

Margaret Blaine • *The Practical Buddhist*

Know the Warning Signs You Are Battling Fundamental Darkness?

Today we are going to look at the internal weaknesses which can affect our practice and sometimes make us stop chanting altogether, so we can recognize them when they come up.

The Spiritual Struggle

Any time we face adversity or take on a daunting goal, we engage in a spiritual struggle. We can maximize our strengths or give in to our weaknesses. It is this struggle that makes chanting for a goal so challenging. You are not alone in this. It happens to everyone.

Do you face a challenge and enjoy it, doing your very best to overcome it? Or, do you allow cowardice, laziness, avoidance and resignation to come to the fore. Do you see adversity as an excuse to complain and blame and give up, or do you see it as an opportunity for further growth and push on through it? Do you chant ritualistically without definite goals and stagnate, not really engaged in the struggle at all or do you eagerly plunge in, challenge yourself and give it your full effort?

You Have the Universe Behind You

Josei Toda, the 2nd President of the SGI, was strict with members who lacked conviction in faith and displayed a resigned or defeatist attitude. The *Introduction to Buddhism*, for beginner's study, describes this. He would tell them "You yourself are Nam-myoho-renge-kyo."

What did he mean by that? He mean't you yourself have the great power within to

overcome any challenge. You are a Buddha. He constantly urged people to understand that they had this power and to reveal their full potential when facing an obstacle. How do you do that? You chant with faith in the Gohonzon and activate that power in your life.

That seems simple enough until those pesky internal weaknesses come up. We have to recognize them for what they are so we won't be taken in by them.

What makes these tendencies so insidious is they are so much a part of everyday life. And any one of them could influence us to stop practicing. That is why it is so important to be able to recognize them.

When you find yourself battling or giving into any of the following, you know you are dealing with the fundamental darkness we each have inside of us. In, *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, these tendencies are called the Ten Troops. Let's take a look at them.

Let's say you become greedy and are willing to cut moral corners to have what you want. Don't we see people who have fallen into this trap every day in the morning papers?

Sometimes care and worry can take over our lives to the point that we can't find time to practice. We put care and worry in the center of our lives rather than putting the Gohonzon in the center of our lives. We can even forget to chant about our concerns.

Or love of pleasure can pull us away from doing Gongyo or going to a meeting.

Sometimes drowsiness and languor can keep us from focusing, letting our minds drift rather than really engaging with the Gohonzon or not getting out of our chair to sit and chant at all.

Fears can take over and distract us from focusing on what we really want instead focusing on them. Or fear can keep us from moving forward and influence us to give up.

Preoccupation with wealth and fame can draw us away from spiritual practice and our own human revolution. They can take over one's life if not kept in balance.

Doubts and regret can lead us to doubt that we have this great power within and can lead us to doubt the Gohonzon itself. That's why it's so important to study, ask questions and handle those doubts. They can put you on a downward slide if you dwell on them and can lead to quitting the practice if not addressed.

Anger can lead to all kinds of problems if indulged. We see the results of that in our courts and prisons.

And arrogance and contempt for others can undercut our benefits and place us squarely on the dark side of life if not addressed. It can affect every relationship, and cause all kinds of problems. It leads to denying that the Buddha nature exists within each person and leads to treating people as a means to an end, rather than upholding their happiness as an end in itself..

What can you do if you are facing and battling one of these tendencies? Wouldn't this be the first thing to chant about? This is where your human revolution is going to be accomplished. Daisaku Ikeda describes why it is important to address these tendencies and how they can impact our practice In *My Dear Friends in America*, the Clear Mirror Guidance.

Ikeda says: "The gohonzon is a clear mirror. It perfectly reveals our state of faith and projects this out into the universe. There may be times, for instance, when you feel reluctant to recite the sutra or take part in activities. That state of mind is precisely reflected on the entire universe, as if on the surface of a clear mirror. The heavenly deities will then also feel reluctant to play their part and will naturally fail to exert their full power of protection."

On the other hand, when you joyfully recite the sutra, chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and carry out activities with determination to accumulate more good fortune in your life, the heavenly deities will be delighted and valiantly perform their duty.”

“If you practice reluctantly with a sense it is a waste of time, disbelief and complaints will erode your good fortune. If you continue to practice in this way, you will not experience remarkable benefits, and this will only serve to further convince you that your practice is in vain. This is a vicious circle.

If you practice faith while doubting its effects, you will get results that are, at best, unsatisfactory. This is the reflection of your own weak faith on the mirror of the cosmos.

On the other hand, when you stand up with strong confidence you will accrue limitless blessings. When you do so, both your life and your surroundings will open wide before you and every action you take will become a source of benefit.”

Summary:

In this vlog we have discussed the ten troops, internal weaknesses that can interfere with our lives and our practice.

It's important to recognize them because they can lead us to undercut the results of practicing or encourage us to stop practicing all together.