pathein, I have had only little contact with Danubyu folks. Only when I come here, I get some information. But tell me so that I know fully.

Sein Tun: The case! Oh, it's quite embarrassing to tell. But it happened this way. There's a village, named Minywa, not far from this place, where he keeps a mistress. He frequently visited her saying he'd got business in the village. But, the Inspector of Police (I.P.), who's his senior officer, was watching his moves, to get a chance for revenge. The I.P. had a cause, because previously 'Big Brother', as Dy.S.P., had been the I.P.'s boss, and he had bullied him. But then their ranks reversed; 'Big Brother' had fallen, the other promoted. One day, 'Big Brother' visited his mistress, and while they were sleeping upstairs, the mistress's father was gambling in a card game, as banker. People had warned him about the I.P.'s intentions, but he didn't listen. So, that day, they were caught by he I.P.'s police team, including the station chief, who's currently in 'Big Brother's place. 'Big Brother'

was also taken in, implicated in gambling, as if he was the banker. The case went up to the D.S.P., who immediately suspended him. And, two or three times he had been drunken and rowdy in town. It's only because his people could cover up, nothing worse happen.

[Ma Than Tin is looking at the floor, and is shedding tears, and is breathing faster.]

Sein Tun: [Getting nearer Ko Nyunt] Saya, I think you ought to leave soon. [Ko Nyunt Maung looks at Sein Tun with a concerned face.] I say it, because - ha, I shouldn't explain. But, you leave here quickly, quickly. That's the best.

Ko Nyunt: [He looks at Ma Than Tin.] Ma Than Tin, I think you are not feeling well; your face is pale. Go and stay in bed, and I'm leaving. I'll return by the early steam boat tomorrow morning. So, bye, bye. [Ma Than Tin nods, without raising her head.] Well, well, you go to bed, and off I go.

[Ko Nyunt gets up to leave; Ma Than Tin also gets up, but she feels giddy, and is unsteady.]

Ko Nyunt: [Looking straight at Ma Than Tin] Go slowly; you look very weak.

[After two three steps Ma Than Tin faints and falls down. Ko Nyunt runs and picks her up in his arms.]

Sein Tun: [He's dumbfounded.] Mai Chit, call your aunt.

[Startled, Mai Chit runs inside.]

[Ko Nyunt is embracing Ma Than Tin, while Sein Tun fans her head.]

Sein Tun: [Seeing Mai Chit coming out,] Where's aunty?

Mai Chit: She's washing her hands, with soap; say's she's occupied.

[At this point, Ma Mya Yin comes out, wiping her hands with a napkin. She looks at Ko Nyunt and Sein Tun attending to Ma Than Tin; then pointing her chin in their direction, she asks Mai Chit, 'What's happening?' Ko Nyo Maung comes into the parlour, with a large note book in hand. He sees Ma Than Tin, Ko Nyunt, and Sein Tun, and looks at them with great surprise.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [Approaching Ma Mya Yin] What's happening?

Ma Mya Yin: I don't know. They were laughing with that visitor. I just come back after dinner, and I see them like this; she in the man's arms.

Ko Nyunt: Aunty [Ma Mya Yin looks at Ko Nyunt with wide eyes.] Before you speak recklessly, you should come and see the patient; see what's wrong with her.

Ko Nyo Maung: [Looking sternly at Ko Nyunt's face, and with greater anger, pointing finger] Hey - you bloke, are you not Maung Nyunt?

Ko Nyunt: [Appearing composed] Yes, I am.

Ko Nyo Maung: Then, you're a very insulting fellow. Hey, Mai Chit and Hla Shin, go and look after your 'Sister', keep her in your arms.

[Mai Chit and Hla Shin go and pick up Ma Than Tin; after handing over, Ko Nyunt stands up.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [As soon as he has ordered the girls] You will know who I am.

[He goes to the wall and picks up a police whistle, and blows it four five times.]

You have come here to steal my wife, haven't you?

Ko Nyunt: It's a misunderstanding, Ko Nyo Maung.

Ko Nyo Maung: Hey, you thief, you have no reason to call me Ko Nyo Maung.

[Ko Nyunt, gritting teeth, and fisted, looks at Ko Nyo Maung]

Sein Tun: You are wrong, Brother.

Ko Nyo Maung: Son of bitch; none of your business. Do you want a broken jaw?

[Sein Tun goes inside; three policemen, with batons, come in running.]

Ko Nyo Maung: Fellow men, take this man to the police station; lock him up. I'll come and make a complaint right now.

Policeman Number One: Yes, Master. [Ko Nyunt is hand-cuffed and taken away. Ma Than Nyunt briefly opens her eyes to look at Ko Nyunt taken away; then she closes her eyes.]

Ko Nyunt Maung: Hey, Sein Tun, bring me whisky bottle. Sister, you spend this night in a friend's place; come back in the morning.

Ma Mya Yin: Why?

Ko Nyunt Maung: Don't ask me why, or why not, when I am greatly upset. Just do what I tell you.

[Sein Tun comes out with whisky bottle in one hand, and soda bottle in another.]

Ko Nyo Maung: Hey, Sein Tun, you take sister to a house she likes. Then you come back quickly. [He drinks a half-cupful of whisky, neat. Car horn is heard since Sein Tun comes out with bottles. As Ko Nyo Maung finishes his glass, Ko Pho Lu, wearing long *lungyi*, and with a walking stick in hand, comes in; he is followed by Daw Kyawt. They meet Ma Mya Yin and Sein Tun, face to face.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [With whisky bottle in one hand, and his rage rising at the sight of U Pho Lu and Daw Kyawt] Go back, go back. I don't want anyone in my home. [U Pho Lu and Daw Kyawt look at Ko Nyo Maung with wide eyes. When Daw Kyawt sees Ma Than Tin lying, she exclaims, 'Oh God, what happened to my daughter.' As she rushes toward Ma Than Tin, Ko Nyo Maung intervenes; he pushes Daw Kyawt's chest; she falls to the floor.]

Ko Nyo Maung: Hey, Sein Tun, pull away this old woman. [Sein Tun, gets into rage instantly; he clicks a sound with his tongue, and he sizes a fist.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [Looking sternly at Sein Tun, he pulls out his gun.]

Son of bitch; how dare you do it; click your tongue at me? Do you want to lose your life at the tip of this barrel. I say, take away this old woman.

[Ko Nyo Maung keeps the gun pointing toward the group. Sein Tun goes to Daw Kyawt to take her out. Daw Kyawt struggles to get up to go to her daughter. When Ma Than Nyunt hears Daw Kyawt falling down, she opens her eyes, and tries to get out of Mai Chit's arms; but she collapses again.]

Daw Kyawt: [Struggling hard] What happened to my daughter? Let me look at my daughter, Maung Sein Tun.

U Pho Lu: Come, let's go. We'll go to the court to get daughter back. [Sein Tun and U Pho Lu pull Daw Kyawt out. Daw Kyawt is still struggling and shouting, 'let me see my daughter.' Ma Than Tin briefly opens her eyes, and closes again.]

Ko Nyo Maung: That's O.K. You can go where you can.

[He gulps whisky, neat.]

Ko Nyo Maung: Mai Chit, come and close the door; don't let any body in; I am going out, and coming back soon.

[He goes out, and Mai Chit closes the door.]

Mai Chit: [To Hla Shin] Come, let us move Ma Ma into the bedroom.]

Hla Shin: We are not strong enough to lift Ma Ma; if we drop her, she'll get injured.

Mai Chit: Oh, no. She's a light weight. Let's lift.

[Ma Than Tin shakes her hand, indicating not to move her. She points finger at her head, and shakes hand again.]

Hla Shin: Ho, don't move; she says she's feeling giddy. [Hla Shin put her arms around Ma Than Tin from the back. Mai Chit brings pillows from the bedroom two three times. She piles up the pillows so Ma Than Tin can lean her back. Ma Than Tin signals Mai Chit to keep her ear close to her mouth; she speaks with a weak voice. Mai Chit says, "Yes", and then swiftly goes out.]

Hla Shin: Ma Ma, are you better now? [Ma Than Tin nods.]

Hla Shin: Ma Ma, you are so weak, because your stomach is empty. I'll make coffee for you. That will give you strength. [Ma Than Tin shakes her head.]

[After about a couple of minutes, Mai Chit comes back with Daw Kyawt, and Sein Tun. Mai Chit closes the door.

Daw Kyawt: [Getting close to Ma Than Tin] Daughter, daughter; your mummy here.

[Ma Than Tin opens her eyes and looks at Daw Kyawt; tear drops come down from her eyes.]

Daw Kyawt: Oh, my poor daughter, you're suffering so much. Your father is now repenting after all your troubles.

[Ma Than Tin gives sign to Daw Kyawt to get her ear close to her mouth to listen; then she speaks.]

Daw Kyawt: Your dad is in the house next door. When we went out from here, they stopped us, and we decided to stay the night with them. [Daw Kyawt again takes her ear near Ma Than Tin's mouth.]

Daw Kyawt: It's your father who wanted that man for you; now he hates him, his heart aches with bitterness. I left him with the people next door. He says he does not want to step on the shade of this house. He feels so bitter for your husband.

Sein Tun: Is he bitter for this much problems?

Daw Kyawt: How are you now, my dear? Getting better?

[Ma Than Tin nods.]

Sein Tun: The old man is entirely converted; he was pro-son-in-law, even before marriage; now he's entirely opposed. Out of bitterness, he's now saying incoherent things. He says he will renounce his T.P.S. (*Taing kyo Pyi kyo Saung**) title, and also resign his *Thamadi-myowun***) post, and also the municipal councillorship once he returns to Danubyu. He's angry with himself.

Daw Kyawt: Your father has asked me to bring you if you decide to come with us. You are coming with us, aren't you? [Daw Kyawt gives a fixed look on her daughter. Ma Than Tin shakes her head. Daw Kyawt shows sign of great disappointment.]

Daw Kyawt: Why? [She places her ear close to M Than Tin's mouth.]

Daw Kyawt: Afraid other people will despise you? So what, if they do? Why do you have to care what other people think? Your happiness the most important for you, isn't it? We have a proverb: *Ma mha-de shay-nay, ma thay-de say-thamar* (There's no lawyer who hasn't got the law wrong; there's no physician who hasn't experienced a patient's death.) Life is like that. These things happen to you not because you are immoral. Who do you care? There's nothing to be ashamed of. [Ma Than Tin again shakes her head.]

Mai Chit: Ma Ma says she's afraid gossip will go around, saying, 'How now? The rich man's daughter is now kicked out, when no money from her father is left.' She has told me this worry frequently.

[The sound from a stopping car is heard. Sein Tun and Daw Kyawt rushed into the inner room.]

[From the outside, Ko Nyo Maung calls, 'Mai Chit, Mai Chit'.]

* It means promoter of the nation. This is a title given to prominent native civil servants and selected people.

** The direct literary translation is 'Righteous Mayor', but the actual and technical meaning is Honorary Town Magistrate.

Mai Chit: Yes, coming, brother. [Mai Chit opens the door. Ko Nyo Maung enters the sitting room, followed by a young girl with make-up and smart dress. The young woman slows down slightly when she sees Mai Chit, and looks at her.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [He picks up the girl's hand as he enters.] Come, this is your home; why are you hesitant entering your home? If you are afraid, I have encouraging medicine; here it is, to embolden you. [He opens the soda bottle, and pours whisky into the glass, nearly two inches deep; then mixes with soda.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [Passing the glass to the girl] Come on, drink this. The girl takes the glass and drinks the drink. Mai Chit on seeing the young woman drinking has chills running down her spine. Ma Than Tin opens her eyes and looks at them; then she turns to the other side. Ko Nyo Maung gulps down a glass of whisky and soda. The girl lights a cigarette from the packet on the table, and passes it to Ko Nyo Maung. Ko Nyo Maung opens his mouth, and the girl puts the lighted cigar in it.]

Ko Nyo Maung: Great. Mai Chit and Hla Shin, come join us; I'm giving a party. Come be merry with us; this is a party to celebrate my loss of job; I'm fired beginning tomorrow. Come, come; sit here. [Mai Chit and Hla Shin sit down at the places shown them.]

Ko Nyo Maung: [To Mai Chit and Hla Shin] You play *matha saing* (funeral music) with *pasat-saing* (vocal drum); my wife and I will dance.

New Woman: Oh, Ko Ko, that will make bad omens; no, *matha saing* no good. Can you do the song 'Mya Kwaha Nyo'? Do make that tune.

Ko Nyo Maung: No, no; I want only *matha saing*. This is my happy moment; Chit May start.

Mai Chit: We have no *pasat sing* skill at all; no, not a single tune.

Ko Nyo Maung: Oh, what poor girls? Can't play *pasat saing!* O.K. then; here I do. *Haw, haw – tu te nein tu te nein tu nein tu nein- tu te nein --* that's how it goes.

New Woman: No, Ko Ko, that's the tune of '*Shwe Kyee Nyo*' song.

Ko Nyo Maung: Aye, play it then. I'll dance.

[Mai Chit and Hla Shin sing *Shwe Kyee Nyo*, accompanied by clapping. Ko Nyo Maung and partner do duo-dance, clumsily. A little later, when they get drunk, Ko Nyo Maung asks his partner to do solo dance; while she does, he lays down on the settee opposite Ma Than Tin, with cigarette in one hand. The woman makes a ballet-spin, stretching arms; as she spins, she moves toward Ko Nyo Maung, and ends up in his arms. Ko Nyo Maung embraces her. Mai Chit and Hla Shin keep their heads bowed down.

New Woman: Ko Ko, d'you love me?

Ko Nyo Maung: Oh, yes.

New Woman: Whom d'you love more, your old one, or this new?

Ko Nyo Maung: Mi Than Tin, the good-for-nothing has been sold to the whore-house. No more such questions.

New Woman: Ko Ko, if you really love me, let's play the game of 'biting tongue'.

Ko Nyo Maung: O.K. That's fine. You bite mine first. Here it is.

[He puts out his tongue, and the woman puts it between her lips.]

Ko Nyo Maung: My turn now; come, give me your tongue.

[The woman puts out her tongue, which Ko Nyo Maung bites a bit hard. The woman gives a shrill cry from pain. She sheds tears.]

New Woman: [In a choking voice] You are so cruel, Ko Ko.

Ko Nyo Maung: 'cause I love you. Does that much give you pain?

New Woman: *Sin kyee-sar yar seik ma-khan tha* (The elephant's teases, but it gives unbearable pain for the goat.)

Ko Nyo Maung: Come, I'll coax you into sleep. And forgive me.

[The woman puts her head in Ko Nyo Maung's lap, and swings one arm around Ko Nyo Maung's waist.]

[Drunk, Ko Nyo Maung sings mixed passages from songs.

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New Woman: [Playing her hand around Ko Nyo Maung's waist, she reaches the pistol.] Ko Ko, take out your gun; I want to look at it. [Still singing, Ko Nyo Maung pulls out the pistol, and puts it in the woman's hand. She examines the gun.]

New Woman: [Aiming the pistol in Ko Nyo Maung's chest] Now, Ko Ko, tell me how much money I will get if I play bandit, and rob you. [Ko Nyo Maung, in heightened drunkenness, carries on with the *Sein chu kyar nyaung* with great enthusiasm.]

New Woman: [Taking the point of pistol barrel close to the chest] Here I am Ko Ko. I think I'll make a lot of money by robbing you. He continues with *Sein chu kyar nyaung*, his foot tapping the floor, marking the tune.]

New Woman: [Raising her voice] Here, Ko Ko – [She shakes Ko Nyo Maung's chin with the free hand.]

Ko Nyo Maung: Hey, wait a moment, let me carry on.

[He carries on with garbled voice, and eyes closed.]

New Woman: Stubborn, this Ko Ko; no giving up the song to listen here. Now, if I - [He continues the song. She turns the barrel tip in a small circle on Ko Nyo Maung's chest.] Listen Ko Ko, listen –

[A bang reverberates; Ko Nyo Maung gives out a loud painful grumble. Startled, the new woman, shakes down the gun and jumps up. Dumbfounded, she looks at Ko Nyo Maung. Ma Than Tin opens her eyes; frightened by the scene of blood, she closes her eyes again.]

New Woman: I don't know how it went off, Ko Ko.

[People inside come out rushing, with excitement. The Inspector and three policemen and some local folks also arrive in haste. One policeman picks up Ko Nyo Maung, and keeps him in embrace.]

Inspector: I say, Ko Nyo Maung, what happened?

Ko Nyo Maung: Doonn't - aask mee, -- inn—spec—tor; myy - wiiffe kielld me. Ththat's all. Thee –stooriee iss – Oh, thee painn --.

Shee goott boyy-freend -- bforree wee – marrieed; I didd –not know; -- soo – I maarried – herr. Since thenn—wee—quarrell -- every daayy. Oncee, -- I foundd her –lovrerr's -- foto – aannd lettterr. Soo – weee foughtt. Herr mann –camee –heeree—I – foondd demm inn --- hap - peey moodd. Hee - is arreested; I – sent him – to the – lock-up. I –comingg – back - after –makingg- - po-liicee coomm-plaint. Oh – it hurts. Shee, - shee – shoott me – when I , --whenn I – [He speaks with

signs, how Ma Than Tin shot him. Then he is unable to speak. He gets spasms; then becomes silent.]

[The people in the room gaze at Ma Than Tin with surprise.]

Inspector: Ma Than Tin, what do you have to say about Ko Nyo Maung's statement?

[Mai Chit stands up to speak, but Ma Than Tin stops her with motion of her hand. Everyone looks at Ma Than Tin.]

Inspector: What will you say Ma Than Tin? – U Nyo Maung – [He looks at Ma Than Tin with a questioning look of surprise.]

[The people remain staring at Ma Than Tin; Ma Than Tin nods; then with closed eyes, she keeps silent. Mai Chit and Hla Shin looking bewildered, cover their mouth with hand, continuing staring at Ma Than Tin.]

The curtain falls.

* * * * *

SUKRA

The play Sukra has been written for students; its aim is to make satire, rather than to tell the story.

The background shall consist of two forest scenes; both left and right sides of the stage also should be forest scenes. Close to the first background is an ant-hill, about three feet high, which extends about half the stage. At the base of the ant-hill, the ground should be dug out and filled with soft soil, to about two feet depth. This is to make it easy for the pigs to dig a cave underneath the ant-hill when the tiger comes.

The stage director has freedom to choose the dress, for the actors to look like pigs. But the author envisions a tight-fitting jacket, with sleeves tight at the wrist, and going down to the waist; plus tight-fit trousers, buttoned to the jacket; the tighter the dress, the better for the play. Thus it will be best to have dresses made to measure for each actor. All pigs shall wear brown canvas shoes in uniform.

The colour of the dress should imitate the colour of pig-skin. The head-dress, or hat, also tight and covering the forehead, should have two projections to represent pig ears, and the nose covered with snout, made of cardboard. The hat should be secured by means of a strap going round the chin. And the hand and fingers should be painted the same colour as the dress.

A pearl necklace may be used to distinguish a female pig from a male. But there is concern that camouflage will cover up the expressions of the characters. And the author considers it may be better to have gold rings, like Indian women, on the snouts of the pigs. But, the director has freedom to adapt in the manner he deems best.

The tigers, like the pigs, shall wear tight dress, but with stripes like a tiger's, and preferably with a long tail attached. The shoes should have the colour of tiger skin. The head has to have a hood of a tiger's head. The hermit, however, can be dressed as an ordinary hermit.

Attention should be paid to see that the character who plays Sukra has a bigger build than the others.

The writing of the play Sukra was completed just before the parliamentary election of 1937. And, it is a satire, to the best of the author's ability, to represent the political situation, current then in Burma.

SUKRA

The Time: Once upon a time, when the King Bramatta was ruling in the kingdom of Banares.

The place: A forest

The curtain rises

Enter a carpenter and wife, with Vuttaki Sukra¹*, from one edge of the stage. Vuttaki Sukra enters staring straight at the ground ahead of him. Behind Sukra, the carpenter and wife stroll in, looking at him. Sukra sits near the ant-hill, gazing at the ground, while the couple takes seats on either side of him, and keeping silent for some time.

Carpenter: You don't have to worry, son; your mum and I will be coming to the forest to visit you quite often. The Burmese say, '*Pyaw yar hma ma-nay ya, taw yar hma nay ya*' (One lives not where he's happy, but where it's most convenient). Like in this saying, when you have grown up, the town is not suitable for you, because there're scoundrels, and they are plenty in deed. Boy, we have drunkards as neighbours who are always eyeing on you to make meat to go with drinks. It's very dangerous in town for you. [He sighs.] [After keeping silent a while] Well, life's like that. [He stands up and looking at his wife] Right, my dear, it's time to say good bye to your son; say bye, bye, and let's be off.

Wife: [Wiping tears from her eyes] Bye, bye, son. Death doesn't do mum and son part, but life does. [She weeps with her face on Vuttaki Sukra's shoulder. The pig keeps staring at the woman.]

The Pig: Don't worry for me, mum. I will listen to your words and dad's, and find a place that suits me. It's been a burden on you bringing me up; and you've made a number of enemies because of me. Well, well, time is running out. [The carpenter takes his wife's hand, preparing to leave. The wife, looking straight at the pig, sheds tears. The pig returns a sympathetic look at his adopted mum. Pulled away by the carpenter, the woman keeps looking at the pig; he pig looks on as they leave.]

[In the mean time a noisy situation occurs, including spoken sounds, saying, 'These fellows are deliberately deceiving us. – What have you done? If we go on like this the pig species will get wiped out'; 'We want heroes to fight the menace of the tiger'; 'We will befriend with the hermits.'

¹ Sukra is a Pali word meaning 'pig'. [translator's note]

‘No, we will not’; ‘They are fighting for the food bowls,’ etc. The pig turns to look, and sees a number of lean pigs, which appear surprised at seeing a big pig. They stopped their conversation, and timidly approached the big pig. The front pig begins.]

First pig: Friend, - [The lean pigs focus their attention on the big one. The big pig gives a stare at the first pig, as if to hypnotise him, and then the same look at the others. The herd falls silent, like a fire extinguished by water. The first pig is choking with words in his throat.]

Sukra: [Pointing finger at the first pig] Who are you, friend?

First pig: [Looking like a bullied-wife, trying to appease her husband, he moves one step toward Sukra.] My name is Bay Tu.

Sukra: Bay Tu, that’s great. [Pointing at the next] And, you?

Second pig: I am Pok Su.

Sukra: [Again pointing at the next, a female] And who’s she?

Third pig: My name is Kwa Sei.

Sukra: Bay Tu, Pok Su, Kwa Sei. And what are your occupations?

Pok Su: I have left the university some time ago, but I’m still unemployed.

Sukra: [Points finger at Bay Tu.] And how about you?

Bay Tu: [With a befriending look, and smiling] Because of the power of my *kamma* from the long, long past, in the previous lives, yes - - [He coughs.] I don’t need to work. I am living on my parent’s earning, and also the support of my relatives.

[The pigs close to him smile. And Sukra looks at Bay Tu, smiling.]

Sukra: How about you, Kwa Sei?

Bay Tu: Our big sister also enjoys good *kamma* from the past. [Pok Su, who’s beside him, elbows him in his belly. He is unable to speak because of pain; with a cheerless look, he presses his belly with his hand.]

Kwa Sei: I am a journalist.

Sukra: Oh, you also have newspaper here. [Another herd of pigs enter.]

Sukra: [Looking with amazement at the pigs] What’s your business here today?

Bay Tu: Oh, master, you don't know our plan yet. It's this – [More pigs enter. With the pigs assembled around Sukra, and the pig audience growing, the late comers push forward to have a look at Sukra. Those who cannot get forward, in groups of two or three, in the distance, converse with actions.] We have a ferocious tiger in this forest, and we are living in great fear of him. And look at all the pigs, all thin and lean, because of him. We are trying to remove the threat of this tiger. Today is our general meeting to discuss how to deal with the tiger.

Sukra: Don't you already have a leader to fight the tiger?

Pok Su: Of course, we do; not just one leader, we have too many, and that's the problem.

One pig: [With temper] There are as many leaders as there are who want to be corrupt. These foolish pigs! They respect only those who tell lies. They should die; really I'd like to strike their snouts and kill them.

One pig: May I ask. You say our leaders are liars, blood-suckers, of blood from the throat of pigs, selfish leaders. But what have you, who are shouting, done for the good of the pig community. And what are your plans?

First pig: How can we do anything when you are following those pigs, and trusting their words. We don't respect you because you have been of no use for us.

First pig: [In an angry tone] We don't do anything because we have no respect for them.

Second pig: [In an angry tone] We don't do anything because we have no respect for them.

First pig: [In an angry tone] We don't do anything because we have no respect for them. [He steps forward with rising temper. One pig pulls him back.]

Second pig: [Also moving one step forward with heightened temper] We have no confidence in them because they have done nothing. [Another pig nearby pulls him back. As they look at each other with hostility, others say conciliatory words. Sukra, with arms akimbo, looks at the two pigs with disgust.]

[Pig leaders, Pig Vungala, Pig Bala, Pig Natti and Pig Petalu enter. Applause and loud cheers. The two quarrelling pigs turn to the leaders; and Sukra also looks at them. The leaders get up the mound, the ant-hill, and stand there.]

[Loud cheers, applause, whistles, shouts, and drum-beats, from the pig audience as the leaders take their positions on top of the mound. The leaders bow to the audience, three times, in

unison like a troupe of dancers. Cheers become louder. Then they sit down simultaneously on the mound; the cheers fade, and finally stops.]

One pig: Bastards, those leaders. What fool game are they playing here?

Second pig: They are wheedles; always like that before followers, trying to endear and play false.

Third pig: [In an angry, louder tone] We don't want nonsense here.

We want to be free from the menace of he tiger; tell us straight what you will do, and what you want us to do.

Some pigs: Hear, hear. [Loud cheers]

Fourth pig: Not words only; we want action by the leaders. Step down if you can't.

Some pigs: That's right. Action; action now. [Loud applause]

One pig: [Running up the mound toward the leaders, then turning furiously to the audience, with raised fist, and in slow speech] Hey, fellows. [Quiet follows, like a fire extinguished by a fire-hose.] Do you believe you can do mischief anywhere, any time? If you have the courage, come on, let's fight; choose the place and time; anywhere you like. Let's see whose blood is redder.

[One noisy clamouring pig near the 'big one' abruptly stands up. Sukra pulls the pig ahead of him down. With unmatched strength, the pig falls down. The front pig, and also the others, look at the 'big one.' The 'big one', looking not at them, but at the angry pig on the ant-hill, nods at the pig looking at him, and shows him his palm. Seeming to understand, the pigs keep silent, and wait as they watch the pig on the mound.

Pig-on-the-mound: Don't insult the pig leaders. There's no pig here whom you can insult. [He goes down the hill in loud applause.]

[Sukra pushes through the pig crowd toward the mound. The pigs look at each other and at Sukra.] [Loud cheers and applause]

[As soon as Sukra has stood up on the mound, cheers and applause become louder.]

Sukra: [From the mound-top he exchanges stares with the audience; the noise and applause do not subside for some time. Sukra raises his hand, and with a serious voice,] Listen, listen.

Some pigs: Listen, listen. [The noise gradually fades away.]

Sukra: I have come up here not to insult the leaders; [Some pigs give cheers.] nor to congratulate them. [Pointing to the leaders] I have come up to request your silence, patiently to listen to what these leaders have to say. I request your patience; no interruption, please listen. [Cheers] We have to hear them first, and only then we can decide. Can you anticipate what they will say? No, you got to listen first.

One pig: Of course we know. They will attack each other; sarcastic words to come.

Second pig: That's quite common; we're quite used to it.

Sukra: You may be right. But nothing remains the same permanently. Yesterday they were speaking hostile words. But they have seen their pig-folks poor and starving, and some have become food for the tiger. Their number is dwindling. They are facing quite a crisis. And that could have changed the minds of the leaders. So I urge you to listen, without interruptions, and quietly. [Applause] And what's more important is to have a meeting chairman. Without a chairman's conduct, the meeting will not proceed with discipline.

One pig: May I move that you take the chair.

Second pig: I support the motion.

One pig: I propose you for the chair.

Second pig: I support your proposal.

Sukra: Excuse me; I am a new pig here, and I need time to observe. So please choose one other pig as chairman.

One pig: Your name please.

Sukra: Sukra.

The pig who asked Sukra's name: Sukra, you take the chair please. It's our unanimous appeal.

Sukra: Very well then. But if I have to act as chairman, you all must listen to me. No one will speak without my permission. And he who speaks must stop when I say, 'stop'. And I will have authority to expel anyone from the meeting. You have to follow these rules.

The pigs: We agree, we agree.

Sukra: Alright; I now take the chair. [Applause]

Sukra: [Turning to the four leaders, and pointing at the first] Your name please.

First leader: [Stands up respectfully and sits down] I am Pig Natti.

Sukra: Thank you very much.

Sukra: [Turning to the second leader] And may I have your name please.

Pig Vangala: [Like the first leader] My name is Pig Vangala.

Sukra: Thank you. [Looking at the third leader] And, you?

Pig Petalu: [Like the others before him] Pig Petalu's my name.

Sukra: I thank you. [He turns toward the fourth leader, who automatically gets up in respect, and says, 'Hi, I am Pig Bala.']

Sukra: Thank you very much. [Looking at the first leader, he asks Pig Natti to talk about his policy.] Now I call upon leader Pig Natti to introduce, in a concise way, his policy. [Applause follows when Pig Natti rises to speak.]

Pig Natti: Friends, It is a great honour for me to speak for the pig community, a nation in fact. Let me remind you that we pigs are not ordinary creatures; we have history. Over three thousand years ago when King Bramatta passed away in Banares, we pigs already had a kingdom cantered in the great Senguttara forest. It's only because we are passing through unfortunate times, i.e. a period when our 'national' *kamma*, the presentation of our star, has become poor. That is the reason for our current state of wretched existence. However, [he assumes a very sympathetic tone] my pig brethren, do we not have the saying, '*Thit ngoke myit-ton myet myint-ton*' (The tree stump is taller some of the time, then the grass taller at other times.) There are similar sayings. So, we, the pigs, aren't going on this way; there surely is a time when we will rise again.

And, that time is not very far off. We have the prophetic utterance, '*Ye mhoke hte migyaung paw, Ma Yar kyaw keit te migyaung*' (Crocodile appears in the water cup, and that's the crocodile which bit Ma Yar Kyaw.) This is a prediction that we, the pigs, will have a happy time, like he crocodile which finds happiness in water. And, I say for sure, that time is around the corner.

As for the tiger, which is rampaging and ruining our lives, we are looking for a chance to deal with him, to finish him off. I consider the disaster that has befallen upon the pig community as my own disaster. Indeed it's my great worry. My pig brethren, my I shorten my statement. Believe me, I shall defend against the tiger at the risk of my own life. And I am ready for that. [He bows to the audience and sits down.] [Applause]

Sukra: May I invite Pig Vangala to make the statement.

Pig Vangala: [Stands up before the audience] I am not a pig of words, but of action. I will serve the pig community with courage and dedication. And that is my brave promise. [He sits down.]

[Applause follows, in the midst of which some one shouts, 'If that's your promise, can you fetch a bucket of water for my wife to bathe.' – Laughter.]

Sukra: I request Pig Petalu to give the speech.

Pig Petalu: [With a mischievous grin] I heard a friend ask for a bucket of water for his wife's bathing water. Unlike Pig Vangala, the leader, I am not prepared, and will not promise, to do anything asked by the pig folks. But, if your wife is in need of bathing water, there's no problem; just send her to my home. [After a brief moment, laughing] I've got a glazed-pot filled with water. [Laughter and applause]

One Voice: Talk like a leader; no nonsense jokes here.

Another Voice: Don't show off your bull-shit nature. [Four or five pigs give loud applause.]

Pig Petalu: Brethren, don't think I'm nutty; I'm joking because I'm in happy mood. What I want to talk here is about unity. Our people are suffering now because we lack unity. And with the hope of getting unity, I have tried uniting the pig leaders, following the advice of the great hermits, whom we revere. But there are leaders who do not really love their brethren, those who are selfish, who hoard food for them alone. As such leaders are numerous, I didn't get their cooperation; my work failed. So what should we do? Simple, we only have to shun such leaders who are food-hoarders. If we go on following them, it will be us, the pig nationals, who will be the losers. I tell you with confidence, and I remind you, if we follow leaders like that we will only sink deeper. [Loud applause]

Sukra: Pig Bala.

Pig Bala: [Rises up to speak.] This is a strange and difficult world. Some leaders think they get things done when they have given a shameless public speech with great eloquence. But don't trust such leaders. You make your reasoned judgment. And the noble hermit, whom we worship, -

Pig Petalu: [Interrupting] When did you worship?

Sukra: [With a serious look] Order, order.

Pig Bala: [Continuing] Who were those who said the hermits, whom we worship, should not meddle in our affairs, but should stay in their hermitages, eating the fruits, and shoots and roots which we offer them? Who were they who said such things? They're Pig Petalu and friends. Who else? [With heightened emotion] Come on; explain us why they are now so fond off the hermits.

One Voice: It looks you have admired them for some time.

Another Voice: That is why he clings to the hermits.

Pig Bala: With great respect for the hermits, I now stress my last point. Let us put our affairs, the affairs of the pig nation, in the hands of the hermits, entirely. But let it be my duty to fight the tiger. [Sit down.] [Applause]

Sukra: Now we have heard four leaders; we know the policies they stand for. But at this point I don't want to comment. It is not in my nature to criticize others when I haven't done anything yet. But, I want to make appeal, with great humility, to the leaders, who are older, and more honoured than I. What I want to say is that the disunity at present is so obvious; the leaders are divided; because leaders are divided, followers are divided; and these divisions have given rise to factions. Some say they are from the pig Vangala's faction; some in Pig Natty faction; and Pig Petalu faction; and Pig Bala faction; so many factions. The faction followers who admire their own leaders are set against each other. Their mutual enmity is stronger than for the tiger, who's the real enemy. That is not all. The splits among them have caused splits even among the hermits. Previously, the noble hermits formed a harmonious community. Now, they are divided, each with their own pig leader. So if we look for the cause of the decline of our pig brethren, it is, as the ancients say, '*Ahyin sit-taw ahmyit myayga*' (When one searches for the cause, the root's in the earth;) we find the root cause, the disunity among us. Why are we disunited? If we analyze, we find it's due to the disunity of the leaders. Do we remember '*Ah-thee tayar ah-nhyar ta-hku*', that one stalk can support one hundred fruits? So, it all depends upon the leaders to unite the nation.

But, I tell you that I do not accuse the leaders as selfish pigs, or food hoarders. But it has been indicated by the recriminations at this meeting that about sixty percent of the pig nationals do make such accusations against the leaders. If the pig leaders want to deny the accusations, they don't need to make verbal denials; they only need to prove their innocence with deeds. And the time to prove with deeds is now.

If the pig leaders believe that the success of their nation depends on unity, why are the leaders not for unity? They have no reason for disunity.

If they really love the pig nation, they will always keep in mind their duty to work for the good, the welfare, of the pig nation. They will not pay heed to whether one is a leader or not. So, before I conclude, may I appeal the leaders to seek unity. Please unite. This is my serious suggestion, my serious request. [Loud applause]

One Pig: [Standing up in one corner] May I say something important.

Sukra: Come up here to make your point.

[The pig pushes through the pig crowd to the mound.] [The crowd cheers him.]

The Pig: [As soon as he has stood up on the mound, he points his finger at Pig Petalu and begins to speak passionately.] We have got reports that you have contact with the treacherous tiger. [He thumps the ground with his heel.] What is your answer to this report?

Pig Petalu: [With a mischievous grin] There're relations between the enemies, to some extent. [Applause] [Some four or five pig from the crowd stand up and voice, 'Hey, bloke, why are you acting important here. Get out. Take him out.' There is some commotion.]

Sukra: Order. Every body sit own please. [After restoring order] My honourable friend, do you have sufficient evidence to say this accusation?

The Pig: Yes sir, we do have the evidence.

Sukra: Can you say it openly to the public?

The Pig: [He takes out a piece of paper from the pocket, and raises it to show the crowd.] I haven't said it recklessly, without proof. Here's he letter signed by Pig Petalu; it's been quite a while that I have had suspicion on leader Pig Petalu, that he is having contacts with the treacherous tiger. But I didn't want to say against him without evidence. So I waited, watching his house. Last night, while I was there, the treacherous hermit, the master of treacherous leader Pig Petalu, came to his house, two hours after midnight. He went in and came out after some time. Then, we, a group of pigs, gave him chase, and he ran away in fright, dropping his satchel. We searched it, and this is what we found inside. [He reads the letter.]

“We respectfully beg to inform the King Tiger,

This is to confirm the receipt of one thousand rupees, and to express our deep gratitude for it. We are confident that we will continue long to serve our master, the Tiger King.

Signed Petalu.”

[Excited exclamation, 'ha' comes out from the crowd, with a big sigh, which was clearly audible to the silent crowd.]

The Pig: [He hands the letter to Sukra.] So, that's it. Tell me what action you will take. [He leaves the mound.] [There is a stir in the crowd.]

Sukra: [He reads the letter, and then gives it to Pig Petalu.] What do you want to say about it?

Pig Petalu: [He takes the letter with trembling hands.] I don't know anything about this matter. [He wipes sweat from his forehead.]

One Voice: Why lie about it; there's the signature of your-mother's-husband?

Sukra: Couldn't it be a faked signature? Someone who hates you had signed it, imitating your signature; isn't that possible?

Pig Petalu [With a brightened face] Quite possible, sir.

Sukra: [Taking back the letter] Take off your ring. [Petalu looks at Sukra with wide eyes; Sukra says, scolding] Take off the ring, I said. [Petalu takes the ring off, and gives it to Sukra. Sukra compares the embossed statue on the ring and the seal on the letter.] O.K. you can go back to your seat. [Petalu goes back and takes his seat.]

One Pig: [From a corner] We want to eat Petalu's flesh.

Another Pig: I want to suck his blood.

Some Pigs: Friends, come; let us go and set his house on fire. [The crowd becomes noisy.]

Sukra: Order. Quiet please. Everybody, please stay seated. [He looks sternly at the five pigs which have come up the mound. What's this? You get down now. [The five pigs look at Sukra in amazement; Sukra returns their look with a stare. He slowly walks toward them; and they turn and go down slowly.] Hey, fellow pigs, everybody sit down. Sit down. Tell those, who have gone out, to return. We have things to tell them.

The Pigs: Hey, everyone, stay put. Those who have gone out, come back. Sukra's going to talk. Sit down, and quiet please. Here's Sukra, our savior. He'll get things right. [Gradually the pigs become silent.]

One Pig: I also have something to say.

Sukra: Come up here then.

The Pig: [As soon as he has stood on the mound] Search Pig Bala's bag. There's the reply letter from the treacherous tiger.

[Losing consciousness, Pig Bala reaches his hand to cover the letter. Startled, he stands up. He looks with wide eyes at the pig which proposed to search his bag. The pig crowd watches in awe at the mound, hoping to witness something really unexpected.]

Sukra: [Turning to Pig Bala] Now, take out the letter under your hand.

Pig Bala: There's no letter; Sukra, you're mistaken.

One Voice: Ridiculous. So blatant a liar.

Another Pig: That's why he has become a leader.

Sukra: Take it out quickly. Time is precious. If you delay it, I'll hand you over to the pigs down there, which are eager to crush you.

Pig Bala: No, I haven't got it.

Sukra: [Getting a little angry] Don't waste time. [He squeezes Pig Bala's bag, and picks out the letter; he gives the letter to the pig who has been asked to search.] You read it and explain to the audience.

The Pig: I have to say it now, shameful it is though. My sister Sondree and Pig Awree, the nephew of this Pig Bala, are lovers, as the young ones use to be. About two weeks ago, Pig Awree told this to Sondree: Very soon the treacherous tiger will give his uncle Pig Bala, the post of Myaing Marlar Park Administrator, which is the park on the north beyond the heath. That's the tiger's possession, and Bala will 'eat' revenues from it. Only after that happens, Awree says, he will marry Sondree, with a grand marriage banquet. My sister has confided me this proposal, and she says she wants it kept secret. But I told this information to my master Bandu, and he asked me to gather more information from my sister about the relations going on between Pig Bala and the treacherous tiger. Upon further investigation, I have found that when the treacherous tiger wanted to send a letter to Pig Bala, he let it hidden beneath an oak bark, under the neem tree at the road diversion to Pinn and Letgyaing villages. Awree goes to take that letter every first day of new-moon, and gives it to his uncle. I asked Sondree to nag her fiancée to show her the next letter. Today, the first new-moon day, he comes by to show Sondree the letter; and when she was reading it, I searched for uncle Bandu; but I couldn't find him. While I walked around looking for my uncle, I met Pig Bala on the

way to the meeting, and there I saw his nephew, Awree, giving him the letter. That is why I have been brave enough to clearly accuse that the letter is there.

Pigs' voice: Read the letter. Read it.

The Pig: [Reads the letter aloud.]

Dear Friend Pig Bala,

I write to discuss an important matter. A confidential meeting will be held at the Reverend Hermit Dewut's place at midnight, on the second new-moon day, this month. I hope you will attend the meeting.

So far you have done a good job, and that very systematically. I hope you will continue to be my ally, but you should try to conceal it from your fellow pigs.

I hope, you, Pig Bala, will begin to enjoy the benefits from this cooperation.

Yours,

Byaggaraja

The Pig: [Handing the letter to Sukra] Can I leave it with you now?

Sukra: [Taking the letter] Alright. [The Pig goes back.]

One Pig: [One from the crowd, looking at the crowd] Are we going to leave these leaders alone? Any idea what to do?

Sukra: Wait a moment, and be patient please. The Pig-leader's story is not finish yet.

Pig voices: Hey, hey, listen; here's Sukra speaking. [The pig voices calm down.]

Sukra: Pigs, surround this mound. Don't let anyone out. [Some pigs stand around the mound. Sukra points finger at Pig Bala and Pig Petalu] You are traitors against your own folks. And the penalty for that is death. [Loud applause]

One Pig: We will bury them alive.

Second Pig: No, let's burn them.

Third Pig: No, drown them in the river.

Sukra: Please listen.

Pig voices: Listen, listen. [Pig voices disappear.]

Sukra: [Turning to pig leaders, and pointing at Pig Natti and Pig Vangala] Will you reveal your secret affairs, before others do? If it's not voluntary, [Pointing at Petalu] you will be doomed like them. There will be no choice, but death penalty. But if you self- incriminate, we can pardon you. So what's your choice?

Pig Natti: [Stands up, trembling] I will say the truth. I received annual payment of Rupee five hundred from the great tiger. My service for that payment is to cause dissent and splits among the 'pig nationals'. To get the split, I breed mistrust among the pig brethren.

Sukra: What about you, Pig Vungali?

Pig Vungali: I get five hundred rupees per annum, and my duty is similar to Pig Natti's.

Sukra: Now we are approaching the end of the story of the pig leaders, with revelations about their character, which have been exposed 'like a dried marrow floating on water.' I have guessed this bad situation very quickly upon my arrival here, but I dared not immediately propose to sack them, because the conditions are not ripe in this pig community. I can explain the difficulty with an example. When I was living in town, I have known Shan nationals who came for pilgrimage at the Lawkamarazein pagoda; they used to make regular annual visits. You know the Shans are very simple folk, so simple that they sometimes appear dumb. When they came to town for pilgrimage, they used to collectively stay at the home of a businessman, whom they have trusted since the time of their forefathers. When they went shopping they did not buy themselves, for fear of making a bad buy. So what they did was to ask their host, the businessman they trusted, to buy things for them. They bought at the price recommended by him, and never would they buy a thing without asking him. These Shans were very fond of rubies; they used to buy precious ruby stones, each stone worth up to around five hundred rupees. The businessman who brokered for them negotiated the price with the gem merchant, fixing the price something like five hundred rupees for a stone whose real price was five rupees. He gave the merchant ten rupees; five for the stone, five for his profit. Then he gave the buyer the stone and a five hundred rupee receipt. How much money did he make from that? He spent ten rupees, and got five hundred; so he profited four hundred and ninety. This dishonest profit making became known to some people who hated such practice intensely. One such person intervened one day. When the businessman was negotiating the price for five hundred rupees between the buyer and seller, for a ruby really worth five rupees, that man disturbed the sale negotiation; he brought a ruby of almost similar quality, and offered it for sale, saying, "Hey friends, don't buy from me if my stone is inferior to that one. But before you buy any, make sure to

inspect mine as well as that; compare them. Then see the prices. Mine will go for five rupees; that one five hundred.” The man went to the extent of trying to take the visitors away from the shop. But the Shans are extremely simple, almost idiotic. You know what they did? They drove the man away. “Go away; don’t try to cheat us; and you can’t really.”

Our pig brethren are also very simple folk; once they trust a leader, they will follow him with blind eyes. If someone, who is unhappy with their leader’s conduct, speaks ill about them, they will drive him away, with the words, ‘Scoundrel, go away; don’t try to deceive us.’”

And also there are some who depend upon such bad leaders; that is, they make a living that way. Because they ‘eat and drink’ by association with the leader, they conceal his bad qualities, and say only good reports about him to the ignorant fellow pigs. Such professional supporters even uplift the bad leader sky-high. Now you have seen for yourself the true nature of your leaders, haven’t you? So, don’t get yourself split, because the selfish leaders are split. I urge you to believe that only unity is your strength, the real strength. From now on, forget about the divisions such as Pig Vungali follower, or Pig Nattier, or Pig Bala member, or Pig Petaluer. Forget faction names. Isn’t the term ‘pig national’ preferable? I stress, in conclusion; forget factions and splits; identify yourself as ‘pig nationals.’ [Long and loud applause]

One Pig: I move the motion that this meeting resolves to give the pig leaders death sentence.

Second Pig: My motion is to pass execution by burning.

Third Pig: I don’t think these are appropriate forms of punishment.

Remember their acts had been to wipe out the pig species, one’s own species. So they deserve to be executed by every pig taking part. And that is my proposal.

Fourth Pig: Then how are we to do that? The details of the execution?

Third Pig: Tie a rope at the neck of each leader, taking out two ends from it. The pigs divide into two teams, and pull each end of the rope, like a tug-of-war.

Pig voices: We like that idea. We like that idea. [Applause]

Sukra: Somebody go and find a rope.

One pig: We’ve got one rope here.

Sukra: O.K. Bring it and come up here.

Pig voices: Come brethren; come, come.

Sukra: We need only four or five.

Pig voices: Only four or five. [Four or five pigs go up the mound, one bringing a rope.]

Sukra: [Pointing at Pig Petalu] Drag that bugger here. [Four pigs go to Pig Petalu, and grab and drag him; he struggles, but is pulled along.]

Pig Petalu: [Making obeisance] Spare my life.

One Pig: You have sinned to wipe out the pig species, your own species, and that's too bad; you'll go down in history with a bad name. So decide to die with courage.

[They tie the rope round Petalu's neck. Then four pigs manage to divide the pigs into two groups, in approximately equal numbers. Each group pulls the rope hard. Petalu shouts, 'Woo, woo'. He dies soon. Then Pig Bala is taken next, with the same procedure. He exclaims, 'Oh, God!' before he dies.]

Sukra: [The pigs begin to handle Pig Natti in the same way.] Wait, wait. We have to spare these two... We must set them free.

Pig voices: But they are traitors, the enemies of the race. Kill them too. Kill them quick. We don't want to see them.

Sukra: No, no. I have given the promise to spare their lives.

Second Pig: But we have killed two traitors; their crimes are the same. For the sake of fairness, kill these two. Come on; bring them here, and now. There's no time.

Sukra: Are you not taking to my advice?

First and Second Pigs: No, we cannot accept that.

Sukra: If that's your attitude, you do what you like. I leave it with you. [Sukra goes down the mound.]

Pig voices: Why has Sukra walked out? What's wrong? What did he say? We want to hear Sukra. Sukra, please speak.

Sukra: These two have made confessions of their guilt because I gave them promise that their lives will be spared, if they told the truth. They confessed trusting my promise. I cannot break my promise. If you will go against my will, I have to go away, rather than break my promise, because if I did, you will not trust me in future. *'Ta-kha ma yon, sei-kha'* (Unbelieved once, untrusted ten

times); haven't you heard this maxim? To give a promise before an audience, and immediately break it is very very bad. No, it's not in my nature to behave that way. If we don't trust each other, how can we build good relations? So, I beg you; allow me to leave.

First Pig: A promise is a promise. One must keep it.

Second Pig: Sukra is right.

Third Pig: May he prosper.

Fourth Pig: *Gati thitsa tee thaw-kha, awza lay-net, nwe myet thit-pin say-bet win* (When one is faithful to his promise, he earns influence; even twiners, and grass, and shrubs, he prescribes, prove medicinal.) This is a long standing word of wisdom.

Fourth Pig: [With rising temper] What are we going to do with these two guys then?

[In the mean time, four or five pigs come up dragging along a pig, causing a lot of confusion in the crowd. They struggle hard to pull him uphill.]

Sukra: What's happening?

First Pig: It's about Pig Petalu. While his letter to the tiger was read out, he slipped away from the meeting. So we traced his foot-steps to see where he was going; stealthily, of course. We found him crossing the border, going to the big tiger. We have arrested him while he re-crossed the border. Here he is; we've dragged him along.

Sukra: [Frowning and gritting his teeth] Silly fellow. Don't you realize that the tiger will eat other pigs first, and when nothing is left, he'll eat you? Have you ever given a slight thought to that? Now, we have no time to execute him; but there's a better way. Let him feel shame as a traitor of one's own nation for the rest of his life. Let him feel shame, let him repent. Well then, but we cannot spend more time here. The tiger will come here.

First Pig: The tiger is coming.

Second Tiger: He's approaching.

Third Pig: Hear, hear; tiger approaching.

[The pigs run out in disarray, shouting.]

Sukra: [Shouts at the top of his voice] Don't run away; don't run. Hey, pigs, stay in your place. If you run, everyone will get killed.

Pig voices: Hey, Sukra's telling us not to run away. Come on, gather here. Don't think of running. [They stopped running, but there's a lot of disturbance in the crowd.]

Sukra: The big tiger is not arriving yet. But it's sure he'll come, because that fellow has reported to him about our assembly here. If we are passive, if we yield, he'll eat us, one pig a day. Instead of facing ignoble death, I'll face death as a hero; I'll kill the tiger before I die. [With passionate expression] Who will join me and share the same fate? Where are the pigs who say they're courageous? Where are the brave ones? And those who worry about the extinction of the pig species, where are they? Come ye all, who dare to die.

About ten pigs: [Simultaneously] Here we are, he volunteers; we'll join you.

Another five to ten pigs: [Voice in chorus] We will also come out to fight.

Another five to ten pigs: [Voice in chorus] We will also come out to fight.

Sukra: Enough, enough. Let's stop talking, and begin organizing. Young pigs, old pigs, and females, stay behind.

One female pig: Let me join the troops. I want to show my courage.

Sukra: Oh, no, no. When we have conquered the tiger, and the nation becomes peaceful, you will have duties to perform. There's division of labour; don't get into a job that's not yours. So you get back.

Pig voices: The order says, young pigs, old pigs, and females must march behind. But quick march.

Sukra: Now, strong and healthy pigs, fall in. Now, dig the earth, under this mound, beginning from the edge. Begin now. Dig deep.

[The pigs work hard, digging. Occasionally they ask if the tiger is approaching, and they stretch their necks to look in the distance. The mound is made fortress-like at the front, and a ditch at the back.]

Sukra: [After the trench-digging is completed] [He speaks fast.]

I will stay at the head of the trench, but you all hide in the trench. Let no one stand behind me.

The Pigs: Yes.

Sukra: O.K. then. Go in.

[The pigs disappear into the trench] [Sukra is walking near the entrance into the trench. After a while, *Byaggaraja*, the tiger king, and the Hermit Wicked enter. When the tiger and hermit see Sukra, they are dumbfounded, looking at Sukra. The tiger gives a roar. Sukra is composed; he looks at the tiger and hermit, and makes a semblance of cough, to make known his presence. He continues walking back and forth.

Tiger: The appearance of these creatures is unusual today. Seems this bloke is the pig named Sukra, who is said to have arrived here recently.

Hermit: Yes, I think so. Insolent bloke, so impertinent.

Tiger: Wait, I will roar once more. [Roars]

Sukra: [Stops walking] Hey, our little pigs, where stay you?

Pigs: *Wei*; here stay we.

Sukra: What plan have you to encircle the tiger?

Pigs: *Dis* way we will to encircle the tiger.

Sukra: How will you kill?

Pigs: *Dis* way we will kill.

Sukra: Be united.

Pigs: We're united.

Sukra: Are you ready?

Pigs: We are ready.

[Then Sukra stays standing in a steady posture, looking at the tiger and hermit; the tiger and hermit look at him in return.]

Hermit: [To Sukra] Here, Oh, king of pigs. You know there's no one, but oneself, who loves him more.

Sukra: [With a serious face, in a slow tone] Yeess.

Hermit: Em, the words I said are very meaningful.

Sukra: Why not? How can the words spoken by a reverend hermit be meaningless?

Hermit: Yes, it carries meaning; and it's important that you understand it properly.

Sukra: I will understand.

Hermit: But you need to understand better than other pigs.

Sukra: I do understand.

Hermit: No; that's impossible. If you really understand, Sukra will not act like this. [Presenting an endearing look; in slow speech] No one loves you more than oneself, remember.

Sukra: Of course. That no one loves you more than yourself is true for the great tiger and the great hermit as well. Yes, one stays alive, that is, to let live one, whom oneself loves most, by using his wit and cleverness in all ways. Doesn't one cause the pig community to split into factions, and then pounce upon, and eat the pigs, one at a time?

Hermit: Say more.

Sukra: In the same way, I have to keep myself alive by using wit and cleverness in many ways, and defend myself.

Hermit: Oh, king of pigs. There are better ways of protecting yourself, and working for the prosperity of your wife and children. Why do you have to follow the plan that needs your sacrifice?

Sukra: May I ask, great hermit. If it is true the tiger and the hermit want prosperity for the pigs, the saying '*Ahmay kyaw dwedaw lwan*' (that one loves the paternal-aunt more than the mother) seems to apply here. Don't you see that?

When we, the pigs, are united, you split them using bribes and deception and persuasion. When the pigs are divided, you eat one at a time. When there is no pig left, you will eat the pig, who was your ally. So what you say goodwill for pigs is not really goodwill; in the long run it's scheming for your benefit. It's selfishness.

Now, you are showing goodwill for me. But I know that's not real; you do it only because you want to eat the pigs, my kith and kin. If what I think is true, that the great hermit and the great tiger are afraid of me, it must be because of the strength united behind me. So I will never crush the strength I possess. And like the great hermit, any pig who loves himself will not do such a thing.

And even if my family and I prosper by doing such things, it will bring great disaster for our descendents. So my choice, the way I behave, proves that I fully understand the great hermit's words. Remember that.

Hermit: [Turning to the tiger.] How are you Tiger King? It's meal-time, and you must be pretty hungry. Come for meal, suck pig blood, and eat suckling pigs.

Tiger: [Turning to hermit] My eyebrows twitch today. Let's return to camp; we'll come back tomorrow.

Hermit: I just want to sit down and laugh. The great tiger, who is the king of three thousand forests, says his eyebrow twitches, and that he wants to go home, and the like, when he is threatened by a miserable pig. That's unreasonable. If these words are heard by other animals, surely, they will disrespect the great tiger; and chaos will reign in the three thousand forests. We will have to regret then, with a ceremony of weeping.

Tiger: No, it's not because of that.

Hermit: *'Nwagyi ye tha ye ya de'* (The big bull laughs, but it hasn't got lower teeth.) The great tiger is the same; he says he's not frightened, but is trembling. The great tiger may become the tiger which is frightened by the pig.

[Instead of replying to the hermit, the tiger keeps roaring. And Sukra keeps staring at him. Believing a moment to strike has come, the tiger pounces upon Sukra. But Sukra jumps into the trench, and the tiger falls badly into it.]

Pig voices: The tiger's intestines have been hauled out by Sukra's tusks. The tiger is dead. Come fellows, come around; bite him. [A noisy scene follows. The hermit has run away.]

Sukra; [Coming up from the trench] Don't keep your attention only on the tiger. Chase the hermit. [Some pigs go out after the hermit. Pigs, who have eaten the flesh and internal organs of the tiger, come out of the trench. Sukra looks on, standing at the head of the trench. A pig comes running, and panting.]

That pig: Hey, hey, want to eat hermit meat? Hurry if you like. The hermit is killed; he went up a banyan tree to escape, but our folks cut down the tree to get him. They're already eating hermit meat. [A herd of pigs rush out.]

One pig: [Coming up and standing beside Sukra] Call back all pigs.

[Two pigs run out to call back the others.]

[To Sukra] Sukra has saved us. The tiger's threat is finished. Sukra, we owe you a lot. So, allow us to repay you the great debt of gratitude.

Sukra: You are mistaken in that. No one needs to thank me, or anyone. You have only done your duty. Those who don't will suffer, to become one day meat for the tiger. You defended yourself.

The same pig: That's correct, of course. But we love and respect Sukra since we first saw him. So allow us to do something.

[Pigs who have eaten hermit meat come back.]

Sukra: What do you want to say?

The same pig: Yes, I will tell you. Are all pigs assembled?

Pigs: Yes, everyone's around.

The same pig: [Coughs to call attention.] I want to say something straight to the point. *Yaung shi yin sadone shi hma tint-te* (A man's hair knot must be matched by a woman's hair knot, to make it appear nice.) Now, Sukra, the leader on whom we rely, only has the *yaung* (man's hair-knot), but no *sadone* (woman's hair-knot) yet. So I make this proposal. Sukra should marry Klyar (the damsel), daughter of Zatila, the rich-pig, and become the president of the 'pig nation'.

Pig voices: We support the proposal.

The same pig: Do you have any objection, rich-pig Zatila?

[There's no reply.]

Second pig: [After the pause] Is it appropriate to ask a father?

Third pig: He's saying yes. Says there's nothing to be ashamed of. [Applause]

The same pig: Well, bring the bride up the mound; the stage, I mean.

[The bride pig is brought to Sukra.]

Sukra: If it is everyone's wish, I accept. But please find out if Kalyar has an owner.

When I was young and living in town, I happened to have acted a go-between a damsel-pig and a suitable chap, not knowing the damsel had a lover. I was embarrassed, and still embarrassed to recall that. And I feel sorry for that. So please ask, if she has an owner. I don't want to split lovers.

The same pig: Does Kalyar have an owner?

Baylu: [With hands behind the back, and twisting his waist, he interjects, with a nutty look.] If to love means to own, I can claim to be her owner, because I love her. I don't know if she loves me or not, but I do love her very much. But as I have been unsuccessful in wooing her, I rather like Sukra to take her. [He sits down] [Applause and laughter]

[Sukra stretches out his hand to Kalyar, and a young pig-damsel takes Kalyar's hand, and puts it into Sukra's. Kalyar stands beside Sukra, with head bowed, and holding his hand. Pig-damsels make a circle around Sukra and Kalyar.]

[All pigs sing the pig national song in chorus.]

Kabar ma-kyay, wanna dwe;

Da doe pyay, da doe myay, da nga doe pyay.

(We won't relent until the world ends, we the pigs;

This is our country; this is our land; this is our country.)

Kabar ma-kyay, wanna dwe;

Da doe pyay, da doe myay, da nga doe pyay.

(We won't relent until the world ends, we the pigs;

This is our country; this is our land; this is our country.)

Da doe pyay, da doe myay, da nga doe pyay.

Da doe pyay, da doe myay, da nga doe pyay.

Doe wanna, doe wanna dwe go

Doe wet mya kon sin, doe pyay lo hmat htin

(We pigs, all of us, let us we pigs,

All we pigs, let us believe this our own country.)

[The crowd keeps standing when the song ends, and the curtain falls.]

The end

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Apology

Although the play *Yamamin*, the King of Hell has been planned for publication in this book, it has finally been left out, for lack of space. It will be included in a later publication.

Nagani

Printed at the Myanma-Yokeshin Press

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5 Nu, Foreword to “Man, the Wolf of Man” (1943)¹

Up to the age of 18 years the present writer had no particular ambition in life. His boyish fancies sometimes dwelt on the glories of being a township officer or sub-divisional officer with enviable powers. Sometimes he fancied that it was more independent to be a lawyer. But they were mere fancies tickled by his immediate environment. They had no permanent place in his breast.

It was only in his 18th year that his real ambition was born deep down in his deepest heart. And it grew and it grew and grew. Yet he had to suppress his personal ambition for all these years, diverting all his efforts to the task of combating British Imperialism; because, to him, this seemed to be a danger as urgent as a fire next-door.

His real ambition in life was to become a writer. He had so much to write about. Like a crowd jostling at the entrance of a cinema, subjects for his pen had been seething his mind. Good or bad, there was so much he could write that would ultimately benefit his country. Time was denied him. The mention of writing well or ill reminded him of a little happening. His comrades knowing his affliction feared lest he should abandon politics for authorship and conspired together to run down his efforts at writing. They discussed them in his presence. They picked out all the blemishes. In short they pointed out to him that he would never be a writer. Alas, they could not understand that a writer writes because he must. It is an urge. Success or failure matters not. Even if the whole world ridicules his efforts he still must write and write. Even as a flood bursts through the dams so does a writer's urge burst through all considerations. That is a thing only writers can appreciate.

This year (1943) the present writer completes the 36th year of his age. Even supposing that he will live to be eighty, and can produce one book a year he can have no more than 40 books to his credit. You may say it is greed; and that a single good book may take a life-time. Still, he cannot help wanting to write at least a hundred books.

One day, as a prisoner in Insein jail, the present writer experienced the deepest sorrow of his life.

To begin at the beginning:

In his native town the nickname of (Tate Sanetha) "Saturday born Street-arab" was well known to everybody. The owner of this unsavory appellation was a nine-year old boy, bad beyond his years. Already he was a boon companion of drunkards. By the age of twelve he was a heavy drinker. Often, as a sequel to his drinking bouts, his stupefied little body might be seen carried home on

¹ *The Guardian* June 1954: 9-11.

someone's shoulder. His father deeply ashamed and hopeless of reclaiming him could only banish him to live as he would in a paddy godown outside the town. The boy brewed his own liquor there. But reformation was soon to come.

At the age of eighteen a miracle happened. Those who knew him when he was fifteen or sixteen would find it hard to recognise him at the age of eighteen. He had been a joker of tricks and mischief that his aunt frequently laid the rod across his back. At the age of eighteen something deep down inside him suddenly changed. So far from playing pranks he scarcely wanted to open his mouth in the presence of people. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." Beauty in things had claimed his heart. A cool moonlight night, a verdant prospect, pretty women, sweet music began to move him profoundly. Whenever he was so moved by things of beauty he wanted to be alone with his joy. Such joy is known only to those who have experienced it. Disturbed from such a state the unfortunate devotee of beauty was distraught. That was why he could not suffer any one to disturb him.

At that time the present writer had a secret talisman. It was only a photograph which was cut out of a contemporary journal in English. The original, a daughter of a high Burmese official was the bride in a society wedding and her photograph was published in the journal. The photograph had extraordinary power over the writer's mind. When he was miserable a look at that photograph cheered him up. When he was in a temper that photograph could calm him down. While looking at it nothing bad could find a place in his mind. It inspired him with thoughts he wanted to do good deeds, Champion the weak, subdue the oppressors, like a knight of chivalry. Mention of this photograph reminded him of an incident which showed how susceptible he was to feminine charm.

He suffered from stage-fright in an extreme degree. His four or five attempts to speak in public were dismal failures. In order to cure it he imposed on himself the penalty of forfeiting a meal every time he failed. He would steel himself for the ordeal and stand up to speak. But not a word would come. He only found himself out of breath and soaked with sweat. Thus he had fled from many a debate and many a meeting. Starvation was his lot. But one night his friend Ko Ba Gyan took him to a lady students' debate.

The moment he entered the debating hall his spirits rose. Of course! half the hall was filled with pretty girls. On this occasion he who had fled so fast from public-speaking, whose knees shook whenever he stood up to speak, this time the timid one was impatient for his turn to come.

After the lady speakers had done, as soon as the chairman permitted floor discussion, up he jumped and the words came tumbling out. At last he had spoken in public. And since then he has had no more difficulty about speaking in public. So much power did things of beauty have over him!

Under beauty's spell he would repair to a secluded corner and compose whatever he was able. At that time he was more keen on composition in English than in Burmese. He was especially keen on Shakespearean blank verse. Being smitten on a college girl he indited to her many a playlet in blank verse. Ko Ba Gyan watched with resignation the many onsets of poetic madness, followed by the throes of composition. It was not known what effect those playlets had on those who read them. But they certainly: meant great relief to the writer. They were the means of unburdening his pent-up heart.

He chiefly wrote English sonnets. But he wrote them mostly to lampoon rival football teams. At that time the team in which he played (captained by Ko Ba Shin) was leading the rest. Each time this team scored a victory the defeated esteem would have insult added to injury. For there would be a sonnet up on the dining hall notice board lampooning the losers. Once when a similar fate befell a team captained by Saw Du Wun, the lampoon hit the captain so squarely that Saw Du Wun was in a rage. The next victim was Captain Ko Ohn Maung, who suspected Captain Ba Shin to be the author, and went straight for him. Only the intervention of a third party averted a serious fight.

One night the present writer was lying down under a Marian tree enjoying the moonlight when he fell asleep. When he woke up again it was deep in the night. The moon had climes to its zenith. All was still except for strains of distant music being played by Indian night watchmen. Intricate but restrained drumming accompanied the velvet notes of a harmonica in Hindu fashion. The night, the moon, the music, together so wrought upon the writer's soul that almost in spite of himself he composed his first serious sonnet "Under the Marian tree." The next day, he showed it to a lecturer in English who gave it high praise and began to take an interest in the writer's efforts. Becoming sufficiently acquainted to know where his bent lay the lecturer advised him to read "Candide" and "Julius Caesar", two plays by Bernard Shaw. These two plays were eye-openers to the would-be writer. Formerly although he had no lack of matter he did not know the method. He had to be content with billet-doux playlets and verses. After reading those two books he hit upon a method. And thereupon he wrote and wrote leaving no time even to read. His studies were forgotten. Even within a fortnight of the college exams he was so preoccupied with playwriting that he could not prepare for the exam. An intimate friend discovering him still writing his wretched play on the eve

of exam got so impatient that he snatched away the paper and tore it up.

During the vacations too at his home town he could not stay at home. He sought the seclusion of a nearby shrine and wrote and wrote. Not only during the day, but also at all hours of the night, to the disturbance of the household, he should repair to that shrine, so that it became necessary for him to build himself a hut at a sequestered spot outside the town and live there all by himself. His old mother who visited him every other day or so seeing him always writing became anxious for his health and remonstrated with him. That was the period of his playwriting mania. He wrote them and sent them England for criticism. He wrote them and entered them in the competition for the Prince of Wales prize. He wrote them and wrote them and had no time whatever for his proper studies. Readers might laugh at them. No matter The writer would have gone mad if he had not written those plays and got rid of the maddening urge in him to write them.

From that time the present writer began to toy with the idea of becoming the Bernard Shaw of Burma. He was confident he had the talent and the inspiration. The only requisite was his mastery of English. That should not be difficult. There had been the famous case of Joseph Conrad, a foreigner who learnt English only at the age of twenty and yet became one of the masters of English prose style. If he could already write playlets and verses at the age of eighteen, why should not he do the same? His confidence was strong indeed. But the itch to write was stronger.

So, he wrote far more than he ever read and thus missed the substance of mastering English for the shadow of writing English and only just managed to pass his B. A. examination and left the Rangoon University with a degree.

Politically the world was undergoing great changes. In Burma it was a time of the revolt of youth against age in politics. Youthful leaders like Thakin Ba Thoung Thakin Ba Sein and Thakin Lay Maung repudiated the leadership of the elder politicians. They were his intimate friends. Their activities as well as his own nationalist spirit kindled by the 1920 Boycott and fanned by school terms in Myoma National High School were gradually drawing him into politics. Although his destination was quite clear he was perforce delayed on his way because of fire breaking out in the street and he must lend his hand in dealing with the emergency. For the present Mr. Bernard Shaw of Burma had to be content with beckoning from a distance while politics claimed the immediate attention.

But that is not to say that his But political and literary activities were mutually exclusive. On the contrary, when he was a member of the working committee of the Dobama Asiayone he was guilty

of pushing his share of the work on the trusted shoulders of Thakin Than Tun and Thakin Aung San. At the head-quarters he was in the habit of shutting himself up with his pen or with his thoughts so that members saw far less of him than of those two. His habit of indulging in a literary brown study at unpredictable moments landed him once in an awkward situation. One night Thakin Than Tun and Thakin Aung San turned up at his apartment with a big idea. These two had been hard at work seeking ways and means of gaining Burma's freedom during the second World War. They were full of their new idea. Alas, all their talk fell on deaf ears because the present writer was in a literary brown study and all he could gather was that they were to go and discuss the matter with Dr. Ba Maw the leader of the Sinyetha Wunthanu Party. So they did with a few student leaders in addition to the three of them. At the meeting he had to laud the discussion. Lead he did, but Thakin Than Tun and Thakin Aung San quickly realized that he did not know what he was talking about and was in danger of bringing all their efforts to wreck and ruin. They had to cut him short and carry on the discussion themselves. On the way back from the meeting they were not a little peeved with him and re-explained to him the whole thing from beginning to end which was such a vastly different thing that the present writer was rocking with laughter.

Political work is ceaseless, and true politicians have to work like beavers. The present writer pays due homage to the determination, zeal, industry and tenacity of these admirable workers for the country. In the ever changing pattern: of party politics, however, he sees them in all their vicissitudes, now friends, now enemies, veritable playthings of Change. He feels sorry for them. But the rough and tumble of their life is not for him. He prefers to lead a life of the imagination. He must have privacy for his thoughts. Yet as a politician he has to be meeting people, seeing people, talking to people, and dealing with people, all the time, During an election tour for the Fabian Party he got so weary of people that in the midst of everything he renounced the world, following in the foot- steps of Prince Siddhartha and took Upasampada ordination in a monastery on Kyauktaga hill near Minhla. This defection at such a critical time, of course made his fellow partymen furious. This was not the only time. As a Thakin Party-man too he was so liable to flee to some sequestered spot, like Myathabeik hill, far from the madding crowd, that he was often despaired of by his comrades. And so his strange career finally led him to this jail where his term of imprisonment was to be two years. One dull day in jail his thoughts suddenly lighted on the fact that the ambition of his eighteenth year was still to be realised. Here he was in his thirty- fourth year and the 16 years he had lost would never be recalled. He felt so bereft that he had to console himself with the thought that although he had not realized his personal ambition he had at any rate had a hand in subduing

the fire that was consuming his country.

The present writer had never written a novel before. He was preoccupied with plays only. Therefore as a first attempt he embarked on this novel "Man the wolf of man"* while in Insein jail. His effort will not have been in vain if by this means he has brought his readers to the realization that all Burmans are compatriots after all and therefore should help one another rather than harm one another. Ever since the deportation of King Thibaw the British policy of divide and rule had split up fellow countrymen into antagonistic classes the ruling and the ruled, the rich and the poor, the exploiter and the exploited. The British had succeeded a making us forget that we were sons of the same mother country. We have perpetrated on one another all the distressing sins of disunity. The time has come for all of us to be so united that the dwellers in mansions and the dwellers in huts, the police and the public, the judge and the peasant, are brothers.

In our long struggle for freedom many individuals, groups and organizations have made their sacrifice in many ways. The Thakin organization is one among them. And in that party there have been many like Yan Shin of this novel who fill between the hedge and the ditch unhonoured and unsung, their supreme sacrifice not appearing even in the news of the day. Had it not been for these obscure but devoted followers the Thakin movement could never have succeeded. In homage to these unknown soldiers is this novel written.

June 1943

THAKIN NU

* *Homo homini lupus*

III Material on Ba Thoung, *An Enemy of the People*

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Translation: Gunnar Peters

99) Ba Thauung, Thakin: Enemy of the Country. Rangoon, Burma Publishing, 1941. 256 p.

Published February 22, 1941, 2000 copies, price 8 Paise. Title of the original book: *An Enemy of the People*, by Hendrik John Ibsen. This is a play translated by Ba Thauung. It has been republished a second time by Win Maw Oo Publishing in 1963. The play had been translated from the Norwegian original into English in 1911. In his introduction, dated 7th day of the waning moon of the month of Tabodwe 1302 M.E. [1940 AD], the author writes that for a long time he had planned to write this play, but only now he managed to do it. Written in comparison to Burmese plays. The play reveals the nature of persons who keep pretending to strive for the benefit of the people, but in truth work only for their own benefit. It was published out of dedication for change in the country. In the second edition of "The enemy of the Country" the author writes that the original publication was too early for the time, as the experiences described in the play could not yet be fully comprehended. But now, at a time when the government had changed repeatedly, with plenty of new experiences, and when those characters of the play have materialized in great number in Burma, it could surely be appreciated. Thakin Ba Thauung is very gifted in giving his translations a genuine Burmese air, and so also with this one creates a play with a Burmese setting and with Burmese people, which is beautiful literature.



Reproduction of Title Page (2nd edition, 1963)

2. Ba Thoung, Preface to the First Edition of “An Enemy of the People”

Translation: Tin Hlaing

Many times has Thakin Ba Thauung considered writing the play ‘An Enemy of the People’, but in none has he succeeded. Now he has done it without the thought of doing it. The saying ‘*Ma ywe be hnit Saw Ke min phyit*’ (that Saw Ke has become king without desire) seems to have arisen due to similar occurrences.

‘An Enemy of the People’ is a Burmese translation of the modern Western play by Ibsen. Although Western plays are basically similar to the Burmese plays *Yethe Pyazat* and *Kawthala Pyazat* by Salay U Ponnya, a comparison of the plots and presentations between them and ‘An Enemy of the People’ will enlighten the reader about the type of literature of the Western plays.

An Enemy of the People is currently a prescribed text for drama in Rangoon University for the Intermediate level (first year). This translation will enable those readers who cannot read English to read it.

Thakin Ba Thauung has written the novel *Yenan* (Petroleum) due to constant urging by U Tun Aye, book distributor. Because it is a very long story and difficult to write, and also due to very limited time available, only part one has been published. The writing of part two of *Yenan* had been postponed to March, to get more time; but U Tun Aye had insisted to continue writing *Yenan*, saying that he would not have a book, which he likes, to publish in February. Thakin Ba Thauung agreed to do it. However, in the mean time, literary critics have sent in endorsements praising *Yenan* as an excellent novel, one which somebody who cannot buy it should steal. After reading the commentaries Thakin Ba Thauung decisively made up his mind to write part two only in March, for he wanted sufficient time as he didn’t to have the risk that the novel may end up poorly and frustrate the critics who have already commended part one. This time U Tun Aye has to give up; but Thakin Ba Thauung has an obligation to give him something to publish in February. It is for that obligation that Thakin Ba Thauung has written ‘An Enemy of the People’.

Thus ‘An Enemy of the People’ happens to be a play chosen by Thakin Ba Thauung and translated by him. Even if it is praise worthy, readers can abstain praising it; but if they have anything bad to say about it, Thakin Ba Thauung is entirely responsible for it. In fact ‘An Enemy of the People’ is a play written for publisher U Tun Aye with Thakin Ba Thauung’s assurance that he will repay any losses arising from its publication. In case the play fails to sell well U Tun Aye may not demand

from Thakin Ba Thaung the payment for the losses, but it actually is true that Thakin Ba Thaung made his promise. Did Thakin Ba Thaung make it because he was certain of the play's success? Or he did it knowing that U Tun Aye will not really demand from him payment for loss? Or did he do it in a moment of rashness? It is difficult to know why. (Some people have indeed criticized Thakin Ba Thaung for his rashness.) What ever the causes, it remains a fact that Thakin Ba Thaung has written it after repeatedly assuring U Tun Aye that he would not lose from 'An Enemy of the People'. (*Phwa hea, lwe par say* – For God's sake may this never happen.)

'An Enemy of the People' is not a new play that has become popular; it's an old one, 50 -60 years old. In fact it is 58 years old, having been first published three years before King Theebaw was dethroned and banished.

Now 'An Enemy of the People' has been completed and the introduction has also been written. Thakin Ba Thaung has done his job; it is now the task of the publisher and the readers to carry on. May they read it without regard for the author; and may they criticize it. Homage to the Enlightened One.

Year 1302, 7th Waning-moon day of Tabodwe,
Thakin Ba Thaung
Rangoon.

3. Tin Hlaing, Book Review of *Tiang Pyi Yan Thu* (An Enemy of the People) by Thakin Ba Thaung

Introduction

In his preface to the first edition, Thakin Ba Thaung mentions that *Tiang Pyi Yan Thu* is a Burmese translation of the well known play “An Enemy of the People” by Henrik Ibsen. It was published in 1941 by Burma Publishing House. At the time of translation, according to Thakin Ba Thaung, the English version of the play was prescribed for the Intermediate class (Second Year) in Rangoon University. Thakin Ba Thaung gave assurance to U Tun Aye, his publisher, that the book would surely make a profit, and that in case it didn't, he would himself pay for any loss for it.

Thakin Ba Thaung

Thakin Ba Thaung, who translated “An Enemy of the People” by Henrik Ibsen, was a famous politician as well as a great writer in Burmese. He was born in 1902, in Gwyegyo Phon-gon village in Natmauk township. His father, U Myit had been a junior officer under King Theebaw's government, and became a township officer under the British colonial administration, when Ba Thaung was born. His mother was Daw Lay Khin. Ba Thaung studied first in the Taungdwingyi Beikman monastery, and then at U Soe Min primary school in Natmauk. At age thirteen, he went to Buddha Thathana National School (BTN School) in Mandalay, where instruction was in Anglo-vernacular. He was a brilliant student and won scholarships. At BTN he came under the spell and attention and special care of the Headmaster. U Tun Shein, the Headmaster later became a national leader in the early days of independence movement and a member of the ambitious three member delegation to London in 1920 which sought political reform and self-government. During the 1920 student's boycott at Rangoon University, Ba Thaung became a leader when the student's boycott also spread to schools. He was in tenth standard and did not finish it and left school.

Ba Thaung became a school teacher at Shwebo, then at Bassein, but later moved to Rangoon and took up writing. He became an assistant editor of *New Burma* and wrote in journals and magazines. After working sometime as library clerk at Kinwun Mingyi Library, he joined The “World of Books” (*Ganda Lawka*), a bi-lingual magazine and worked under the oriental scholar and former ICS officer J S Furnivall. He was editor for the Burmese section. He came into contact with leading scholars of the time. It was at *Ganda Lawka* that his translation skills became acknowledged; indeed he had won translation contests in the *Ganda Lawka* five times before he joined it, and he was

barred from further competition. Ba Thaug earned enough prestige to become an instructor in translator at Rangoon University.

The 1930 racial riots between Indians and Burmans gave Ba Thaug a new sense of nationalism which later became even stronger because of the peasants' revolt led by Saya San. He started writing nationalist slogans and with a small group of like minded men he formed the *Dobaama Asi-ah-yone*, (We-Burman Association), making his home its headquarters.

Ba Thaug influenced university students and introduced Dobama slogans and its song to the campus, to the annoyance of its pro-British administrators. His contract as translation instructor was discontinued after one year. He stood for election to the Burma Legislature in a bye-election for Shwebo district. His team displayed so much anti-British sentiments that they were given the deportation order from the district.

Ba Thaug became prominent in the independence movement as the pioneer who used 'Thakin' as prefix, or title in his name. As a founder of the Dobama Asi-ah-yone, he inspired a generation of young men, including Thakin Nu, General (Thakin) Aung San and others, who grew up to become Burma's leaders in the struggle for independence. It was he who brought the Dobama theme to Rangoon University campus. Although he was the founder of the party, after a few years, he seemed to have given up (or lost?) his role in the leadership of Dobama Asi-ah-yone. Just when the tempo for independence rose to its highest pitch on the eve of the Second World War, he was found not to be involved in the party activities. As a political activist he got short terms of imprisonment a few times. And after the War, when General Aung San and his colleagues were assassinated, Thakin Ba Thaug was put into custody because of his close relations with Galon U Saw, Aung San's political rival and assassin, but he was not charged and acquitted.

But Thakin Ba Thaug made his name particularly as a master translator. In the art of reproducing great English classics, Thakin Ba Thaug matches Shwe Uddaung who was about ten years older than he. The two shine brightest in Burmese literature as the best translators from English. He excelled in slogan writing. His short crisp sentences formed the Dobama slogan. A few examples are:

<i>Bama-pyi thee doe pyay</i>	Bamapyi is our nation.
<i>Bama sar thee doe sar.</i>	Bama sar is our written language.
<i>Bama sagar thee doe sagar.</i>	Bama saga is our spoken language.

<i>Doe pyi go chit par.</i>	Love our nation.
<i>Doe sargar go chee mhyint par.</i>	Promote our written language.
<i>Doe sagar go lay-sar par.</i>	Respect our spoken language.
<i>Thakin myoe heay do Bama.</i>	We are Bama, the race of Masters.

It didn't take much time for these slogans to become adopted by Doebama Ahsi-ah-yone.

Thakin Ba Thauung's political role diminished as the Second World War approached but he kept on writing. During and after the war, he passed through various phases including a teashop owner, an agriculturalist, hotel owner. After 1962, he was given government posts in the Ministry of Information and sat on the board of movie censors, and news review section. In his later years worked in the translation department of the Burma Socialist Programme Party.

Twice married, he got one son and one daughter by his second wife Daw Than Kyi.

During his writing career Thakin Ba Thauung won a number of awards: The Prince of Wales Literary Prize from the Rangoon University Senate for translating *Outlines of General History*, UNESCO Prize for Literature, and many smaller prizes. In 1980, he was awarded the Naing Ngan Gon Yee title (First Class), the highest decoration by the State, for his important role in the independence movement. He died after receiving this title.

A prolific writer, Thakin Ba Thauung has among his important works: *Gaba yar za win Choke* (translation of *Outlines of World History*); *Panthar Ma Sar Uu*, an adapted novel which became a school textbook; *Chay Lay chaung taw hlan yay* (George Orwell's *Animal Farm*); *Ta taung ta-nya* (*Thousand and One Nights*); *Gaba pat-le yet shit-se* (Jules Vernes' *Round the World in Eighty Days*). He has also written many articles on various subjects including science and technology and medicine.

Summary of the play

It has to be remarked first that the Burmese version of the play is plot-wise an almost exact replica of the English version. However, Burmanization is so masterful that it can be easily mistaken for an original work. First, we notice the cleverness in the choice of character names. Dr Thomas Stockman becomes Dr U Gon Min, and his wife got the name Daw Nan Shin, her own identity, as married Burmese women used to retain their maiden names after marriage; there is no place for Mrs. or her Christian name Kathrine. Their children are Ma Khin Hla (Petra), a school teacher,

Maung Ba Maung (Ejlif) and Maung Ba Naung (Morten). Of the remaining characters, Peter Stockman, the Mayor and Thomas' brother becomes U Yan Way; Hovstad, the editor of the People's Messenger gets the name U Po Htei whereas, the newspaper, People's Messenger, itself becomes the Burmese daily *Pyi Thu Taman*. Supporting characters are U Chit Kha (Billing, the sub-editor), Kapitan Aung Lin (Captain Horster, mariner), U Po Hman (Aslaksen, the printer), U Aung Pan (Mrs Stockman's adopted father).

The drama is based on a clash between two brothers, Dr Thomas Stockman, the professional who values social values and principles, and Peter Stockman, who holds the Mayor-ship, a pragmatic politician and social organizer. Their clash of principles and outlook is the theme of the play. The cause of the conflict is the Municipal Baths, for which the Mayor is the supreme authority, and Dr Thomas Stockman as the Municipal medical officer is the chief officer.

Act I of the story starts with Mrs. Stockman at home making meals for her husband and to entertain his journalist friends. It used to be the meeting and eating place of Stockman's journalist friends. As U Chit Kha sits eating, U Yan Way, the Mayor comes in; he is followed by U Po Htei. They conversed about newspaper articles written by Dr Gon Min. Then they talk about social matters of the town including the Baths, the pride as well as the major source of families in their town. Dr Gon Min is the medical officer under the town municipal committee chaired by U Yan Way. Dr Gon Min comes home and joins the conversation. He begins to hint about the existence of issues for which people in power are responsible. He expects to rely on young people in particular and the population to support his mission. U Yan Way asks his brother about the article he has written for the People's Messenger which hasn't come out yet. But Dr Gon Min tells him new circumstances have given him new ideas and that the article written last winter will not be published. U Yan Way leaves the house after telling his brother about his suspicion that he is planning something behind his back. The family and guests go on talking when the Mayor leaves. Dr Gon Min becomes jubilant when he gets a letter by mail. They discuss about the Municipal Baths whose water is now found to be not clean being contaminated by discharge from a factory and infected with bacteria presenting a serious health problem. The letter is a laboratory report confirming it. There is a need to make major repairs on the Baths pipe-work. Dr Gon Min believes that the Municipal committee is responsible for it and has already written about the matter which is going to be published in *Pyithu Taman* with urgency. The journalists encourage him and he expects his efforts will be appreciated and supported by the public. Feeling that he has the full support of journalist friends as

well as the public, Dr Gon Min sends the memorandum about the unhygienic situation of the Baths, by messenger to the Mayor. His wife and daughter are also on his side.

Dr Gon Min receives the letter which the Mayor sends back to him. U Aung Pan, Daw Nan Shin's foster-father visits their place bringing information that he has heard about the unhygienic state of the Baths. The information, supposed to be kept secret has leaked out from Ma Khin Hla. U Po Htei, the editor cautions Dr Gon Min about the wisdom of a direct confrontation with the town officials. U Po Hman the printer promises Dr Gon Min the support of the middleclass as he is the Chairman of the Householders' Association. However, he recommends moderation in all matters. Then Mayor comes in and asks Dr Gon Min if he is really going to make an official report to the Municipal Committee. The brothers have disagreement; The Mayor argues about the wisdom of publicly revealing unhygienic status of the baths, that the whole town is dependent on the Baths for income, that there are practical problems to make repairs, large expenditure, who will pay for it, the need to close the Baths during repairs which will take about two years. U Yan Way tries to convince his brother that bringing up the issue so openly isn't wise. If the problem is made known to the public, bathers from other parts of the country will not come; hotels, restaurants, shops will have bad business. Dr Gon Min does not share his brother's view. He thinks health is a priority and that the seriousness of the infection in the water is a matter that must not be concealed from the public. He confronts the Mayor, resulting in a hot argument. U Yan Way reminds his brother that he can lose his job if he persists in asking the Committee to take action about the Baths. But Dr Gon Min is unconvinced. He thinks in terms of science, democracy and civil rights, the right of the public to know the truth. The prospect of her husband being fired makes Daw Nan Shin a bit more cautious. She urges her husband to be more subtle in dealing with his brother.

Act III brings humour as well as the approach to climax, the scene of confrontation between the two brothers. It begins with discussions between the editor and sub-editor of People's Messenger about the articles written by Dr Gon Min and which they are going to print. Dr Gon Min comes in to discuss his strategy with them. After Dr Gon Min leaves Ma Khin Hla comes in to talk with the journalists about her unwillingness to translate an article they have given her. She makes sharp comments about the journalists. In an attempt to be cleverer than his brother, U Gon Min has come to the printing room via the back door. He talks with the editor to explain his stand regarding the Municipal Baths. He reasons with them not to publish Dr Gon Min's article, but to give it to him. He explains them all aspects of the problem and the journalists agree with him. The Mayor requests

them to print an official report from the Municipal Committee about the Baths which he has readily prepared. He blocks the printing of the article by Dr Gon Min.

While they continue talking Dr Gon Min comes into the office. The journalists try to conceal the Mayor's presence from Dr Gon Min. The Mayor is pushed into a side room. Dr Gon Min asks them to print his article promptly and to allow him to proof-read it. Daw Nan Shin follows her husband. She talks about her husband heading for trouble and gives a sharp tongue to the journalists for their support of Dr Gon Min's rash action. As he strolls about the room, Dr Gon Min notices the Mayor's gown and status symbol, the lance. Instantly he knows the Mayor is there trying to win over the journalists. Dr Gon Min puts on the Mayor's robe and grabs the lance. He opens the side door and mockingly salutes the Mayor. Dr Gon Min makes the Mayor look like a fool. It becomes clear that the journalists are with the Mayor; they no longer support Dr Gon Min. He is told that they will not publish his article. Dr Gon Min tells them he will print his article and distribute it to all residents of the town at a town meeting. He says he will explain the truth to the people. The Mayor tells him he will not be allowed the use of meeting place. U Yan Way reassured his brother he cannot get a place to call the town meeting. Dr Gon Min tells him he will proceed through thick and thin. He even challenges the Mayor; he tells him, "*Kyar ne sin le-pyin kya daw thei gya ya hmar paw*" (They will know when tiger meets elephant in the field.)

In Act IV the tempo rises even further. The scene is an old fashioned room in Captain Aung Lin's house. The Mayor has denied permission for Dr Gon Min to use public places as meeting place. Captain Aung Lin, the mariner and friend of Dr Gon Min, has given his house for the meeting place. Town folk have come to the meeting held at Dr Gon Min's request. Alas! U Yan Way, the Mayor is present there.

As Dr Gon Min begins to speak, some one called attention to the need to elect a meeting chairman. Dr Gon Min objects unsuccessfully arguing that he has called the meeting because he wants to give a lecture. Ironically, the Mayor is proposed to take the chair. The Mayor declined to take the chair, but nominates U Po Hman instead. He is duly elected. The chairman speaks about the virtues of discretion and moderation and requests the person who calls the meeting to be moderate. Then the Mayor addresses the meeting. He explains about the undesirability of exaggerated accounts of the sanitary condition of the Municipal Baths being circulated. He calls attention to Dr Gon Min's intention to agitate the masses and set them against the establishment. He gets cheers and support from the audience.

Then to raise passions further, the Mayor moves a motion “to deny the opportunity for the Medical Officer to give his planned lecture or make any comments at the meeting.” He argues the Dr Gon Min will create conflicts of opinion and disunity. The motion is approved by the support from the chair and by shouts of public acclaim. Then U Po Htei, the editor, speaks to explain why the People’s Messenger has to change its stand, why their support for Dr Gon Min has to be retracted, his reason being that the newspaper has to work with, and for the public, and that Dr Gon Min’s activities are injuring public interests. Obviously, Dr Gon Min is on the losing side as shown by shouts from the audience against him.

Nevertheless, Dr Gon Min’s request to address the meeting is granted. He puts aside the issue of Municipal Baths, but speaks about a recent discovery he has made – the colossal stupidity of the authorities. He vehemently attacks the people in power, comparing them to a herd of bulls in a farm, doing mischief everywhere and standing in a free man’s way etc. He calls attention to the need to exterminate them like vermin. In particular, he attacks his brother, Peter Stockman, the Mayor as slow-witted and hide-bound in prejudice, and his company as parasites and relics of a decaying school of thought.

Amidst protests, in fact with the meeting getting rowdy, Dr Gon Min continues to make his strongest attack. He accuses the compact Liberal Majority as a dangerous group and an enemy of truth and freedom. Disregarding shouts and the chairman’s call to withdraw his ill-considered remarks, Dr Gon Min continues. He denounces the Liberal Majority for denying him the right to speak and from telling the truth. He brings to task the decaying moral foundations of society. To an interjection by the Editor that the majority has the *right* on its side, he retorts that the majority has *might* on its side, not *right*. He challenges the Editor and the People’s Messenger on their principles. He attacks the denial of truth by the majority. Finally, he challenges the democratic principle of government by majority. He contrasts the intelligent minority versus the foolish majority. He refuses to accept the right of the inferior majority to govern the superior minority.

The meeting goes on with Dr Gon Min getting less and less support. The meeting chairman proposes a resolution by vote that “This meeting declares that it considers Dr Gon Min, Medical Officer of Baths, to be an enemy of the people.” He proceeds to arrange ballots.

While the voting goes on and the voices continue to be noisy, U Aung Pan approaches Dr Gon Min and asks what he says about the tanning shop at Ma-uu-daw, to which he replied that it is the source of filth and infection. U Aung Pan warns him that this view would cost him dear. At this juncture a

stout man comes up to Captain Aung Lin to protest his permission to allow his place being used by the enemy of the people. The Captain indignantly replied he has the freedom to do what he likes with his own property. The stout man hinted to him he will also do what he likes and that what he will do will be known the next morning. To shouts of continuing applause the resolution is passed. **Dr Gon Min is now an enemy of the people.** The meeting winds up amidst whistle blows and shouts and hisses.

Act V begins with Dr Gon Min collecting stones in his house which have been through the windows during the night. They talk about their disgust with people of the town. Some one brings a letter to them, which happens to be from the landlord giving them notice to quit. Dr Stockman talks about leaving the place and going to Japan in Captain Aung Lin's ship. His wife is worried and reluctant about leaving the town. Then Ma Khin Hla comes in to tell her parents that she has been sacked from her teacher's job. She explains that the Principal has received anonymous letters which compels her to sack Ma Khin Hla. Then Captain Aung Lin comes in with the news that he has been dismissed from his post as ship's captain. It is now realized that the stout man is the ship's owner.

Then the Mayor comes in saying that he wants to privately talk with Dr Gon Min. The Mayor has brought a letter of Dr Gon Min's dismissal by the Municipal. After expressing regret for what has happened, the Mayor advises his brother that he ought to stay away from the town for some time. In the meantime he says that there is no prospect for Dr Gon Min's medical practice in the town. He suggests that after writing a letter of apology, he can be reappointed in his post and that the town-folk will forget and forgive. Dr Gon Min does not accept the suggestion. Then U Yan Way tells him something he hasn't known before. The revelation is that U Aung Pan, Daw Nan Shin's foster father has written his will leaving his large fortune to be inherited by Daw Nan Shin and children. When Dr Gon Min says that there is no reason for U Aung Pan to dislike him and change his will, the Mayor mentions his suspicion that his brother has been colluding with U Aung Pan to disgrace the Municipal Council members. He even accused Dr Gon Min to have received money from the old man to launch the attack.

When the Mayor has left, U Aung Pan comes to the house. He reveals a secret to Dr Gon Min: he has bought a lot of shares in the Municipal Baths with all the money at his disposal when the share prices were cheap. He says that these shares are bought with money he has reserved for Ma Nan Shin and children. Then he takes up the issue of his tannery producing filth to contaminate the Baths. He is willing to spend some money to correct the situation there, but Dr Gon Min should

avoid pinpointing it as the problem. It will be crazy on Dr Gon Min's part to go on highlighting about the sanitary condition of the Baths because he has a big family interest in it and can easily correct the situation. Dr Gon Min expresses his displeasure with U Aung Pan's actions. But the old man asks him to think hard and give him the answer by 2:00 pm the same afternoon whether he will accept his suggestion and the property to inherit.

U Aung Pan leaves the room and U Po Htei and U Po Hman come in. They explain why things had gone the way it did the other way. On top of that they express their displeasure that Dr Gon Min has been involved in buying the shares by his father-in-law. It is inappropriate to cause share prices to come down and let some one close to buy them. However, they are conciliatory. They offer him the facilities of the People's Messenger at his disposal; to correct the public opinion and to repair the Baths with the money he and his father-in-law now possess. But their ideas upset Dr Gon Min. He explodes and threaten to beat them and drive them out of the house. He writes three big Nos on a card to be sent to the old man. His wife reminds him that they have to move out. Captain Aung Lin offers them accommodation in his home. Then he finds his sons coming back from school. They tell him that following a quarrel with other fellows, the principal has temporarily suspended their school admission. Dr Gon Min talks about opening a school for his sons and to make them strong citizens, liberal and high-minded and capable of driving out wolves out of the country.

The play ends with Dr Gon Min saying "The strongest man in the world is he who stands alone."

The translation of terms and concepts

A careful comparison of *Taing Pyi Yan Thu* with the original play *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen shows that the plots are identical. There is absolutely no variation in the theme or in the progress of the story. Only the character names have been expertly changed, and the scenes are made Burmese. We find that Thakin Ba Thaung has made a number of appropriate changes. Some examples:

"This is arrack, and this is rum, and this one is the brandy" in the original becomes in the translation "This is coffee, and this is tea, and this one is the cocoa."

Burmans do not drink alcoholic drinks at home. This requires suitable changes: the offer of a glass of sherry has to be altered into an invitation to eat dinner, and when this is declined, the offer of beer is replaced by tea. But, "(*Touchez glasses with them.*) Your good health!" has no Burmese

equivalent; the Burmese do not have the tradition of drinking to toast. So this act of Western civility has to be completely deleted in the translation.

However, there is something Thakin Ba Thauung has changed, unnecessarily we believe. It is not understandable why he chose to use “*wut lon*”, a gown for the Mayor’s “official hat”. There is the word for it; either *oak toke* or *gaung baung* may be used. Then there is “*hlan dan*”, a spear, when the original object is the “staff of office”. In the days of royalty as well as in Burma Parliament there is a “*kyaing doke*”, a mace symbolizing authority, and it can be the “staff of office.”

The place name Molledal has been changed to *Ma-uu-daw*, a typical Burmese place name, and “Viking” is replaced by “*sit bo*”, an army officer. As a “Temperance Society” is not known in Burma, the author substitutes a “Moral Improvement Society” in its place.

Another change of place name is also noticed. While in the original work Dr Thomas Stockman says “We are going to sail away to the New World”; in the translation it becomes “after all we are leaving for Japan in Captain Aung Lin’s ship.” Why does he change the New World to Japan? Maybe, because it’s nearer to Burma.

In the choice of words and phrases and clauses too we find Thakin Ba Thauung truly Burmese. His vocabulary is wonderful. We give some samples:

“on the brink of starvation” is translated as “*ta-min nat-kyaw sar ya ma lauk*”, a true Burmese expression, literally meaning “almost skipping alternate meals of rice.”

“up there” is given the equivalent “*ah-nyar hmar nay gya done ga*”. *Ah nyar* is a perfect choice, meaning Upper Burma, and the clause means “while living in Upper Burma.”

The chosen word for “lion-hearted” is “*sar-ma-yee seik*”, a word common in old Burmese, perhaps in pre-war days when Thakin Ba Thauung used it. But it now seems to be obsolete. The usage can be deemed reasonable.

And there is also ample use of slang, which is appropriate for a play. Some samples are: “*saw hamar*”, meaning “will hit hard”; “*kyeik laik*”, meaning “strive hard” suitably used to translate “it is war, it is war.”

There is a Burmese common euphemism: “*Kyar ne sin le-pyin tway*” (Tiger and elephant meet in the field) to depict a confrontation of two giants. But, in this play, Thakin Ba Thauung uses it a bit differently. He writes “*Shan ne sin le-pyin tway*, a Shan being a person who belongs to a major native race of Burma. It is not clear why he does not use the more common usage.

On the whole, we find Thakin Ba Thaung's translation entertaining. Although it contains absolutely no changes in the plot, *Taing pyi Yan Thu* represents a true Burmese version of *An Enemy of the People*.

Noteworthy also is the names of characters which are typically Burmese in pre-war days. Gon Min, Yan Way, Po Hman, Po Htei, Ba Maung, Ba Naung etc. are of truly Burmese style, in which Burmese personal names do not contain more than two names, and most of them mono-syllabic. This is also true of female names in the play adopted by Thakin Ba Thaung. The Burmese personal names have now changed drastically; they may contain as many as four or five names, and each can be rather long. Examples: Kalyar Yu Yu Ahsin-hla, a girl's name; Aung Tayzarnwe Tun Pauk, a boy's name.

Impact

The play demonstrates the complexities of society, that democracy and human rights are not straight forward. Even the scientific method can fail when it comes to be a topic for the people. There are many things which Dr Gon Min has not foreseen. Good intentions don't necessarily bring good results is the moral of the play. At a time when Burma was involved in political struggle against imperialism for freedom and democracy, the lessons of Dr Gon Min should no doubt have been invaluable for many an aspiring independence fighter of the day.

Dr Tin Hlaing

December, 13, 2005.

3. Kyaw Nyaing, *Enemy of the Nation* by Thakin Ba Thoung

The play entitled 'Enemy of the Nation' written by writer Thakin Ba Thoung is now 65 years old. The writer admitted that his play was an adaptation of a play from the West written by Ibsen. So, the reader may understand and overlook certain points that are not typical of Myanmar.

The term Writer will be incomplete considering Thakin Ba Thoung's being a politician, Thakin (= Master, a term adopted by political activists during the independence struggle against the British colonialists). He was a forerunner Thakin, one of the pioneers who opened the chapter of Thakins. He is also a founder of Doh Bamar Asiayone (an organization of Myanmar people). It would be fitting to describe him Thakin Ba Thoung, who opened the eyes of Myanmar people and inspired them to cultivate the spirit of the masters to replace the slavish mentality they were made to harbour under the alien subjugation. However, he was described Writer in recognition and tribute of the invaluable service rendered by his literary works. He broadened the readers' horizons by producing the translation works like 'Pantha Ma Sa Oo' and 'The Thousand and One Nights'. Writer Thakin Ba Thoung exhibited his skills to Myanmar writers the kind of reference they should emulate and the methods of translation that had to be followed. We can learn a lot from his works 'Oil' and 'Enemy of the Nation'.

In the play, *Enemy of the Nation*, there were eleven characters. The leading character was Dr. Gon Min. He was a medical officer at the municipal swimming spot of a town, where the story was based. His wife was Daw Nan Shin, and his daughter Ma Khin Hla, a school teacher. He had two sons, 13-year-old Maung Ba Maung and ten-year-old Maung Ba Naung. U Yan Way, elder brother of Dr. Gon Min, in this play was a villain or the main rival of Dr. Gon Min. U Yan Way was mayor of the town and an authority of crime suppression as well as the chairman of the swimming spot. Although the two were blood brothers, U Yan Way staged an open fight against his younger brother when there had arisen the issue of personal interest and the interest of the town.

Another character in the play was U Po Hte, editor of the *Pyithu Taman* (Envoy of the People) newspaper. At first, he was a close friend of Dr. Gon Min and inserted the articles of the latter in the newspaper. He often visited the house of Dr. Gon Min and relished meals there with the family. He shared Dr. Gon Min's ideas. Assistant Editor of the same newspaper U Chit Kha was also a close friend of Dr. Gon Min's family like U Po Hte. U Po Hman was a printing press attendant of the newspaper. He was a straightforward man. Unlike U Po Hte and U Chit Kha, he stuck to what he believed to be right. He used to advise Dr. Gon Min to be sensible. Right from the start U Po Hman did not support the attack of Dr. Gon Min. U Aung Ban, who adopted Daw Nan

Shin, was a businessman and an opportunist. He was ready to take advantage of every opportunity to serve his selfish purpose. Captain Aung Lin was a captain of a seagoing vessel. He was most faithful friend of Dr. Gon Min throughout. He rendered help and protected Dr. Gon Min when all ostracised the doctor. With those characters Thakin Ba Thoung wrote the play 'Enemy of the Nation'.

In the foreword of the first printing of the play, Thakin Ba Thoung wrote that he completed the play in 1941 (on the 7th Waning Day of Tabodwe, 1302 Myanmar Era).

The play 'Enemy of the Nation' was adapted into a Myanmar play from its Western model. The modern Western plays were similar to the plays of U Ponnya like 'Ye-thi' (= water seller) and 'Kawthala'. If the plots were compared between the Myanmar plays and (Thakin Ba Thoung's) Enemy of the Nation, one will be well aware what the modern Western plays are like.

Thakin Ba Thoung in the foreword of the book said: "Enemy of the Nation is a prescribed text for the Intermediate students at the Yangon University. Those who have no knowledge of English language and wish to read a play prescribed for the Intermediate students are advised to read Enemy of the Nation".

The writer admitted that his play was an adapted work and it was prescribed as a text book for Yangon University Intermediate students. And as he said "Those who have no knowledge of English and wish to read a play prescribed for the Intermediate students are advised to read Enemy of the Nation" and the year he cited he had completed the play was 1941 (1302 Myanmar Era). If the Enemy of the Nation in Myanmar language was prescribed for the Intermediate students it was no need for him to write about this in the foreword and there was no time to do so. He also wrote that the first printing of the play was published by Burma Publishing House of U Tun Aye and not by Nagani Publishing House. Considering these points the Myanmar language 'Enemy of the Nation' play was not the prescribed text for Intermediate students but the original English language play was.

In the foreword of the second printing, the writer said Enemy of the Nation was published on 7 July 1963. So, the first printing took place 65 years ago and second printing 43 years ago. The foreword in the second printing was more comprehensive. It touched upon the play and its background history. The original work of Enemy of the Nation was a Norwegian story in Norwegian language. It was translated into English language 95 years ago in 1911. It was then adapted into Myanmar language in 1941. The writer adapted it during the time of the Japanese occupation. In the foreword for the second printing, he explained the aim of writing the play:

“When I began to write the play no one in Myanmar expected the nation would face similar experiences. In the absence of such experiences the readers of *Enemy of the Nation* might not fully appreciate the literary value of the play. In other words, publishing of *Enemy of the Nation* during the pre-War period was too early.

“At present, however, Myanmar has rich experiences and the readers will be able to enjoy the taste of *Enemy of the Nation* better. After publishing *Enemy of the Nation*, there have come into existence in Myanmar quite a large number of the persons like the characters—U Po Hte, U Chit Kha, U Po Hman and U Yan Way. And the persons like Dr. Gon Min had not emerged yet. For Myanmar to have sufficient experience, persons like Dr. Gon Min have to appear in Myanmar society.

“In every nation, there used to be persons who are able to deliver eloquent speeches on the public wellbeing but in practice they usually turn to personal gains. In the *Enemy of the Nation*, such persons of beautiful words are portrayed vividly. It would not be necessary to point out who such fellows are but you may have already seen them.”

Thakin Ba Thoung was born in 1901 and he passed away in 1981. So, he had been in the service of the nation and the people for 80 years. He was the first ever Thakin in Myanmar. He experienced and witnessed the events and played a role in the times of the colonialists, the British administration, the Japanese occupation, the parliamentary period of the government of the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL), the Caretaker government, the Revolutionary Council and the Burma Socialist Programme Party. Passing different times he had known different persons of various positions. Hence, he highlighted the period between the first printing and the second printing of *Enemy of the Nation* as follows:

“They say a period of 100 years is not long for a nation or a people. But during the time of 23 years covered by the *Enemy of the Nation* play, there were seven changes of government or rulers in Myanmar. At first, the nation was under the rule of the British. Then came the Japanese and it was under Chancellor Dr. Ba Maw. Afterwards, the English re-entered the nation. The nation regained independence and it was under the rule of AFPFL led by U Nu. Later, the Caretaker Government of General Ne Win was in control. Next came Pyidaungsu (=Union) Government of U Nu. The nation was then ruled by the government of Chairman of the Revolutionary Council General Ne Win. These are truly ample experience for Myanmar. In other nations, generally speaking, it will take so many years to experience them.”

The swimming spot of a town was the setting of the play ‘*Enemy of the Nation*’. The play

portrayed different types of the characters—the honest, the crooked, the upright, and the fair-weather men ready to change colour to serve their selfish purposes. The spot or the site in the play was used as not only for swimming but also for fetching drinking water of the entire townsfolk. So, it was the source of revenues for the town's municipality and the pride of it as well.

However, the medical officer of the swimming spot found out that it was poisonous or noxious and thus the distributions centre of poison. When water was put to laboratory test, the suggested content of poison was confirmed. Therefore, the doctor suggested the spot be under repair and closed to the public for a period of about two years and the cost would be about K 300,000. If so, people earning their livelihood from the spot would be adversely affected.

As the use of water from the spot would be harmful to health of the townspeople, Dr. Gon Min would urge the town committee to close down the spot. The Pyithu Taman newspaper agreed to agitate, educate and convince the people of the danger. However, the mayor of the town was opposed to the plan. He said the doctor was exaggerating the issue and the site was not harmful to that extent. He began organizing the editors. In so doing, he wielded his influence plus threats and coaxing. Editors U Po Hte and U Chit Kha and the pressman U Po Hman were behind Dr. Gon Min at first but they yielded to the influence of U Yan Way and changed sides. Due to their agitation and persuasion, the population of the town supported U Yan Way. Dr. Gon Min remained steadfast in his determination to stand by the truth. Finally, however, he had only his wife, his daughter, his sons and his friend Captain Aung Lin in support of him.

The play depicted how the people naturally acted or stood on the side that promised favours to them instead of standing on the side of the truth. Since the play was written in 1941, he seemed to present the events in the time of the Japanese occupation—people giving more priority to self-interest than the truth, having to live under fear of the danger close to them, and the truth thus was out of place due to widespread ignorance and artlessness among the public.

At a mass gathering, Dr. Gon Min said: “Another point is that a person of weak character cannot be magnanimous. The Pyithu Taman newspaper has been publicising daily that the cause of weakening character, practice of taking bribes and moral breakdown as in the case of waste matter from the leather works at Ma-u-daw flowing into the swimming spot is because of learning. It is most improper to write such untruth. People with common sense should not lie or roll in filth. What is more, they should avoid making themselves most disgusting ones.”

U Po Hte and the likes of him who relished the meals at the house of Dr. Gon Min accused the doctor of being an ‘enemy of the nation’. Who are the ‘enemy of the nation?’ Are mayor U Yan

Way and Y Po Hte's group the 'enemy of the nation' or is Dr. Gon Min himself? Or is U Aung Ban, the owner of the leather works? It is up to the reader to decide.

If the scenes the writer saw at that time are compared with what is going on at present, we have come to notice opportunists who stick solely to self-interest but do not care anything about others. The persons like Dr. Gon Min, who braves the criticisms and stands for the welfare of the public, are almost non-existent. So, the number of people like U Yan Way who are ready to wield their authority for selfish aims and those like U Po Hte who are dancing to the tunes of the persons in authority thereby leading an easy life is growing high. So, the reader is to correctly view the enemy of the nation to be none other than opportunists placing self-interest in the fore.

V APPENDICES

Appendix 1

SHORT INFORMATION on the MAKING of the BOOK REPORTS

CHOSEN BOOKS from the bibliography will be provided on a lending basis by the manager [or for people in Myanmar through the Myanmar Book Centre in Yangon (55 Baho Road; telephone 221-TWO REPORTS on each book by different persons are accepted.

LENGHT: 8,000 to 12,000 words (plus special space, if desired);

LANGUAGE of PUBLICATION: English; manuscripts in Myanmar language will be translated;

CRITERIA (must not slavishly be observed):

1. Biographical information about the author/translator, and other contributors;
2. Information about the non-Myanmar sources used in the book; (if the book is a translation, the original English version will be provided, too, if possible;)
3. Summary of the book's contents;
4. Information about the special aim and intended impact of the book at the time of publication;
5. How are foreign terms and concepts translated or transformed into the Myanmar language and the Myanmar context? (May be omitted!)
6. Personal assessment by the reviewer of the book, its impact on later times and its meaning for today

DEADLINE of DELIVERY of the REPORT: December 31, 2005 (the deadline can be extended);

DELIVERY of the REPORTS DRAFTED: Directly to the manager of the project by email or through the Myanmar Book Centre.

COMMENTS and EDITING: The reports will be commented upon by another person. The reviewer may react on the comments and answer the questions as he or she likes. The responsibility for the final editing of the reports is with the project manager.

REWARD: As a financial reward, each reviewer will receive 50 US \$ at the time of submitting the book report and 30 US \$ after the final editing.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS like recollections of elder people, who remember the impact of Nagani on their life, and essays on subjects related to the club (Nagani Song, Nagani Magazine, the role of literature in disseminating knowledge in Myanmar, etc.) are very much appreciated.

Appendix 2

INFORMATION about COMMENTARIES on BOOK REPORTS

1. The commentaries asked for shall serve two aims

First (and most important): To start a dialogue on Myanmar's intellectual and literary heritage between interested people inside and outside of Myanmar.

Second (and important, too): To check the clarity of the report with regard to the intended publication.

Therefore, the commentator should be interested in Burma affairs and in the general topic of the respective book, but must not know anything about its specific content.

2. Length of each commentary: Must not exceed the space of this paper.

3. Some hints that may be useful to observe in writing a commentary:

Are there any questions that are brought up by reading the report?

If yes, what kind of questions do arise?

Are the criteria listed in the “Short information on the making of book reports” (see attachment) met by the book report?

What information on the book report do I find interesting/exciting or unnecessary/redundant?

Is there anything that I would recommend to the author of the report?

Delivery of the commentary: It would be appreciated if the commentaries could be sent by email to the above mentioned email address. If the author of the report chooses to react on the commentary, the commentator will be informed.

Affairs to come: All participants will be informed about the development of the publishing process of the reports and are invited to participate in future deliberations and activities. - Questions and recommendations are very much appreciated.

MYANMAR LITERATURE PROJECT



Starting with an investigation into the NAGANI BOOK CLUB

The project's
Working Papers
are published by
the **Department of Southeast Asian Studies of Passau University**

Already Published:

- No. 10:1, An Introduction into the Nagani Book Club
 - No. 10:1.1, Additional Material on Nagani
- No. 10:2, Thein Pe, *Saya Lun* and *Member of Parliament*
- No. 10:3, Ba Hein and Hla Shwe on Capitalism
- No. 10:4, Thein Pe, *Student Boycotters* (Two Volumes)
- No. 10:4.1, Additional Material on Students, Society and Politics
- No. 10:5, Ba Khaing, *Political History of Myanma*
- No. 10:6, Nu, *Gandalarit*
- No. 10:7, Mogyo, *José Rizal*
- No. 10:8, Three Books on World War and Burma
- No. 10:9, Two Works on the History of the Russian Revolution
- No. 10:10, Soe, *Socialism* and Chit Hlaing, *Memories*
- No. 10:11, Ba Hein, *Students' Revolution*
- No. 10:12, Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Riot*
- No. 10:13, Two Political Dictionaries
- No. 10:14, Thandwe Maung, *Asoka* and Tun Shein, *First Hand Experience of India*
- No. 10:15, Four Books on Germany
- No. 10:15.1, Two Books of Khin Khin Lay on Germany
- No. 10:16, Four Books on Sun Yat Sen
- No. 10:100, Papers Presented at the Burma Studies Conference, Singapore 2006

Some Nagani Books
were scanned and are available on CD.

For details contact
habezett@t-online.de

All Working Papers published until now are available at
<http://www.zoellner-online.org/mlp.htm>
and at the Online Burma Library
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=2083>

INVITATION

Readers are invited to participate in the project by

- writing **comments and criticisms** on the contents of this and other volumes of this series;
- contributing **essays** on Burmese/Myanmar literature as a medium between the international world and Burmese society;
- providing **material** that sheds more light on the Nagani Book Club, its context and impact on Burmese intellectual and literary life;
- offering **assistance** as translators and commentators of book reports.

For contributions and questions, please contact:

Dr. Hans-Bernd Zöllner
University of Passau
Phone: +49-40-8317961
Fax: +49-40-84051735
Email: habezett@t-online.de