

UNITY AMONG OURSELVES

Need for Arakanese Unity

by

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BEING an Arakanese Muslim, I think I must discuss the notion of Unity and try to apply it in the context of our Arakanese affairs. In Arakan, Arakanese Buddhists and Arakanese Muslims form two important ethnic groups while there also exist other racial groups such as Chin, Mro, etc. Buddhists are however in the majority. Therefore, without unity between the Arakanese Muslims and the Arakanese Buddhists, there will be no progress in Arakan in future. If we want real peace, progress and prosperity for the land of the Golden Pagodas, we must sink all our differences and strive to get unity among us by any possible means.

There must be unity between the Arakanese Buddhists and the Arakanese Muslims and there should also exist unity among the Arakanese Muslims themselves.

To get unity among ourselves, I may quote below three examples from international politics. The first example is from a Middle East country, Lebanon. In Lebanon, like in Arakan, there are two main groups of people, namely, Muslims and Christians, who live peacefully and harmoniously. Constitutionally, the President of the country is always a Maronite Christian, while the Prime Minister is a Sunni Muslim. The co-operation among them has helped to achieve the country's unity and progress which is a matter of remarkable interest.

The second example is from Cyprus in the Mediterranean. In this Island also Turkish Muslims and Greek Christians are living hand in hand. They came to an agreement only recently. But before that both the parties had been fighting each other over the question of whether Cyprus should merge with Greece or with Turkey. There were feuds and bloodshed. Cyprus is now on her way to independence. The President and the Vice President of the country shall be Greek Cypriot and Turkish

Cypriot respectively. All other responsibilities and benefits in the country are to be shared proportionately between Christians and Muslims.

The last example is from Singapore. In this most important sea port of South East Asia, there are peoples of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and Malay origins living side by side, maintaining their country's progress, culture, dignity and prosperity. The main important groups among them are the Malays and the Chinese. Now, in this autonomous state of Singapore, the head of the state is a Malay and the Prime Minister is a Chinese. The Chinese

The author considers that in view of the special nature of the country and the sentiments of the Arakanese, no case for a separate Arakan State exists. He fears that by its creation the strength of the Union of Burma, a small underdeveloped country, would be weakened. He advocates, instead, for unity between the Arakanese Buddhists and the Arakanese Muslims, and among the Arakanese Muslims themselves to work for peace, progress and prosperity in Arakan.

are in the majority while the indigenous Malays are in the minority. Both the communities get proportional representation. Singapore is trying to become one of the states of the Federation of Malaya. If she can become so, the head of the state and the prime minister of the country will be both Muslims.

We can draw an analogy between our beloved Arakan and the countries mentioned above. Therefore, it is our duty to try hard to get unity between the Buddhists and the Muslims of Arakan. Then only can we achieve progress and prosperity in our land.

I feel very sorry to mention that there is also a lack of unity among the Arakanese Muslims themselves. The main causes of the

disruption of unity among them are racial and sectional prejudices. Some of them style themselves as Rowengyas while others call themselves Kamans and yet others Chittagonian descendants etc., and they take pride in being so called. Some of them have a deep-seated sense of localism and therefore take pride in their birth places such as Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Akyab, Mrohaung, Kyauktaw, Kyaukpynu, Sandoway etc. If we go on in this way, I can say with certainty that we will not be able to achieve any good work; nor will we be able to get unity among ourselves. This will indeed hamper the progress of our community in particular and of Arakan in general. I should therefore like to request my people that they should forget the past and make the future bright by sinking their racial differences. Then only, I hope, we can reach our goal without fail.

Achieving unity among the Muslims is very easy if they follow strictly the examples set forth in the Quran and the Hadith. In Islam there is no caste system. Religiously speaking, all Muslims are on the same level, irrespective of whether one is rich or poor. This is manifested in congregational prayers in Mosques where they have to stand in rows in which the rich stand side by side with the poor. Those who come first take their places in the front, and those coming late take their places in the rear. We must try to apply these noble religious principles in our daily life.

The question of granting statehood to Arakan, viewed from the nature of our country and the sentiments of our people, is not at all acceptable on principle. If we get statehood, we cannot keep social justice among ourselves, especially between the two major religious groups—Arakanese Buddhists and Arakanese Muslims. Furthermore, it will weaken the

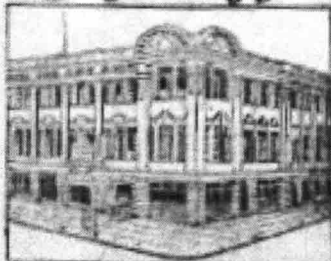
strength of the Union of Burma, which is a small under-developed country in which creation of more states is not desirable.

If Arakan becomes a state by the will of the majority, then we should not forget the examples I have quoted above of Lebanon, Cyprus and Singapore. Then the Arakanese leaders shall have to see that there is Unity, Discipline, Justice and Equality among Arakanese Buddhists and Arakanese Muslims. If we are not in a position to acquire these important attributes, then I am afraid, there will be no unity among ourselves and the destiny of the proposed state would seem very gloomy.

In this connection, let us take an example from a neighbouring country, Pakistan. In Pakistan, there were states and provinces in both the East and the West wings. In each province there were a governor and a premier with its own cabinet. Pakistan government later eliminated all these states and provinces and amalgamated them into two major wings such as East and West Pakistan. By doing so, Pakistan government has saved money and got rid of troubles, disunity and bloodshed.

As I am an Arakanese Muslim, I shall not like to hear of, or bear our future distress and bloodshed. So I am dutybound to express my sincere views to my people. May Allah Almighty bestow on our people understanding to avoid future mishaps and distress. We must try to get ourselves united to make our future happy and prosperous. In Arakan there is much work to be done and we can carry it out by having unity among ourselves.

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THE HUMBLE OIL-LAMP

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From Tin Moe's "Lantern-Lite Lyrics" in Burmese—

Translation by: Kenneth Ba Sein.

It's true, the humble Oil-Lamp
 Cannot reach the exalted Heights
 Of the Elite and palatial Homes:
 It's true, the humble Oil-Lamp
 Cannot illumine the petal-strewn Path
 Of the sophisticated, who thrive
 On Clouds and ride the Moon!
 It's true, the humble Oil-Lamp
 Has little strength,—just enough
 To guide a straggler thru'
 Who has stray'd o'er the rutted Track,
 And soothe his restless Heart:
 Its colour!
 Not like the Sun,
 Nor like the light of Moon
 Nor bright at all!
 Yet from its humble angle,
 As tho' confident of its little power
 And with faith, maybe,
 It wants to give a subtle touch of Beauty
 To the wide world around—
 With its humble Light!