

佛學問答

Questions on Buddhism

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Q. All Buddhists abstain from killing. But those like Christians do not observe such Sila (precept). Who will be responsible for the sin? Does their God take away the sins for them as pastors said?

A. As one sows one reaps. As one eats one is satiated. As one has a boil one suffers. How can others get the result which you have done unto yourself? There is a universal law of cause and effect and that is a universal truth. I do not know the reasoning of other religions.

Q. When one reads a novel, looks at a motion picture sings a song or listens to an opera, one can reach the state of self forgotten and get the steadiness of the mind. Is this state the same when it is gotten by repeating Amitabha?

A. The novels, motion pictures, songs or operas are mostly describing obscenity, robbery, sorrow, happiness, separation and combination. They cause you happy, angry, sorry and joyful and make your mind swinging and jumping. How can you get the steadiness of mind? The steadiness is to forget everything, to get rid of the influence of the environment, to be independent from the outside and to be tranquil inside.

Q. It is obviously right for Buddha to forbid killing. But any one must drink water and there are many germs inside the water. Is it breaking the precept to drink water or to boil water? Is it breaking the precept to catch a louse or a bed-bug and kill it?

A. Buddha taught to filter the water for avoiding killing. You can drink the tap water because it is filtered by the water company. You can remove the louse and bed-bug to the open field. All living creatures have lives and killing is painful and cruel. It would be breaking the precept if you kill them. Killing is of two kinds; one is intentional and another is unintentional. For the beginner who has no

ability of clairvoyance the unintentional killing is unavoidable. But you should try your best to be careful.

Q. Is there any difference to study Buddhism by living a lay life or a homeless life? Which is better? Monks depend on the lay disciples to supply them. Is it not unfair? The monks do not bring up heretage and do not live with their parents. Is it not showing ungratitude?

A. For learning and practicing Buddhism, it is better to live a homeless life. He must be bound to save the beings and to become a Buddha. This shows the best gratitude. Monks like teachers of the school. Teachers also depend upon others to eat. Many occupations demand one to leave his parents. If he has his contributions, you cannot blame him for not showing gratitude.

Q. Is bodhisatva Avalokitesvara (Kuan-yin) a woman has she one thousand hands?

A. Bodhisatva Avalokitesvara is not a woman. The body of a woman and the body having one thousand hands are all differentiations of the Bodhisatva.

Q. Why the Bodhisatvas of the west pure land are all male? If there is no use of the female, there should be no use of male also. Then they are not distinguished by sex and should not be told to be of male.

A. It is as you have said. Male and female are opposite terms. If there is no female, there is no male. To say that the Bodhisatvas are of male sex is to let the people here to understand better and to imagine better.

Q. I was told that there is no beginning and no end. The ignorance which has no beginning is the ignorance which has no end. If the rebirth to the west can get rid of the samsara (the circle of rebirth), it should be the end of ignorance. Is it contrast to the said statement?

A. The ignorance has no beginning. But you can not say that it has no end. The stoppage of illusion is the end of ignorance. When you are reborn to the west you may or may not stop your illusion. Therefore you can say that the samsara is stopped and you can not say that the ignorance comes to an end when you are reborn to the west.