

## THE WANDERING JEW.

A BUDDHIST PARALLEL.

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IN 1899, a Japanese scholar, Kumagusu Minakata, then sojourning in London, propounded, in *Notes and Queries*, a Buddhist analogue to the legend of the Wandering Jew. It is found in the Chinese version of the Samyuktâgama, one of the canonical collections of Buddha's Dialogues. I have not, however, been able to find it in the Pâli Samyutta Nikâya (or Classified Collection) which is a different sectarian recension of the same or a similar collection to the Chinese one. On the other hand, the story is in the Sanskrit of the Divyâvadâna, a collection of extracts from the Buddhist Canon, together with later additions, compiled sometime between the second century B. C. and perhaps the sixth century A. D. The Chinese translation of the Classified Collection dates from the fifth century A. D., while the Sanskrit or Prâkrit original is lost.

The story is that Pindola, one of Buddha's disciples, being challenged by unbelievers to work a miracle, flew up into the air and brought down an alms-bowl which had been fixed on a pole. Buddha reproved him for this, and forbade his disciples to work miracles for display. Thus far the story is in the Pâli Canon, in the Book of Discipline, and may be found in English at page 79 of *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XX. But the two later sources add the statement that Buddha told Pindola :

“Na tâvat te parinirvâtavyam yâvad Dharmo nântarhita iti.”

“Thou shalt not attain Nirvâna (i. e., die) until the Dharma (i. e., Buddhist Gospel) disappears.”

The expression “attain Nirvâna” is applied to the death of an Arahat, for, like other Asiatics, the Hindûs have different verbs “to die,” according to the rank of the departed. Buddha therefore said: “You shall not die while my religion lasts.” As the

Buddhists believe in a coming Buddha who will be greater than Gotama was, this also means: "You shall not die until the next Buddha comes to earth."

Curiously enough the passage was translated by Burnouf in 1844 in his great Introduction to (later) Buddhism. (*Introduction à l'Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, second edition, 1876, p. 355.) But scholars appear to have overlooked the parallel to the Christian legend until the Japanese savant pointed it out.

The first appearance in Europe of the legend of the Wandering Jew is in the Chronicle of Roger of Wendover, where we read that the story was told at the monastery of St. Alban's in the year 1228, by an Armenian archbishop then visiting England. It appears to have been known already in that country, for the English monks begin by asking their visitor about the mysterious wanderer. The archbishop says that he has himself conversed with him, for he roams about the Orient, passing his time among bishops.

Now we know that Persia and Armenia were buffer-states between India and the hither East, and that Hindû legends, like that of Barlaam and Joasaph, passed through those lands on their way to us. Unless we can find a Christian original for the story of the Wanderer earlier than the fifth century, when the Chinese Classified Collection was translated, we must give the Buddhist story the priority, and strongly suspect that, like the Holy Grail, it probably gave rise to the Christian one.

Until the vast literature preserved in China has been translated, we shall have few facts to judge from. Fâ Hien heard the Buddhist Holy Grail story preached from a Ceylon pulpit in the fifth century, and there was great religious and literary activity in China and Chinese Turkestan from his time onward. Christianity and Buddhism met; their legends were interchanged and at times confused, as in the case of St. Joasaph; until at last a Chinese emperor forbade the intermixture and decreed that the Syrian Messiah and the Indian Buddha should be kept distinct.