

Research Title: An Analytical Study of Deva's Role in Suttantapitaka

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to study the status and roles of Deva including the attitude towards Deva, and to compare the attitude towards Deva expressed by the ecclesiastical administrative monks and lay people in Ubonratchathani province. This research was carried out by means of the documentary research mainly based on Suttantapitaka and the field research by using on the questionnaires given to 100 administrative monks and 200 lay followers from monasteries of the administrative monks.

For the documentary research, it is found that 'Deva' refers to those worshipped by humans. There are three kinds of the Deva: (1) gods by convention, i.e. the king and his royal family members, (2) gods by spontaneous birth on a heaven because of good deeds, and (3) gods by purification such as the Buddha and the noble disciples. This research mainly focused on the gods in the six sensual heavens, i.e. Catumaharajika, Tavatimsa, Yama, Tusita, Nimmanarati, and Paranimmitavasavatti. One was born as a Deva through good deeds, especially bodily, verbal and mental good conducts and dana giving. A Deva possesses four qualities, i.e. long livelihood, splendid beauty, divine sensual happiness, and supernatural power. Gods in the six sensual heavens play a major role with humans both in positive and negative roles.

Gods played a positive role by keeping their eyes over a good man and rendering a due help. They paid a visit to the Buddha and noble disciples as to listen to their teachings and as to ask questions. Gods who play a negative role usually appeared in form of 'Mara', an evil one, as to obstruct or disturb a man while doing good deeds. However, they could not cheat or control those whose minds are still such as the Buddha and noble disciples under their power.

A man should bear the right practices on Devas by means of (1) dedication of merits, (2) reflection on deifying virtues, (3) transference of loving-kindness, and (4) invitation of gods to do good together such as listening to the Dhamma.

For the field research, it revealed that most of the administrative monks have a right understanding and attitude towards the Deva, though there are some wrong views, for example, they regard the Deva as one of higher position than humans. But this is not applicable for Deva's intelligence, since gods visited and sought advice from the Buddha. Some administrative monks also believed that while chanting, they invited the Devas as to come and protect people. In fact, the chanting of inviting the Devas is only for welcoming them to listening the Buddha's teachings. For the lay followers, they comparatively have less right understanding than the administrative monks. For example, 76% of the respondents believed that the Deva is of a higher position than the human. And 65% of the respondents believed that it is not right for paying respects to the natural resources such as a huge tree, mountain, and river. In fact, the Buddha prescribed paying respects to those natural resources since a Deva might be therein. Since the administrative monks have more good chances to study the Buddhist texts and take actions in propagation of the doctrine to people, they advance the lay followers for their right understanding and attitude towards the Deva.