

三生九品 Three Births and Nine Grades

—摘自《金剛棒喝》宣公上人法語彙編
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English Translation by Lianlian Wu

問：既然淨土是萬人修萬人去，為什麼到了那邊還有三生九品？上品上生一到那裡就有受用，又快樂，這不是表示菩提心不夠？還是有什麼原因？

宣公上人：這雖然說是淨土法門萬人修萬人去，去的人呢，也都是早就修過了；修到成熟了，他就去了，不是一生一世的事情。你就遇著《阿彌陀經》，念阿彌陀佛，這不於一佛二佛三、四、五佛而種善根，才能遇到這樣殊勝的法門，是已經於無量百千萬億佛所種善根，才能遇到這樣殊勝的佛法。

至於怎麼樣還分九品？人的根性都是不一樣的，有的人勇猛精進，一點懷疑心也沒有，所以他上品上生，他念佛多了，修行時間也多了。才修行，念佛沒有念那麼多就往生了，就是下品下生，你到那裡再念。

念佛念法念僧，總而言之，功不唐捐，你用一分功得一分果報，不會不平等的；這是平等的，三根普被，利鈍兼收，不分出品級來。利根和鈍根一樣嗎？所以要分出等級來，不過到那兒就不會再墮落了。無論上品上生，下品下生，生到極樂世界那兒沒有三惡道，不會再墮落了。下品下生，他功力還不夠嘛！這是很平等的。❀

Question: If ten thousand people practice the Pure Land Dharma method, and are all able to go to the Pure Land, then, why are there three births and nine grades in the Pure Land? Those who attain birth on the highest level of the highest grade are comfortable and happy as soon as they arrive there. Are there any reasons?

Venerable Master Hua: Although it is said that the Pure Land is where anyone who practices can arrive, those who attain birth there have practiced the Dharma before. When the time comes, you can go there. It does not happen just during one life. When people come across the *Amitabha Sutra*, and recite Amitabha, these people have not merely cultivated the roots of virtue with one Buddha, two, three, four, or five Buddhas. They have cultivated all kinds of virtuous roots with hundreds of thousands, even countless numbers of Buddhas, so they can find such a remarkable Dharma method.

How is it divided into the nine grades? Everyone's traits are different. Some people are dedicated and undaunted, free from doubts. Therefore, these people attain birth on the highest level of the highest grade. They have recited the Buddha's name many times, and have cultivated for a long time. If you just start to practice and you attain rebirth there when you haven't recited the Buddha's name that many times, then you will attain rebirth on the lowest level of the lowest grade, and you will continue to recite the Buddha's name there.

All in all, it is worthwhile to practice mindfulness of the Buddha, mindfulness of the Dharma, and mindfulness of the Sangha. Your efforts will reward you. It won't be unfair. It is fair that it covers the three roots, receives both those who are sharp and dull. Are these with sharp roots and dull roots the same? Therefore, we have to divide them into different grades. But once you are there, you will not fall back. No matter whether one attains birth on the highest level of the highest grade or the lowest level of the lowest grade, the three evil paths don't exist in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss and one will not fall back. If one attains birth on the lowest level of the lowest grade because he has not put enough effort. This is very fair!❀