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## Preface

By

Dr. Khin Maung Win

The articles in this collection appear for the first time together in a single book. There have been other articles on Buddhism in Colourful Myanmar and Stories and Sketches of Myanmar. The present collection is an addition to them.

The idea for the title, Buddhist Pilgrim's Progress comes from a well known work of John Bunyan in English Literature, called Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress tells the story of a man named Christian, who sets out on a pilgrimage. His journey takes him to the city of Destruction through the valleys of Humiliation and the Shadow of Death and finally ends in the Celestial City which is the desired goal of all pilgrims. On the way Christian experiences episodes of stirring adventures as he meets and battles with giants and monsters.

It is an allegory in which the journey repre-

sents the author's own experiences in following the path of God. The places and creatures he meets represent the difficulties, trials and tribulations, and conflicts he encounters.

However, Khin Myo Chit need not create giants and monsters to tell her experiences in Buddhist meditation. She just relates everything as they happened. If the difficulties she meets were represented by creation of monsters, it would have made a tale no less exciting than Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

In her article, The Buddhist Way of Life in Myanmar, Khin Myo Chit tells how a non-Buddhist and non-Myanmar would respond to the Buddhist concept of re-births by citing a passage from Nevil Shute's novel The Chequerboard. I wish to add a passage with a similar theme from Dennis Wheatley's novel, The Golden Spaniard. The passage runs as follows.

"I have spent much time studying most of the great religions and philosophies which have influenced mankind as far back as our very limited knowledge carries us. They divide themselves into two kinds. Those which teach survival and those which do not.

There's plenty of evidence to show that each human being is animated by something which continues to function after the physical body is dead. If a person refuses to accept that, there's nothing more to be done about it. It is no good arguing. They are just in

a very low state of development and will learn in time.

The teachings which preach survival are divided into three kinds. The most primitive are those in which the worshippers bow down to something they can see: trees, wooden idols, Priest kings whom they regard as personifications of their God. The next stages are those in which people bow down to something which they cannot see — an invisible but personal God. The third and highest types are obviously the philosophies like Taoism and the purer Buddhism, which teach that we are not puppets jiggling to a strange tune played by some invisible superman but that each of us carries within ourselves a spark of that divine fire which animates creation.

Life is not of today or tomorrow, but eternal. This is a school and in it we are all learning. The lessons we learnt are courage, compassion and wisdom. You and I have had countless incarnations. You and I have climbed a long way already to have reached our present state. The sort of deal we get in our next incarnation depends on how we pass the test in this one. Practise courage and compassion and strive after wisdom."

(From The Golden Spaniard, by Dennis Wheatley, page 303 to 305.)

This is one of the ways in which a non-Buddhist and non-Myanmar responds to the Buddhist concept

of rebirths.

The article, Add Life to Years the Buddhist Way, is taken from the book: Religion, Aging and Health, A Global Perspective. It is part of the movement launched by the World Health Organization in the 1980s to promote the health of elderly persons. The article begins with the news item about U Thant, the United Nations secretary general from 1962 to 1971, bowing down to his 87-year old mother. It is remarked that a son is never too old or too important to bow-tow to his mother. The article goes on to relate the stories from Buddha's time on the theme of respecting and taking care of the elderly. It goes on to relate the history of homes for the aged in Myanmar and a short biography of Daw Oo Zun, founder of the Old Peoples' Home in Yangon.

There is also the story of Dhammadina and the doctor and the snake, a tale from Dhammapada. The readers may also read about the Hti-Ta-Hsaung Ceti, Mai La Mu Pagoda and Aung Mingala Pagoda. In short, all articles in this collection are related to the Buddhist culture and thought as accepted and practised by the Myanmar people in their daily life.

Finally, I wish to add that the year 2015 marks the hundredth anniversary of my parents, U Khin Maung Latt and Daw Khin Myo Chit. Encouraged by the readers' response to the works of Daw Khin Myo Chit, my

wife Shwe Yi Win and I have collected more of her works from old magazines, journals and newspapers. For the works that have not yet been published in book form, we are now going through the procedures to make them appear in a single book. We hope the readers will welcome them as they have always done for Daw Khin Myo Chit's writings.

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