

KARATE INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

PRINCIPLE #10

Source: [*The Black Belt Book of Life*](#)



#10



A Black Belt
Without Humility Is Like
A Well Without Water

Humility is the highest form of strength;
Arrogance the highest form of weakness.

As a silo sits vacant of fodder,
*A Black Belt Without Humility
Is Like A Well Without Water.*

*We come nearest to the great
when we are great in humility.*

Rabindranath Tagore

[Nobel Laureate, Literature 1913]

*To become truly great, one has to
stand with people, not above them.*

Charles de Montesquieu

[18th Century French Philosopher]

*If I have seen further, it is only by
standing on the shoulders of Giants.*

Sir Isaac Newton

There is absolutely no question that the greatest of souls to ever walk and breathe upon the earth were saturated from head to toe and bone to soul with humility. Of all the virtues, none stands equal to a genuine heart fully replete with its own insignificance. Indisputably, the greatest of the great clothe and cloak themselves in the garb of honest humility. They intrinsically understand their connection to an infinite power far greater than the finite scope of their limited selves, as well as their duty to be a conduit of compassion for all.

Martial arts is a great magnet for the power-driven consciousness. Because of its capacity to create warriors of extreme skill and combative prowess, it often, and most unfortunately, attracts the ego-saturated and machismo-laden intimidator who, in a quest to manage his intrinsic insecurity, over-compensates by bullying externally, pronouncing himself in the manner of a chest-thumping gorilla or a feather-strutting peacock. Such behavior is not

power. It is unadulterated weakness masquerading as power. Hopefully, through the rigors and discipline of martial arts training, such souls will gain the inner strength they need to overcome their weakness, become truly strong, and walk the path of those who wear the mantle of magnanimity, not malevolence or vulgarity.

Because martial arts creates power—not just in martial combat but in character—it is practically incumbent on the practitioner to be humble, realizing the importance of the mystic phrase from Saint Charan Singh: "Only the highest can help the lowest." Of what value is there anyway in lauding oneself over another? It is, to be sure, a clear sign of insecurity *prima facie* [on its face]. The reality of power is that it is powerful and needs no advertisement.

The famous British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, said: "Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

So why would any Black Belt worth his rank need to conduct himself or herself in such a way as to promote their own prowess? Their prowess should be a reflection of their humility, not their machismo. Look at the truly great souls who have walked this planet: Buddha, Christ, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Schweitzer, Mother Teresa, Gandhi and others. Their power was reflected in their humility, not their arrogance.

As martial artists, it is appropriate, if not dutiful, that we demonstrate the reality that "A Black Belt Without Humility is Like a Well Without Water."

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