

## CHAPTER VI

### ORDINARY HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

127. It may be stated that one cannot expect the Vinaya to deal with the subject of sexual relations purely between men and women in lay life. The Vinaya being concerned with monastic discipline, the data we possess regarding all sexual relationships are presented in relation to the lives of certain members of the Buddhist monastic community. And, as for ordinary heterosexual relationships, which, of course, go to form a normal sexual outlet,<sup>1</sup> the Vinaya mentions them amongst sexual offences said to have been perpetrated by a few bhikkhus. As heterosexual relationships are of limited value for this study, such relationships (historical or otherwise) need not attract our attention very much. However, the fact that a few recluses bound by the vows of celibacy are recorded as having been guilty of such relationships is a matter worthy of note, although one should not, as observed earlier (*v. supra*, 64), maintain that the Order was riddled by scandal.

128. At the very outset it has to be stated that the Buddhist monastic attitude towards the weaker sex had been clearly settled during the lifetime of the Master himself. The *Mahāparinibbānasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* summarizes the position: To a question raised by Ānanda as to the attitude the bhikkhus should adopt towards womenfolk, the Buddha admonishes that (in the first instance) women should not be seen at all. If they be seen however, no conversation should ensue. A woman could be a distraction, and this advice is obviously based on the sound psychological principle that, if possible, it is better to stem a current of distraction at its source than to leave room for subsequent repression of impulses which could develop. Nevertheless, if a woman speaks to a bhikkhu, he should be vigilant.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the compliments paid to womanhood in the early Buddhist texts,<sup>3</sup> as far as the religious life (*brahmacariya*) is concerned woman

1. *v. Supra*, p. 89, fn. 3.

2. *Katham mayam bhante mātugāme paṭipajjāmaṃ ti? Adassanāṃ Ānanda ti. Dassane Bhagavā sati katham paṭipajjissābbaṃ? Anālāpo Ānanda ti. Alapantena pana bhante katham paṭipajjissābbaṃ ti? Sati Ānanda upaṭṭhāpetabbā ti* - D.II,141.

3. *Cf. e.g.* - S.I,43 et 86.