

U MOE HEIN  
Poetry and essays

“My Sole Wish”

In this very country  
I wish to be reborn  
loving and serving it.

I breathe its air  
I eat its food  
and grow up as a tree.

I care not storms  
I fear not winds  
come whatever for.

Happy am I  
to live and die  
on this beloved soil.  
And to be its citizen  
once again, to love and serve.

For a fish, no place is better than a river. For a bird, no happier can it be than in the woods. For man, a question also rises, what is the best? I, for one, would answer “his homeland.” Do I sound patriotic? But that is not the point. It is simply a man’s love for his soil.

Whenever I travel up or down country, a feeling of gratitude and joy overwhelms me. The fields, things growing, valley or mountain, monuments or houses, people at work, children playing, and etc. ...all become a quilt. Patterns and colours may differ but the quilt is one piece. Likewise, society and surrounding merge into oneness.

Looking at this oneness of souls and soil, in other words, a country and its citizens, I am filled with pride. Since days of yore, our ancestors have gone through thick and thin, weal and woe. Times may be good, times may be bad as history will show, but we have not lost our identity. The struggle for the better continues.

As a Buddhist, and as a devotee, I do believe in “the rounds of birth”. I do not know my past life nor the future. What matters most is the present. Here, in this country, I was born. Here, I have grown up. I have enjoyed all the merits that this country could give. From the time of our forefathers to the present, the shaping and making of this country is the greatest task. With sweat and blood, the noble ones have toiled and sacrificed for this generation and for more to come. We are indebted to them. Being a

son of this soil, I must serve so. Out of love and duty, and to the best of my ability, I must do utmost for the land I live in. For me, one life is not enough to fulfill this wish.

Let me be born here again, in Myanmar. I fear not what I have to face. Whatever the odds. So long as I am a citizen breathing its air, quenching my thirst with its water, and living on its produce, I shall be happy. My head and heart will uphold and cherish all the values of the land I am born in. To be among one's countrymen and serve the land together, is my sole wish. Nothing great, just a simple and strong wish, may I say.

### “A Mission”

Where to my dove... where to  
never tired are you?  
Out there  
in the open wild,  
flames and painful cries.

What then  
my dove... what then  
can you ever do?  
All songs of peace  
and words of love  
non-stop, I'll coo.

Know you  
my dove,... know you  
the dangers not a few?  
I do but I don't flinch  
so I dare go through.

Oh, what .  
my dove,...oh what  
makes you steadfast?  
If for peace, for life,  
then it's a .. “Must”.

## Fly, Where You Have To

A dove. A symbol of peace. When I was given this postcard to compose a poem, immediately it became lively, flapping its wings to set out on a journey. As you know, an object becomes animate as soon as it captures the poet's attention. So, a dialogue took place between the two of us. The subject, of course, was about its peace mission. To all my questions, the little dove answered well. Nobody can fail to notice its traits: courage, sacrifice and resolve. In one word—nobility.

Like the little dove, there are people in the world whose minds are set to bring peace, whose hearts are filled with compassion and their determination unshaken. Organizations like the U.N. and its agencies have been founded to promote peace and bring prosperity. A great service to mankind. Without men of peace and a spirit of cooperation, what would our world be?

Yes, the world is not free from flames. It never was in the past, nor in the present, and the same to be in the future. Conflicts, wars and tensions appear from time to time. Just as the planets have their dark sides, so has our earth. There is no exception. Tensions and turmoil are the boilers of our society.

But, it is the nature of men—worthy men, noble men, not to give away to destruction of our human race. World peace must be preserved. All thoughts and efforts must pertain to it. The will of the wise must conquer the evil. Flames must be put out and lives must be saved at whatever cost. Nothing is more precious than human lives. It is a bound duty. Oh, little dove! Fly where you have to. Indeed, a noble mission.

## “The Pen”

Oh where...  
in the world can you find  
a monument of the wind?

Out there  
on a sacred mound  
head and heart its ground.

And wet  
with blood, sweat and tears  
unfading in all weathers.

Not like

sun, moon and stars  
a mere routine they are.

But this  
monument of the mind  
one does see at anytime.

A symbol  
of love, life and truth  
that all heavens bow  
and earth salutes.

For us in Myanmar, there is such a day as "The Poets' Day." Something to be truly proud of. Isn't it opportune for the country to honour the citizens who plough its field with a pen? The pen that stokes the fire and sets the literary flame. The flame that rids the dark and sheds the light of truth. No wonder, the Emperor Napoleon once remarked: "The pen is mightier than the sword".

"The Poets' Day" came into being just before we attained our independence. Men of foresight assembled to choose a day befitting to commemorate it yearly. According to the Burmese calendar, it must be on the first of the bright fortnight of Nataw (November or December).

Since the past and to the very present, "The Poets' Day" is held countrywide, with events like talks given by the writers and poets, discussions with readers, competitions and literary awards, and so on. Here and there, the occasion is held within the month writers and readers meet face to face. In someway, it is a venue of minds.

The above poem that I composed is but a token. In fact, the gratitude of literature is beyond expression. It is said the earth revolves on its axis. What then serves as the pivot of its civilization? Surely, the pen! Am I overstating? No, I am not. History is replete with people and events that have given proof as to how the pen has made and shaped the world for good and bad.

To conclude,--powerful is a weapon for offense or defense. More powerful is the pen to create or destroy mankind. It has no perimeter. And just as our earth, it has withstood all weathers.

OH, mighty pen:...The lever of life.

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