

true! For the best test of a religion is the practical one—does it work?’

‘You are right; and the best way to convince ourselves is to look steadily at ourselves. We talk much of stoic fortitude and of self-control. Yet a glance from a pair of dark eyes, or a wanton gesture, and we are as clay. Are we honest with ourselves? And think of the murders in Burma. After twenty centuries of Buddhism our people are perhaps the most passionate in the world!’

When they returned to Calcutta they paid a visit to the archaeological section of the Museum, and Ba Gyi showed his friend the infallible proofs, which history has written in letters of stone for all to read, that stoicism is not a good enough religion for the heart of man; if he is denied a God, he will create one.

They began with the simple stone coffer which contained the ashes of the great Stoic, and stood in reverent silence before this most ancient of Indian monuments. Then they passed on to the pillars of Asoka, and spoke of his greatness and enthusiasm for the ‘Good Law’. And when they came to the great Barhut rail, Ba Gyi pointed out to his companion the Wheel, the Bo-tree, the lotus, and other symbols of the religion.

‘There are symbols in plenty,’ he said, ‘but no images. Buddhism was afraid of idolatry, and at the time this rail was made, about 400 years after the birth of Gaudama, there was still no figure of him. But let us go into the next room.’

They passed into the gallery which contains the Gandhāra sculptures, and Po Tun exclaimed at once: ‘The Buddha has become a god! Look at these haloes everywhere, and the worship given him by kings!’

‘Yes,’ said Ba Gyi, ‘and this is not the end. Here in the next room he has lost his characteristic pose of calm meditation; see, his legs are no longer crossed, and his