

## CHAPTER III

### THE APPROACH TO SEX: *BRAHMACARIYA*

67. The Buddhist approach to the subject of sex is basically determined by the Buddhist attitude towards *kāma* or the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. *Kāmas* are to be shunned since they lead to *dukkha* or empirical sorrow (*v. infra*, 83) — the *kāmas* themselves being founded on sense-perception which is said to provide no satisfactory basis for true happiness (*v. infra*, 71) as understood in Buddhism. However, being pragmatic in outlook (*v. infra*, p.68, fn.6b) Buddhism approaches the subject of sex in a two-fold manner, *viz.* (1) the approach of the *bhikkhu* (or the *bhikkhunī*) and (2) the approach of the layman (or the lay-woman). Nevertheless, as we shall endeavour to show (*v. infra*, 69-74) it is the approach of the former which is considered to be the most appropriate, in contradistinction to that of the latter, who may be looked upon as pursuing a lower ideal. In fact, the Buddhist laity may emulate the *bhikkhu* or the *Arahant* even for a day whenever an opportunity presents itself: *cf. A.IV,248 ff. et 388 f.*

68. While the *bhikkhu* and the *bhikkhunī* are said to lead a life of complete celibacy (*v. infra*, 85-89), the laity, in the matter of sexual morals, are expected to observe chastity only. The *sikkhāpada* or the precept governing the layman's sex-life is broadly formulated to induce chasteness in all sensual pleasures (*kāmesu*), for, by it what is sought is only the prohibition of "wrongful indulgence in the passions": *kāmesu micchācāro*. Sex, therefore, is placed on a par with any other passion that one is heir to, and it is left to the layman to tackle it in the way proper for the Buddhist.

69. However, it is the life of renunciation and monastic celibacy (as opposed to that of the layman) which is considered to be the most conducive to the attainment of the ultimate goal set forth in Buddhism. As often stated in the Canonical texts, the pure religious life is said to be difficult for one to lead while being a householder. It has also to be borne in mind that weightage is constantly placed only on this difficulty and not on an impossibility (*cf. na-y-idam sukaram agāram ajjhāvasatā ekantaparipuṇṇam ekantaparisuddham saṅkhalikhitam*