

# The study of *Saya Zawgyi's Beda Lann (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)* Poem from the Aesthetical Point of View

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## Abstract

Among *Saya Zawgyi* (1907-1990) poems, *Bada Lann(Pann Pan Lyat Pae)* poem will be selected and analyzed. The main research question is "Why can his poems be considered a proponent of Myanmar Philosophic thought? According to the data analysis, *Pann Pan Lyat Pae* poem is composed of the political, social and ethical concepts. In this paper descriptive method and comparative method are used. *Saya Zawgyi's* poem gives the knowledge and concepts of art for the people.

Key words: Aesthetical, Political, Social and Ethical

## Introduction

*Saya Zawgyi* is one of the famous of the poets and authors. "He was born in 1907 April 12 Friday, *Phyar Pon* Township in *Ayeyarwadi* Division and his parents are *U Yaw* and *Daw Sein Nyunt*. *Saya Zawgyi* was the eldest son in a family of nine. The name is *U Thein Han* and when he writes the poems, he uses the name *Zawgyi*"<sup>1</sup> *Saya Zawgyi* started writing poems from 1923. *Saya Zawgyi* is a leader in the pioneering period of modern literature. "In 1934 *Sayagyi U Pe Maung Tin*, *Saya Minn Thu Won* and *Saya Zawgyi* wrote in the collection of University poems as *Khit San Kabya*".<sup>2</sup>

*Saya Zawgyi's* Poems are related to Myanmar culture and daily life. In this period the new literature gained power and become spirited and forceful, and have full of good intension, compassion and sympathy. *Saya Zawgyi's* Poems can be approached from some Western theories of art. According to Plato, particular things are copies of the universal ideas or forms. He believed that all things in the physical world are imitations or copies of their eternal forms or ideas. Aristotle's theory of imitation of essence is more consistent and reliable than simple imitation theory. In this theory the tragedy can produce the feeling of catharsis. The concept of Catharsis is one of the famous concepts in Aristotle's Philosophy of art.

Emotionalism generally subscribe to the view that the works of fine arts are based on the emotion of the artists. All the works of art involve the emotions; all are the outcome of genuine creative efforts to produce excellence form. According to Tolstoy, art

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<sup>1</sup> ဆရာဇော်ဂျီ (၂၀၀၆)။ ဗေဒါလမ်းကဗျာများ (ပထမအကြိမ်)။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။ နိုင်ငံ့ဂုဏ်ရည်စာပေတိုက်။ စာ-၁၂

<sup>2</sup> ယင်းစာ-၁၂

must also communicate emotion to its audience. Tolstoy holds that the power of art depends on the infectiousness.

Realism is an art movement as well as an art theory. Realism arose at certain intellectual development, when people felt a need to understand social progress and the hidden forces of social relations. The essence of realism is social analysis, the study and depiction of life of man in society, of social relationship between the individual as well as society and the structure of society itself.

### **1. The Three Main Aesthetics as Basic Theories for Analysing of *Beda Lann (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)***

*Saya Zawgyi's Beda Lann (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)* poem is related with Myanmar Culture and Myanmar society. The thoughts, ideas and experiences of ordinary people were expressed perfectly both in verse and prose. They reflected the real world more and more. With his poems *Saya Zawgyi* was an outstanding member of the group who won many literature awards. He was a "Poet extraordinaire", but more than that he was a philosopher and aesthetician. This theory of art was indeed, the combination of Western theory of art and Eastern Indian aestheticians. So, *Saya Zawgyi's* poems can be approached from some Western theories of art.

#### **1.1 Imitation Theories**

The theory of 'simple imitation' is the oldest theory of art. The imitation theory is traditionally alleged to maintain that the artist copies or reproduces things, people and events from reality, making an image which is an "imitation" of them. It was presented by the Greek Philosopher Plato who presented the first systematic discussion of the nature of art in the Western thought.

##### **1.1.1 Plato's Imitation Theory**

Plato said that the artist imitates the original objects and produce the work of art. For him the artists are the imitators and the works of art are the imitations of the artists. Plato defined 'art' as 'imitation' and he said that 'art is Mimesis'. It means that 'Art is Imitation'. So Plato's theory of art is called 'Imitation-Theory'.

Poetry, then, is an imitation of the actions of men, dealt with in a universal way, bringing about pity and fear and the catharsis of same. Poetry and drama, being forms of art and thus imitations of nature, imitate the process of change. So, art has its social responsibilities and its rational place. All things created by men such as paintings, dramatics poems and other works of art are imitations or copies. He also described Art as imagination and imitation.

##### **1.1.2 Aristotle's Imitation Theory**

Aristotle did not invent the term "imitation". Plato was the first to use the word in relation with poetry, but Aristotle breathed into it a new definite meaning. So poetic

imitation is no longer considered mimicry, but is regarded as an act of imaginative creation by which the poet, drawing his material from the phenomenal world, makes something new out of it.

The artist composes works of vast by a certain genius and inspiration. They received this inspiration from the gods. Aristotle's theory of imitation of essence is more consistent and reliable than simple imitation theory. According to Aristotle, there are three kinds of imitation. They are (1) objects of imitation, (2) means of imitation and (3) manner of imitation. Then the artist or poet imitates the essence or universals.

For Aristotle, when the art imitates the essence, it imitated by means of tragedy. The tragedy can produce the feeling of catharsis. Catharsis means purification or watering the passions. The concept Catharsis is one of the famous concepts in Aristotle's Philosophy of art. So, his theory of art can be applied and evaluate for the works of art.

## **1.2 Emotionalist Theories**

Romanticism is not a distinct theory of the Fine Arts. It is known simply for its art movement in the history of aesthetics. The basic principles found in the Romantic Movement are not clearly seen as a system. But in the nineteenth century, those views were systematically changed to a systematic theory of art and gave birth to "Emotionalism". Thus the Romantic Movement prepared the ground for the emergence of the Emotionalist theory of art.

Emotionalism is the first systematic theory of art in Aesthetics. Since emotionalism sprang up from Romantic Movement, it continues to preserve the basic principles of the Romantic Movement. Prominent features of Romanticism such as emphasis on Emotion, promotion of the role of artists and freedom of creation can be seen in Emotionalism. Emotionalism can be divided into two kinds; (1) Theory of Expression of Emotion and (2) Theory of Communication of Emotion

### 1.2.1 Eugene Veron's Emotionalism Theory

Emotionalism generally subscribes to the view that the work of fine arts are based on the emotion of the artists. The first to present the theory of Expression of Emotion was Eugene Veron.

A created work of art is objective and public. But the act of creation is a highly personal one. Not only is it an individual who creates, but the creation is inseparable from an expression of his emotions. All the works of art involve the emotions; all are the outcome of genuine creative efforts to produce excellence form.

### 1.2.2 Tolstoy's Emotionalism Theory

According to Tolstoy, the expression of emotion is not enough to constitute art. Art must also communicate emotion to its audience. Art is very important to share emotions. Tolstoy holds that the power of art depends on the infectiousness. The more infectiousness it is, the better the art. The infectiousness depends on three qualities. These are originality, clearness and sincerity. The sincerity is the fundamental importance in art. So the theory of Tolstoy's aesthetics is very important to estimate the power of art. Tolstoy's famous book "What is art" is famous to evaluate the aesthetic values of art.

### 1.3 Realism

The Realist movement began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to Romanticism. Realism is an art movement as well as an art theory. It can be said that Realism comes from Romanticism yet at the same time it seems opposed to Romanticism. Realism in art can be understood either as attitude or style.

Realism in art shows the link between art and the material world, i.e. it must be an objective reflection of reality. The second concept is the consciousness that the artist aims at the reflection of causal relationship of phenomena.

So, the relationship between the individual and society, the structure of society itself and social analysis, the study and depiction of life of man in society, of social relations are the essence of realism. This completes a brief survey of the principle aesthetic theories of the West that will be used in evaluating *Saya Zawgyi's (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)* poems.

### 1.3 Evaluation of *Beda Lann (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)* from The Aesthetical Point of View

Aesthetic is broader in scope than the philosophy of art, which comprises one of its branches. It deals not only with the nature and value of the arts but also with those responses to natural objects that find expression in the language of the beautiful and the ugly. A problem is encountered at the outset, however, for terms such as beautiful and ugly seem too vague in their application and too subjective in their meaning to divide the world successfully into those things that do, and those that do not, exemplify them.

Almost anything might be seen as beautiful by someone or from some point of view; and different people apply the word to quite disparate objects for reasons that often seem to have little or nothing in common. It may be that there is some single underlying belief that motivates all of their judgments. It may also be, however, that the term beautiful has no sense except as the expression of an attitude, which is in turn attached by different people to quite different states of affairs.

In the poem of “Still With Flower in Her Hair” (*Pann Pan Lyat Pae*) is one of the more renowned poems by the poet *Saya Zawgyi*. This verse has had the greatest impact on the reading public and is the most well-known of his poems. Thus the poem shows how a strong spirit can withstand the misfortunes that one meets in life. This is a favorite theme in Myanmar Literature and other media. *Saya Zawgyi* brings to life with his words and phrases the plight of the Hyacinth flower floating down a tide creek, facing dangers such as a palm frond that will most likely crash into it or the herd of ducks that will probably peck at it to shreds. But no matter what troubles “Ma Beda” faces, she will not surrender but shall go on wearing a flower in the hair. This is a metaphor to show that man’s spirit cannot be broken or conquered.

#### 1.4 Evaluation of Poem “*Beda Lann (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)*”

This poem is the most famous and alternative poem of *Saya Zawgyi*. It explains the hard life giving an example of Hyacinth flower as a metaphor. *Saya Zawgyi*’s ‘hyacinth’ is purely metaphorical.

Riding the waves and tossed around,  
*Beda* floats, moving up and down<sup>3</sup>

He compares the hyacinth that is carried away by the waters along the creek and buffeted here and there with a variety of circumstances and the vicissitudes of human life. Therefore, he seems to imply that life is a mighty struggle and no bed of roses. On first reading *Saya Zawgyi*’s view of life seems fatalistic interpretation of the *Buddha*’s teaching that life is full of suffering.

After being smitten wasn’t left alone in pain  
But a tidal wave drowned her again  
Sinking down under, doesn’t re-appear  
Till a wave surges up a couple of yards afar  
Together with it, surfaces the beautiful *Ma Beda*<sup>4</sup>

In the first place, the hyacinth which metaphorically stands for a human being seems to be pursued by the down trodden poor. Whichever it is, the life he depicts seems dark and dreary.

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<sup>3</sup> ယင်းစာ-၄၃

<sup>4</sup> ယင်းစာ-၄၃

Another interpretation suggests that the hyacinth, being a fragile and pretty flower, represents a woman at the mercy of the world. It arouses emotions of distress and pity. But the intent behind his verse is not so superficial.

While Beda just clenched her teeth,  
The unsubdued and unyielding Beda fair,  
Still keeps on wearing the flower in her hair<sup>5</sup>

Further reading and reflection of the poem will show that the hyacinth is a survivor. The stanza which says “*Pann Pan Lyat Pae*” brings this out clearly. No matter what the external conditions the ‘hyacinth’ overcomes all obstacles and difficulties with great courage and forbearance. There is present in his poem a sense of predestination but it is not the predestination of blind fate but that of the past *Kamma*.

Moreover, the verse where the reed pipe reminds the hyacinth not to be swayed by certain conditions in her environment, brings out clearly the Buddhist teaching that one should steer one’s own life on the straight and narrow path; that one should not be deflected from one’s goal by external factors; that self-reliance is the key to survival and ultimate liberation from the petty sufferings of human life. He urges to nurture equanimity amidst the ups and downs of life; His theme is not that of desperations and despair, but of self-reliance and hope.

To evaluate *Saya Zawgyi’s* “*Pann Pan Lyat Pae*” from certain western aesthetic point of view, it may be said that this poem fulfills the criterion of Veron’s Emotionalist theory. *Saya Zawgyi’s* personality is evident in the poem. The way he thinks and the way he feels about human life is clearly and beautifully expressed in the terms and phrase he has used. As for style, it is uniquely his own.

Similarly, the poem “*Pann Pan Lyat Pae*” not only fulfills Tolstoy’s criterion of communication of emotions, but also the content as prescribed by Tolstoy. Leo Tolstoy rejected depictions of art or literary compositions that had as its subject matter and the life of the upper classes and high society as pseudo art. *Saya Zawgyi’s* does not support such a view. For him life in all its aspects was for verifying and philosophizing.

But there is present sympathy for the weak and needy as illustrated in the Hyacinth’s way. *Saya Zawgyi’s* description of Beda’s life was able to spread the Buddha’s word that “life is full of suffering” in simple yet evocative terms. *Saya Zawgyi’s* poem of Hyacinth also communicate to the reader, the need for courage and forbearance in the face of diversity, that she at any rate was able to control her fear and anxiety when confronted with chaos and misfortune. The particular stanza refers to is the one which, in translation means “*Beda* grit her teeth and is still wearing flowers in her hair”.

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<sup>5</sup> ယင်းစာ-၄၃

This poem succeeded in communicating to the reader the need for knowledge and awareness of life in order to avoid empty pride, especially in the verse in the titled 'Beda is Exhausted'. Yet the poet succeeded in this, not through preaching but in graceful verse that strikes a chord in the heart of the reader. The lessons that he tried to convey had a greater impact because of his poetic art. This attests to the fact that *Saya Zawgyi's* "Pann Pan Lyat Pae" poem fulfills Tolstoy's criterion of communication of emotion.

The Realistic trend in *Saya Zawgyi's* poems can be seen in 'This is Your Way', a verse in the "Hyacinth' way". He gives a realistic account of how human nature can be swayed by the many sensations and emotions that one encounters in life. He presents these complexities in human nature using the Hyacinth, again as metaphor. *Beda* bring to life a human being's behavior- those prompted by the emotions and desire. This is especially true of the verse entitled 'Edd Tide and Neap Tide'.

Here the poet brings into focus the law of change and impermanence and urges that we try to understand this and try to adjust the circumstances. He is not urging compromise or defeatism, but only to find the best possible means by coping with life's problems, which includes nurturing a steadfast mental outlook. His message is that a person is in control of himself and his life only if he understands that change is inevitable, whether in nature or in the human psyche. However, he does not attempt to make a social analysis of the role of the individual in society but there are indirect references as to how a person can benefit society in the role in which one has been cast.

In this poem 'To Beautify the Creek' he metaphorically depicts how each object and creature in the Creek contributes to its natural beauty, the implication being that if one plays one's assigned role it makes life better. For example, the egret and even the leaning and swaying coconut plan tree, he said in this poem, contribute to the beauty of the creek. Thus from this perspective it can be said that there is a realistic trend in *Saya Zawgyi's* verse.

All in all, *Saya Zawgyi* is the most renowned of Myanmar poets. There can be no doubt about his literary genius. His play of words, and rhyme of his poems are impeccable. Listening to this poem is music to one's ear. Among his contemporaries only the poet *Saya Min Thu Wun* is the same stature. But their interest and themes differ. There is a philosophical complexity in *Saya Zawgyi's* poems that invites reflection. Both have contributed much to the advancement and sophistication of Myanmar poetic art. But it must be admitted that *Saya Zawgyi* is more than a poet and he is also considered as a philosopher.

The poem of the "Pann Pan Lyat Pae" also fulfill the Myanmar *Rasa* criteria. *Saya Zawgyi's* humanism and empathy are evident in his portrait of how, like humans, the *Hyacinth* has to face the perils of life, which stimulates fear and anxiety that is

*Bhayanaka Rasa*. However, it also arouses sympathy and admiration for the courage displayed by the Hyacinth, so *Karunā Rasa* and *Vira Rasa* are also present.

### Conclusion

*Saya Zawgyi* was a prominent Poetic philosopher. Accompanied by the artistic criteria he shows moral characteristics and culture traditions of Myanmar people. *Saya Zawgyi's (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)* poem brings to the readers' mind the sense of catharsis set forth in Aristotle's poetics. Aristotle meant by catharsis was in reference to Greek drama. He said that a person who is full of emotions such as anger, love, greed, sorrow or pride, gains some release after watching a dramatic performance fulfilled the requirements of art. If an actor on stage kills another in violence, in an indirect way then, a person watching the performance identifies himself with the actor. Murderous or violent intensions he may have had against another person is dissipated. It is a vicarious experience which release and relives some of his more violent emotions.

If an actor on stage kills another in violence, in an indirect way then, a person watching the performance identifies himself with the actor and murderous or violent intensions he may have had against another person is dissipated. It is a vicarious experience which release and relives some of his more violent emotions.

So his poems were composed with good form and suitable content. So it must be an account of form and content. The value of art depends upon its mutual relationship of form and content. In most of the *Saya Zawgyi's (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)* poem, it can be seen the realistic outlook of art. Most of the realists hold that art is a mirror of life. So his poems show that the real life is very important. Plato and Aristotle had claimed that art can be used for the soul reforms and can change the thinking and attitude of the audience. So, it may be concluded that views in his poems had given many advantages for the society.

The Realistic trend in *Saya Zawgyi's* poems can be seen in "*Pann Pan Lyat Pae*", a verse in the Hyacinth's way (*Beda Lann*). He gives a realistic account of how human nature can be away by the many sensations and emotions that one encounters in life. He presents these complexities in human nature using the Haycinth (*Beda*), again as metaphor. Here the poet brings into focus the law of change and impermanence and argues that we try to understand this and try to adjust to circumstances.

The same theme appears in the Principle of the Tide. Like the realism of western view, the purpose of *Saya Zawgyi's (Pann Pan Lyat Pae)* poem is to depict life as it is and to try to explain it. However, he does not attempt to make a social analysis of the role of individual in society but there are indirect references as to how a person can benefit society in the role in which one has been cast. In the verse 'To Beauty the Creek' he



metaphorically depicts how each object and creature in the Creek contributes to its natural beauty, the implication being that if one's assigned role it makes life better.

*Saya Zawgyi's* poems try to show that human nature has weakness, that there may be opportunities that stay by one's side when times are pleasant but walk away in times of trouble. The poet realistically paints a picture of the world and life as it is so that a human being will understand what to expect, how to adapt himself and thus overcome difficulties to reach the goal he has set for himself or herself.

This is the pragmatics, realistic characteristics of the Myanmar way of thinking. This is reflected in *Saya Zawgyi's* thought. But the significance of his contribution lies in the fact that he has with his poems made explicit what was known only implicitly. In other words, his poetic language has given shape and form to the Myanmar way of thinking.

Thus *Saya Zawgyi* not only contributed to the modernization and promotion of Myanmar Language and literature but he was a proponent of Myanmar philosophic thought.

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### မြန်မာဘာသာကျမ်းကိုးစာရင်း

၁။ ကျော်စိန်၊ ဒေါက်တာ။ (၁၉၉၇)။ ဇော်ဋီကာ (ပထမတွဲ)၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့ ။ ဖိုတိုလစ်သိုပုံနှိပ်စက်။  
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