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To Mark the Hundredth Anniversary of
U Khin Maung Latt
and
Daw Khin Myo Chit

Introduction

By

Dr. Khin Maung Win

This collection of Daw Khin Myo Chit's articles marks the 100th anniversary of U Khin Maung Latt and Daw Khin Myo Chit in the year 2015. The articles are divided into five parts: Culture, Political Life, People and Places, Conversation Pieces, Stories and Plays.

The dictionary meaning of **culture** is given as: the habits and traditions and beliefs of a country, society or groups of people. It is also given as arts like music, art, theatre, literature, etc. According to the dictionary of cultural literacy, culture may cover such areas as: Religion, Mythology, Folklore, Philosophy, Fine Arts, History, Politics, Geography, Literature, Anthropology, Physiology, Sociology, Business, Economics, Physical Sciences, Mathematics, Medicine, Health, Technology. That's quite a lot of area. In fact, all articles in this collection may be regarded as dealing with culture in one way or another. Thus the parts divided may be considered as sub-divisions of culture.

A Patchwork of Contradictions begins with the statement: we are a nation of contradictions; our religion (Buddhism) teaches the impermanence of all things and that life is suffering, and yet nowhere in the world could be found a people as happy and fun-loving as we are; everything goes with music, song and dances _ even funerals. The article gives some examples to make her point.

Hail to Thee Blithe Spirit relates her experiences of watching a dance performance, western style. What she learned from watching the performance is that whoever wants to achieve in life, be it in art or in meditation practice, must strive on again and again. Listening to the commentary given by Miss Martha Graham, she came to appreciate the thousands of times of practice that lie behind a single dance step. She also admitted that her impressions were for more personal reasons rather than aesthetic.

In the article on **Myanmar Entertainment of Songs, Dance and Music**, she explains the meanings of Kadaw dance, paying respects to the audience, the dance of the golden drum — shwe ohze, harp music with vocal accompaniment, seven variations dance steps, cock-fight dance and music.

In **How not to Deal with Superstitions**, she explains that according to the dictionary, superstition means to believe in or fear what is unknown, mysterious or

supernatural. According to the meaning, everyone is superstitious in one way or another to some degree. Superstition is not something that can be argued out of a person's system. Above all, it is good manners to respect other's belief. She concluded the article with a humorous note saying: If a dear old lady gives you a talisman saying that it will make ladies fall at your feet, accept it with thanks even if you will throw it away, once out of her sight. Or perhaps you might keep it in your pocket, saying to yourself, "What's wrong in keeping this anyway, it's only a tiny thing that can go into my breast pocket. _ you never know, it might—" and you stop to look around shame-faced someone might hear your thoughts." (Personally speaking I wish I own such a talisman, without the knowledge of my wife.)

April is the month of the water festival and the Myanmar New Year. It also marks the coming of spring and Daw Khin Myo Chit wrote in **Now That April's Here**: I should be spring cleaning, as any self-respecting house wife (which I am not) should. In the article **English Literature Through Burmese Eyes** Khin Myo Chit says that the attitude towards Literature is to be always grateful for the good and beautiful thing when it comes. When reading English Literature, even though one does not consciously look for similarities in Burmese Literature, one cannot help remember the like thoughts and expressions. The writer recounted her experiences of

reciting lines from Shakespeare to a friend who asked: where do the lines come from? Theragatha or Dhammapadha? When told that the lines are from Shakespeare, the friend exclaimed: "Why, they are Buddhist thoughts!" She concluded the article with a melancholy note saying, : In the autumn of our life , we find our ourselves leading our children into the great wonderland of literature, as we sit them on our knee and soothe their craving with the inevitable: once upon a time...

During the 1930s at the time when there was no Independence Day nor Union Day nor Resistance Day, when the days of national importance were so scarce, the Burmese people clung to this day, namely **Par-daw-mu Day**. It was the day that the Burmese people finally lost its sovereignty. On that day , processions and tableau were arranged and scene of taking away of King Thibaw and his Queen was enacted. Daw Khin Myo Chit wrote:-To-day Par-daw-mu Day offers us a wealth of lessons. We critically look into what had probably led to the to the fall of Burmese monarchy and try to learn the sad lessons of what backwardness and short-sightedness and disunity could bring upon.

In **Jottings from Chauk Oil Fields**, Khin Myo Chit wrote : - Being here is like sitting in a time machine . It is difficult to remain in the present. I am transported either into past or projected into the happy future. The present moment itself is being rapidly transformed. Old

ideas and obsolescent institutions are being swept away by the tidal wave of revolution. We live in a period when history is being made in the grandest manner and we are to be actors on the big stage. Khin Myo Chit's way of presentation can be used in describing any historic event which one is taking part, like for example 1988 movement. It will of course be an imitation, which reminds me of a saying of Stephen Hawking. When his book A Brief History of Time became a success, other writers imitated him in writing about their favourite subjects under the titles _A brief history oftheir favourite subject. Seeing those imitations, Stephen Hawking remarked that Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

In the **Golden Harvest**, Khin Myo Chit, in writing about the Golden Jubilee of the University Boycott Movement, says that the events and facts belong to history, but what she wishes to write about is what it means to the younger generation. Writing about her impressions she wrote that to her childish mind, the men and women who wore home-spun clothes and badges were the people who were trying to overthrow the British government. She admitted that she did not quite understand how they were going to do it, but she believed that they could do it. She did not know at that time that the boycotters were sowing the seeds of nationalism and patriotism and little did she realize that she was to be one of those who would harvest the grain.

In the article, **Growing up Under the Colonial Regime**, Khin Myo Chit wrote: -A quarter of a century ago, never did a moment pass without our being reminded of the state of subjugation our country was in. If we went to the cinema hall, there would flash on the screen the Union Jack flying to the tune of God Save the King. Those days we hardly dared to hope we would ever live to see our own flag flying to the refrains of our national anthem. After that, Khin Myo Chit continued to relate how it was like to grow up under the colonial regime.

The Independence Day comes once a year, and in **Memories on Independence Day**, Khin Myo Chit tells us about how she (using the expression that she herself uses) wallows in nostalgic memories of the past (before the Independence).

One of the articles featuring *People and Places* is a book review on Daw Ah Mar's book called **Worthy Men and Women of Mandalay**. In the preface of the book, Daw Ah Mar wrote: -"Because I could not help being impressed by the activities of our women, so commendable and worthwhile, in the business world, I began writing of those I have known personally all my life." Mandalay is still considered the seat of culture, especially for the performing artistes. Musicians, singers, dancers, stage actors feel that they can attain the highest level of perfection, only after they have had the guidance and training under the maestros of Mandalay.

The creative talent of Daw Ah Mar, born and bred in Mandalay, is consumed in her literary works. Her biographies and travelogues are informative and entertaining. Nothing escapes her, the sublime and the ridiculous, the mundane and the lyrical, — everything is there, all harmoniously woven into a mosaic of lasting beauty." That is the way Khin Myo Chit reviewed Daw Ah Mar's book.

In the article **Shumawa U Kyaw (A Tribute)** Khin Myo Chit paid a tribute to U Kyaw, founder, publisher and chief editor of Shumawa magazine, writer, film producer and director. Khin Myo wrote that U Kyaw loved to have people in his house to gather and talk. Himself shy and modest, he did not talk much. He preferred to listen. He said, "I just let them talk and listen. I get a lot out of them." Regarding the last part, Khin Myo Chit wrote: I do, not, for the life of me, quite know what he 'got' out of those 'gab-sessions' in which I was an active participant.

Natshinaung was one of the most romantic personalities. He had given us the tradition of courage, sportsmanship and poetic achievement and alas!... a bitter lesson too. The bitter lesson to be learned was how a soldier and poet though he was, he went down as a traitor to his country. Some writers believe that Natshinaung was never a traitor. However historical accounts are against him. The truth is hidden in the hands of history. Meanwhile it is our good fortune that we have his poems.

The Cheroot Soldier is a radio play which makes me remember the golden age of radio plays in the 1950s. Even in the golden age no one except the players and producers and their friends and relatives listen to those plays. Still, it was a time to remember by the likes of us. This play is based on a true incident during world war II. In that play,

Sgt.. means desk sergeant

Col. means Colonel (Dhammika) Ba Than

Yi means the wife of Bo Sein Tun

Tun means Bo Sein Tun

I too feature as one of the voices: - Bo Sein Tun's hit — where ? He is there under a tree.

The characters are real people and the happenings are true. It's a pity that together with the disappearance of radio plays the writings too are lost into oblivion. In other countries like England and USA, the radio plays live on in the writings of great writers like P.G. Wodehouse, Noel Coward, Agatha Christie, Dennis Wheatley, and others.

About ten minutes walk to the south of Hledan there used to be a bus stop called Prome hall bus stop. About ten minutes walk from Prome hall bus stop to the east, there used to be a cottage called **Aye Yeik Tha**, literally translated cool and pleasant shade. On the north east of Aye Yeik Tha is what used to be known as BOC college and on the east lies the University of Distance

Education (UDE). The radio play is about the life at Aye Yeik Tha. The characters in the play are real people.

Latt represents U Khin Maung Latt, my father,

Mya represents Daw Khin Myo Chit (Daw Khin Mya), my mother,

Lin represents Htin Lin, writer.

People of the Aye Yeik Tha group include : U Thu Kha, movie director and writer, U Win Tin, well-known politician and journalist, U Zaw Waik, boxing champion, U Ba Gyan, cartoonist, Daw Kyi Mar, singer and writer, Daw Kyi Aye, writer, Daw Hla Than, writer and stage performer, Thaw Dar Swe, writer, U Win Pe (writer Mya Zin) and others. Although it may not be a big deal to other people, the people of Aye Yeik Tha group take pride in being part of the group. In the conclusion of the play the five brats mean U Htin Lin's four children and me.

The marriage of an old maid and old bachelor usually makes a good subject, be it real or fictional. In this story, **The Case of the Curious Bride and the Frightened Bridegroom**, if it was the bride who is frightened, it would have been taken as one of those wedding blues. But in this case, it was the bridegroom who was frightened even for his life and the bride was very curious, even enough to, well, I won't spoil the story. It is better to read it. The story has been passed from generation to generation, and its origin has been lost

in history. The story must have improved with each telling according to the imagination of the teller. But even in Khin Myo Chit's telling of the story there is still some room left for the imagination of the reader. It reminds me of what my mother used to say about the modern movies — one thing about these movies is that nothing is left to imagination.

There are other articles and stories which the reader can find out for himself.

And finally, I wish to add that this year _ 2015 marks the 100th anniversary of my parents U Khin Maung Latt and Daw Khin Myo Chit. My wife Shwe Yi Win and I have gone through the old newspapers and magazines, and made a collection of stories and articles that have not appeared in book form. This book is the result of our efforts to make the not-yet-well-known works of my mother in a single volume.

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