

Let the Lamp Keep Burning

By Selwyn Saw Win

"Pyathou", the tenth month of the Myanmar calendar falls in February. Days are cool and sunny, with dew drenched nights. I visited my old high school on one sunny day of February. My memories of olden days suddenly occurred in my mind when I stepped in to the school compound.

"Not for school but for life do we learn" was a motto of Methodist English High School which is now well known as Basic Education High School No.(1) Dagon in Yangon. This motto has been embedded in our mind since our childhood. During our school days, we were like flying birds resting on one big shady tree. We learnt together, we played together and we sang together on the same branch.

After passing matriculation (or) tenth standard we were like morning birds flying away from a tree towards different directions. Most of all of our friends dispersed to different places. Some attended universities and colleges, some went abroad, some joined the government services and some earned their living on their own private business.

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After high school we rarely see each other because we were running on our own tract towards different destination and goal. However, sweet memories of our school days still remain in our mind and we still have sincere attachment as intimate friends without any change. We try to meet and gather whenever we have chance and time.

According to Buddhism, Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, Parents and Teachers are the first to be revered in our daily life. Beside our parents our school teachers taught us moral and manners to become a good citizen and also gave us education to become an eligible person to learn higher education for various professions and specialties. Not only in Buddhist society, no doubt that the other society also give priority to the parents and teachers with high appreciation.

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“Arsriya Puzaw Pwe” (or) Saya Kadaw Pwe (or) Teachers Obeisance Ceremony has been well established in our Buddhist culture. “Saya Kadaw Pwe” is not only to pay respect with the gesture of gratitude to the teachers but also to ask their forgiveness for any wrongful action we might have done consciously or unconsciously in the past. “Saya Puzaw Pwe” of Methodist English High School (MEHS) / Basic Education High School No. (1) Dagon, organized by the old students of 1954 to 1980 batches has been holding annually in the beginning of a year. This is one of the occasions which I attend without fail yearly.

Like the birds flying back to the mother tree, the old students gather at the assembly hall of the school to pay homage to the old teachers. Not only the old students staying in Myanmar but also some students from abroad attended and some students contributed fund from abroad to hold this annual ceremony. Last year I was delighted to know that (11) MEHS old teachers, who were in service during the time of MEHS, are still living at the ripe old age of (85) and above and some teachers attended the ceremony. MEHS old teachers Mrs. Quinn, Dr. R. Linton, Mrs. R. Longsdale and Mrs. Knott are staying abroad. At that year altogether (68) teachers including MEHS old teachers attended the obeisance ceremony and accepted the contributions of the students both in cash and in kind. Before winding up the ceremony all the teachers and students stood up and sang MEHS school song unanimously. It reminded us our morning assembly session during our school days.

The old students contribute cash for the school to the Head Master in obeisance ceremony yearly.

By the support of the MEHS Memorial Foundation Fund and local contributions the scholarship has been giving to the descendants of MEHS alumni since 2010. In 2013 three university students and four high school students received scholarship from this program. Moreover the achievement award was given to the student who scored highest marks in the high school examination last year. Basic Education High School No.(1) Dagon, next generation of MEHS, is still maintaining its high prestige up to the present moment. There were (62) students who passed with all “D” (obtained distinctions in all six subjects) in 2014 high school examination.

MEHS alumni working group is holding meeting every month in order to exchange information, paying

scholarship allowance to the recipients, making arrangement to visit ill teachers and contribution for bereaved teachers and alumni, discussing cooperation programs with MEHS Memorial Foundation Fund and preparation measures for annual gathering lunch.

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After the “Saya Puzaw Pwe” the members of an organizing committee visited the homes of some old aged teachers who could not attend the ceremony. The contributions of the students were presented to the teachers at their home.

Together with the organizing committee members I had a great chance to meet with (97) years old Myanmar Sayamagyi Daw Mya Sein and (92) years old Mathematic teacher Mrs. Dahlia Myat San at their respective residences last year. It was really regretful that MEHS old teachers Daw Mya Sein , Mrs Dahlia Myat San and Daw Mya Mya Than passed away within August, 2014.

The old teachers used to request us to sing MEHS school song whenever we visited their home. We could not forget their gentle smiles, their words of thanks and their blessing for the students. We realized that we, the old students are somehow responsible to support our teachers, to encourage our younger generation who are trying to pass with flying colors and also to contribute our school where many outstanding students were produced yearly since several decades and maintaining its high prestige up to the present moment.

The lamp of MEHS is still burning with the energy and efforts of old and new generation. Let's fulfill the energy to our lamp in order to get continuous burning for brighter future.

“Even the smallest act of kindness is worth while”

(Selwyn)