

Are There Gods/Deities in Buddhism?

Hi everyone, this is Nancy. Today is June 26th, 2021. How are you doing? Often there are people asking, "Are there gods in Buddhism?" And most of the time, people would answer, "No, there are no gods in Buddhism." Today, I would like to share with you gods in Buddhism. Actually not just in Buddhism, it's gods in the universe.

Before I reach to the topic, first let's see our society. In schools, there are principles and other officials; in cities, there are mayors and other officials; in counties, in states, in countries, there are different levels of officials. Besides officials, there are educators. Educators for elementary school students, for middle school students, for high school students, for undergraduate students, for graduate students, and for postdocs.

In the universe, gods are like officials, and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are like educators. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas use different expedient means to educate, to awaken, to instruct, to enlighten sentient beings; while gods are responsible for managing, and for maintaining the Law. The Law, or Cosmic Law, is embodied differently in different realms. In the ghost worlds, it is called Yin Law; in human's world, it is the law that we know; in the Heavens, it is Heaven's Law.

Just like the officials in this world, gods have different levels too. Ghost kings are gods and each is at different level. Each layer of Heaven has its host and each host is also different. No matter it is a Ghost King or a Host of one layer of Heaven, these are all gods. You see, there are so many different kinds of gods. For example In Buddhism, it is the dragon kings who are responsible for raining. They would take the order where to rain and how much to rain. The orders are all made based on the Cosmic Law. Or an easier way to put it, that depends on the karma of that place. Everything has a reason or reasons behind, reasons that human beings may not know, or difficult to understand. When dragon kings rain, they need to rain exactly the amount in the order.

There is overlap between gods and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Many gods are Buddhas or Bodhisattvas themselves. It's just like the officials in our world may or may not have a Ph.D degree. Some ghost kings may also be Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It's like a village head who could have a Ph.D degree while a state governor may not.

Gods and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas may show different characters, different features. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are more focused on enlightenment; gods are more focused on loyalty. When gods take the orders, they need to put them into action. In general, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are educators, they may show to be more compassionate; gods may appear to be more merciless because they need to execute orders, to enforce the Law. But one thing we need to understand is that sometimes being merciless is being compassionate. It's just like we cannot be too nice to our kids, rules are necessary for them to grow healthfully. Make sense?

The higher the level, the stricter the Law. In the invisible worlds, things are much more transparent. It is not like in the human world mainly because we have this physical body which weakens our spirituality. Our mind is more clouded because of the desires, habits, and so on. In the invisible world, no gods dare to bribe; no gods dare to lie, and so on. They are aware of the Law much more than humans. Sometimes, even ghosts do not want to be born as a human because once we have this physical body, we forget everything and may create too much evil karma in this turbid society.

Amitabha! This is our today's share. This talk is mainly to answer this question "Are there gods in Buddhism?" for some people. This talk is only for your reference. Between the Heaven and the Earth, everything is transparent though most people do not realize this. Thank you everyone for being here. I will see you next time. Bye!