

How Did Mankind Begin According To The Text of Your Faith?
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Question: How did mankind begin according to the text of your faith?

Answer: There is no mention of the origin of mankind in Buddhist texts. From the Buddhist perspective, our universe has been created and destroyed over countless eons. This continual process is without beginning and without end and was set in motion through natural causes. Our present universe occupies one slot in this beginningless and endless sequence of time.

The Buddha gave a teaching known as *pratīyasamutpāda* that, translated, means dependent origination or dependent arising. It states that everything in this phenomenal world exists due to various causes and conditions that arise. Nothing exists as an individual, independent entity, but is due to multiple causes and conditions. Just as a sprout is only possible with the existence of a seed; a seed alone can't produce a sprout. The sprout is dependent upon a multitude of conditions including soil, water and the proper temperature. So the seed and the sprout are mutually dependent. All phenomena are dependent upon a multitude of conditions. Whatever exists is due to a multitude of causes and conditions all intricately interlinked. One cause is never enough to bring about an effect.

The Buddha said: “When this is, that is. From the arising of this comes the arising of that. When this isn't, that isn't. From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.”

So while Buddhism doesn't have a story of creation, it does have a very logical explanation of how and why phenomena exist in the world. This teaching also helps us to understand the origin of suffering and how to end it.