

CHAPTER X

MISCELLANEOUS SEXUAL PHENOMENA

Sex in Marriage

367. On the subject of approved sex-relations within lawful wedlock, the data provided by the Vinaya are, indeed, scanty. Just as much as it is not within the purview of the Vinaya to dwell on such a theme (except in so far as it affects the life of *brahmacariya*), as a literature upholding the ideal of celibacy, very little is said — and little may be inferred — regarding the subject, even from the rest of the Pali Canon.

368. Primarily, as a form of asceticism, early Buddhism had to be antipathetic towards sex.¹ Notwithstanding its sociological teachings, Buddhism cannot bless any action leading to a biological process resulting in *samsāric* existence, repeating its cycle of birth, decay and death, even if sex be looked upon as a vital procreative function. Therefore, while Buddhism deals with the socio-ethical aspects of wedlock such as the duties and obligations of husband and wife as referred to, for instance, in the *Sīgālovādasutta* (D.III,180 ff.)² or in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (cf. A.II,57ff.), it maintains discreet silence regarding their sexual life. Monogamy is upheld,³ and the negative injunction that a man should not go to another's wife is made.⁴ Conjugal love was tolerated, but not encouraged, for, in the ultimate analysis, it would perpetuate *dukkha*.

369. The closest that Buddhism comes to the sexual side of married life is when it extols the virtues of chastity (cf. D.III,190). As in the case of all its ethical precepts for laymen, in this instance too, the stress is "placed on purity in general rather than on any particular detail"⁵ and with that the matter ends, giving us no particulars regarding conjugal love. Even the Asokan rock and pillar edicts,

1. Cf. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, p.239.

2. Also cf. *Mahāmaṅgalasutta* (Sn. 258-269).

3. Cf. *Supra*, p.133, fn.1.

4. *Parasā dāraṃ nātikkameyya*, Sn.396.

5. T.W. Rhys Davids, 'Chastity (Buddhist)', ERE, Vol.3, p.490.