

Don't Make Gods Into Demons

This slogan refers to our general tendency to dwell on pain and go through life with constant complaints. We should not make painful that which is inherently joyful.

At his point, you may have achieved a certain level of taming yourself. You may have developed the tonglen practice of exchanging yourself for others and feel that your achievement is real. But at the same time, you are so arrogant about the whole thing that your achievement begins to become an evil intention, because you think you can show off. In that way, dharma becomes adharma, or nondharma.

From Training the Mind & Cultivating Loving-Kindness by Chogyam Trungpa

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"Abandon poisonous food" and "Don't make gods into demons" are warnings that only you know whether what you are doing is good practice ("gods" or "good food"). Anything could be used to build yourself up and smooth things over and calm things down or to keep everything under control. Good food becomes poisonous food and gods become demons when you use them to keep yourself in that room with the doors and windows closed.

From Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living by Pema Chodron,

Don't Reduce a God to a Demon

If, as you meditate on mind training, your personality becomes stiff with pride and arrogance, it's as though you have reduced a god to a demon; dharma has become nondharma. The more you meditate on mind training and dharma, the more supple your personality should become. Act as the lowest servant to everyone.

From The Great Path of Awakening : An Easily Accessible Introduction for Ordinary People by Jamgon Kongtrul,

Do Not Let the Gods Descend to the Devil

The commentary speaks first of Devas, gods like those of the Hindu or Greek pantheons. Many accounts suggest that these non-human beings can be rather fickle. If you honor and worship them, they may help you. If you don't, they may turn around and injure you, in which case the god descends to a devil, an inflictor of harm.

What does it really mean for the divine to descend to the diabolical? The point of the Mind Training is to subdue our own mind: to gradually vanquish self-grasping and the mental afflictions that arise from it. No matter how intensely, earnestly, and diligently we practice,

we may still inflate ourselves with a sense of superiority, using our spiritual practice as an unfortunate source of conceit. This distortion of the practice is the descent from a Deva to a demon, from a god to a devil.

Why do we engage in any spiritual practice? The answer that Buddhism emphasizes is our own vulnerability to suffering, whether blatant or as an undercurrent of anxiety. If we are deeply aware that we need help and recognize that without dharma our minds are dysfunctionally creating misery, it becomes ridiculous to hold a supercilious attitude. It is hard to be pompous when the reason for practicing is a desire to be free of our own mental distortions. The Four Noble Truths - the existence of suffering, the source of suffering, freedom from suffering and its source, and the means of achieving such freedom - are very sobering in this regard.

Excerpted from: The Seven-Point Mind Training(

Do Not Bring a God Down to the Level of a Demon

Worldly people use their religion, in order to have success in business, to acquire power and situations of prosperity; but if they fall sick, lose their possessions and so on, they think their gods are displeased and begin to think of them as demons.

If through the Mind Training we become proud and boastful, it will be as Gampopa once said: Dharma not practiced properly will bring us down to the lower realms. If we become pretentious and conceited, we will certainly not be practicing Dharma. Because of our pride, the Mind Training, instead of taming us as it should, will make us all the more hard and obstinate â€¦

If the medicine we take is unsuited to the illness we have, our condition will be all the worse. In the same way, we should apply the teachings so that they act as an antidote to our ego-clinging. Towards everyone we should consider ourselves as the humblest of servants, taking the lowest place. We should try really very hard to be modest and self-forgetting.

From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.