

“SABBÉ PI DUKKHAM.”

(Everything is Sorrow.)

A LESSON FROM EURIPIDES.

Written in Lamma Sayadaw Kyoung, Akyab.

LAUGHTER in the faces of the people
Running round the theatre of music
When the cunning actors play the Bacchae,
Greets the gay attire and gait of Pentheus,
Pentheus by his blasphemy deluded,
Pentheus caught already in the meshes
Of the fate that means to catch and crush him,
Pentheus going forth with dance and revel,
Soon by Bassarids (wild joys of Nature)
To be hunted. Ai! the body mangled
By the fatal fury of the Maenads
Let by Agave his maddened mother
(Nature's self) . But this the people guess not,
Only see the youth in woman's raiment,
Feigned tresses drooping from his forehead,
Awkward with unwonted dress, rude waving
Aye the light spear tipped with mystic pine-cone ;
Hear his boast who lifts the slender thyrsus :
“I could bear the mass of swart Cithaeron,
And themselves the Maenads on my shoulders.”
So the self-willed's folly lights the laughter
Rippling round the theatre. But horror
Seizes on the heart of the judicious.
They see only madness and destruction
In the mockery's self innate, implicit.
Horror, deeper grief, most dreadful musings

Theirs who penetrate the poet's purpose !
So in all the passing joys of nature,
Joys of birth, and joys of life, in pleasures
Beautiful or innocent or stately,
May the wise discern the fact of being—
Change and death, the tragedy deep-lurking
Hidden in the laughter of the people,
So that laughter's self grows gross and hateful.
Then the noble Truth of Sorrow quickens
Every heart, and, seeking out its causes,
Still the one task of the wise, their wisdom
Finds desire, and, seeking out its medicine,
Finds cessation of desire, and, seeking
How so fierce a feat may be accomplished,
Finds at first in Truth a right foundation,
Builds the walls of Rightful Life upon it,
Four-square, Word and Act and Aspiration
Folded mystically across each other,
Crowns that palace of enduring marble
With sky-piercing pinnacles of Will-power
Rightly carven, rightly pointed ; strengthens
[Mind sole centred on the single object]
All against the lightning, earthquake, thunder,
Meteor, cyclone with strong Meditation.
There, the scared spot from wind well-guarded,
May the lamp, the golden lamp, be lighted
To illumine the whole with final Rapture
And destroy the House of pain for ever,
Leave its laughter and its tears, and shatter
all the cause of its mockery, master
All the workings of its will, and vanish
Into peace and light and bliss, whose nature
Baffles so the little tongues of mortals
That we name it not, but from its threshold,
From the golden word upon its gateway,
Style "Cessation"; that whose self we guess not.
Thus the wise most mystically interpret
Into wisdom the worst folly spoken
By the mortal of a god deluded.

So, the last wise word rejected, Pentheus
Cries, “*αγ ως ταχιστα, του χρονου δε σοι φθονω*”—“Why
waste we time in talking?

Let us now away unto the mountains!”

So the wise, enlightened by compassion,
Seeks that bliss for all the world of sorrow,
Swears the bitter oath of Vajrapani:

“Ere the cycle rush to utter darkness

Work I so that every living being

Pass beyond this constant chain of causes.

If I fail, may all my being shatter

Into millions of far-whirling pieces!”

Swears that oath, and works, and studies silence,

Takes his refuge in the triple jewel,

Strangles all desires in their beginning,

Leaves no egg of thought to hatch its serpent

Thrice detested for unnatural breeding—

Basilisk, to slay the maddened gazer.

Thus the wise man, for no glory-guerdon,

Hope of life or joy in earth or heaven,

Works, rejecting all the flowers of promise

Dew-lit that surround his path; but keepeth

Steady all his will to one endeavour,

Till the light, the might, the joy, the sorrow,

Life and death and love and hate are broken:

Work effaces work, avails the worker.

Strength, speed, ardour, courage and endurance

(Needed never more) depart for ever.

All dissolves, an unsubstantial phantom,

Ghost of morning seen before the sunrise,

Ghost of daylight seen beyond the sunset.

All hath past beyond the soul's delusion.

All hath changed to the ever changeless.

Name and form in nameless and in formless

Vanish, vanish and are lost for ever.