
OF GODS AND DEMONS

(By Bhikkhu Dhammānanda)



*It is in the mind's thought
Where earth's fate is wrought
In the war between light and dark
There seek to understand each side's mark
Where gods and demons seek become the lord
There wisely you should choose to where resort
And from whom you seek to gain your due reward*

There are five gods or devas, who live in heaven, but occasionally come down to earth to wage a war with their dark counterparts. The first one of those devas is called 'Inspiration', 'Effort' is named

the second one. The third goes by title 'Clarity'. The fourth aptly called 'Unity'. While 'Wisdom' betitled is the last .¹

These five devas, always engage in a war with five demons, who are called 'Greed'²; 'Ill-will'; 'Lethargy', or 'Laziness'; 'Confusion'; and 'Restlessness'.

Ordinarily the devas and the demons are in a perpetual war with each other. And whenever the devas win, life becomes joyful, filled with beauty, and full of subtle and lofty things. But whenever the demons win, life becomes troublesome, difficult and full of undesirable and hideous things.

Now a demon can not attack heaven directly, he has to fight on earth and use the weapons of earth. Hence the demons have made four magical weapons each from a different element of earth. The first of which is called 'coarseness', it is made from the earth element proper. Their second weapon is called 'diluteness' or 'lack of clarity', it is made from the water element. The third weapon is called 'unrestrained fire', it is made up of the fire element. While the fourth weapon is called 'unguided activity'. This is made up of the wind or air element.

The devas too posses four weapons, each made by refining one of the elements. The first of which is called 'light'. This they once extracted from the element of fire. The second is called 'clear seeing'. They made this by purifying the water element. The third

¹ These are my translations of the five Buddhist Spiritual faculties saddhā, vīriya, sati, samādhi and pañña. Usually they are translated as "Faith", "Effort", "Mindfulness", "Concentration/Collectedness" and "Wisdom".

² or sense-desire

weapon is called 'strength'. This was made by refining the earth. While their fourth weapon is called 'subtleness'. This they acquired by taming the wind.

These, then, are the weapons of the gods and the demons, and the war they wage is the eternal struggle between good and evil in this world. The outcome of this war holds profound relevance for us all, as it is our own lives that hang in the balance.

Now, each of us in fact is a battlefield between these gods and those demons. Nay, each of us sometimes is of the gods and sometimes of the demons and sometimes indeed is the battlefield and the war itself.

Hence, I implore you, dear friends: Be vigilant when you recognize the weapons of the demons on your battlefield. In such moments, negligence is your greatest foe. Instead, ardently seek the aid of the divine weapons—light, clear seeing, strength, and subtleness