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Buddhist Attitude towards Deviant Sexual Behavior

A Textual Study Based On *Pali Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas*

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Abstract

We are living in a world, which is attempting to liberalize traditional values in the sphere of sexuality. Sexual practices which are traditionally accepted as nonconforming to social, cultural or other sorts of values and judgments are being questioned and certain groups try to prove that some sexual practices are not deviant. They are inclined to consider them as normal just as much as penile-vaginal sex among adult members. The concept of deviant sexual behavior is a complicated concept because it covers a variety of sexual practices. Within the last two decades, few researches have been attempted to explain the Buddhist scriptural views on sexuality. This increasing trend among scholars caused me an interest to look into the cases and views regarding nonconforming sexual practices mentioned in the Pali suttas and vinaya sources which belong to the Theravada tradition of Buddhism.

In the attempt of looking for the Buddhist attitudes towards deviant sexual behavior, I read the Pali Sutta-vinaya sources and their commentaries while trying to understand and compare their data with the sexological views which cover the subjects such as Psychology, Criminology, Medical Science and Sociology.

In the course of study, it was revealed that determining a sex act to be deviant is very difficult because sexuality is involved in many fields of study and each of these fields approaches it differently. According to the Theravada view, sex within marriage is acceptable and all the other forms of sexual practices are considered as immoral. For the monastic community sex is completely prohibited. Any sexual act violating the norms of chastity and celibacy is an unwholesome deed and therefore leads to rebirth in a bad destination and miscreant has to suffer for a long time in samsaric existence. Therefore, deviant sexuality is perceived as going against the Buddhist path to ultimate liberation of Nibbana. I believe this understanding regarding deviant

sexuality will be conducive to strengthen the moral consciousness about one's sex life and thereby to avoid unpleasant experience and sexual violence in society.

