

Further Note on Persecutions of Buddhists in India.

MRS. HODGSON writes that she finds a reference in her husband's handwriting to the extermination by violence of the Buddhists in India; and, at p. 99 of his "Languages, Literature, and Religion of Nepaul and Tibet," he says: "Furious bigots dispersed the sect, and attempted to destroy its records"; and at p. 48 a lama says, "Sankar Ācārya destroyed the worship of Buddha." (Compare also p. 12.)

That the general opinion of native scholars in Nepal is that there was such persecution appears sufficiently from the above, and from statements in the history of Nepal, drawn up by them, which Dr. Wright translated. We find an account there (p. 118) of Buddhists being put to death, confirmed at pp. 152, 153, and at p. 159.

Mr. Robert Sewell also points out incidentally in the J.R.A.S. for 1898, p. 208, that the Kerala Utpatti states that the Buddhists were driven out of Kerala by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa.

This opinion of native scholars in Nepal and South India is suggestive. But they adduce no evidence of historical value in support of it, and pending further information it does not seem to be any sufficient ground for altering the conclusion reached in the paper printed above.

The fact is that such vague, general statements, occurring in books written centuries after the events they refer to, and unsupported by details sufficient to

enable us to form any judgment as to what is really meant, are not evidence of persecution at all. They are only evidence of the belief of the persons making the statements. And this belief may easily have arisen from misunderstanding or exaggeration of accounts of what is not persecution, but only the victory, by argument or other means, of a rival faith.

Hofrath Dr. Bühler, who has been kind enough to take interest in this question, and to express his general agreement with the conclusions reached above, has been good enough to send me the following interesting note on certain inscriptions from Western and Southern India, showing the survival and the treatment of Buddhists there after A.D. 800.

These inscriptions are as follows :—

“ 1. On a Torana, found by Dr. Führer in Sānchi, published by me, ‘Epigraphia Indica,’ vol. ii., pp. 366 ff., with facsimile, date earlier than eleventh century.

“ 2. Two Kaṅheri inscriptions of A.D. 843–44 and 851, published by Kielhorn, ‘Indian Antiquary,’ xiii., 134 ff. (comp. ‘Bombay Gazetteer,’ vol. i., pt. ii., pp. 208, 404).

“ 3. The Dambal inscription of A.D. 1095, published by Fleet, ‘Indian Antiquary,’ x. 185, 273 (comp. ‘Bombay Gazetteer,’ vol. i., pt. ii., pp. 228, 452).

“ 4. The Miraj inscription of A.D. 1110, ‘Jour. Bo. Br. R.A.S.,’ xiii. 6 (comp. ‘Bombay Gazetteer,’ pt. ii., p. 228).

“ You will see that the Kaṅheri establishment must have been flourishing during the ninth century. In A.D. 843–44 the monks received a grant for various necessaries, *inter alia* for books, from an old *minister* of the Silāhāra feudatory of the Koṅkaṅ. If a minister made such a grant, it follows that Buddhism still had adherents among, or at least still was respected by, the official class. In A.D. 851 a *gomin* from Bengal settled in Kaṅheri and had new caves excavated, which were to serve for meditation. The

place seems to have had still its attractions and a certain reputation outside of Western India. The Dambal inscription, which records the building of two Vihāras in the Dharvād Collectorate and their endowment by certain merchants of the place, speaks for itself. But it may be noted that one of the Vihāras was erected outside of Dambal in Lokkaguṇḍi (Lakkuṇḍi), that hence there were more Buddhist communities than one in the Kāṇarā country, and that Buddhism still had a hold on the mercantile classes, just as in earlier times.

“The last inscription, which has been found a little further north, in one of the Southern Marāṭhā States, alleges that the chief of Kolhāpur had a tank excavated, and erected on its embankment a Śiva, a *Buddha*, and an Arhat, for whose worship he granted some land. Small temples with images on the embankments of tanks are very common in India, and there are cases in which they were numerous. Thus near Aṅhīlvād-Pāṭan in Gujarāt Jayasimha-Siddharāja set up 1,000 Liṅgas around the *Sahasraliṅga talāo*. Usually the excavator of the tank sets up images of his *iṣṭadevatā* or his patron deity in which he believes. If Gaṇḍarāditya chose the deities of three sects, he indicates thereby that, like Aśoka, Khāravela of Kaliṅga, and Harṣa of Kanauj, he was a worshipper of all the creeds (*sarvapaṣaṇḍapūjaka*¹) to which his subjects belonged. And the fact further indicates that Buddhism still existed in his territory. Buddhist ruins have been found near Kolhāpur, and it is very probable that Buddhist communities, descended from those of the Maurya and Andhra times, still survived in the beginning of the twelfth century.

“The number of these late Buddhist inscriptions is small. But it must be borne in mind that there are *none* at all from the times of the Kadambas (4th–6th centuries)

¹ The expression *sarvapaṣaṇḍapūjako* occurs in Khāravela's Hathigumphā inscription.

and of the Calukyas (6th–8th centuries), though the documents are fairly numerous.

“If you find that any of these remarks will serve your purposes, you are welcome to make use of them.”

Mr. Watters having informed me that in the Chinese work numbered 1,340 in Nanjio’s Catalogue (translated in 472 A.D.) there is an account of a real persecution of Buddhists by Mahirakula, King of Kashmir, in the course of which *Siṃha*, the 23rd so-called patriarch, was killed, I asked him to look the matter up. He has been kind enough to send me the following note as to the Chinese evidence.

“2, CLEVELAND ROAD, EALING.

“February 22, 1898.

“MY DEAR RHYS DAVIDS,—I have again read over the passages about Mihirakula slaying *Siṃha*. The accounts evidently indicate a persecution of Buddhism in that king’s realm, and *Siṃha* was only one of the victims. In one account the King obtains from the Abbot *Siṃha* statements to the effect that he was an arhat and had no regard for his body, whereupon the King cuts off his head. Milk shoots up from the severed trunk, and the King’s arm falls off. Even in accounts of Mihirakula, which do not mention the martyrdom of *Siṃha*, the King is always, I think, introduced as an enemy of Buddhism—the man who breaks the Buddha’s bowl and demolishes topes and *vihāras*, thus indirectly leading to irregularities in the lives of the bhikshus, who were left without head and house; he also slays bhikshus. One consideration helped to lead me to regard Mihirakula’s conduct as a persecution of people on account of their religion—he was a devoted adherent and supporter of another sect; he was the re-incarnation of Lotus-face, who had been an enthusiastic disciple of Pūrṇa, a great non-Buddhist teacher. But Mihirakula may have been at first a Buddhist, as the Kashmirians told the Chinese pilgrim, although I don’t see any mention of that in other books.

“ I hope you will let me know if I can hunt up anything more. The tiny little scraplets of information one gets in the middle of a big book are very tantalising, but sometimes they are useful and interesting.

“ Yours very truly,

“ T. WATTERS.”

[See also the remarks by Mr. Fleet, Mr. Beal, and Mr. Vincent Smith in the “Ind. Ant.,” 1886, 245 and foll., and 345 and foll.]
