



ENSLAVED BY ENGLISH SAN SHWE BAW (SITWE)

About the Author

San Shwe Baw is now an Asst. Professor at the Institute for English Language Education (IELE) of Assumption University, Thailand. Before he left for Thailand in 1994, he had worked as a tutor

of English in the University Correspondence Department (UCD), Yangon University and Sittwe College for nearly twelve years. He is also the supervising editor of the ABAC Journal, an international Journal published three times per year by his university. Many of his English language teaching articles have been published in Thailand and America. His first novel, *The Astrologer's Predictions*, was published by Pann Wei Wei Sarpay in March, 2013.



I am pleased to write about Professor San Shwe Baw's latest book entitled, *Enslaved by English*.

In this story, a Rakhine university student from a humble family has the opportunity to go abroad to study English through the financial support of his wife's family. He returns with a master's degree graduating with Honors, but only to eventually become the pawn of his father-in-law, who takes advantage of his English language ability, by opening a chain of English language schools for him to teach. The young man's life begins to deteriorate when he finds himself in a loveless marriage. One day a fight breaks out between the husband and the wife, in which he suffers memory loss due to a heavy blow on his head. The recovery is slow. So, citing his health problems, he seeks a divorce, which is granted, and begins a life of loneliness. However, life takes an unexpected turn when he discovers that an unknown life source awaits him in a remote Shan village, and he finds the son he never knew he had.

This plot of this book is based on the underlying theme that shows we should never give up on life, no matter how

hopeless things become, and we can work together to make life better. We see that through cooperative effort, and helping hands, life in a remote village can be improved by those who choose to give their time, resources, and funds. In other words, rural citizens can get ahead with just a little help from those who have the wherewithal to make their lives better through education.

As an editor of two journals in the United States, I have had the pleasure of publishing (by peer review) the writings of Professor San Shwe Baw since 2003. His writing is precise, and folkloric, a lovely reflection of his culture and of the students he teaches. His most recent work weaves imagination with reality and highlights the plight of humanity as we struggle, and yet overcome, the blows that life may bestow upon us.

This book is a good read for anyone who wants to read excellent English through a delightful story of a man overcoming tragedy, and winning in the end. I recommend it highly.

Dr. Eileen Ariza
Professor
Florida Atlantic University
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It is with delight that I welcome the appearance of San Shwe Baw's second novel entitled "Enslaved by English". The author told me that the main aim of writing this second book is the same as his first - *The Astrologer's Predictions*, that is, to motivate the students from his country to read English. This second book seems to be lighter than the first in terms of the plot, yet no less significant than the first in terms of the theme. So beautifully is the love between the two young university students from different ethnic races described: a Rakhine boy and a Shan girl. San Shwe Baw's descriptions of the Rakhine boy's unconditional love for his Shan girl even in the face of life's toughest confrontations and the girl's selfless act and moral courage in her attempt to help the boy she loves stay above the troubles facing him are powerful enough to tug at the heartstrings. If his first book captures the readers' attention through suspense, the present book will move the readers through his description of the untarnished, time-tested love between the two youths.

One will remember the saying, "True love never runs smooth" while reading and, so will the reader, after finishing

the book, understand another saying "Love makes the world go round." It may not have been just a coincidence that the story ends with the couple doing rural development activities in the penultimate chapter and a novitiation ceremony in the final chapter, depicting both a social and religious beauty every Burmese appreciates deep in their heart. The book is really another wonderful read from this gifted writer.

Dr. Noel Jones
Visiting Professor at Stamford International University, and the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Bangkok, Thailand; and The National Economics University, Hanoi, Vietnam.

The Astrologer's Predictions - the author's first book

The story is mainly about the life of an imaginary Arakanese university teacher who had taught in his country as well as in Thailand. While describing his life in Burma as a young teacher and in Thailand as a middle-aged teacher and then back in Burma as a veteran teacher, the writer attempts to throw some light on the role of karma and destiny in life, the two concepts with various interpretations among individuals and religions. In the story, the main character tries to share some of the insights regarding karma and destiny that he has gained through observing remarkable events in his entire life to his young nephew, only to find himself bombarded with the critical, analytical comments by the latter. The focal point of their discussion centers around to what extent a man can create his own destiny. Though no definite conclusion is reached in the story, it is hoped that the two characters' discussion on that topic will serve as a springboard to further discussions among young people, especially among those who have never given the matter any attention before.

The story also reflects some of the traditions adhered to by the Burmese people in general (i.e. the role of astrologers in society, seeking moral support in times of trouble from the Buddhist monks, looking for supernatural means to avoid misfortune (yattaya in Burmese), etc. Toward the end, Vipassana meditation is suggested as a way to put an end to all the unpleasant

things in life. In doing so, the writer describes Buddhism as a guide to help a man live a normal life without bowing down to what is usually referred to as fate. There are also a few chapters dealing with comparison between Burma and Thailand in terms of culture and traditions, which may help young Burmese readers notice how similar the two Buddhist countries are in those aspects. The description of the university life under the military rule is deeply poignant, from which today's youths can catch a glimpse of the bitter experiences undergone by university teachers during the political unrest of more than two decades ago. In short, the book is a blend of three areas in almost equal proportions; namely culture, religion and politics. By using simple English, the writer has portrayed the life of his imaginary character with the aim of helping the youths in his country read English.

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