

**A Comparative Study of the Concept and Practice of
Pūjā in Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism**

By

Rev. Shi Xinguang

Registration No: 2110

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Abstract

The present research was undertaken as a comparative study of the Concept and practice of Pūjā in Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism. It was carried out under five chapters and conclusion as the last. The main objective of this research was to clarify the theoretical and practical aspects of Pūjā in Mahāyāna and Theravāda not only related to the ancient literature but also to the living traditions in the modern world. Attention was paid to the other religious traditions in the world so as to treat our subject in a wider context.

The first chapter was devoted to define and interpret the term Pūjā in its usage in various contexts as devotion, honour, homage, respect, veneration and observances. The acts of offering (Pūjā) in Buddhist traditions are not limited to the Triple Gem but to a large number of related aspects of the society such as heaven, natural objects, ancestors, deities, fire, relics and Bodhisattvas. This wider usage of Pūjas has been explained in the second chapter in order to clarify the wider usage of the term Pūjā in Buddhist traditions. Various Pūjas explained in the fore-going two chapters have been classified in the third chapter in two ways. First according to the number of types of Pūjas and secondly according to the items used in the Pūjas. The most important aspect of this research is to elucidate the relationship between Pūjas and the Buddhist ethical path leading to the realization of Nibbāṇa. This has been uncovered in the fourth chapter. In order to treat the subject in a wider context the fifth chapter was devoted to a general discussion on the geographical and inter-religious variations of Pūjā. In the conclusion we have not taken an attempt to summarize all the chapters but to elucidate simply the main similarities and differences of Pūjā in Mahāyāna and Theravāda as this was a comparative study related to those two traditions.