

Relics of Buddha and Enlightenment in Kamila Shamsie's Novel *A God in Every Stone*

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Abstract

Kamila Shamsie's novel, *A God in Every Stone* (2014) unearths the historical instances of Buddha from the time of Emperor Asoka till the excavation and preservation of statues and stupas in Peshawar Museum. Shamsie narrates a story that circles around the search for the Circlet of Scylax, the great explorer; its discovery by Najeeb and its sojourn with Buddhism. The author successfully intertwines archaeology, excavation, museum, statues of Buddha and stupas with the story of excavators, soldiers, freedom fighters and World War I. Kamila's characters, places and events penetrate the Buddhist virtues. The writer uses symbols like the Circlet of Scylax, the statues of Buddha, the Sacred Casket of Kanishka, and the Stupas of Asoka to take the readers towards the enlightened journey of historical instances. Kamila intertwines the story which symbolizes the quest and journey of the human towards the enlightenment. The paper is an effort to trace the instances of Buddha and enlightenment in Shamsie's, *A God in Every Stone*.

KEYWORDS: Buddha, Enlightenment, Circlet of Scylax, archaeology

Introduction: Kamila Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone* (2014) shortlisted for prestigious The Orange Prize throws light upon history and excavation of Buddhist relics. The novel documents findings of Buddha statues and stupas in Peshawar, especially at the ruins of Shahji-ki-Dheri. Along with the excavation by Vivian, Tahsin Bey and Najeeb, the archaeologists, Shamsie brings to light history and surmises the historical events and their relevance to Buddha. Kamila Shamsie does not talk directly about Buddha and Buddhist philosophy and but if one removes these aspects from the novel, it becomes a lifeless story of migratory subjects witnessing history and places. Each character in the narrative projects some or the other shade of Buddha and Buddhist philosophy. The author puts forth the one of the largest religions, a religion of Eastern and Central Asia based on the teaching of Gautam Buddha. The teaching founded by the Buddha is known as Buddhism in English. The term, 'Buddha' latterly means, 'enlightened one, a knower'. Kamila Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone* pinpoints the several instances where her characters experience and practice Buddhist virtues in their lives. The writer depicts the true nature of Islam which is based on humanity at the same time; she also puts forth the peace and enlightenment related to Buddhism. Shamsie's characters who are the archaeologists discover the Buddhist philosophy. The author not only unearths 2500 years old, hidden history but along with it she uncovers Buddhism founded by Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) before 2500 years ago in India. The characters in the novel move from the darkness to knowledge, truth and facts. Their movement marks their struggle to achieve the enlightenment. Kamila makes the characters to find out god in the stone. Buddhism is not a system of faith or worship. In Buddhism, there is no such thing as belief in a body of dogma which must be taken on faith. It begins as a search for truth. A human can

attain the peace and knowledge and enlightenment if he takes refuse in Buddha. Shamsie's every character gets attracted towards the peaceful postures, facial expressions and oculesic.

The title of the novel, *A God in Every Stone* suggests the presence of God in every statue and stone. The author points out an abstract presence of God in every stone, it is only after the excavation it gets visible and concrete form which represents the God. All that is good, valuable and leads the human towards their salvation is god. Buddha is a visible form of God. The stone becomes priceless when it gets the shape of Buddha. Kamila narrates the story of stone which becomes valuable Buddha. She chronicles a story of a common human who reaches to the enlightenment. Buddha is one who attains Bodhi. Bodhi means wisdom, an ideal of intellectual and ethical perfection which can be achieved by man through purely human means. The person with the strong belief in the existence of god will be able to find him. Shamsie vocalizes the story of transformation of common human beings into Buddha. In novel all the characters move towards the greatness like Buddha. The author mentions various statues of Lord Buddha which attract all the characters towards Buddhism. Kamila narrates the story of Najeeb, younger brother of Qayyum Gul, Tahsin, a Turkish archaeologist and Vivian's journey to get the Scylax's Circlet. Ultimately, this search takes them towards Lord Buddha. These characters move, observe and communicate with the statues of Buddha that influence their life. Among all the characters, it's Najeeb who has a passion for the knowledge and truth. He is so passionate and curious about the knowledge and truth that he does not care about the society, family and religion. He likes to gaze Buddha's statues in the museum. He communicates with it. He observes his deep-set eyes. He becomes one with Buddha and succeeds in discovering a god in every stone. With his intellectual power he finds out the exact place of the circlet and unearths the Circlet.

A God in Every Stone deals ancient history and culture. Kamila Shamsie uncovers the history of the Kanishka dynasty which had its headquarters in Peshawar. Shamsie talks about the Great Stupa which was seven hundred feet tall. The author explicates how there is a god in every stone:

Once there was the Great Stupa, seven hundred feet tall. From every point in the Peshawar Valley men and women could look up from the dust of their days to see the pillar ringed with gold which arose from its uppermost canopy of pearls. Surrounding the Stupa, a vast monastery complex. Everywhere a traveller looked there was the Buddha, carved over and over into and around the countryside, in an age when the people of this region had the vision to find the god in every stone. (Shamsie 102)

Further, the place Shahji-Ki-Dheri provides the material for uncovering the relics of Buddha and Buddhism. The archaeologists from all over the world migrate to Peshawar during the unrest of the World War I. Tahsin Bey migrates temporarily to Peshawar to see the Sacred Casket of Kanishka. Kamila kindles curiosity about the cultures of ancient time. This casket not only throws light upon the Kanishka dynasty but also uncovers the culture of the Kanishka clan regarding Buddha and Buddhist philosophy. Gradually, Kamila Shamsie makes a comment on how incessant attacks on historical monuments destruct the history and glory of the Buddhism. Vivian Spencer

observes that the Great Stupa has turned into just relics and it is in abandoned condition. Shamsie states how the nature of people in Peshawar makes Vivian restless due to which Vivian wishes to return to the torturous life of a VAD nurse which she feels a comfortable zone for her than living in Peshawar.

Tahsin Bey, a Turkish archaeologist desires to discover the Circelet of Scylax. He focuses all his senses on the excavation and tries all the possibilities to get it. He excavates the places where he feels the circelet can be hidden. He wants to find the circelet because according to him the circelet can bring him a sense of achievement and peace as it belongs to Scylax, a great and trusted explorer from Tashin's homeland, Caria. The writer plants the circelet as a symbol of Scylax's knowledge, dedication, ability and trustworthiness. Scylax gets the silver circelet as reward from the Persian king, Darius I. After getting it, Scylax sets himself free from all the royal boundaries of Darius I and starts to support the victims of Persian king's cruelty. He stands with them and fights against Darius I who has trusted him once. Scylax not only gets freedom for himself but he also wishes the freedom for his people. The Circelet symbolizes the bright circle of awakening which bestows the enlightenment to Buddha. After achieving the enlightenment, enlightened and awakened Buddha starts working for humanity. He spreads the message of peace and humanity through Buddhism. Like Buddha, Scylax also senses the enlightenment after getting the circelet and begins to spread the knowledge and the happiness among the sufferers of Caria. The author identifies the journey of Scylax with the journey of Siddhartha Gautama of becoming Buddha. King Siddhartha has a royal life, he moves by suffering in the world. He decides to give up his lavish lifestyle and endure poverty. He obtains the knowledge which can bring the divine peace. Afterwards, he spends his life for the betterment of the others. In the same way, Scylax decides to leave Darius' royal shelter and support his people. He spends his life for the betterment of his people. Scylax imparts Buddha's virtues wisdom and compassion. Kamila presents Scylax as the Buddha of his own time.

Tahsin Bey wants to find out the Circelet of Scylax. As Siddhartha Gautam moves by the unhappiness, grief spread in the world and he migrates in search of reason of sadness as well as the way by which he can uproot the sorrow from the world, Tahsin also feels and follows the same. He knows the fact that there is unhappiness in the world and he tries to find the ways to be happy through archaeology. He says, "Though there is a great deal of unhappiness in the world, I am daily reminded of life's capacity to find new ways to delight and enrapture." (Shamsie 46) Further, like Buddha, Tahsin reveals the truth from his stories. He uses his skill of storytelling to make the people aware about the truth and facts which are hidden and forgotten with the time. Buddhism has spread its roots in the whole world. Buddha's stories about his experiences and encounters with the people in his walk of life encourage millions to follow and practice his teachings, Buddhism. Tahsin's stories have the same quality and capacity to move people and inspire them for the truth. As Buddha and Scylax want to toil and spread the peace among the people, Tahsin also wants to achieve the peace in his life as well as in the life of his people. He inspires people to obtain the truth and spread it among the others. But Tahsin cannot achieve the circelet because of his own limitations. He takes help of lie to search the truth and facts. He lies about his Armenian identity in order to get the permission for exaction in Labraunda, Turkey. He does not have the control on his own

mind. Though his nephew, Mohamed warns him not to share the secret with Vivian. He still discloses his identity to Vivian which proves a threat to his life.

Inspired by Tahsin's stories, Vivian Rose Spencer, a British archaeologist who has passion for history and excavation also joins for the quest for truth. He shares with her the knowledge about the Circlet and his real identity. Tahsin successfully ignites Vivian's quest for the Circlet. Hence, the search or the journey towards the circlet continues by Vivian. She proves herself a true follower of the truth. Also, Kamila traces the Buddhist value of serving humanity. She tells how Vivian Spencer serves to humanity in the WWI. Vivian returns to England to serves to the wounded soldiers as VAD nurse. Her service exemplifies the hard and miserable sufferings of the human. She works to cure the sufferings, the wounds of the soldiers. She serves and encourages the soldiers. She witnesses the suffering, the life and the death in the hospital. She works restlessly. Her deteriorating health provides evidence of her dedication and affection towards humanity. Further, in her journey to Peshawar by train, Vivian meets Qayyum Gul, the Lance-Naik in Indian British army. Qayyum Gul loves to serve the Rulers. His friend and soldier, Sepoy Kalam Khan plays very important role in Qayyum's life. He saves Qayyum's life. He denies the orders of British to fight against the Muslims of the other countries. Kalam decides his place in the world by joining Mohmands and fights against the rulers. He is murdered by his family enemy. Qayyum wants to repay his sacrifice by taking care of Kalam's father. He also feels to avenge the killer of Kalam. Kalam's father understands the rule of the world where life for life is considered as a justice. So, he states Qayyum that he does not want to take revenge because revenge also destroys the life of the one who seeks it. Kalam's father highlights an important Buddhist virtue about the revenge and forgiveness. According to the Buddhist philosophy, revenge and anger is like a burning coal, which in the process of picking up to throw at another burns one's own hand. He also encourages Qayyum to follow one of the Buddhist principles, non-violence and join Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in his movement of non-violence against the British. Qayyum accepts the way shown by Kalam's father. He joins Ghaffar Khan and finds his place in the world. He feels shame for killing so many German soldiers without any reason.

Further, Shamsie equates the story of Asoka and Qayyum. Emperor Asoka travels extensively, gives sermons and spreads Buddhism through the stupas and temples so that the people can learn on how to achieve peace and enlightenment in life. Similarly, after realizing his mistake, Qayyum joins Ghaffar Khan also promotes the value of non-violence. Kamila relates Qayyum with the Great Emperor, King Asoka. King Asoka likes to exhibit his bravery on the battlefield. Similarly, Qayyum also likes to exhibit his bravery in the war fields. As Asoka loses his courage after observing the piles of death in the battle ground, Qayyum also loses his right eye in the war. Buddhist ideology inspires Asoka to follow Buddhism. Hence, Asoka leaves the path of violence and accepts the way of peace. Qayyum also leaves the violence and accepts the way of non-violence. When Qayyum visits a family of a died soldier, Sepoy Khuda Buksh's family at Shahbaz Garhi in Yusuzai lands, His brothers of take Qayyum to a giant rock with shapes cut into it. They respect to it. The youngest one wipes it with turban by kneeling. Qayyum asks

about it. The old man tells him that the curved letters are the words of the King Asoka, who ruled with blood and fire. When he sees died soldiers on the battlefield, he becomes the follower of Buddha. He leaves the life of violence and accepts the path of peace. He also spreads the message of peace among the people through inscribing stones, stupas and temples. It indicates that after the centuries also Buddha controls and impacts the life of people. King Asoka is evidence of it. After listening the story of King Asoka, Qayyum imagines himself as King Asoka at Vipers saying to himself, No more. It means after two thousand five hundred years also Buddha continues to influence the people and motives them to choose the path of peace in life:

Even before there was paper there were scribes amongst Yusufzai, the old man said. But what does it say, Qayyum asked. The old man didn't know exactly but they were the words of the King, Asoka, who ruled with blood and fire until one day on a battlefied he looked at the mountain of dead, heard thee sobbing of a woman whose husband and sons had all been killed, and become a follower of the Buddha, renouncing violence and inscribing stone with his belief in peace. His fingers lightly brushing the ancient word, Qayyum saw Asoka walking through that field at Viper and saying to himself, No more. (Shamsie 139)

Shamsie also puts light on the impact of Buddha on Qayyum as well as on Najeeb. She sets the Peshawar Museum as a place where all the statues of Buddha's have been kept. Hence, the museum becomes a Buddhist structure like stupa or temple which has several statues of Buddha. Shamsie showcases the influence of Buddha on Qayyum and Najeeb. Qayyum enters the museum. He so minutely observes the statues that a thought crosses his mind, "Live among these objects and your heart would turn to stone." (Shamsie 176) Shamsie explicates that after observing Buddha's statue the heart of a person clings to the Buddhism. Qayyum who likes to exhibit his bravery in the battlefield, starts believing in non-violence. For the first time he finds beauty in everything with his deformed eye. Similarly, by being in a continuous contact of these statues Najeeb evolves the ability to discover the god in every stone. He discovers Lord Buddha and like him he achieves the enlightenment. In the museum, Najeeb presents Buddha's statue as if it is not a statue but Buddha himself. Qayyum too minutely observes the statue with all his senses. Najeeb says:

-Here, the Buddha, this is him.

The folds of the prophet's skin suggested the former sleekness of the prince he had been; the sunken eyes bore knowledge of all the world's sorrow. All you have endured; all you must yet endure. Qayyum rested his hand against the glass-fronted cabinet and leaned in towards the Buddha's starving face, suspended over the ridged skin of his chest. Stone made flesh; no, stone made bone and skin. If a man rested his hand on that cage he might hear a heart beating within; but gently, gently, the ribs could snap from the pressure of a single finger. He shivered and stepped back; now he understood idolatry. *Bismillah-ir-Rehman-ir-Rahim*, and the Buddha continued to gaze beyond him, all of Vipers there in his eyes, every

dead soldier, and Kalam Khan bleeding to death, cold and alone. And beyond him, all the dead men, in the deepest, saddest part of the Buddha's gaze, was Kalam's killer, a man who took life for duty, for family, for tradition.

Qayyum lowered himself to his knees, and Najeeb sat next to him. (Shamsie 177)

Gradually, Vivian Rose Spencer finds peace whenever she is near to the Buddha's statue. Buddha consoles her, gives her sense of protection and fearlessness. In Peshawar, when Vivian gets letter from England about Mary's brother, Richard's death due to wound in war, Kamila makes her protagonist to find a peace and condolence in company of Buddha. Vivian sketches Buddha's figure in order to get the peace to her disturbed mind. She even throws mud at Buddha which gives her comfort. And finally, she touches Buddha's fingertips. Kamila traces the presence of Buddha in all his statues. She proves that the Buddha still alive in his statues. He just not attracts, sees, observes but also consoles and provides the sense of comfort, strength and protection. Shamsie states:

Kneeling in the mud, she began to sketch the figure of a stucco Buddha within an archway. She wasn't yet halfway done when she stopped . . . She caught hold of a fistful mud, scooped it up and hurled it at the Buddha. There was something so satisfying about it that she did it again, and again, and again. When she finally stopped her hair was in disarray, her shirt clinging to damp skin. The stucco Buddha held her gaze, his hand raised. She touched her fingertips to his. (Shamsie 193-194)

Vivian also communicates with Buddha when she visits Peshawar after thirteen years. At Shahji-ki-Dheri, she finds Buddha's statue. She touches the Buddha's fingertips, cups her hands around the Buddha's ankle in the search of the comfort and peace. Vivian returns to Peshawar at the time of violence, she finds safety in Peshawar Museum. She observes, "Two giant Buddhas still stood at the far end of the high-ceilinged hall, one raising its hand at her in the Abhay Mudra. Protection and fearlessness." (Shamsie 281) She also steps into the gallery of Buddha's statues in museum. The deep-set eyes of the starving Buddha hold her attention. She states, "Only the deep-set eyes of the starving Buddha did something else emerge, a humanity beyond all other humanities". (Shamsie 283) Kamila also highlights Najeeb's obsession for Buddha. He attempts to discover the god in every stone. He collects Buddha's statues of different sizes. The author states points out the influence of Buddha on Najeeb. She writes, "There he was in all sizes, all stages of life from young prince to aged ascetic, his expressions almost always on either side of the border which separates smug from serene. (Shamsie 283)

Kamila pinpoints Vivian's love and affection for Buddha is more than archaeology. When Vivian notices that the mark of sped on the smooth surface of forehead of Buddha's statue, she touches the scar in apology for the crime of excavations.

Kamila writes, “Viv. Touches the face. The grey stone cool against her palm, the surface smooth except where a spade had left its mark against the forehead, just inches from the raised mole which marked the urna – she touches the scar in apology for the crime of excavation.” (Shamsie 107)

The search of the Cirlet brings Vivian to Peshawar where she comes in contact with Najeeb who helps her to reach to the book *Buddhist Records of the Western World*. The book contains the information about the Chinese travellers who visit Shahji-ki-Dheri. It also contains information about Sung-Yun, who travels in AD 518. He visits India on the order of his Empress of a China, in order to get back Buddhist holy books in order to save the book from Turks. The effort of the Chinese traveller indicates China’s revered respect and love towards Buddhism. Vivian reads the writings of Sung-Yun about Shahji-ki-Dheri after move on to Hiuen-Tsang’s writings. In Sung-Yun’s writing, he visits the stupas, statues and temples but Hiuen-Tsang only finds ruins. It gives idea the heights of Turks’ destruction. They just do not want to destruct the Buddhist places; they want to ruin the holy spirit and energy sources of the Buddhism.

Najeeb Gul achieves the state of serenity along with the cirlet. Kamila relates Najeeb with Buddha. She chronicles that before getting the cirlet of awakening, Siddharth Gautama enjoys the earthly pleasures. Najeeb in the beginning wants to establish himself as a successful archaeologist. The proper arrangement, the collection of the relic, his diary at museum indicates his desire for success and the place he desires to achieve in the life. Prince Gautama does not know the pain, sadness. He rules his kingdom and gets pleasure. After awakening he frees himself from all earthly pleasures. In the same way, Najeeb takes lots of efforts to get the cirlet. As a Native Attendant of Peshawar Museum, he rules his kingdom, Peshawar Museum. But after getting the cirlet, he obtains enlightenment which sets him free from all the temptations. Like Buddha, he gets peace in the life. He becomes so self-satisfied that even does not want to get fame by revealing his achievement to the world. Najeeb attains the height which Buddha reaches after awakening.

Kamila sets Peshawar Museum as a symbol of the Buddhist temple, stupa or a place related with Buddhism. According to the Webster dictionary, Museum means a place where the ancient, historic, religious, cultural things are stored. In Peshawar, the museum plays a pivotal role in preserving the various statues of Buddha. The author puts light on the gallery where Najeeb preserves Buddha’s in various forms and size. Kamila vocalizes the Najeeb’s love for Buddha as well as Buddha’s influence on Najeeb. Kamila narrates how Peshawar Museum attracts every character towards it. It fascinates Najeeb. Najeeb enjoys the company of Buddha Kamila presents Najeeb as Buddha and the museum as his kingdom which he rules. She tells how he walks through the Hall of statues like a prince and visits statues as his frozen brothers. Kamila also traces Najeeb’s love for Buddha, museum, and its artifacts. She states how Najeeb speaks to the statues in the Hall:

Najeeb walked through the Hall of Statues, a prince visiting his frozen brothers, all an enchantment which it was his destiny alone to lift. .his voice speaking to the artefacts in his simple Greek sentence which they all seemed to understand: the winged sea-monster; ichthyocentaurs and fish-tailed bulls, Tritons kneeling before the Buddha; Indra and Brahma adoring Him; a winged figure seated on a fragment of an Achaemenid column, looking out of the deep-set eyes. A centaur bearing a shield. The Buddha receiving an image of the Buddha. (Shamsie 156)

Kamila makes Vivian Rose Spencer also to notice how Najeeb behaves like Buddha. At the time of returning the gifts to Vivian, Najeeb walks backwards along the pathway. Viv explicates Najeeb's gaze at the time, "his eyes on her face with the same concentration with which he had met the Buddha's gaze. His right hand raised to shoulder level, fingers together, palm outwards in a gesture of protection learned from a man of stone." (Shamsie 197) Vivian Spencer finds the spark of wisdom, curiosity, quest for truth in Najeeb Gul, a younger brother of Qayyum Gul. Kamila highlights Najeeb's attraction towards Buddha. Najeeb forgets the world and be one with Buddha whenever he comes in contact with Buddha's statue. When he accompanies Vivian to museum, he forgets everything. It is Vivian who brings him in his senses. Kamila states, "The boy was standing next to the webbed-fingered, larger-than-life Buddha with their beautiful drapery . . . he spotted, and been struck by, the faint, unexpected pupil in the eye of one the tall Buddha . . .for a long time he remained motionless, studying it, until Viv clapped her hands twice, and Najeeb dropped off the guard's shoulder." (Shamsie 108)

Tahsin Bey inspires and guides her to search the circlet, she also follows the tradition and shares knowledge with Najeeb which inspires him to pursue truth and uncovers the circlet. Najeeb from childhood toils to gain the knowledge and changes himself as an Assistant of Museum and a successful archeologist. He does not trap himself in the boundaries of particular cast or religion. He sets himself free to find what he wants, the circlet. He calls Vivian after studying when he becomes sure about the exact place of the circlet. He invites her for the excavation at Shahji-ki-Dheri. Vivian denies at first because she fails to logically connect the facts related to the Shahji-ki-Dheri and the circlet. But Najeeb revives the belief in her. He explicates her how the circlet reaches to the Shahji-ki-Dheri. The author presents Najeeb as a strong character. He wants to get the Circlet but not for him but for Vivian as it is her dream to get it. He clears the doubts with his endless curiosity, perseverance and confidence. He is the only person in the story who finds and wears the Circlet as he is the great archaeologist and knowledgeable. Unlike Vivian he has patience and perseverance to end what he starts. So, he deserves to hold the circlet on his head.

Kamila traces Najeeb's love, respect, attraction and interest in Buddha. When he and Vivian go to trench, Najeeb finds out stucco figures of Buddha. There he replicates the Buddha and gently strokes his knee. Vivian also forgets her terrifying experiences as a VAD nurse. The word, 'trench' brings her memory the images of Buddha instead of suffering soldiers. She states:

When she looked into the trench she saw it had been dug deep to reveal part of a wall decorated with stucco figures of Buddha – the boy, replicating the Buddha’s cross-legged pose, was gently stroking the knee of the Enlightened one. From now on when she heard the word ‘trench’ she wanted only to think of this. He turned towards her, grinning a huge grin as if he had been the one to discover the stucco figures. . .reaching out, she touched the Buddha’s face, a shiver travelling all the way through her. (Shamsie 103)

Kamila also provides the evidence that Najeeb communicates with Buddha. He considers that Buddha greets him whenever he enters the museum. She states, “Pulling open the doorway to return to the ordinary world, he turned to look over his shoulder. A giant Buddha raised his hand to him in farewell.” (Shamsie 157)

Kamila projects Peshawar Museum as a place where Buddha comes to life. Najeeb as a Native Assistant of museum rules over there. He observes, communicates and imitates Buddha. He lives among the Buddha’s statues and becomes like him. Vivian and Qayyum also sense peace and protection in the museum. After thirteen years, when Vivian returns to Peshawar at the time of violence. She experiences the safety, protection and peace in the museum. Gradually, Kamila traces the influence of Buddha on Qayyum Gul. Though he does not relate the idea of non-violence with Buddha, he senses an eternal peace as he reads the translated words written on the rock. He says, “I went to the rick and read the translated words while I stood in front of it, and felt a powerful peace which I know to come from Allah, no matter which of his Messenger he used to spread it through the earth.” (Shamsie 222)

Further, Kamila tells the journey of Scylax’s circlet. But at the same time, she glorifies Buddhism and its impact after 2500 years. She also talks about the attacks of Huns. She also traces the various visits of Chinese especially, the visit of Sung-Yun, who’s ‘mission was not one of the theft’. Najeeb’s quest to search the truth and fact brings him to the real place of the Circlet. In his letter to Viv he explains how the circlet passes from Alexander to Shahji-ki-Dheri. He writes from Alexander passes the circlet to Nearchus then it goes to in the hands of Seleucus Nicator afterwards Sandracottas or Chandragupta Maurya, the grandfather of the great Buddhist King Asoka gets it. He explicates the work of King Asoka after converting to Buddhism. He writes:

When Asoka converted to Buddhism he had stupas built all across the length and breadth of his kingdom; each Buddhist stupa had a treasury, and the energy of the stupa was derived from the objects in the treasury. . .the White Huns under Mihirakula overran Gandhara, burning stupas, pilling their treasures. Hearing of the approach of the Huns, a *bhikkuni* (that’s a Buddhist nun) called Maya escaped from a stupa complex, carrying the treasure of the great Asoka, determined to save it from the marauders. She travelled to the Great Stupa of Kanishka, and there she met the Chinese traveller Sung-Yun. When he refused to take the Circlet

to safety, she buried it beneath the Great white Statue of Shahji-ki-Dheri. (Shamsie 230)

After achieving the circlet Najeeb does not feel to have it. He achieves fulfillment. In the Storytellers Street protesters demand the independence, there he meets Diwa, a beautiful girl, he does not care about the circlet anymore as he gets his love. This is an instance of Buddhism's expression, *metta*, the Buddhist goal of universal and all-embracing love. *Metta* means much more than brotherly feeling or kindheartedness. It goes hand in hand to forgo self-interest in order to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind without thinking caste, class, color and sex. Najeeb just imagines his life with Diwa. He frees himself from the worldly satisfaction. Even he does not talk about the circlet after meeting her. The circlet becomes priceless once he achieves it. He gets peace after the discovery of circlet. His passion for circlet ends. He cares for Diwa more than the Circlet. He does not care about the turban in which the circlet is kept instead of it he enquires about Diwa. Najeeb is the only character who achieves enlightenment. Buddha means enlightened. Hence, the author calls Najeeb as the Buddha, an extraordinary man who achieved the fulfillment in life. He toils for the knowledge like Buddha. He obtains the knowledge of the circlet. After a lot of hardships, he discovers the circlet. She says, "Her young Pactyike, the boy she'd rescued from nuns and maulvis, grown into a man whose imagination tracked the Circlet through a thousand years from Alexander to Chandragupta to Asoka to the girl who had no name until he gave her one that was Buddhist and Geek and Hindu and Muslim in origin: Maya, of the Peshawar Valley." (Shamsie 279)

Shamsie connects Buddha's circle of enlightenment with Scylax's Circlet. As Buddha becomes awakened after the achievement of the knowledge, the circlet of enlightenment, Najeeb also becomes awakened after discovering the circlet. He sets himself free from all the earthly temptations. Diwa is also one of the compassionate characters who serves water to the protesters without caring her life. She looks like a divine figure to the picketers. Even she follows the Buddhist virtue, *metta* without caring about anything she gives water to all picketers. Her compassionate nature is so pure that Najeeb who is so intelligent character falls in love with her in the first sight. She also sacrifices her life for her love, Najeeb. She supports her Zarina, her brother's wife. Diwa represents divine energy. She also holds the Buddhist virtues. She too has a passion to gain the knowledge due to which she runs to find out the turban which has the hidden circlet. Her passion for truth and her love for Najeeb give her courage to go among the firing, bullets to get the turban. But unfortunately she dies in the firing. But she gets respect and love even after her death. Kamila projects Diwa's short character so dexterously that everyone who gets her single glimpse cannot forget her. Qayyum sees her for the first time when she comes to get the turban. Her sudden entry among the bullets, firing amazes and astonishes him along with the other protesters and British soldiers. Due her incomparable courage, Diwa holds the circlet even after the death. She submits herself to the violence for her love for Najeeb and knowledge.

To conclude Kamila's novel, *A God in Every Stone* recites story of one of the largest religions based on the humanity, Buddhism. The author reveals the impact, hold

and strength of Buddha through the Great Stupa. The narrative elaborates several instances of the excavation of the relics of Buddha and the excavators as the thirsty aspirants for the knowledge and the past. Through the nexus of Buddhist, Christian, Turkish and Muslim subjects, the author brings forth the Buddhist relics, Buddhism and enlightenment.

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