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**SEXUAL MORES OF ANCIENT INDIA
AS REFLECTED IN THE VINAYAPITAKA
OF THE PĀLI CANON**

(being a socio-cultural evaluation
of the data of sexual significance in the early records of
the Theravāda Monastic Laws)



A Thesis
presented to
the University of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)
Peradeniya Campus
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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June, 1973

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In an era like ours, in which the problems of social evolution and change are being keenly felt and studied, every effort is being made to understand man as a social being. However, if one is to understand the present, a peep into the past becomes necessary. Man ever remains the heir to the past, for, it is the past that grows into the present. The value of the present study is to be seen in that light.

There is a tendency in modern socio-cultural studies to recognize the place of sex among human values. The Victorian prudery of yester-years is no more. The importance of sex in history, sociology, psychology and psycho-analysis is being increasingly realized. As one of the factors of human motivation, sex, until recent times, was the least understood, notwithstanding the fact that many ancient civilized nations possessed cultures in which sex played a prominent rôle. Today, sex is being considered an integral part of life, and one cannot hope to understand man tearing him asunder from his sexual background.

We have chosen as our field of study the sexual
 norms of ancient India as reflected in the Vinayapitaka
 of the Pali Canon. Whatever studies that have been done
 so far in this sphere have been mostly from the Brahmanic
 point of view, and the Buddhist sources have not been
 efficiently utilized even when the period and the region
 covered had been Buddhistic, as well. If one is to secure
 a clearer view of ancient Indian sexual life it is
 imperative that a careful scrutiny of early Buddhist
 literature should also be made. In fact, sociological
 studies based on early Pali literature, made so far, have
 virtually ignored the subject of sex. To ignore the data
 on sex in this literature is to secure an incomplete picture
 of a cultural scene. Furthermore, the sexual lives of the
 ancient nations have so far been approached from what one
 may call "the classical angle". One need only to turn
 the pages of Johann Meyer, Hans Licht and Otto Reifer to
 see this classical approach to the sexual past of India,
 Greece and Rome. Yet there is much to be said about the
 sexual lives of these nations; *the Pali literature would suggest
 a different approach which would be early*

A study of the phenomena of sex among a given
 people could also be approached from other angles, such as
 the ethical, psychological, or sociological. Ours is
 mostly a socio-cultural approach since our sources lend
 themselves to a thorough and critical investigation from
 that point of view. And in that attempt we have

endeavoured as far as possible to correlate the data at our disposal to the findings of modern sexology, especially in its psychological and sociological aspects, although, as a science, sexology is not yet fully equipped to answer every question asked of it. Therefore, in a study of this nature, its theories are mostly signposts for one's guidance and should not so much be looked upon as blue-prints for ready acceptance. In this regard we would like to add that orientation of sex in ancient India cannot be completely identified with that of the West. ^{It may be said,} ~~for instance,~~ ^{that} ~~the mastery of instincts and impulses and the channelling of their energies for spiritual purposes was mostly Indian.~~ ^{It} As far as Buddhism is concerned, it may be ^{said} that while there is much in common between the Buddha and Freud, the former, as noted in the course of this thesis, ~~was to~~ believed in the suppression of sex for the consummation of spiritual ends, while the latter saw its repression by man - the elimination of which was considered necessary for a better life. Recognizing, as he did, personal effort (attakāra) and human endeavour (purisakāra), the Buddha was essentially an experimentalist, while Freud was a pathologist, although some of ^{Freud's} ~~his~~ views may be experimentally demonstrated. The Buddha and Freud were also analytical geni; but Freud remained an empiricist while the Buddha went beyond empirically ascertainable facts - a position, to which, the Jungian attitude is perhaps the closest in the West. Our sources, therefore, refer to

concepts, values and experiences of a different culture far removed in time and space from that of the West, and caution has to be exercised in viewing them in terms of modern concepts. These facts, accordingly, are being borne in mind in the course of our observations.

In early Buddhist literature, such valuable data on sex are furnished by the Vinayapiṭaka. Sex being related to sensual desire (kāma), biological reproduction (puṇabbhava, lit. "re-becoming"), and therefore to empirical sorrow (dukkha), Buddhism is careful regarding the subject of sex, even when dealing with lay-life. However, as Buddhist monastic discipline involves the question of celibacy, the vinaya has to deal with sex at least as far as necessary. Furthermore, the Vinaya had to take into account the social conditions against which background the Buddhist monastic structure was to evolve. All this has resulted in the Vinaya texts in particular becoming a source of data on sex, unlike any other contemporary Indian literary record. The scope of this thesis, therefore, is a critical investigation and evaluation of the data of sexual import in the Vinayapiṭaka.

As usual with a study of this nature, supplementary data from other available sources have also been utilized. Of the Pali Commentaries used, special mention has to be made of Buddhaghosa's Samantapāsādikā. It throws such

light on many matters connected with our study. From what has been stated in the course of our observations it will be noted that the Commentarial traditions deserve careful consideration, notwithstanding the time-lag and their historical evolution as opposed to the Canon.

Finally, we would like to state that we do not by any means claim that our results, whatever they may be, to be final and conclusive. *One is not the last word on the subject.* We may have touched only on the fringe of problems and they may have not been seen below their surface. However, if the observations embodied in the ensuing pages, in their small way, would enable one to see with a new eye and achieve new insights into the subject, our labours would not have been in vain.

I am extremely grateful to my teachers, friends and colleagues for the help they rendered me in the course of these investigations. I am permitted to refer to them by name if and when this thesis appears in print. I thank them most sincerely.

L. P. N. Perera

7th ~~November~~ ^{June}, 1973.

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Pages</u>
Preface	ii - vi
Contents	vii
Abbreviations	viii - xi
Chapter I - INTRODUCTION	1 - 50
Chapter II - THE DATA ON SEX IN THE PALLI VIRAMATIARA	60 - 86
Chapter III - THE APPROACH TO SEX : IDEOLOGY	87 - 117
Chapter IV - THE EARLY BURNING SANKHA AND ITS SOCIAL BACKGROUND	118 - 166
Chapter V - THE DATA ON SEX : THEIR EVIDENTIAL VALUE	167 - 176
Chapter VI - CERTAIN HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS	177 - 207
Chapter VII - HETERO- AND HOMO-SEXUAL DEVIATIONS AND IMMORALITY	208 - 314
Chapter VIII - FURTHER DEVIATIONS	315 - 406
Chapter IX - PROSTITUTES, GAMERS AND HUSBANDRY	407 - 441
Chapter X - MISCELLANEOUS SEXUAL HERESIES	442 - 492
Conclusion	493 - 495
Appendix	495A - 495B
Bibliography	496 - 516
Index	517 - 591
1. Introduction	
2. The Approach to Sex, i.e. Ideology	
3. The Approach to Sex, i.e. Ideology	*****
4. The Approach to Sex, i.e. Ideology	
5. The Approach to Sex, i.e. Ideology	
6. The Approach to Sex, i.e. Ideology	

ABBREVIATIONS

A.	Aṅguttaraṇḍīyā
AA.	Aṅguttaraṇḍīyā Aṭṭhakathā, i.e. Maṅgalaṇḍīyā
AMST.	The American Dictionary of Social Terms
Art.	Article
ID.	The Book of the Discipline
MED.	Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary
Dh.	Dharmapada Upaniṣad
BuA.	Buddhavaṃsa Aṭṭhakathā, i.e. Madhuraḍḍhuraḷāsinī
Chand.	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
CHI.	The Cambridge History of India
CJH.	The Ceylon Journal of the Humanities
COO.	Concise Oxford Dictionary
Comy.	Commentary
CID.	Critical Fall Dictionary
D.	Dīghanīkāya
DA.	Dīghanīkāya Aṭṭhakathā, i.e. Saṃyogavāyāsiṃ
ICA.	Dictionary of Classical Antiquities
DED.	Davidsonian Etymological Dictionary
Dh.	Dharmapada
DhA.	Dharmapada Aṭṭhakathā, i.e. Commentary to Dharmapada
Dns.	Dhammasaṅgani
DnsA.	Dhammasaṅgani Aṭṭhakathā, i.e. Atthasūlīni
Dialogues.	Dialogues of the Buddha
DPPH.	Dictionary of Pali Proper Names

EBR.	Encyclopaedia Britannica
EBD.	Encyclopaedia of Buddhism
ERE.	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
ENB.	Encyclopaedia of Social Behaviour
ESP.	Encyclopaedia of Sex Practice
Further Dialogues.	Further Dialogues of the Buddha
Gilgit MSS.	Gilgit Manuscripts, ^{Vol. 3} (i.e. Nilasarvāstivāda-Vimayavastu)
HAIP.	An Historical Atlas of the Indian Peninsula
HOS.	Harvard Oriental Series
IHQ.	Indian Historical Quarterly
It.	Itivuttaka
J.	Jātaka
JAOS.	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JRAS(GB).	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Great Britain & Ireland)
Kinsey Report (Female).	Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female
Kinsey Report (Male).	Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male
KVA.	Kuddakapīṭha Aṭṭhakathā, i.e. Kūruvatthajotthā I
Kvt.	Kāṇḍāvitarand
KS.	Kāraṇīya
Kvu.	Kaṭṭhvatthu
M.	Majjhimanīsiya
<u>Ma.</u>	<u>Mahāvastu Sūtra, i.e. Upaniṣadpāṭhaśūtra</u> ?
MA.	Majjhimanīsiya Aṭṭhakathā, i.e. Mahāpūsūland
MIn.	Mālinīpāṭha
MIS.	Middle Length Sayings
NIDL.	New International Dictionary of the English Language
PD.	Pali-English Dictionary of the Pali Text Society

PSJ.	Pali Text Society, London
Rup.	Rupajapanāṭṭhā
Rv.	Ritavattīya-Atthakathā, i.e. Ruravattāḥariparā III
Rv.	Rg Veda
S.	Saṅgāyatanīyā
SA.	Saṅgāyatanīyā Atthakathā, i.e. Sūratthapāṇḍarā
SEM.	Sacred Books of the Sādhanists
SEK.	Sacred Books of the East
SED.	Sanskrit-English Dictionary of M. Monier-Williams
SEB.	Simon Beauvillain's Equant (Series)
Sn.	Suttantapīṭṭha
Sn.	Suttantapīṭṭha Atthakathā, i.e. Paravattāḥariparā II
S.V.	sub voce
Tait.Up.	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
Th 1.	Therīgāthā
Th 2.	Therīgāthā
Th.	Thera-Therīgāthā Atthakathā, i.e.
Tr.	Translation, Translator, Translated
UCR.	University of Ceylon Review
v (vr)	verse (verses)
Vbh.	Vibhanga
Vbh.	Vibhanga Atthakathā, i.e. Samāhavinodanā
Vin.	Vinaya (Vinayapīṭṭha)
Vin.	Vinaya Atthakathā, i.e. Samantapāsādikā
Vien.	Vinaya Vinaya
Vv.	Vimānvatthu Atthakathā, i.e.

Wörterbuch.	Sanskrit-Wörterbuch by O. Böhtlingk & R. Roth
Woven Codices.	Woven Codices of the Early Buddhists by E. M. Hare, (JBB., Vol. 15)
Yajñvalkyā.	Yajñvalkyā-Śrauti
ZDMG.	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

(Other abbreviations used in this Thesis
are those in general use)

TABLE I

CONTENTS

TABLE I
CONTENTS

(3) The following is the table of contents of the

1. The Cross-References in this Thesis, except when specified otherwise, are to Paragraph Numbers.

2. The Index refers to Page Numbers.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Pali Vinayapitaka and its place in ancient Indian literature

(1) The Pali Vinayapitaka is the corpus of the Theravāda Buddhist monastic laws, and, as aptly expressed by Mrs. Rhys Davids, is a "treasury of monastic legality."¹⁾ The texts of this Piṭaka set out, against a certain socio-cultural background, the rules and regulations governing the external conduct and management of the Bhikkhu Saṅgha

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- 1) Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids in her Editorial Note in Horner, *BD. I*, p. lxi. Fundamentally, the Vinaya may be described as a "code" of rules for the Buddhist monastic community, although it may not strictly fall within the definition of the term "code". A "code" is defined today as a "systematic collection of statutes, body of laws so arranged to avoid inconsistency and overlapping" (v. COD., s.v.), or "an orderly and authoritative statement of the leading rules of law on a given subject" (MBR., s.v.). The Vinayapitaka is perhaps not precisely a "systematic collection" or "an orderly and authoritative statement" of laws in terms of these definitions (cf. Sukumar Dutt, Early Buddhist Monachism, First Indian Ed., 1960, pp. 14 ff. and Durga N. Bhagvat, Early Buddhist Jurisprudence, Poona, 1939, p. 20). Yet the Vinaya rules are very much "systematically and scientifically arranged, though their classification may fall short of the modern methods" (Bhagvat, ibid., p. 18). Codification itself is "an advanced form of legislative development, and represents the stage at which all the preceding phases of development are woven into a coherent whole" (v. R.W.M. Dias, Jurisprudence, London, 1970 Ed., p. 443). Unlike many other ancient codes of law, the attempts of the Vinaya at systematic classification of rules have, in very large measure, been successful.

or the Buddhist monastic community,¹⁾ whose members - as they are even today - go to form a coenobitic community, the origins of which in North-East India hark back to the very life-time of the Buddha. The texts of the Vinaya which together with much auxiliary material embody these rules for the "outward conduct"²⁾ of the Buddhist monastic community form part of the Tipitaka - the Pali Canon - consisting of a three-fold division. Miss I.B. Horner, who translated into English the entire Vinaya-Pitaka³⁾ carefully observes this limitation of the Vinaya to "outward morality"⁴⁾. This limitation "to an outward and objective field is amply indicated by the striking absence from it, of any passage stating that the observance of the courses of training 'made known for monks by the Lord' will conduce to the realisation of desirable subjective states"⁵⁾ which are very much emphasized in the Sutta-Pitaka. Theoretically,

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- 1) Cf. FRE., Vol. 8, p. 86; Vin. I, xiii (Introduction by H. Oldenberg); Rhys Davids & Oldenberg, Vinaya Texts, I, SBE. XIII, p. ix; Horner, BD. I, p. vii et passim; Bhagvat, op. cit., p. 43. The inner spiritual development of the Bhikkhu Saṅgha, as in the case of the laymen, belongs more to the sphere of the Dharma. The "external" aspect of Vinaya in general is recognized by Kauṭilya too. y. Arthasastra, I, 5.
 - 2) Vin. I, xiii (Introduction by Oldenberg). Oldenberg adds that the Vinaya cannot deal with purely ethical questions, "except so far as these affect such outward conduct" of the Buddhist monastic community (loc. cit.).
 - 3) Published in the "Sacred Books of the Buddhists" series under the title The Book of the Discipline (in 6 parts), by Luzac & Co. Ltd., 48 Russell St., London, W.C. 1, (1949-66), for the Pali Text Society.
 - 4) Horner, BD. I, ix
 - 5) loc. cit.

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