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Preface

A foreword for Ma Ma Naing, a lady from among the wiles of the Dancing Strings

Daw Ma Ma Naing (Mandalay Marionettes) is an artist who is capable of using her pen skillfully and with precision. This can be seen how she explains her craft in depth to her readers through her writing.

In this book, the readers can enjoy her attractive writing in which she drew a close picture of puppet-lovers from Japan, the land of Cherry blossoms. She also guides her readers through other subjects such as how refined and intricate Myanmar traditional puppetry is and how it serves as a metaphor for the meaning of life.

Initially this book was entitled "Puppet-lovers from the Land of Cherry Blossom", which may have confused readers as to whether the title referred to Pyin Oo Lwin in the mountain ranges of Shan state or Japan. Moreover, in this book I found something much more subtle and

profound than merely learning about the puppet-lovers from Japan. Thus I urged the author to reconsider her naming of the book. She rethought it and changed the title to "The Wiles of the Dancing Strings".

The dancing strings from the title of this book do not signify anything but the strings that are used to manipulate the puppets.

Yet, Daw Ma Ma Naing is not a mere puppet made out of timber-tree which is being manipulated to be dancing by the moves of the strings. On the contrary, she is totally herself. However, it seems that Ma Ma Naing, who titled herself as Ma Ma Naing (Mandalay Marionettes) and to whom I have given a title as "The Queen of Today's Myanmar Traditional Puppet", is being tied by the several tricky strings of life.

As the reader makes their way through the chapters of this book, alongside some technical articles written about the puppets they will find many ingenious details of the author's life.

When I honored her with a title - "The Queen of Today's Myanmar Traditional Puppets", some argued that it could possibly sound exaggerated or overstated. Then I had to make myself clear by claiming that I only called her a "queen" - not a "king", yet. Then those critics withdrew their acclaims over my single question. "Is there any other lady in this country who contributes to and famous for the traditional puppet apart from

Daw Ma Ma Naing?" Even though there are many respectable and admirable male puppeteers who ought to be honored, there is no one else among the ladies, except Daw Ma Ma Naing, who could hand the legacy of art from the father of puppet (Mandalay Marionettes).

Then I wondered she, by putting the self-given title - Mandalay Marionettes - into a bracket, might have meant to say that her puppet style is from Mandalay or else she might have tended to advertise that Mandalay Marionettes is the only one and a unique place for everyone who wants to enjoy puppet show.

Ma Ma Naing is, therefore, the one who preserve the traditional heritage of Myanmar puppet.

Ma Ma Naing is the one who have been able to raise the dignity of Myanmar all around the world.

Ma Ma Naing is the one who supports all the elderly artists including elderly puppeteers.

Ma Ma Naing is the one who enjoy herself in performing puppet shows and singing.

What is more, she was the one who could protect Myanmar traditional puppet culture through the tricks of dancing strings and ups and downs of life. As Ma Ma Naing is not a timber-wood puppet in reality, she does know the essence of this poem -

"The uncertainty is the body and mind
Ever changing with the time,
Thrive and die and die and thrive
Never change its plight

Existing and collapsing
True in body and soul
True is the place of Nirvana
Where the body and soul is no more,
So to be in Nirvana,
Practice the means of mindfulness"

Here I just hope and wish that she be strong enough to firmly keep her father's legacy of puppetry, no matter how the strings of life may differ.

Dr. Chit San (Chit San Winn)-13/10/2011