

Burmese Political Jokes

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Draft 13 April 2009

Don't Laugh or Else

Humour is a staple of life, and perhaps even more so when living conditions are tough. The Burmese people turn out in droves to watch a nyeint, a package of burlesque, vaudeville and cabaret performed at temple fairs, during merit making, and on Buddhist festivals. The all night festivities are known in Burmese as pwe. But in Burma it's hard to make jokes which are not about politics. When you joke about daily life, you can't avoid economic or social issues. In Burma everything is political. The comedians appear to be keeping their spirits up. "They are not depressed. They work happily, despite having wounds and cuts on their hands and legs because they believe strongly that one day democracy will be achieved," said a recently released prisoner. It is a Burmese trait to understate hardships. To make light comedy about their situation is natural. The people can only wonder if the generals have completely lost their sense of humour. Burma Net News, 5 August 1996

3 'I' Case

Nevertheless, famous comedian Zarganar still found the courage to crack a joke at the trial court during his sentencing, chaffing: "I am sentenced to 45 years imprisonment with a three 'I' case. I was sent to Insein prison for using the Internet to study IT," his sister-in-law Ma Nyein related. Mizzima News, 27 November 2008

3 Political Parties

Among the Burmese themselves as the common joke says that if you put two Burmese together they will form three political parties. Prof. Kanbawza Win, 22 November 2008

4 Bs

Of course most, if not all of them are 4 Bs for Burma, but in Burmese we jokingly label as Bae Htaing, Baing Kya, Bu Pyaw, Ba Hma Ma Loke Bu meaning sit aside, no money, argumentative and will do nothing. Prof. Kanbawza Win, 22 November 2008

Adam and Eve

Three guys were arguing as to what race Adam and Eve were. The Burmese Christian guy said they must be Burmese Christians as they are so good looking. The Burmese Chinese guy said that they must be Burmese Chinese as they are so calm even with a snake. The Burmese Indian guy said that they must be Burmese -

Indian as they have no shelter, no clothes, no money, share one apple, advised by a snake who told them that they are living in paradise! sanooaung.wordpress.com, 8 March 2008

Ayu! Ayu! Ayu!

The 47 generals who rule the country know they are despised. In Andrew Marshall's splendid, infuriating memoir of Burma called "The Trouser People," he recalls attending a football match in Rangoon some years back when an army officer came out to present the trophy to the winning team. A crowd of 5,000 people began yelling, "Ayu! Ayu! Ayu!" — Fool! Fool! Fool! His Burmese companions told the astonished writer that even this regime lacked the power to arrest 5,000 people at once. Berkshire Eagle Online, 1 April 2009

February 30th

"When will Burma get Democracy?"

"February 30th!"

Thee Lay Thee, San Francisco, 1 February 2009

Chair

Zarganar once refused a request to perform for General Ne Win, the ailing former ruler who many suspect still controls SLORC. The comedian was forced to go on stage, but crouched on a chair, tightly gripping it. The chair was broken, but he would not get off even after he asked some members of the troupe to fix it - a comment on the military's refusal to relinquish power despite the overwhelming victory of the National League for Democracy in 1990 elections. Burma Net News, 23 July 1996

Zarganar has a history of run-ins with authorities. Offered a seat at a police station when once taken in for questioning, he reportedly replied, "Thanks, but I don't want to sit down, because once I sit on a chair I won't want to give up my seat" - a reference to then Prime Minister Ne Win's penchant for clinging to power. Washington Post, 6 September 2006

Comedians

"We are comedians," said Pan Thee, a performer of Thee Lay Thee. "We don't know how to be afraid." He said the humor is "not just about politics, but social class and social status. How people are faring during life." We would like to go back but we are sure we would be arrested. In our country, we do not have a right to make a joke against their policy. Matt O'Brien, Contra Costa Times, 7 February 2009

Comical Ali and Kyauk Yu Pyan

One of the most popular bits is when two comedians portray UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari and Minister of Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, who is dubbed as "Comical Ali." Kyaw Hsan begins touching the legs of Gambari—the duo then gradually begin to touch mouths, eyes, ears and heads. "This man does not know about "Myanmar!" [Burma]," says Kyaw Hsan. Finally, the two stand up and can not touch each other any more. "Your dollars are falling out!" says Kyaw Hsan, pointing to the floor. Gambari quickly bends over and picks up a US dollar. Kyaw Hsan kicks Gambari in the rear, shouting "This is Myanmar!" Recently, the UN special envoy's budget of more than \$800,000 was approved for 2008 to work toward national reconciliation. The Nigerian diplomat has a Burmese nickname, "kyauk yu pyan," which

means “one who takes gems and then leaves.” Say Young Sone comedian troupe, Irrawaddy, 21 December 2007

Condom

Burmese Tatmadaw has announced that its new national symbol is the Condom, because it accurately reflects the government stance. A condom allows for inflation, halts production, destroys the next generation, protects a bunch of pricks and gives us a sense of security while we’re actually being screwed! Sanooaung.wordpress.com, 8 March 2008

Corporation 24

Burma is no “ordinary” military dictatorship; when Gen Ne Win seized power in 1962, military coup d’etats were not uncommon in the region, but when the Burmese army assumed not only political but also economic power. Known as “the Burmese Way to Socialism” it meant that everything in sight was nationalised, ie, handed over to 23 military-controlled state corporations. The outcome was a disaster for the population at large, and a flourishing black market, sometimes jokingly referred to as “Corporation 24”, emerged. Bertil Litner, Asean Focus Group, November 2007

Cyclone Nargis 2008

In one of the Thee Lay Thee’s joke, the king of a cyclone-ravaged country receives a huge sum of foreign aid and pockets most of the money before passing it down to the chief minister. Step-by-step, government grafters take their cuts until a lowly refugee, holding an empty water can, tries to complain to the king. Sorrow tinges to humor. Corruption is the point, a parody of the Burmese junta’s response to a deadly cyclone last year. But delivered with a Vaudevillian-style rimshot at the end of every one-liner, it left hundreds in stitches. Matt O’Brien, Contra Costa Times, 7 February 2009

The Dogs

A resident of Shwegondine, Bahan Township, told The Irrawaddy on Friday that she saw a group of four dogs with pictures of the regime’s top generals around their necks. Sightings were also reported in four other Rangoon townships—Thaketa, Dawbon, Hlaing Thayar and South Okkalapa. Some sources said the canine protest had started at least a week ago, and was keeping the authorities busy trying to catch the offending dogs. “They seem quite good at avoiding arrest,” laughed one resident. 12 October 2007

Everyone Knows, But No One Knows

Everyone knows that Than Shwe always say “AS SOON AS POSSIBLE” to all Project Managers when he visited the new construction sites and new projects.

Everyone knows the wedding of Than Shwe’s daughter.

Everyone knows Major Zaw.

Everyone knows Than Shwe’s daughter gave birth after five months of the wedding day.

Than Shwe was surprised when his daughter gave birth within five months. He rang to the hospital.

The midwife replied.

“My Dear General. Your daughter told me that she wanted to give birth before you tell her AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.”

No one knows that Than Shwe was upset and couldn't watch the Shaolin (*Chinese Martial Art*) Movies with his grandkids on that evening. Thein Win, burmadigest.info, 1 September 2007

Finishing Education

Comedian-singer Maung Metta was silenced by authorities in 2001 when, as host of a music show on state-run TV, he interviewed a female singer of high school age and congratulated her for finishing her education _ a pointed reference to the regime's frequent closures of universities. Washington Post, 6 September 2006

Helicopter Tour

Senior General Than Shwe and General Maung Aye were in a helicopter looking down Rangoon. Than Shwe said, "Maung Aye, if I throw two 1000 Kyat notes down, two people will be happy." Not wanting to be outdone, Maung Aye said, "If I throw 200 of 10 Kyat notes, 200 people will be happy." The pilot heard the conversation and said, "If I throw the two of you down, 50 million Burmese will be happy." sanooauang.wordpress.com, 8 March 2008

Hundreds of Thousand of Volts

The people of Burma are increasingly finding the country's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) the best source for cracking jokes. People are lampooning the junta and its cronies with jokes relating to oppression, corruptions and lies. Some jokes are directed against the oppressive and corrupt behaviours of junta-affiliated organisations.

For instance, there have been frequent power cuts and blackouts throughout the country due to shortage of electricity. But the junta's newspaper, the New Light of Myanmar says that hundreds of thousand of electricity voltages have been produced by power plants throughout Burma. The people say that electricity is so scarce in Burma that one is not likely to get electric shock if one puts you finger inside a plughole. "But don't touch the junta's newspaper! It's charged with hundreds of thousand of volts," goes one joke. dassk.com, 9 June 2004

Kho

Prior to the pro-democracy movement in 1988 there was one comedian in Burma who dared criticize the military regime- Zarganar, the country's most popular political satirist. On one such occasion, his routine included a play on shi kho, a reverential form of address where the hands are raised, and palms together. Instead of bowing respectfully to Ne Win, chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme party (BSPP) and other senior leaders, and repeating sh I kho as is customary, Zarganar emphasized the word kho which also means "to steal" He repeated "Ne Win kho," "San Yu kho," "Sein Lwin kho," and "Aye Ko kho." The Nation, 2007

Kiss

Senior General Than Shwe, General Maung Aye, Htet Htet Moe Oo and General Khin Nyunt were sitting in a Burmese Railway train heading up to Southern Shan State for campaigning. Near Kalaw, the train goes through a tunnel and it gets completely dark. Suddenly there is a kissing sound and then a slap!

The train comes out of the tunnel. Htet Htet Moe Oo and Senior General Than Shwe are sitting there looking perplexed.

General Maung Aye is bent over holding his face, which is red from an apparent slap.

All of them remain diplomatic and nobody says anything.

Senior General Than Shwe is thinking: "These guys are all crazy after Htet Htet Moe Oo. General Maung Aye must have tried to kiss her in the tunnel. Very proper that she slapped him."

Htet Htet Moe Oo is thinking: "General Maung Aye must have moved to kiss me, but kissed Senior General Than Shwe instead and got slapped."

General Maung Aye is thinking: "Damn it, Senior General Than Shwe must have tried to kiss Htet Htet Moe Oo, she thought it was me and slapped me instead."

General Khin Nyunt is thinking: "If this train goes through another tunnel, I could make another kissing sound and slap General Maung Aye again." sanooaung.wordpress.com, 8 March 2008

Marxist

A common joke in Burma during the years of constitutional democracy (1948-62) claimed that the country had many political parties, all of them Marxist. Eric Kolvig, *Burma Today: Land of Hope and Terror*, December 1991

New Burma Postage Stamp Not Sticking

This laugh comes from JJ at Burma News (via Jeg): The junta in Burma has created a new first-class postal stamp featuring its leaders. The stamp was not sticking to envelopes, which enraged the junta, who demanded a full investigation. After a month of testing, a special junta commission presented the following findings about why the stamps were not sticking:

- 1) The stamp is in perfect order.
- 2) There is nothing wrong with the adhesive.
- 3) People are spitting on the wrong side. December 2007

No Dentists in Burma

There's a joke in Burma that -- why are there no dentists in Burma? The reason is because you are not allowed to open your mouth in Burma. Religion and Ethics, pbs.org, 21 April 2006

Par Par Lay went to India for the Dental treatment. Indian Dental Surgeon was quite surprised as Par Par Lay came all the way from Burma to India, just for a simple Dental treatment. Then he asked. "Don't you have Dental Surgeons in Burma?" Par Par Lay replied, "Yes Sir, but they were unable to work as Burmese people are ordered not to open their mouth by the Military Government of Burma."

This is the one of the famous jokes of the comedian U Par Par Lay. He was released from the Oh Boe Jail of Manadalay at 9:00 pm, 29 October 2007. burmasitmone.wordpress.com, 1 November 2007

No Lawyers in the Court

When a judge notices that a student has no lawyer to defend him in the court, thus he asks, "Where is your lawyer?" A student who is a political prisoner answers, "My lawyer is in a prison."

Thee Lay Thee, San Francisco, 1 February 2009

Post Referendum

One said “regime generals should have 100% votes at the referendum because all votes are in their hands, now only 92.4% yes is lowered than what they supposed to have.” A good thief never leaves things behind and he normally takes all. In this case, SPDC is just a survival thief. Burma Democracy and Development, 15 May 2008

Referendum

Burmese Referendum brings to mind the old Northern Ireland election slogan -”VOTE EARLY AND VOTE OFTEN” sanooaung.wordpress.com, 8 March 2008

Socialism

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

Obama Socialism:

Obama tells the CEO’s, “Give me your debts and take this B\$.” (Bail-out Dollars)

Oh, Burma Socialism:

Burma General Ne Win tells the CEO’s, “Give me your profits and take this BS.” (Burmese Socialism which is really BS)

Dr. David Law, 13 April 2009

Space Hitchhiker

Kyant Phoot wins the election. To celebrate, they decide to send some space hitchhiker to space on the Chinese Rocket. Senior General Than Shwe calls together a group of Kyant Phoots. Comrades, we are going to send our man to space using Chinese Space craft. Since we want to be different from others, the Military - Kyant Phoot Cabinet has decided that you will all now fly to the sun. But Mintayargyi, we all will be burnt to crisp. Don’t afraid, the Burmese Military and Kyant Phoot government has thought of everything ...you will fly at night! sanooaung.wordpress.com, 8 March 2008

Thieves

A very famous Chief priest of a church in Naypyidaw, Burma is dying. Before he dies, he asked for Than Shwe and Maung Aye to be beside his deathbed. Both of them were excited at this opportunity because they thought it would be good for their image with the Christians around the world. At the priest’s deathbed, they asked, “Father, why did you ask us to be with you on your deathbed?” The priest replied, “Because I wanted to die like Jesus Christ. He died between two thieves, and I wanted to do the same.”

sanooaung.wordpress.com, 8 March 2008

Toddy Palm Leaf Boxes: Prostitution

Zarganar refused to attend the high budget propaganda performance staged by the People’s Relations Department. Officials gave him top billing at one Rangoon show, knowing it would draw a huge crowd, and were upset when he did not show up. When Military Intelligence went to his house he told them he wouldn’t perform because he was bound to say something they wouldn’t like and earlier this year Zarganar performed

under a Visit Myanmar Year billboard in Rangoon as a hawker selling traditional toddy palm leaf boxes which, in Burma, is a euphemism for prostitution. Burma Net News, 5 August 1996

Two Crops

As we were brought up in Burma, we have idea about planting trees, rice and etc. We have vineyards in some parts of Burma. We have very good grape planters, planting grapes in Burma. Grape planting is not a seasonal job; it's a decade old hard job. Grape planting has three seasons; picking season, winter pruning season and summer pruning season. In pruning season, the matured canes and fruits are selected and immature canes, fruits and leaves are completely removed. After picking season, the grape plants have no leave, no fruit, are dry and look like fire wood.

The following is based on true story of a Regional Military Commander who had visited the Vineyard in his command region. One day, Major General XXX and his followers went to the nearby Vineyard in his Command Region. Unfortunately, grapes had been already picked by the fruit pickers at that time. There's no fruit, no leave and the plants look like fire wood. The planters explained to the commander that they are going to do pruning next month. The Commander didn't understand about that and he gave the following guidance to the planters. "Two crops should be harvested in the vineyard. Grapes are picked and plants are already died. So cut all these grapes and plant vegetables in the Vineyard." Thein Win, burmadigest.info, 18 August 2007

We Make Own Power

In 1997, authorities jailed Lu Zaw and Par Par Lay after a now-legendary performance, given at the invitation of Nobel Prize-winning opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The two brothers spent an hour dancing and cracking jokes. Sympathizers videotaped Ms. Suu Kyi giggling in the crowd, but authorities sent the two brothers to a labor camp for their crime of joking about politics. An international human rights campaign led to their release after five years.

Lu Maw, squatting with an old radio microphone and puffing on a cheroot in the dark, says that the authorities have cut off his electricity tonight because they know it's showtime. "Never mind!" he screeches, in English. "We have generator! We make own power!" He waves his hand: With a thump, the lights come on, and the foreign audience cheers. The Moustache Brothers, Asian Wall Street Journal, 6 October 2006

What makes God cry?

George Bush, Hu Jintao, and Than Shwe went to visit God.

Bush asked God, "When will the U.S. become the most powerful nation in the world?" God replied, "Not in your life," driving Bush to tears.

Mr. Hu then asked when China would become the richest nation in the world, which drew the same "not in your life" answer from God, and tears from the Chinese president.

Finally, Burma's ruler asked when his country would have enough water and electricity. This time it was God who broke into tears, saying, "Not in my life!" Zarganar Humor, Anjari, solidarityprojects.org, 18 October 2007

Without the Brain

When asked why the Burmese public is so fond of comedians and comedies hated by the generals, Zarganar said. "For those of us who live in Rangoon and Mandalay, whether we go to the cinema or stay at home, the situation is like this. Wherever we go, it is depressing. It is depressing to be on the buses and to go to the stores. As it is depressing, they do not want to see other things (films); don't want to see the crying ones (tragedies) or the fighting ones (actions) - they just want to watch funny films. Some of them (jokes) are spreading among us. Recently, a joke credited to me came out. An American, an English and a Burmese meet and boast. The American said, we, the Americans had climbed the Everest with no legs. The English said, that's easy, man. We, the English had crossed the Pacific without arms, twice. Then, the Burmese said; your efforts are nothing. Our country has been governed without the head (brain) for 18 years." Burma Net News, 31 July 2006

Burma Compatriots

Citizens for Peace, Liberty, Justice, Equality, Stability, and Prosperity

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Note: In honor of the strong will of the Burmese people, we would like to use the conventional English only in all of our documentations regarding Democracy for Burma.

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