

Questions and Answers on Faith: Devil of Mercy vs. Righteous Anger

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Q: What is the Buddhist concept of the devil of mercy?

A: This concept is found in Buddhist sutras and Nichiren Daishonin's letters. The devil of mercy has two meanings. First, it indicates the devilish, negative nature of life that capitalizes on a certain degree of mercy within people's lives, playing on their sympathies until their views become distorted, and they are unable to discern right from wrong or good from evil. Such mercy prevents people from standing up resolutely against injustice and evil.

Second, it refers to the devilish function within one's life that creates attachments to shallow teachings. This prevents the development of faith in the True Law.

So the devil of mercy originates from one's fundamental darkness and produces a shallow, unenlightened mercy. When we are in this life-condition, we are vulnerable to the influence of the extremely powerful function called in Buddhism the King Devil of the Sixth Heaven. The Daishonin states, "The fundamental darkness manifests itself as the King Devil of the Sixth Heaven" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 279) Through his behavior against the Daishonin's intent, we can clearly see that Nikken is now functioning as this devil.

For example, the Nikken-led priests of Nichiren Shoshu claim that the Dai-Gohonzon does not exist in the hearts of ordinary human beings. Rather, they claim that it exists separately from our lives, and that the only way people can acquire enlightened qualities is to chant specifically to the Dai-Gohonzon. This — and all it implies — can be found nowhere in the Daishonin's writings.

The Daishonin uses the expression *grave slander* [*dai-hobo*] in 28 places in his writings, usually referring to the founder or high priest of different heretical sects of his time. He also uses it at times to mean the nation of Japan or its people, who not only refused to uphold the True Law but persecuted its votary, the Daishonin. He was harsh with other sects of Buddhism, he explains, because they gave people an incorrect view of life and the Law. And because he cherished the True Law with all his heart. We don't see any sign of the devil of mercy within this compassion.

The Daishonin also states, "The fundamental nature of enlightenment manifests itself as [the Buddhist gods] Bonten and Taishaku" (MW-3, 279). In "Letter From Sado," he shares the story of a haughty demon who is put in his place when scolded by Taishaku. The life-condition of righteous anger shown here by Taishaku in reproaching the demon's arrogance is the same anger necessary whenever dealing with the Lotus Sutra's enemies. In practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism in this defiled age of the Latter Day of the Law, it is vital to tap into the same life-force that Taishaku did, the life-force that is innate within our Buddhahood.

The strength of true Buddhist compassion will defeat devilish functions. SGI President Ikeda always stresses that "What matters is one's heart" (MW-5, 289), and definitely, this tarnished age is the time for hearts of righteous anger, not shallow compassion.

In his lecture on "The Opening of the Eyes," President Ikeda states: "No matter how compassionate some might appear, if they fail to take action, it is the same as if they have no compassion. They lack compassion. The opposite of compassion is false friendship — falsely befriending another." This false friendship is a function of the devil of mercy.

Righteous anger is a result of a profound understanding of Buddhism and its application. Righteous anger to protect the Law and the people finds its roots within our Buddha nature, the place where absolute compassion dwells. But shallow mercy is a product of the lower worlds.

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