

佛學問答

Questions on Buddhism

解答者：李炳南居士

Answered by Mr. P. N. Li

譯者：李恆鉞居士

Translated by Mr. H. Y. Li

Q. All living creatures outlive after death. They transmigrate among six ways of existence according to their past good or evil Karmas (deeds). But from the ancient times can the Vijnanas (the intelligent spirit of the living creatures be increased or decreased? If you say that the number is not decreased, when the Vijnanas turn into Bodhisattvas or Buddhas, the Samsaras (transmigrations among all lives) stop. Then there should be a decrease. On the other hand, living creatures multiply by geometric exponents. That should be an increase. If you still say that there is no increase and decrease, to where go and from where come the Vijnanas as mentioned in the last two cases?

A. This can be illustrated by the simile of air: The air convects by getting hot and cold. If you build ten thousand rooms, there would be air in every room. If you cancel one thousand rooms, you cannot say that the air is decreased by one thousand roomfuls of it. If you then build again one hundred thousand rooms, you cannot say that the air is increased by one hundred thousand roomfuls of it. The Vijnanas of the living creatures are like the air in the room. It has the difference of good or bad odor and of hot or cold. It can flow from A room to B room and circulate among numerous rooms to and fro. If you know the boundless space, you will know the problem on increase and decrease. The property (Vijnana) of Bodhisattva or Buddha is like the outside air. It has neither odor nor temperature nor any change.

Q. If the judge observes the five Silas (commandments) and condemns the criminal to death, has he broken the Sila of abstaining from killing?

A. For illustration, if you buy a numbered seat of a train, the car boy will direct you to your seat according to your ticket. He has no responsibility of the condition of the seat whether it suits you or not. If anyone does against the law, the judge will condemn him according to the law without the responsibility of the

quality of the punishment whether the criminal likes it or not. He has been punished by his own misconduct and not by the will of the judge. But for death condemnation, if the law gives some elasticity, you had better change it to the other possibilities (the lighter punishments).

Q. The Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha (Tizang) told us about the names of hells and reward of the evil conducts. Is he the governor of the hells and the master of Yama (the king of the hell)? I was told that the Darma (the power of Buddha's teachings) can cancel the bad reward. It should not matter whether the Bodhisattva can control the hell or not. Is this idea true?

A. Governing is a kind of political power. Buddha and Bodhisattva only teach and save the living creatures but not govern and control. The Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha is very pitiful and want to help all those, who live in, to get rid of it. He goes to the hell very often but he is not the governor.

Q. I was told that the Buddha's power is boundless. If so, why Buddha cannot win the Mara (Devel)? Why he cannot compell every person to be a Buddhist? Why he cannot stop the evil deeds and wars in the world?

A. The answer is divided into three parts. Firstly, upon the question of the power of the Buddha, it is not that Buddha and Darma (his teachings) are not powerful. But the disciple, when he is not well trained and his mind is not very strong, is defeated by Mara. Secondly, Mind, Buddha and Sattva (living beings) are all the same. They all have tremendous power. When the mind is deluded, it is Sattva. When the mind is awakened, it is Buddha. The delusion and enlightenment depend on one's own mind. But those enlightened pity on the unenlightened and show them the way by words and phrases or the Holy Canon. The Sattvas are concealed by their original illusion (include ignorance, arrogance and suspicion) and do not study. Therefore they do not believe. Every thing should be done by his own mind and not done by Buddha for him. Thirdly, the evil deeds and wars are caused by the greed, anger and ignorance of human minds by diverging from the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha is the greatest physician who cures people's disease by the drug of Darma. But the people refuse to take the drug. Of course the illness will become bad. Is it then reasonable for the sickman to curse the physician.