

Question 37:

How to believe that there are The Thirty-one Planes of Existence mentioned in the Buddhist philosophy?

Answer: We as human beings are just one type of physical being among voluminous numbers of animals, insects, bacteria, fungi, plants and other physical living organisms here on our tiny planet Earth, in this unimaginably vast cosmos with countless stars, planets and galaxies. So it is not unreasonable to believe that intelligent physical human beings are only a small fraction of the total intelligent beings that exist, particularly considering that almost every culture in the world has references to non-physical intelligent beings - ghosts, demons or other malevolent beings, and angels or other beneficent beings – in their religious scriptures and/or legends.

Also, in just about every culture in the world there are people – prophets, saints, mediums, shamans, yogis, and psychics -- who have received messages from other-worldly beings such as angels or spirits. Messages from these beings have been accurate enough that belief in their existence has withstood the test of time, and is commonplace in many cultures around the world. Of course in today's modernized world we may doubt the reality of such messages because there are plenty of charlatans, psychic wanna-bes and mentally ill people who claim to hear voices also. But a very large percentage of the world's population believes that a message of an angel was heard by Mary, the mother of Jesus, or that messages from God were heard by Moses, Abraham, Jesus, the prophet Muhammed, or Baha'ullah. The Pali Canon is filled with references to devas, maras and other non-physical beings who could communicate with the Buddha and arahants. It is not logical to believe in some parts of the Canon (or other scriptures) but to disbelieve other large parts of it that refer to metaphysical phenomena merely because they cannot be proven with scientific instruments that are available to us. Even many scientists nowadays theorize and believe in parallel universes, energy fields, dark matter, additional dimensions, and subatomic particles that suggest the possibility of different realms that were unimaginable only a few years ago.