

The God-Idea

To trace the origin and development of the God-idea, one must go back to the time when civilisation was still in its infancy and science was still unknown. Primitive people, out of fear and admiration towards natural events, had believed in different spirits and gods. They used their spirits and gods to form religions of their own. According to their situation different people founded different gods and different faiths.

In the beginning of the God-idea, people worshipped many gods -- gods of trees, streams, lightning, storm, winds, the sun, and all other earthly activities. These gods were related to each and every act of nature. The belief that spirits live in objects such as stones, tree roots and mountains is known as ANIMISM. Then gradually man began to give these gods, sex and form as well as the physical and mental characteristics of human beings. Human characteristics were given to the gods: love, hate, jealousy, fear, pride, envy and other emotions found among human beings. The belief in many gods is known as Polytheism. From all these gods, there slowly grew a realisation that the events of the Universe were not many but were One. This understanding gave rise to the monotheistic God of recent ages.

This God was regarded by different men in different ways. Some idealised God as the King of heaven and earth; they had an idea of God as a person. Others thought of God as an abstract principle. Some pictured God in a paradise or heaven while others made an idol and worshipped it. The Theists said, 'Yes' and went on to say yes God really did exist. The Atheists said, 'No' and went on to say that God did not really exist at all. The Sceptics or Agnostics said, 'We do not or we cannot know.' Thus there grew a variety of ideas and beliefs and names for the God-idea

*Adapted from "What Buddhists Believe"
Written by Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda
Published by Buddhist Missionary Society*



Copy this passage into your exercise books and complete the missing words.

Primitive people believed in many different _____ and spirits. They worshipped gods of trees, streams, lightning, _____, winds, the sun, and all other earthly activities. The belief that _____ live in such things is known as _____. Then gradually man began to give these gods human form and characteristics such as love, _____, jealousy, fear, pride envy. This belief in more than one god is known as _____.

Some people began to think that everything that happened in the universe came from one source and that there was only _____ God. This is known as _____. Some saw God as the _____ of heaven and earth; they had an idea of God as a _____. Others did not give God a human form.

A _____ is someone who believes that God really exists.

An _____ believes that God does not really exist at all.

A Sceptic or _____ will say 'We do not or we cannot know.'

gods	ANIMISM	King	person	THEIST
Storm	one	MONOTHEISM	spirits	ATHEIST
hate	AGNOSTIC	POLYTHEISM		

