

The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #24

Perfect Practice

Perfect practice, perfect makes.

Simple practice makes a habit.

If it's perfection we desire,
then we must make *Perfection* habit.

Simple habits, habits make.

The outcome of our loves
becomes extraordinary in the law
that *perfect is as perfect does*.

When we spend time in forming
those things we want in 'grooves',
then we must practice perfectly
for *perfect is as perfect moves*.

We can't expect perfection
from results our effort takes,
if we don't practice perfectly,
for *perfect is as perfect makes*.

Be thou perfect.
Bible - Genesis 17:1

*Perfection is attained by slow degrees;
it requires the hand of time.*

Voltaire

*There is such a thing as perfection . . .
and our purpose for living is to find
that perfection and show it forth.*

The gull sees farthest who flies highest.

Richard Bach
Jonathan Livingston Seagull

*God's work is permanent and everlasting
and exists in a state of perfection in every man.*

*Man is the top of all creation, the perfect handiwork
of Nature in all aspects. He contains within himself the key
to unlock the mystery of the Universe and to contact the Creator.
It is the greatest and the highest good fortune of any sentient being
to be born in the form of man.*

Saint Jagat Singh
[20th Century]

*Perfect is he who, by practice and meditation, lifts
his soul to its real abode, freeing it from all
bonds both internal and external, gross,
subtle and causal and thus detaches
his mind from the world and
its phenomena.*

Swami Ji Maharaj
[19th Century Saint]

We've all heard the phrase, *practice makes perfect*. In reality, practice doesn't make perfect. Practice only makes a habit. *Perfect practice makes perfect*.

Philosophically, there exists a vast number of people who do not believe perfection is possible; in other words, it is unattainable. Their belief is that no one is perfect and therefore we live in a state of personal imperfection. Thus, not only do their beliefs define them, their lives and accomplishments, they limit them and keep them from experiencing perfection or striving to

achieve it. The phrase, *argue for your limitations and, sure enough, they're yours*, [Richard Bach] is a perfect match for those with this philosophy.

It is true we all have flaws but that does not mean we will always have flaws, especially when considering the grand scope of all life and its spiritual ramifications. If God commands, *Be thou perfect*, who are we to argue otherwise?

By taking a stand for imperfection by acknowledging we all have flaws is to excuse our flaws and assume, erroneously, we'll always have them. Such philosophy also sets the bar very low. The truth is that we will continue to have flaws and operate at a low level unless we work to correct our flaws and climb to a higher level. But this takes work, a lot of work and concentrated effort, and those individuals exhibiting a weak disposition and inability to accept the challenge will naturally avoid and argue against the perfection-oriented philosophy. This is one critical argument for martial arts training: it teaches us to be warriors, to engage and conquer both internal and external challenges. Martial arts training should teach the soul that he or she is strong, courageous and capable of anything, perfection included. Martial arts training teaches us how to fight and conquer, not just people, but negative, outworn and limiting thoughts and concepts.

The highest of spiritual teachings exhorts us to be perfect. Therefore, strive for perfection. You may not hit the mark in this life, but it's a sure bet that if you don't aim for the target, you'll never hit it, and Perfect Spiritual Masters, not humans, tell us perfection is possible if we keep our nose to the grindstone and our eye to the Light.

As we move toward perfection our personal power increases, eventually leading to a state of perfection in higher spiritual regions. But if we don't work to perfection, we'll never advance and will never get "there." To some, this thought of higher realms of existence may seem esoteric, and to others strange and weird. Yet, what is strange and weird is this world with its cavalcade of limiting, negative and incarcerating thought.

As those of us know who study martial arts and who have devoted our lives to it, we advance from level to level, eventually surpassing any concept of belt ranks and simply continue in our journey to know more, study more, do more, succeed more, elevate more, be more. Once we get to a certain level of training, belt ranks don't mean anything to us. We transcend the belt motif.

Obviously, we begin at the white belt "region" and gradually attain higher and higher levels of expertise. The learning is never over. It never stops. There is always more to know and higher regions to evolve to in relation to our martial arts knowledge and ability. The higher we climb, the better, the more perfect we become. We get to the top not by accepting our flaws, weaknesses, shortcomings and limitations but rather by learning and struggling to overcome them and . . . we eventually succeed.

As we go through the ranks, we become more perfect in the process. If we had assumed from the beginning that we were imperfect and so full of flaws and weaknesses that we could never get to the top, then we wouldn't. This is why some people never make it to a black belt level. They don't believe they can; they buy into their own weaknesses and limitations or allow themselves to be victimized by the negative and limiting thoughts of others who couldn't make it and wanted company in their confinement and, guess what, they become the manifestation of their beliefs, or worse yet, someone else's! Astonishing, isn't it? Actually, it's natural. We are what we think, and if we think we can't, we can't. If we think we can, we can and do. If we believe perfection is impossible, we will find a way to support it or entertain the beliefs of other people who are also perfection-challenged.

Therefore, as a martial artist, or any artist, when we practice our art, we should always and relentlessly do our utmost to practice perfectly. Simply practicing does not insure success. Practice only makes a habit and that habit can be good or bad. To insure the ever-increasing quality of our own art, we must endlessly work to achieve perfection. Why be mediocre? Why remain stagnant just because someone with a limited understanding of life said it's impossible to be perfect? Nonsense. As a practicing martial artist, or any artist in any discipline, your own experience should prove to you the ever-ascending quality of unlimited expression. Remember, *The gull sees farthest who flies highest!*

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