

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

**THE BUDDHA ON THE
SO-CALLED CREATOR-GOD**

*“I count your Brahma one th’ unjust among,
Who made a world in which to shelter wrong.”*

~ Jataka

- 23.1.1 The Pali equivalent for the Creator-God in other religions is either *Issara* or *Brahma*. Tracing the origin of *Maha Brahma*, the so-called Creator-God, the Buddha comments in the Patika Sutta¹.
- 23.1.2 “On this, O disciples, that being who was first born (in a new world evolution) thinks thus: “I am *Brahma*, the Great *Brahma*, the Vanquisher, the All-Seer, the Disposer, the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Assigner, the Master of Myself, the Father of all that are and are to be. By me are these beings created.” And why is that so? A while ago I thought: Would that other beings too might come to this state of being! Such was the aspiration of my mind, and lo! these beings did come.”
- 23.1.3 “And those beings themselves who arose after him, they too think thus: “This Worthy must be *Brahma*, the Great *Brahma*, the Vanquisher, the All-Seer, the Disposer, the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Assigner, the Master of Myself, the Father of all that are and are to be.

- 23.1.4 “On this, O disciples, that being who arose first becomes longer lived, handsomer, and more powerful, but those who appeared after him become shorter lived, less comely, less powerful. And it might well be, O disciples, that some other being, on deceasing from that state, would come to this state (on earth) and so come, he might go forth from the household life into the homeless state. And having thus gone forth, by reason of ardour, effort, devotion, earnestness, perfect intellection, he reaches up to such rapt concentration, that with rapt mind he calls to mind his former dwelling place, but remembers not what went before. He says thus: ‘That Worshipful *Brahma*, the Vanquisher, the All-Seer, the Disposer, the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Assigner, the Master of Myself, the Father of all that are and are to be, he by whom we were created, he is permanent, constant, eternal, unchanging, and he will remain so for ever and ever. But we who were created by that *Brahma*, we have come hither all impermanent, transient, unstable, short-lived, destined to pass away.’”
- 23.1.5 “Thus was appointed the beginning of all things, which ye, sirs, declare as your traditional doctrine, to wit, that it has been wrought by an over-lord, by *Brahma*.”
- 23.1.6 According to one view we are what we were willed to be by a Creator. Our destinies rest entirely in his hands. Our fate is pre-ordained by him. The supposed freewill granted to his creation is obviously false.
- 23.1.7 Criticizing this fatalistic view, the Buddha says: “So, then, owing to the creation of a Supreme Deity men will become murderers, thieves, unchaste, liars, slanderers, abusive, babblers, covetous, malicious and perverse in view. Thus for those who fall back on the creation of a God as the essential reason, there is neither desire nor effort nor necessity to do this deed or abstain from that deed.”²

23.1.8 In the Devadaha Sutta³ the Buddha, referring to the self-mortification of naked ascetics, remarks: “If, O *Bhikkhus*, beings experience pain and happiness as the result of God’s creation (*Issaranimanahetu*), then certainly these naked ascetics must have been created by a wicked God (*papakena issarena*), since they suffer such terrible pain.”

23.1.9 In the Bhuridatta Jataka⁴ (No. 543) the *Bodhisatta* questions the supposed Divine justice of the Creator as follows:

*“He who has eyes can see the sickening sight,
Why does not Brahma set his creatures right?
If his wide power no limits can restrain,
Why is his hand so rarely spread to bless?
Why are his creatures all condemned to pain?
Why does he not to all give happiness?
Why do fraud, lies, and ignorance prevail?
Why triumphs falsehood—truth and justice fail?
I count you Brahma one th ’unjust among,
Who made a world in which to shelter wrong.”*

23.1.10 Refuting the theory that everything is the creation of a Supreme Being, the *Bodhisatta* states in the Mahabodhi Jataka (No. 528):

*“If there exists some Lord all powerful to fulfil,
In every creature bliss or woe,
and action good or ill;
That Lord is stained with sin.
Man does but work his will.”*

23.2 NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

1. Digha Nikaya iii, p. 29. Dialogues of the Buddha. iii, pp. 26, 27.
2. Majjhimaha Nikaya ii, p. 222, Sutta No. 101
3. Digha Nikya i, p. 221. Sutta No. 11.
4. Jataka Translation, vol. vi, p. 110.