

**RECOGNIZING DEVILISH FUNCTIONS  
THE FIRST STEP TOWARD DEFEATING THEM  
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When people try to advance or construct something positive, some force of resistance will work against and disturb their progress. In physics, one of Newton's three laws of motion states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. This is a natural occurrence in our environment.

Knowing and recognizing the existence of this opposite force is crucial in our daily lives. The aerodynamic shape of a race car is the result of studies on how air resistance can be used to increase speed. We have to approach our lives and our Buddhist practice the same way — to prepare for resistance and use it to our advantage. Nichiren Daishonin explains that “he who abides by the Lotus Sutra will inevitably attain Buddhahood. Therefore the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, the lord of this threefold world, will become intensely jealous of anyone who abides by the sutra” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 201)

Because such “devilish” or negative functions are difficult to recognize, it can be difficult to fight and overcome them. Rather, it is easy to be deceived and swayed by them. Sometimes they appear as people who oppose our practice, other times it surfaces as feelings of doubts from within our own lives. Whether external or internal, the Daishonin explains that “this devil king...attaches himself like a plague demon to people in a way that cannot be detected by the eye. Thereafter, like persons who gradually become drunk on fine old wine, rulers, fathers and mothers, wives and children gradually become possessed by him...” (MW-1, 201).

The key, then, is to clearly recognize negative functions for what they are and muster up the courage to fight against them. Once we can recognize them, we've made an important first step toward overcoming them.

Especially when we practice hard and challenge ourselves to propagate this great philosophy for the sake of all humankind, we must expect that obstacles and devilish functions will arise, attempting to defeat us. Actually, the time when such obstacles occur is the time when we can change our karma and further advance in our lives.

As the Daishonin experienced one severe persecution after another, so too did his disciples. Many of them abandoned their faith because of what seemed to be severe difficulties. Taking a closer look, however, their defeat was linked to the fact that they did not expect such obstacles to occur. They could not recognize the negative functions for what they were and consequently were defeated. Others, like Shijo Kingo, triumphed because they recognized the opposing forces and maintained their faith.

So Buddhism teaches that when an individual practices and develops fortune in life, obstacles always appear. And how much greater are the negative influences that appear in the world when the votaries of the Lotus Sutra number in the millions, all of them propagating the great pure teaching for the happiness of all.

That is why the Daishonin warns that as kosen-rufu progresses, the three powerful enemies will arise without fail, appearing as individuals and social forces who try to impede the flow of Buddhism. The appearance of powerful opponents serves as evidence that we are practicing correctly — it proves the legitimacy of the of our kosen-rufu movement.

Study is crucial to developing the correct perspective on our personal obstacles and the challenge of the temple issue. For this reason, the Study Department has recently revised

the Intermediate Exam materials (see below) to include more study on this important aspect of Buddhism.

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