

# Review of: "The Centrality of Sexual Abstinence in the Buddha's Teachings"

Paul Van Der Velde<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Radboud University of Nijmegen

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The article surely is interesting. It gives a very complete overview of ideas and quotations from the Pali canonical writings. Some remarks:

The Pali quotations are not always correct. Kāmmachanda is incorrect. It should have one 'm' or a short a and two 'mm', depending on what it is to mean in the sentence. Diacritics are not on all places consistent. I think you intend kāmacchanda here.

To refrain from eroticism is indeed central in the early monastic teachings, the Buddha (supposedly) emphasized it on many occasions. But this theme was already present in Brahmanism/Vedism/Hinduism and Jainism as well. In the abstract it is stated that Buddhism is an exception among the other religions in this matter, but that is maybe a bit too strong now. Others did claim similar ideas. Moreover, this suggested uniqueness of Buddhism is not convincingly brought forward in the rest of the article. The desire for nirvana/moksha/enlightenment/liberation of course is made clear, but this does not make the Buddha or Buddhism unique. Think of early Christianity for instance or Manichaeism. These are later of course than Buddhism.

In this contribution the HOW of the restriction of eroticism is strongly brought forward. How this can be found in the teachings is clear. The exact WHY is less convincing. The why is now in the argument: the Buddha has said so. (or supposedly said so). But that is hardly convincing for an outsider.

The article reflects an insider's perspective. Is this intended? As a whole the article is convincing for a Buddhist believer, but not for an outsider.

The Aggannasutta is quoted. We have to keep in mind that, maybe, the Aggannasutta is a persiflage on Rigveda 10.90. you can find this, maybe, in the introduction to the sermon in this sutta. So maybe it was never intended as a serious subject, but rather to mock the arrogant brahmins. But even though it came to serve as a myth of origin or so. The publications of Richard Gombrich and Johannes Bronkhorst could shed some light here.

That the human situation of man and woman is not natural according to Buddhism may be true, but what is natural then? Is natural good in any way? Samsara is wrong in whatever form according to ancient Buddhism.

It is doubtful whether the Pali canonical writings are indeed the oldest form we have of the Buddhist teachings. There are ancient parts, but definitely also much later additions, redactions and revisions.

Certain particular choices are made in the translations. These choices may invoke unwanted connotations. E.g. 'sugati' as s 'heavenly state', or 'God-like state'. Maybe better: 'a good path', 'good position', 'state of happiness'. This in order to prevent the idea that indeed the world of the gods or something would be involved here. Another example: 'vemattatā' as 'duality'. Duality has particular connotations in Indian philosophy. Why not 'difference', distinction, discrepancy'.