

The Concept of God and Divine Creation in Brahmanism

i. The Concept of God in Theistic Religions

The concept of a creator god is accepted in every theistic religion. The God is the main cause or principle for theism. And he is also the truth of the world and every phenomenon. The most important teaching of theism is to accept the God as the creator (*issaro*) without any question. There is nothing in this world beyond his power and everything is under his creation. The God has limitless power and he is the Supreme Being. He has been attributed certain supreme qualities such as omnipotent (*sarvabaladhārī*), omniscient (*sarvajña*), omnipresent (*sarvavyāpī*), and omnibenevolence or all in good (*sarvatobhadra*). The real nature of God is inexpressible and he is out of all verbal designations. According to Vedic teaching the real nature of Brahman is cannot be explained through language. The *Puruṣa Sūkta* elaborates the incomparable

superior quality and mighty power of Prajāpatī or Brahman as follows.

The cosmic person is endowed with countless heads, countless hands and countless feet. Heads, hands and feet of all creatures are His. He pervades the entire macrocosm through and transcends it. The whole universe visible and invisible is his body. He is the Past and Future. He is the Controller of the gods and goddesses. This phenomenon is not his ultimate form, as He has left His real nature and became this for the enjoyment of the creatures. All this is His glory. But he is infinitely greater than His glory. All beings existing in the three divisions of time are his one quarter and his remaining three quarters are untouched by creation. Three quarters of

His being are above, beyond time, space
and causation.¹

The above elaboration is very interesting and it emphasizes how the creator God looks like. Though this explanation belongs to the Hinduism, still we can apply those features to creator God in any other religion such as Christianity and Islam. The God is father of everyone and everything. Since, Christianity and Islam are post-Buddhistic religions, the early Buddhist critique of God and divine creation is mainly target Hindu divinity.

The Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world. But we are not sure in which particular period the concept of a created God was come into being. But it is very clear that how this idea was gradually developed in Hinduism. There cannot be found specific evidence to prove that whether the Indus Valley people believe in a creator god or not. But based on some muni like miniature figures

¹ Dr.Asha Kumari, Hinduism and Buddhism, p.10

found among corpus of archaeological artifacts, some affirm that it could be primitive stage of the concept of Hindu god Śiva. However, Vedic literature shows how the concept of a divine Creator was gradually developed from animism to polytheism and from polytheism to monotheism, the one God, who is known as Brahmā.

ii. Buddhist Critique on Creator God

Buddhism does not accept any god or godhead as a creator of this world. The Buddhist view is that to believe in a creator god is a kind of wrong belief (*ditṭhi* or *micchāditṭhi*). Therefore, it is crystal clear that Buddhism does not support any theistic belief. Because of this standpoint, some people wrongly accuse the Buddha as an atheist who advocated atheism. Obviously, this is a misinterpretation of the Buddha's teaching. As we know atheism means more like accepting nihilism, which is the teaching of materialists. Buddhism categorically rejects materialism and nihilism because materialists do not believe in kamma and rebirth but

Buddhism does believe in saṃsāric life, kamma, and rebirth. Therefore, Buddhism cannot be considered as an atheistic religion. However, one may consider Buddhism as an atheistic teaching with relation to its rational thought which advocates the importance of man's freewill instead depending on a supernatural power or God. But the problem is theists call it atheistic in the sense of disparaging Buddhism rather showing its standpoint. Nyanaponika Thera says: "The word 'atheism' however, frequently carries a number of disparaging overtones or implications, which in no way apply to the Buddha's teaching". However, it is better to avoid of using this inappropriate term 'atheism' to represent Buddhist teaching because Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic and it is also far from the annihilistic teachings.

Buddhism rejects the theological proofs of the existence of God because it is illogical and disprovable. Buddhism argues that there is no evidence to prove a personal God

or impersonal Godhead. Because of overwhelmed and uncontrolled emotions people trust in God and such powers. The Buddha mentioned that many people go for refuge under mountains, deep forests, particular places, huge trees, cetiyas etc. because of fear and terror. For an earnest believer, all those places and items are powerful and blessed. In the same way, for a God's believer, the God is very close to him, lovable to him and also his fate is decided by the God. Therefore, he is ready to accept everything as God's will and he thanks for the God for deciding his fate. But Buddhism does not accept things happen with the will of God but due to causes and conditions and in some cases due to the law of karma.

According to the Buddha, the idea of creator God is created by human being with a partial knowledge of the reality. The *Aggañña Sutta* explains that a brahma who departed from the brahma world, born in the human world and renunciated the world and practiced meditation where he attained the knowledge of

retrocognition. Then he could able to read his past life experience as a brahma and wrongly came to a conclusion that there is a great brahma who is immortal and the lord of brahmas, the creator of beings and so on. He is named as Mahābrahma, the creator of the world. This story shows us how people created the idea of God.

Another thing is people largely tend to believe that there are beings who are higher and superior than them and those particular beings have magnificent power to control the universe. As we discussed before, animism, polytheism, henotheism, and monotheism are the results of the anxious thinking of human beings about the universe. However, Buddhism also accepts gods but as different kinds of beings. They are also kinds of inhabitants of this universe and fellow-wanderers in the round of existence or saṃsāra. There are different types of world systems in which different types of beings are living with different types of consciousness. They too subject to impermanence, suffering and no-self and go

from one life to another due to karmic force. But beside gods and men, there is no superior God who controls us. Gunapala Dharmasiri rightly says: “Without knowing the possibility of limitations upon God’s power how one can put in absolute and unconditional faith in the salvific power of God?

The Buddha questioned the existence of the God from the theistic followers or Brahmins. In the several suttas such as the *Cūlasakuludāi Sutta*, the *Tevijja Sutta*, and the *Sandaka Sutta*, the Buddha has criticized blind faith. Those who believe in God have never seen him but they claim about the existence of God. They are like a file of blind men who see nothing. Therefore, hearsay or *anussava* is not a criterion to judge the existence of the God. In the *Cūlasakuludāi Sutta*, the Buddha shows a simile about the blind faith. A young man says that he is in love with most beautiful girl in the country. Then people come to him and ask: “Good man, do you know that the girl with whom you fall in love is from Brahmin,

Kṣatrīya, Vaiśya or Śūdra caste?” He answers “no Sire”. Then they ask: “Do you know her name and clan or whether she is beautiful, fair or dark, and tall, short or middle or you have ever seen her?” Again he answers “no Sire”. Finally, the Buddha said that this kind of blind belief is nonsense.

Rejecting the concept of a creator God, Buddhism gives very important place for human will and effort to succeed in one’s life. In the ‘section of heedfulness’ (*appamādavagga*) of the Dhammapada, the Buddha further advised as follows. “The glory of him steadily increases, of the one who is energetic, mindful, pure in conduct, discerning, self-controlled, right-living and heedful”. Without believing in any creator God one can be successful in his life if he practices aforementioned qualities. It is not the God who helps him but only his rightful thought and actions.