Thesis Title: The Concept of Nat-worship Among Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar

Researcher: U Nandacara

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Veerachart Nimannog

Abstract

This research is an examination of the concept of Nat-worship among Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar. Myanmar is predominantly a Buddhist country, but Nat-worship still exists in Myanmar and some Buddhists are more or less connected with Nat-worship. The Nat-worshipers vary in number according to the current situations on which they are facing. If they are fine, the number of Nat-worshipers stands in the same points or becomes less. If they are in difficult situations, the number of Nat-worshipers becomes increasing. This research analyzes the concept of Nats which consist of Local Nats (Myanmar-born Nats) and Devas from Buddhist texts in accordance with Burmese literatures, the way of practice in Burmese Theravada society, and the appearance of Devas in Tipitaka and its commentaries. This includes types of local Nats, Devas, their conceptions, and proper ways to deal with them. This research also examines how much Nat-believers understand and devote to their Nats, Nat-worship, rituals and ways of worship. Finally the research discusses and evaluates the accommodation of Nat-worship in Buddhism, the impact of Nat-worship on Burmese Buddhist society in negative and positive ways, and the impact of Buddhist thoughts on local Nat-worship as well.