

## 答問學佛

## Questions on Buddhism

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**Q.** In the Amitabha Sutra, Lord Buddha said "Sariputra, one cannot be reborn to the Pure Land because of minor good deeds." The explanation was, "If one only makes oneself good and is not willing to be a Bodhisatva to save sentient beings, he will be a Hinayanist or he has done minor good deeds. Therefore to be reborn to the Pure Land one is required to be filial, to repeat the Sutras, to salute the Buddhas, to perform the six Paramitas and the ten good deeds and to keep the precepts." If it is so, how about being reborn with the Karmas, following him? Also I have heard that a parrot and a butcher were reborn to the Pure Land upon repeating the Amitabha. Of course a parrot and a butcher would be far beyond the doing of minor good deeds. Please explain why.

**A.** I did not see the explanation you mentioned. The Sutras on Pure Land emphasize the main practice and accessory practice evenly. If you imitate the highest you can only reach the middle; if you imitate the lowest what rank will you get? This was the reason why the ancients told one to aim for the highest. There are nine ranks of rebirth to the Pure Land, the parrot and butcher had main practice only and they were reborn to the Pure Land in the low rank.

**Q.** From my viewpoint, all religions teach sublimation of Tanha, craving, into an ideal purified state of mind. Why do certain religious people refuse and condemn those ideals which are different

from theirs?

**A.** Tanha is the name applied to everything which one craves irrespective of whether it is good or bad. Since people differ in their state of minds, their purposes in searching are also different. It is natural that one dislikes those things which are eagerly sought after by others. There is nothing unusual about the difference in the cravings between religion people and evil doers.

**Q.** The Buddha told us that all beings are equal. Why was there the bitterness of the six passes? Where comes the bitterness? What is the standard of the effect? Perhaps animals cannot realize the bitterness of life as humans can.

**A.** This can be answered in five steps: (1) The equality of beings refers to nature, life, ability to be educated, ability to become enlightened, etc. It does not refer to Karma and its result. Though the result of the six passes is different, yet the quality of equality remains the same. For example, in human beings there are officials, soldiers, peasants, labourers and tradesmen; there are rich, poor and prisoners; but they are all called human beings, they are equal in birth and in death. (2) Bitterness comes from the Karma, the causes performed. (3) Sufferings are divided into birth, old age, sickness, death, departing of a beloved, meeting of an enemy, despair, flood, fire, war, starving, coldness and misfortune. (4) Human beings don't know the sufferings of animals. Animals flee from the hunter, that is the suffering of fear. Men kill mice and mosquitoes, this is the suffering of hunger. They suffer bitterness without knowing beforehand, that is the suffering of ignorance. (5) The inferiority of human to animals is an exception such as for example that foreign dogs eat beef and bread but the Chinese people eat vegetables. Not every thing about animals is superior to human beings.