

BUDDHIST CONCEPT: THE THREE CATEGORIES OF ACTION Doing the Right Things

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I wake up in the morning and sleepily make hot cereal, standing in front of the stove, groggy and still recovering from the half-consciousness of my dreams. All is dark out, even in summer, and now in winter I catch cold chills until I sit down with the hot pot of wheat, wrap a blanket around me and read the *World Tribune* while I eat, always going straight for SGI President Ikeda's guidance.

Some members think I am a diehard in my pursuance of study. It's not as noble as that — it's just difficult for me to get through the day maintaining a high life condition. And President Ikeda's words always give me a stone of hope to turn in my pocket when I find my attitude slipping.

Perhaps it's due to the fact the I am so newly awake, but sometimes there is one sentence or paragraph that applies to me and me only. That sentence is just what I need to hear.

Then I am ready to tear into gongyo and an hour of chanting — ready to change my life. Somehow, though, in the 20 minutes it takes to actually start gongyo, and in the hour of chanting afterwards, I get distracted. I consider the impossibility of my dreams.

I get discouraged and disappear into daydream daimoku, suddenly noticing 15 or 20 minutes have gone by. But I know I need the strong determination to match my goals.

So I summon it and come up with ways to win in whatever situation I am in. "I am determined to know what I need to learn from this situation," I say to myself. "I am determined to know how to create value in this situation. I am determined to see total victory in this situation."

I see the victories, but nonetheless it is always a fight. A constant fight to keep my thoughts, words and action synchronized.

Buddhism teaches that all three types of action — thoughts, words and physical actions — need to be in unison, in harmony. Otherwise, we will not experience the full benefit of this Buddhism. This imperative is an indication of the primary importance of each moment in our lives.

The logic is so simple: Thoughts lead to words, which in turn lead to actions. The subtle yet powerful balance between a positive or negative determination — something that comes to shape our outlook on life and consequently affects the life we live — rests first upon our thoughts.

The three categories of action can also be applied to our practice to the Gohonzon. Thoughts correspond to how we feel when we pray — for instance, do we have a strong determination to win in our dreams and contribute to kosen-rufu? Words refer to the actual recitation of gongyo and chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Actions correspond to getting in front of the Gohonzon.

At the same time, regarding our practice for others, thoughts correspond to our strong desire for others to become happy; words to whatever we say to encourage them; and actions to our activities for others, like home visits and attending district meetings. As the Daishonin writes in "Letter to Priest Nichiro in Prison": "Others read the Lotus Sutra with their mouths alone, reading only the words, but do not read it with their hearts. And even if they read it with their hearts, they do not read it with their actions. Praiseworthy

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indeed are those like you who read the sutra with both body and mind!" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 127).

One cannot live without thinking, speaking and acting. This Buddhist concept of the three actions is worth reminding ourselves of everyday. It is the rudder that helps us direct our determinations into victories.

My fight to wake up my life from the dark of sleep every morning and read the *World Tribune*, then do gongyo and daimoku, aligns my thoughts with the rhythm of the universe. It is the path to my dreams and world peace.

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