

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY BUDDHIST SAṄGHA AND ITS SOCIAL BACKGROUND

90. We have already referred to the close interrelationship that obtained between the early Buddhist *Saṅgha* and the society of the times (v. *supra*, 21-24). Before we proceed to an analysis and an evaluation of the data regarding sex in the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, a few sociological observations on the nature and social background of the early Buddhist *Saṅgha* to which the *Vinaya* refers seem necessary as that would enable a better appreciation of the data we possess.

91. The early Buddhist monastic community broadly falls into two categories: Firstly, there were those who renounced the world impelled by lofty motives. As stated, for instance, in the *Nalakapānasutta* (M.I,462 f.),¹ they sought *pabbajjā* "through faith" — *saddhāpabbajitā* — on their own conviction that the *brahmacariya* under the Buddha was the surest guarantee to release from *dukkha* (empirical sorrow),² and took delight in the *brahmacariya*: *abhiratā brahmacariye* (cf. M. I,463). Their life was one of contentment and happiness, and they lived with a sense of modesty and scrupulousness and with a desire for training: cf. *Appicchā santuṭṭhā lajjino kukkuccakā sikkhākāmā* (Vin. I, 44 *passim*). They are often referred to as "the noble disciples who have put forth exertion" — *ariyā āradhāviriya* (M.I,19 *passim*) — and receive recognition as "the virtuous and the good": *silavanto kalyāṇadhammā* (Vin. I, 73 *passim*). And, as the *Kandarakasutta* (M.I,399) shows, the Buddha was proud of the attainments of many of his disciples.³ As the *Kakacūpamasutta* (M.I,124) implies, very many early disciples belonged to this category; and were amenable to the words of the Buddha: "My heart, O Bhikkhus," says the Buddha, "was gladdened by the

1. Also cf. M.I,196.

2. *loc. cit.* Also A.I,147 f.

3. Cf. *Santi hi Kandaraka bhikkhū imasmim bhikkhusaṅghe arahanto khināsavā vusitavanto katakarariyā ohi tabhārā anuppattasadalāthā parikkhāpabbhavasamyojanaṃ sammadaññā vimuttā. Santi pana Kandaraka bhikkhū imasmim bhikkhusaṅghe sekkhā santasīlā santasavuttino nipakā nipakāvuttino cāhenu satipatṭhānesu suppatijjhātacittā viharanti...* - M.I,379. Also cf. M.III,79 f.