

## *Is Buddha the Creator of the Universe?*

Is Buddha the creator of this world? Monotheistic believers seem to think that everything in the universe including our physical bodies is created by God. Therefore, God is the creator of the universe. The basis of the statement above is from the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. It mentioned how this monotheistic God created this world. Let us look at what this chapter said.

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ So, God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, ‘Let the

earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’ And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good...And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness...’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Since ancient times many wise people have doubted this theory. Not only does this kind of theory contain a lot of mistakes, it will not pass scientific verification. Based on findings from academic research, we can agree that the origin of monotheism began under deep and immense influence from ancient cultures that originated in Persia and India.

In traditional Indian culture, all civilization originated from the Vedas, the basic scriptures of Hinduism in India composed between 2000 and 500 B.C. Within the Vedas, the most ancient scripture, called Rigveda, is a collection of Indian religious hymns. In the scripture, the origin of the universe is described: “There is the Creator. He creates this world.” The Vedas also considered the following: “In fact, there is an

omnipotent god who creates everything, and the water element is the primary and earliest substance that formed this world. Before the formation of the universe, it is an embryo-like matter being nurtured in water. After the end of pregnancy, the embryo becomes mature. The fetus, 'universe', is born from the mother body, the 'original water'. Then the three realms including 'sky, ground, and space' are magically created.”

When it comes to the notion of “mental consciousness”, people would believe that the consciousness of the creator is different from that of human beings. The mental consciousness of the creator can reach everywhere in the universe without extinction or being born. The conscious mind of living beings, on the contrary, will be born and be extinguished. Although he has created all matter and all living beings, the creator himself is not actually created. Since he is not created, he would be indestructible. Because his essence is not created, he is capable of producing everything. The above are all related theories of the creator known to the average person.

But how do Buddhists look at the question about “the creator” in Buddhism? How would they interpret what is the origin of the universe? Let us look at the following questions first. What is the world? What is the universe? There is a statement often mentioned in the Buddhist community: “Sentient beings transmigrate in the three realms.” The so-

called universe is composed of the three realms: the desire realm, form realm and formless realm.

Sentient beings of the desire realm indulge heavily in desire or lust in order to nourish their lives including the desires for food, lust, and sleep, and this is the reason why it is called the desire realm. The desire realm is comprised of hell, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, humans and the six desire heavens.

The level above the desire realm is the form realm. The form realm is positioned above the desire realm. Sentient beings wanting to leave the desire realm need to get rid of the five desires, practice meditative absorption, and attain *dhyāna* first to dwell comfortably in the form realm. In the form realm, the sentient beings use meditative joy as their food while utilizing mental capacity to communicate. The materials they require will be generated based on their individual virtues and merits as well as the strength of their meditative absorption. For example, their clothing naturally comes as they create this notion in their minds without performing any enhanced meditation.

Nowadays, masters and Buddhist practitioners in general have misunderstood the definition of meditative absorption. True meditative concentration is only found in the level of First *Dhyāna* or above. The desire-realm concentration or neighborhood-concentration practiced by

ordinary people cannot be called meditative concentration because the level of First Dhyāna has not been reached. Hence, they are referred to as “neighborhood concentration.” After attaining First Dhyāna, one can have the strength to leave the desire realm since he has attained the true skill of meditative concentration. If a person wants to enter First Dhyāna, besides having sufficient strength of concentration, he needs the virtues of the form realm and most importantly to subdue and eliminate the greed and lust of the desire realm.

Further above the heaven of the form realm, one enters the formless realm. There is no form dharma in the formless realm, except the pure meditative concentration state one’s mind comfortably dwells in. This includes the four meditative states which are the infinite consciousness, infinite space, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception. They are commonly called the four formless samādhis, or four formless heavens.

All sentient beings including you and I have been transmigrating within these three realms without ceasing since beginningless time. We have been to the form realm and the formless realm as well as having fallen into the three evil paths. In fact, there is not a single place that we have not been before. However, since you are reading this article, you are continuing to transmigrate up to the present. This means that none of the desire realm, the form realm, or the formless realm is the place of

liberation and this is the reason why it is called “the transmigration in the three realms.”

You may ask: Who created this structure of three realms? In Chapter 6 of the *Upāsaka-śīla-sūtra*, Buddha preached that the formation of the earth, mountains and rivers, and even the places of the hungry ghost path, the animal path, and the hells, the asura palace, the heavens of the four heavenly kings, all the way to the Paranirmita-vaśavartin Heaven, is due to all kinds of good and evil karma committed by sentient beings. Since the sentient beings have never had a moment to stop committing karma, the material world will continue to naturally evolve.

Therefore, Buddha is not the creator and neither is God. The true creator is the True Mind of sentient beings, tathāgatagarbha, with which all the good and evil karma committed by sentient beings rely upon. Karmic effects induce all kinds of circumstances on earth for sentient beings to receive the consequences of their previous actions. This further extends to our entire solar system and the Milky Way galaxy. All these material worlds and planets are just the product formed by the collective karma of all sentient beings and not the creation of God. Buddha is the one and only great enlightened person able to teach sentient beings the truth about the formation of the universe. Buddha is therefore called the One-with-All-Knowledge, not the creator of the universe.