

**An Analysis of Religio-Philosophical Views of
Divine Beings (Devā) as Reflected in Pāli
Nikāyas and Commentaries**

By

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Abstract

The devas in Buddhism are believed to be elevated, luminous and blissful Beings that dwell in divine realms who hold righteous or unwholesome views about human welfare and emancipation. Accordingly, this dissertation examines the religio-philosophical views of the divine Beings (devā) as reflected in the Pāli Nikāyas and commentaries. The Buddha used the devas functionally for a two way didactic process. First, to confute the traditional religious views and second, to introduce the new path of deliverance discovered by him.

By this dual process the Buddha refuted the traditional views such as *sāsvatavāda*, *issaramimmānavāda* and the mythology of Mahā Brahmā and inducted a new set of Brahmas symbolically to explicate the doctrine of the Buddha which centres on the eightfold noble path.

In this research I use the qualitative method of textual analysis of the Pāli canon and the related commentaries for the search of data and to arrive at logical inferences. It needs to be emphasised that essential care was taken to adopt an objective view on the subject of research restraining the religious leanings of the investigator.

The background of this dissertation traces the inherited evidence of devā worship from the antiquity of Harappan, Vedic and Vedantic traditions and their assimilatory and transformative changes in Buddhist cosmology. In this study the views of devas are appraised as tools in a two way process of refutation of fallacious ideas and to introduce right views realised by empirical means.

On the above basis the research study pursues to derive the teaching devices and methods used by the Buddha for a dual purpose of affirmation and negation. Consequently, the contributions of the research emanate from the findings derived from (i) The methods used to refute the traditional wrong beliefs and (ii) The methods used to disseminate the doctrine of the Buddha. Most of these methods applied include devices such as the use of super normal powers of the Buddha, literary techniques and logical reasoning.