



從佛法看 性別認同根源

性別認同議題席捲東西方社會，
除了從社會、人權等角度來討論，
從佛法來探索性別認同的根源，
將會發現一切都是貪欲在作怪，進而引發苦！

近年來，性別認同（gender identity）的相關議題已成了東西方社會矚目的焦點，各國經過各界長期討論、爭取後，已有國家政府陸續透過立法程序，來保障不同性別認同者的相關權益，以回應社會期待。

今年五月，臺灣立法院通過〈制定司法院釋字第七四八號解釋施行法〉（俗稱〈婚姻平權法〉）後，臺灣成為亞洲第一個以法律保障非異性戀者合法結婚權利的國家。佛教如何看待「性別認同」及其根源？佛法如何提供大眾不同視角的思考，不再受到社會性

別認同的局限而自在？

法鼓文理學院《阿含經》研究小組負責人、精研原始佛教教理的法樂法師（Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā）認為，當代性別理論在探討性別議題時，常用的「性」、「性別認同」、「性別角色」等概念，其實依然有不少爭議，再加上這些分類方式並非原始佛教典籍中既有的概念，因此，以下討論，法師雖沿用這些用語，但不試圖釐清既存的爭議，而是由社會、人權觀點著眼，再逐步深入到法的層次。這兩個角



性別認同是近年東西方探討的熱門議題之一，臺灣是亞洲第一個以法律保障非異性戀者合法結婚權利的國家。
(萬奕辰攝)

度雖有所不同，卻能彼此互補。

佛教倫理的核心關懷

不論對種種身分認同本質是真實或虛幻的討論，在一般社會大眾與團體中，保障自我認同及團體認同的自由，且平等對待，與佛教對尊重、包容、慈悲的教導是一致的；尊重每一個人在因緣、因果的法則之下自我決定的權利，是佛教最基本的倫理觀。

因此，在性倫理的領域中，絕對不會從勝義諦的層次出發，去干涉佛教徒（或任何一個人）的性別認同，因為這種帶有侵犯性，甚至極權主義色彩的立場，與佛教最根本的倫理觀有所牴觸，這一點毫無疑義。

我們常有機會聽到關於無我和空的教導，不過，在沒有詳細闡釋的情況下，很可能帶來困惑，甚至誤以為不該使用「我」或「個

人」之類的字眼。從原始佛教來看，佛陀對無我的觀點並非如此，對於約定俗成的觀念，以及表達方式也不會加以否定。畢竟勝義諦是在世俗諦的基礎上建立的，不了解世俗諦就無法了解勝義諦。

保障身分認同的權利與自由、提倡平等對待弱勢團體，不但能減少個人和團體的苦，同時也能增進相互包容。儘管種種身分、認同的終極本質如幻，這依舊是佛教教義在倫理與社會面向上的核心關懷。

因此，若執於超越或究竟的層次，而從「道德」甚或基本教義派立場出發，宣稱應將身分認同相關權利擱置不論，法樂法師認為，這並不符合佛教的觀點。況且，那些因為性別認同而處於劣勢或遭受歧視的人，未必能夠接受這種觀點，以及這種解構認同的方式。



佛教對性別根源的看法，是基於欲望的性別認同執著，和其他任何一種形式的欲望相同。
(李東陽攝)

其實，保障正義、平等、權利，以及每一個人自我決定的自由，是社會共同的責任。在某些佛教圈中無形存在著一種優越的傲慢，導致有些人在面對其他人真實的生活時，以「更高層次的真實」之名而顯得正義凜然。有時這種傲慢來自制度性或科層結構所賦予的特權，當身處上位者，大聲疾呼回到「究竟」、超越的實相和價值系統，難免流於空泛，對許多因種種原因身處社會低層的人而言，這種方式絲毫無助於滿足他們的需求，以及解決他們的挑戰和困境。

欲望讓人產生性別

在建立起平等包容的環境後，個人和團體將更有機會藉由深入佛教法，理解各自的

認同如何在因緣和合中逐漸形成，而從世俗的層次提升到法的層次。一般所謂的「女性」、「男性」所指為何？又根源於何處？法樂法師從原始佛教解脫道的立場出發，援引了一段有關「繫、離繫」的教導，說明對於「女性」、「男性」的認同是建構在感官欲望之上：

男子內則思惟男根、男行、男衣服、男類、男欲、男聲、男飾，彼於是歡喜，於是喜悅；於是歡喜、喜悅之彼，外則思惟女根、女行、女衣服，女類、女欲、女聲、女飾，彼於是歡喜、喜悅。於是歡喜、喜悅之彼，外則希望偶合。彼偶合故，希望令起所樂、喜之偶合。諸比丘！於男子性喜悅而著，於婦女有繫。諸比丘！如是之男子不征伏男子性。諸比丘！繫者如是。諸比丘！如何為離繫耶？（增支部7集48經）

在這段經文之前，是另一段以女性為主體的經文，內容完全相同。由此可見，佛陀對於男女兩性對各自的性別認同，可說展現了完全的「性別平等」。從上述經文可知，先有了內在對特定性別的認同，以及偶合的欲望後，進而才有與外在另一性別偶合的行

為，偶合的欲望使得男女無法超越各自狹隘的性別認同。

也就是說，「女性」是由與男性偶合的欲望所定義，反之亦然。這個過程呈現出特定的認同如何導致特定的欲望。就某種程度而言，性別的定義並非某個人生理上「是」什麼性別，而是來自於這種欲望，來自於「想」或渴望什麼，而這種欲望又是由匱乏感所形塑——「擁有」後，渴望自己所沒有的；或是渴望擁有特定特質，進而「成為」特定特質。不去關注內在或外在的男根和女根則能離繫，不執著於異性，最終徹底超越個人的性別認同。

看清性別認同建構的根源

儘管這段經文討論的是男女兩性，在同性的性欲上，相同的方法也可以用來解構基於欲望的性別認同執著，和其他任何一種形式的欲望相同，同性間欲望也是建構在狹隘而繫縛的認同感之上。

原始佛教經典中，長部27經《起世因本經》是另外一部與性別認同相關的經典。在這部如寓言般的經典中，佛陀為兩位加入僧團的婆羅門解釋世界的起源，以及現存社會制度的來源，兩性的起源則是與性欲有

關。經文提到，在這個世界形成前，大部分眾生住在光音天，沒有時間、空間的分別，萬物之間渾然一體亦無分別。眾生沒有形體，「於意所成」、「以喜為食」，「自放光明」，彼此間「無男女之別」。而後，地球表面出現了「色具、香具、味具也，恰如有完全之醍醐」的粗重物質，受貪欲驅使的光音天眾生嘗了之後，貪著此「甘美之地味」，復生起更多貪欲，連帶使其他光音天眾生亦生起貪欲，「彼等自放光明漸漸轉薄」，身體愈形粗重，男女兩性的性徵分別出現，目光因此被異性所吸引。這種對異性的關注燃起兩性心中的激情，色身欲火中燒，而行交會。

在這段寓言式的描述中，男女兩性並無任何本體論上的差異，兩性彼此間的交會是貪欲，以及自我認同相互作用的結果。貪欲導致性別出現，以及對自我性別認同提升、渴望異性所顯現的性欲等觀點，與上述增支部經文相互呼應。這段經文平等呈現男女兩性，貪欲則是兩者間的共同點。

最後，法樂法師再次提醒，貪欲和無明是認同建構的根源，且影響認同建構的每一個層次。「苦」——所有痛苦與不滿——的根本則在於貪。



original English interview based on which the foregoing Chinese version was extracted by the editors of *Humanity*

Q. In recent years, identities issues have always been a widely debated topic and many governments have passed laws to affirm identity-related rights. It is true that through the law, the awareness of the public could be raised and those related rights could be better protected. However, it may also, more or less, strengthen one's grasping to those identities, which, according to Buddhism, are not fundamentally real and may be the source of vexation. How should a Buddhist practitioner approach such a seemingly contradictory situation? Especially when one's closely related identity is not being properly acknowledged or valued?

A. I assume here you must be referring to "sexual" and "gender" types of identities?

I will attempt an answer from the point of view of early Buddhist thought. Early Buddhism is my area of academic expertise and also what inspires and informs my own Dharma practice.

I will set aside gender-identity related issues in the Buddhist monastic code. They have their own legal and ethical implications within their own framework. These involve quite some complexity and controversial aspects.

Allow me to also set aside the question whether or how the early Buddhist teachings imply or propose a distinction between "sex", "gender identity" (personal identification of one's own gender based on internal self-awareness) and "gender role" (social roles based on the sex of the person). The definition of these categories is controversial in contemporary theoretical literature on sex, gender and gender roles. These categories are not intrinsic to the framework of the early Buddhist texts.

That being said, I suggest approaching your question from two distinct but complementary perspectives. I would like to start from the social and human rights perspective (from a Buddhist standpoint), and then move on to the Dharma dimension.

As to the first aspect: whatever the final word on the real or else illusory nature of such identities and identifications may be, I think freedom of self- and group-identification and non-discrimination at all levels of the society, including Buddhist communities and institutions, is certainly in line with the Buddhist teachings on respect, tolerance and compassion. So from a Buddhist perspective there is no question of interfering with the gender identity of a Buddhist person (nor of anybody else's) coming from a doctrinal standpoint concerning so-called ultimate reality. Such an intrusive if not openly "totalitarian" position in the field of sexual ethics would be at odds with the very basics of Buddhist ethics, which recognizes a person's right of self-determination – within a network of causes and conditions – that is unquestionable. Well, all too often one hears watered down versions of the teaching of not-self and emptiness to the effect that we should not even use terminology such as "a person", "an individual", etc. From an early Buddhist perspective, this is not what the Buddha's vision of not-self is about, nor did the Buddha take issues with common parlance and conventions.

As I see it, protecting the right and freedom of identity, promoting equity and non-discrimination of any minorities reduces personal and communal suffering and increases inclusion. This is a central concern in Buddhist ethics and social doctrine,

regardless of the ultimately illusory nature of all forms of identity and self- or other identification.

Thus, it seems to me, a “moralistic” if not fundamentalist approach that declares that such identity rights are to be set aside in the name of a transcendent or ultimate level of analysis would be at odds with a Buddhist perspective. Moreover, such ideas and deconstruction of identities may or may not be freely embraced by those who actually suffer from any form of disadvantage or discrimination on account of their gender or sex identity. In fact, it is the collective responsibility of our societies to protect the rights and freedom of self-determination of everyone, justice and equity. I think there is a superiority conceit in certain Buddhist circles which leads some of us to become righteous concerning the actual lived lives of others in the name of “higher truths”. At times this form of conceit comes with positions of institutional and hierarchical privilege. Too often the appeal to “ultimate” and transcendent realities and value systems can turn into a rhetoric that fails to address the needs, the challenges and the difficulties faced by those who find themselves in socially subordinate positions for whatever reasons.

To the second aspect: once ease, inclusion and equity are in place, it becomes easier for each and every individual – privately, communally – to understand gender or sex identity “constructs” for what they are, in the light of the Buddhist teachings on conditionality and construction of the self, if they so wish.

Looking more closely at early Buddhist ideas of womanhood or femininity and malehood or masculinity, what can be considered the normative early Buddhist position on sexual identity in relation to the path to liberation is poignantly articulated in a discourse in the Aṅguttara-nikāya collection of early Buddhist discourses. This is introduced as a

“teaching on union and disengagement”. Identification with both femininity and masculinity are seen as constructed on the basis of sensual lust:

“A male gives attention internally to the faculty of masculinity, to masculine behaviour, masculine manners, masculine ways, masculine desire, masculine voice and masculine adornments. He becomes impassioned with them and delights therein. Being impassioned with them and delighting therein, he gives attention externally to the faculty of femininity, to feminine behaviour, feminine manners, feminine ways, feminine desire, feminine voice and feminine adornments. He becomes impassioned with them and delights therein. Being impassioned with them and delighting therein he longs for union externally and he longs for the happiness and pleasantness that arise because of such union. Living beings who delight in masculinity go into union with females ... in this way a male does not transcend masculinity.” (AN 7.48)

The same is repeated verbatim for a female, who identifies with her sense of femininity within, all the way up to seeking union with masculinity outside. Thus there is perfect ‘gender equality’ in this respect.

In this way, external union is preceded by internal identification and union, so that yearning for sexual union prevents females or males from transcending the narrow confines of their respective sense of identity.

That is, femininity is defined by the desire for union with the masculine and vice versa, showing how particular identification precedes and leads to particular desire. To some extent, the definition comes from that desire, not from what a person “is” but from what they “want” or crave for, and desire is in turn shaped by the sense of lack – desiring the opposite of what one “has” or wishes to possess and thereby “is”. Disengagement comes about by not giving attention to the relevant faculties internally or externally, and culminates in becoming detached from the opposite sex and in transcending one’s sexual identity altogether.

Although the text is framed in terms of males and females, this deconstruction of grasping sexual identity based on desire could also be applied to the case of same-sex sensual desires. Just as any other form of desire, same-sex desire is based on a limited and constraining sense of identity.

Another relevant early Buddhist discourse is an explanation of the “genesis”, as it were, of sexual identification as intimately related to the influence of lust found in a parable in the ‘Discourse on knowing the beginning’ (Aggañña-sutta) of the Dīgha-nikāya (and its various Chinese and Tibetan parallels). This is an allegorical discourse on the origins of the existing social order given by the Buddha to two Brahmins who had gone forth as Buddhist monks. The allegory unfolds by way of a progressive fall from a Golden Age of undifferentiated matter, space and time, devoid of any perception of embodiment. No male or female were known, and self-luminous, bodiless and sexless beings were reckoned just “beings”. They fed on delight. With the passing of time, a substance appeared on the surface of the recently formed earth and a greedy being tasted it, liked it and developed craving for it. Other beings similarly developed craving. As the beings kept partaking of the substance, their self-

luminosity disappeared. The more they continued to eat the increasingly coarse substances that would manifest on the earth, the coarser their bodies became, and further differences in their appearance emerged. Eventually, this process of gradual embodiment culminated in the appearance of the sexual organs. In the female appeared the organ (or mark) of the female, in the male that of the male. Women began to look too closely at men, and men at women. Owing to this preoccupation with each other, passion was aroused, and their bodies began to burn with lust. Later, because of this burning, they indulged in sexual intercourse.

This allegorical depiction of the way in which the sexes come to be differentiated implies no ontological difference between the sexes. The pairing in two distinct sexes is the end result of a crescendo of impulses of craving and a process of self-identification, with no notion of femalehood (or malehood) presented in essentialist terms. The appearance of the sexes seen as a result of craving, and the increasing identification with one’s own sex and desire for the other seen as an expression of lust, resonate well with the Buddha’s teaching on the nature of femininity and masculinity in the Aṅguttara-nikāya discourse I mentioned above. Here the female and the male sex stand on a par in their representation. The common denominator to both is craving.

I would like to conclude on this note: craving and ignorance are at the root of identity building, at all levels. And craving is the root of all suffering and unsatisfactoriness – dukkha in Pali, duḥkha in Sanskrit, kǔ 苦 in Chinese, bsdug sngal in Tibetan.