

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## 1. MĀRA IN THE GUISE OF BUDDHA.

Würzburg, Sanderring 20.

January 25, 1902.

DEAR PROFESSOR RHYS DAVIDS,—It is, no doubt, very difficult to glean after the rich harvest of information collected by Professor Windisch in his masterly monograph on “Māra und Buddha”; yet, in so wide a field, who could ever hope to attain to completeness? On the other side, the small and insignificant ear which I have picked up while wandering across the same field does not alter the general results arrived at in that monograph; and, withal, the remoteness of the spot where it lay hidden is enough to excuse any omission. When, about five years ago, I first perceived it in Buddhaghosa’s Commentary on the *Etad-aggā* chapter of the *Ānguttara* (vol. i, pp. 23 sqq.), then to be read only in MSS., whereas at present some portions of this work are printed at Colombo on bad paper in Sinhalese characters, I sent a copy of it, that is to say of the legend in which Māra assumes the appearance of Buddha, to Professor Windisch, who, in my opinion, is our competent master in this branch of enquiry. And now it is only in the hope that others may be able to adduce more parallels, that I venture to call attention to my gleaning. Such parallels would be welcome from both quarters, from the Buddhist as well as from the Christian. For the legend

which I am concerned with has a counterpart in a legend which relates that once the Evil One appeared to a monk of the Egyptian desert in the guise of Christ.

The Pāli source, i.e. the *Manorathapūraṇī*, written by Buddhaghosa in the first half of the fifth century<sup>a</sup> A.D., presents us with about a hundred legends, one of which deals with an upāsaka, named Sūra Ambaṭṭha or Sūrambaṭṭha, or simply Ambaṭṭha. He was setthi of Sāvattihī and supported the heretics, but one day Gotama Buddha preached the Doctrine to him in a way appropriate to Sūrambaṭṭha's status in the world, and after establishing him in the fruit of the first stage of the Path he withdrew.

“Then Māra thought: ‘This Sūrambaṭṭha is my own. To-day, however, the Teacher has gone to his house, and perhaps through the sermon he heard the Path has become manifest to him. I will ascertain whether he has escaped from my domain, or not.’ Then, by virtue of his power to assume any shape he desired (*attaṇo kāmarūpitāya*), Māra created a shape resembling that of the Buddha, and as even his mode of taking hold of his robe and bowl was the same, he counterfeited the Buddha very well. In this attire he took his stand at Sūrambaṭṭha's house-door.

“Sūrambaṭṭha, upon hearing that the Buddha had come again, thought: ‘The Buddhas do not come save for what is conducive to our final emancipation (*niyyānika*). Why, then, has he returned?’ Still, because he imagined him to be the Buddha, he speedily went near unto him. After having saluted him, he stood at a short distance, and said:—

“‘Sir! But a moment ago you finished your meal in this house and went away. What can be the reason that you come back again?’

“‘Ambaṭṭha,’ he answered, ‘when I taught you the Doctrine, there was one matter which I taught without having previously reflected upon it. I taught that all the five khandhas are impermanent, associated with suffering, and devoid of a Self, but this description does not hold true of all of them. Some, on the contrary, are permanent, stable, and eternal.’

“Sūrambatṭha thought: ‘This sermon is very hard to believe. For the Buddhas would not teach anything without having reflected upon it beforehand. We know that Māra is the opponent of the Buddha. Evidently this is Māra!’ ‘Thou art Māra,’ he said.

“As soon as the disciple of Buddha had uttered this word, it was as if a blow with an axe had fallen upon Māra. He was able no longer to keep up his disguise. ‘Yes, Ambatṭha! I am Māra!’ he said.

“Whereupon the other: ‘If a hundred, yea, if a thousand Māras like thee should come here, they would be unable to shake my faith! The Great Gotāma, the Buddha, when teaching the Doctrine informed me thus: All confections (*saṃkhāras*) are impermanent. Stop no longer at my house-door!’ And he snapped his fingers. On hearing this, Māra kicked at him, but, unable to dispute what was said, then disappeared.”

Everybody will see that this legend ought to be ranged with those which Professor Windisch alluded to when he said:—

“Als der Herrscher über den Saṃsāra endlich ist er (Māra) es, der die verschiedenen Gestalten und Schicksale des Daseins schafft . . . . Damit hängt wohl zusammen, dass Māra selbst verschiedene Gestalten annimmt, in denen er an Buddha und dessen Anhänger herantritt” (l.c., p. 199).

But nobody will overlook the many features which distinguish our legend from all such in the Mārasaṃyutta and Bhikkhūsaṃyutta of the Saṃyutta-Nikāya. Certainly, it is not shaped after the pattern given there. Both form and contents are different. Nowhere else does the Tempter approach an *upāsaka*, nor does he assume anywhere but in our legend the outward appearance of Buddha.

The name of Sūra Ambatṭha occurs, as far as I know, only once more, in another list of celebrated householders (Aṅg., vol. iii, p. 451). In the Sanskrit literature of the Buddhists, or, strictly speaking, in the printed texts, it does not occur. Likewise, no other legend is known to me in

which Māra appears in the guise of Buddha.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, I hope that our legend does not stand alone in Buddhist literature, and I am eager to get intelligence, particularly from scholars versed in the Tibetan and Chinese sources.

Whereas the same legend, or a similar one, is as yet wanting in this hemisphere of the *globus religiosus*, we possess a parallel in the other sphere, viz. in the Lausiac history, written by Palladius, a Christian monk, in 420 A.D. It contains a series of biographical sketches of monks who were living in the deserts of Egypt, and is dedicated to Lausus, a chamberlain at the court of Theodosius II. For other details, I may be allowed to refer to the critical Study<sup>2</sup> on this work by Dom Cuthbert Butler, to whom I am indebted also for having kindly sent me a proof of the legend which I here discuss, forming part of a forthcoming critical edition of the Greek text of the Lausiac history.

Valens, a Palestinian by birth, was exceedingly puffed up with haughtiness, and though he was repeatedly mocked by the devil, still he continued to believe that these mockings proceeded from heavenly powers. Such a behaviour encouraged the devil to carry his mockery to the utmost. "He turned into Christ (*σχηματίζει εαυτὸν εἰς τὸν Σωτῆρα*) and came to Valens in the night, being himself accompanied by a thousand demons in the disguise of angels, who carried torches. Such was the apparition: A fiery circle became visible, in the centre of which the devil appeared in the figure of Christ. One of the angel-demons went before to tell Valens: 'Christ has taken pleasure in the libertine mode of thy life, and has come to see thee.'" Thereupon the monk left his cell and adored the Antichrist. The next day he announced, in the presence of all the members of the Community, that he had seen Christ; but the holy Fathers put him in iron fetters for a year, in order to cure

<sup>1</sup> Divyāvad., pp. 360 sqq. (see also Windisch, *Māra u. Buddha*, pp. 171 sqq.), was, of course, known to me, but the legend narrated there is, in my opinion, no real parallel to the story in question.

<sup>2</sup> The Lausiac History of Palladius: Texts and Studies, Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature, vol. vi, No. 1; Cambridge, 1898.

him of his insanity, in accordance with the maxim, *Contraria contrariis curantur*.

I need not point out that Valens, though he was living the life of an ascetic, is far excelled in perspicacity of mind by Sūra Ambatṭha of the Buddhist story, who was only a layman, although styled ariyasāvaka, i.e. belonging to those disciples of the Buddha who were walking in one of the four Paths. Yet we are here not concerned with the moral and intellectual qualities of the two men, but with the legends alone; and if we undertake to compare them one with the other, there remains only one real similarity between them, to wit, that the Evil One makes an attempt to deceive his victim by taking the outward appearance of his opposite.

The legend of Valens is told besides in a Syriac version, now printed in P. Bedjan's *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, t. vii, 1897, pp. 93-95, which is believed to be the compilation made by Ānân-Īshō' in about 670 A.D., and described by Thomas, Bishop of Margā (ninth century), in his *Book of the Governors*.<sup>1</sup> The Syriac text does not differ from the Greek except in small things, as Professor Oskar Braun, of Würzburg, had the kindness to assure me.

I looked round for any other story that might bear resemblance to this one, but my efforts have not been rewarded with success. Neither Sulpitius Severus nor Cassian nor the *Apophthegmata Patrum* afforded me anything. It is quite likely, however, that in Coptic, Ethiopic, and Arabic sources of Christian origin some such story will be found. At present we can only say that the legend of Valens stands alone, and in this respect both sides are equal. Let us hope that future research will free the Buddhist as well as the Christian legend and their common element from an ungenial isolation.—Yours sincerely,

E. HARDY.

<sup>1</sup> See E. A. Wallis Budge, "The Book of Governors," vol. ii, 1893, p. 191.