

ABSTRACT

THESIS : Factors Affecting the Reverence of Buddhist Votive Tablets
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The study of the factors affecting the reverence of Buddhist votive tablets was conducted to find out the nature, mind and experience of the Buddhist, including the Buddhist votive tablet possession of those who sought them for their own reverence by whatever method or for whatever purpose. The data were collected from the sources where Buddhist votive tablets were available for sale, i.e., Buddhist votive tablet clubs or monasteries where there were such tablets for sale.

The total samples were 205. Many of them (34.1%) aged 26-35. Males accounted for 89.3% and females 10.7% of the sample group. Around 44.9% had a Bachelor's degree. Around 40.5% worked for the government or for state enterprises. Many (30.7%) had an income of more than 16,000 baht a month. They could be classified into four groups. The first group (40%) sought Buddhist votive tablets for reverence because they were fascinated by the history of a particular Buddhist votive tablet. The second group (16.6%) believed in the magic power of a particular Buddhist votive tablet. The third group (27.3%) owned Buddhist votive tablets in commemoration of Lord Buddha. The last group (16.1%) had a speculative purpose, for they thought that they would buy Buddhist votive tablets to sell them at higher prices in the future.

The research results revealed that the proportion of those who truly believed and followed the Buddhist teachings was still low. Most people sought the tablets because they believed in the magic power of a particular Buddhist votive tablet. Only those who had them in commemoration of Lord Buddha were found to truly believe in and to faithfully follow the Buddhist teachings. When the mind was considered, it was found that those who believed in the magic power of a particular Buddhist votive tablets could not control themselves well and had low self-confidence. On the contrary, those who were fascinated by the history of a particular Buddhist votive tablet and those who owned Buddhist votive tablets in commemoration of Lord Buddha tended to have a better control of themselves and to have high self-confidence. The scores of the "mind" factors of both groups were found to be nearly the same (at a moderate and a high level). Those who had a lot of experience in Buddhism or who participated in Buddhist activities were found to have Buddhist votive tablets in commemoration of Lord Buddha. In contrast, those who hoped to sell them at higher price in the future had little experience in Buddhist activities. When the nature of possession was considered, it was found that all groups liked to give or take Buddhist votive tablets free of charge. Only in the Buddhist votive tablets market was there selling and buying. Most customers were speculative. The speculative group outnumbered the other groups in buying Buddhist votive tablets from the market. Powdery Buddhist votive tablets were the most popular in all the groups. The speculative group preferred Buddhist votive tablets that, they believed, could make them popular or charming, whereas those who believed in magic power preferred Buddhist votive tablets which they believed to protect them from dangers.

As the chance to participate in religious activities and to learn the Buddhist teachings was becoming less and less, many people did not deeply

understand the Buddhist principles , which focused on encouraging people to use their own intellectual to find reasons behind what happened. As a result , they could not keep their minds in peace and lacked confidence. They searched for something to cling on , as could be seen from the group who believed in the magic power of Buddhist votive tablets. Also , the lack of understanding of Buddhist teaching made a speculative group regard Buddhist votive tablets as goods.

In fact , Buddhist votive tablets represent Lord Buddha and His teachings , but many people do not truly realize this. They believe and perform differently from what the religion teaches. The study clearly shows that those who have Buddhist votive tablets in commemoration of Lord Buddha are smaller in number than those who are fascinated by the history of a particular Buddhist votive tablets for future sale.

Related people or agencies should pay more attention to religions activities. They should persuade people to join them and instill the Buddhist teaching in the minds of the younger generation so as to enable them to have peace in minds and to live happily in the society.