

Theology - by Ven Dr M. Punnaji Maha Thera

WHAT IS THEOLOGY

- Theology is the study of god;
- Some writers on Buddhism have stated that there is no theology in Buddhism;
- They say that Buddhism is atheistic, but this is not true.

MEANING OF "GOD"

There are three meanings of the term "god" (deva) in Buddhism;

- Sammuti deva = "god" by convention
- Uppatti deva = "god" by birth
- Visuddhi deva = "god" by purity of mind

GOD BY CONVENTION

This is when the term god is used to refer to natural phenomena, such as god of love, god of war, god of health, sun god, moon god, thunder god, lightening god, rain god, etc.

- This is the kind of god we find in polytheism;
- Conventional god is only a matter of belief, but it is taken seriously because it provides the essential feeling of security.

GOD BY BIRTH

- This use of the term "god" refers to the inhabitants of Heaven;
- In the monotheistic religions such gods are called Angels;
- In Buddhism these are the inhabitants of the Sensual Heavenly Realm (*kāma loka*), Imagery Heavenly Realm (*rūpa loka*), and Imageless Heavenly Realm (*arūpa loka*).

SENSUAL HEAVENLY REALM (Kāma loka)

The 6 classes of heavenly beings of the Sensual Heavenly Realm (*Kāma loka*):

1. *Cātumahārājika-deva*;
2. *Tāvatisa*;
3. *Yāma*;
4. *Tusita (s. Bodhisatta)*;
5. *Nimmāna-rati*;
6. *Paranimmita-vasavatti*.

IMAGERY HEAVENLY REALM (Rūpa loka)

The 4 classes of heavenly beings of the Imagery Heavenly Realm (*Rūpa loka*):

1. *Brahma-pārisajja, Brahma-purohita, Mahā-brahmāno (s. brahma-kāyika-deva)*;
2. *Parittābha, Appamānābha, Ābhassara*;
3. *Paritta-subha, Appamāna-subha, Subha-kinna (or kinha)*;
4. *Vehapphala, Asañña-satta, Suddhāvāsa*.

IMAGELESS HEAVENLY REALM (Arūpa loka)

The 4 classes of heavenly beings of the Imageless Heavenly Realm (***Arūpa loka***):

1. Heavenly beings of the Realm of Infinite Space (*Ākāśānañcāyatanūpaga-deva*);
2. Heavenly beings of the Realm of Infinite Perception (*Viññāṇañcāyatanūpaga-deva*);
3. Heavenly beings of the Realm of Nothingness (*Ākiñcaññāyatanūpaga-deva*);
4. Heavenly beings of the Realm of Neither Sensation Nor No Sensation (*Nevasaññā nāsaññā yatanūpaga-deva*).

GOD BY PURITY OF MIND

- This is when god is seen as the perfect being with a pure mind;
- In monotheistic religion this is the Creator of the world;
- In Buddhism, this is the Buddha and his perfected disciples;
- This is when god becomes God with the capital "G".
- This is also when man becomes God through union with God.

HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF GOD

1. For primitive man there was no image of God. God was only a supernatural power;
2. It was only in ancestral worship that God appeared as a human form of an old man with a beard;
3. When morality entered religion, God was a judge who punishes the evil and rewards the good;
4. With this comes Heaven and Hell;
5. When religion became mystical, God became an infinite substance that pervaded the universe, which was ineffable, transcendental and immanent;
6. God at this stage is mysterious and cannot be described;
7. God can only be experienced through meditative experiences;
8. When religion evolves to the highest level, which is the level of enlightenment, God is seen as merely a human concept, the ideal of perfection that human beings struggle to realize through the practice of religion;
9. By now, God is not seen as the Creator or first cause. God is rather the destroyer of the delusion of "world" and "self";
10. At this stage, religion becomes humanistic and god is defined in humanistic terms.

ANTHROPOTHEISM

- Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic. It is rather humanistic with a humanistic definition of religion. This humanistic definition of God is best described as "**anthropotheism.**"
- Here God is defined as the human ideal of perfection that man conceives and struggles to realize through the practice of religion.
- Buddhism asserts that all human beings have the potential to realize this ideal.
- When this potential is actualized "man becomes God" (***Brahma bhuto***).

HARMONIOUS AWAKENING

- This realization is called awakening from the dream of existence or **Harmonious Awakening** (***sammā-sambodhi***)
- This is exemplified by the **Buddha**, the Harmoniously Awakened One.

HONOUR TO HIM, THE HARMONIOUSLY AWAKENED ONE!

