

The Shwe Dagon Pagoda

Objects that have been donated for centuries fill one room. Jewel encrusted scabbards, solid gold Buddha's, silver Buddha's set with rubies and lacquered gold prayer books. In an adjoining room where racks of women's hair hang, some are four or five feet in length and still glisten. I was told that those too poor to give anything of worldly value, had their hair cut off as a sign of deep faith and humility. I held the hair in my hands and the consistency differed from thick to thin, and the color from brownish to deep black. Some hair was straight, some wavy, but it was very eerie, fingering the hair of the dead.

As I walked along speechless at the enormity of it all, I noticed small cubicles dedicated to the day of the week with worshipers burning incense. If you ask someone from the west when they were born, they will answer you such and such a day in that month in the year of our lord. If you ask a Burman when they were born, they will reply, Monday or Friday or whatever day of the week that they came into the world. The Burmese week has eight days, Wednesday being divided in half, each day represented by a different animal. Wednesday morning is an elephant with tusks and Wednesday evening is an elephant without tusks. My birthday is Thursday which is represented by a rat.

End