May’s lesson is complex and long, so it is being offered early for those who have completed April’s:

The Buddha’s teachings on devas, brahmas and other “shining ones,” the 31 planes of existence and the effects of jhana on rebirth linkage should be known.

The view was held at the Buddha’s time of Brahmā as the creator of the universe and of union with Brahmā as the highest good, only to be attained by prayers and sacrifices. This is much like a current view of Allah or Jehovah. But the Buddha himself did not hold this view amid does not speak of any single Brahmā as the highest being in all creation. He does, however, validate their existence and the beneficial role of cultivating faith, cultivating relationship with and cultivating qualities of their comparable character for happiness, peace, compassionate power and protection.

“One who wants to develop the recollection of deities should possess the special quality of faith evoked by means of the noble path. He should go into solitary retreat and recollect his own special qualities of faith, purity and understanding, with the deities as if standing as witnesses, in this very way: There are deities on the plane of the Four Great Kings, of the Realm of the Thirty-three, Yama World, the Contented Devas, those enjoying own creation, those with power over others creations, those of the Brahma world, and those formless ones far above them...

All those deities were possessed of faith so that on dying here they were reborn there, and such faith is present in me too. And those deities were possessed of virtue ... of learning... of generosity ... of understanding, such that when they died here they were reborn there in a divine dimension, and such understanding is also present in me too! (AN III 287). He recollects his own special qualities, making the deities stand as witnesses. When a Bhikkhu is devoted to this remembrance of the deities, he becomes dearly loved by those deities. He obtains even greater fullness of faith. He has much happiness and gladness. And if he penetrates no higher, he is at least headed for a happy destiny.”

While the ultimate goal is Nibbana, this is certainly a living experience praised -- not denounced -- by the Buddha. In fact, he professed to know them directly and spent a lot of his time in fellowship with them. We can, too as we cultivate similar divine qualities.
This study may be difficult for some, validating for others, and liberating for a few of you. Below are the links to study this month with additional links to follow on the topics. There are many other references available on the internet.

**STUDY**

Main study (78 pages) [http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/allexistence.pdf](http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/allexistence.pdf)

Please note pages 75-78 particularly to see the correlation of jhana practice to rebirth linking!

[http://what-buddha-said.net/drops/Rebirth.htm](http://what-buddha-said.net/drops/Rebirth.htm) -- various references

[http://what-buddha-said.net/library/DPPN/wtb/b_f/deva.htm](http://what-buddha-said.net/library/DPPN/wtb/b_f/deva.htm) - list of classes of heavenly beings

**ASSIGNMENT**

You are asked to share your personal thoughts after considering this study (for those of you for whom it is just that – a study.) For some, this study is an actuality! How does it “bump” against your previous spiritual practices in other lineages or belief systems? Does it cause you to outright reject, re-evaluate, re-kindle or refine any previous views and/or practices?

**PLEASE COMPLETE AN ESSAY ON YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THIS – DO NOT REGURGITATE THE TEACHINGS. THERE IS NO PARTICULAR PRACTICE THAT IS EXPECTED OR Demanded OF YOU. THIS IS JUST FOR YOUR EDIFICATION AND TO ASSIST YOU IN RESPECTING AND NOT DISCOURAGING OTHERS WHO, THROUGH FAITH, WALK THIS PATH OR TO ALLOW YOU TO FREELY EXPLORE THE FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH AND SURPASS THE BOUNDARIES OF THE HUMAN HEART.**