

The purpose of the thesis is to conduct a study and make an analysis of the life and role of Mara (the Tempter) in the Pali Canon of the Theravada Buddhism (the Southern School of Buddhism) and the conditions which are required of him for his chance of attaining the enlightenment.

It is found in the study that Mara belongs to a class of divine beings residing in Paranimmitavasavatti Devaloka (the sixth heaven of which Paranimmita reigns as king). He is characterised by strong jealousy and absence of good will towards others. He thus always prevents others from performing good deeds. He in particular harassed the Buddha from the time of his renunciation of the world and adopting ascetic practice, up to the time of the Buddha's Parinirvana (the final release from the cycle of rebirths).

His most prominent role in this case was when he led the army of demons to drive away Prince Siddhattha from his seat under the Bodhi tree, a feat which symbolizes the eternal struggle between Dhamma (virtue) and Adhamma (evil), in the same time demonstrating that virtue prevails over evil.

It is possible, however, that Mara could attain Buddhahood in the future, only if he could completely give up the Wrong View, and while being born a normal and un-deformed human being, he had to make a determination to attain enlightenment. He then had to build up a strenuous effort towards this goal until a Buddha would acknowledge his Right View and his store of merits as being sufficient for becoming a Bodhisattva. That Buddha would then utter a prophecy for his future attainment. After the formal prophecy of that Buddha, Mara could then proceed along the path to attain enlightenment in the first place and become finally a Buddha in the future.

It is suggested that a similar study of the Role of Mara in Mahayana Buddhism be undertaken to complement the present study.