



What is Aikido

By Mr W. Smith Sensei, 6th Dan so Hombu, UKA Shido-in.

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What is Aikido? It means different things to different people. We read and hear a lot of explanations. Masters almost never see their students as they really are, whether practising, teaching or off the mat. What does Aikido mean to me? Friends and loved ones, my family, and what we have created.



What do I think of the future of Aikido. In the past I have seen a lot of partings. Witnessed relationships between friends, student and teacher, and associations breaking down. I have seen a lot of changes in the lives of some students. Fragmentation's, jealousies - and although always trying to look for the reasons why, it is sometimes very difficult to understand. For instance is it our teaching, our example; or is it our own character that is in doubt. In my travels I sometimes encounter disharmony and problems where the politics are self motivated. This is not what we are trying to project. I have asked myself is this really Aikido, with love and harmony.



We create self-discipline in many ways. We must ask ourselves what we hold dear - principles, family, self development, dojo, association, country - some or all of these. We need to build and work hard to overcome the things that disrupt our understanding. We must build strong associations with aikidoka - of whatever grade, who will discipline themselves. We must ask ourselves whether we are doing enough for own development, enough for the dojo and the association and above all are we helping to create friendship and understanding of others. We must try and make a better environment for everyone, practitioners or not. This is the biggest discipline of all, trying to make our everyday life the same as it is in the dojo. In other words trying to make our own world a dojo.



I feel that only Aikido is a common leveller in any kind of physical practice, either individually or in a group. When people wear a gi, enter the dojo, they become the same, whatever colour, creed, religion, sex or whatever position they hold in life. Not only do they become students of Aikido (and of O'Sensei) but also they enter a study of themselves both in mind and body. I have seen students climbing their own mountain, step by step. Sometimes with joy and exhilaration, sometimes with sorrow - not fully understanding what is wanted from them.



As teachers we should try and build a situation in the dojo (often referred to as a religious hall) of trust and of being approachable at all times. This I feel is very important - that the sensei is seen to have authority at all times - because of the knowledge through study and example that they show (both on and of the tatami). This authority can be difficult for different reasons. In my experience it is impossible to do everything right all the time, you can





only do what you think is right at the time.

Building on trust - is sometimes overlooking things that you feel should be rectified, without apology or dominance. Personally, I have never been satisfied with my efforts when my own sensei saw me teach or practice, have never felt a high enough standard when I received my grades. This trust however has made me work and dedicate myself more, to try and obtain the peace of mind that I was worthy. My love of Aikido and fellow practitioners has seen me through these sometimes worrying times.



At the beginning of this article I said that Aikido means different things to different people. I feel that with trust and understanding, students at the moment can overcome and enjoy the discipline of ups and downs. Not only in their Aikido practice but also in their everyday lives, realizing that the quality of life is entirely up to one person in the world – themselves.



In conclusion - putting into words what Aikido means to different students is very difficult. Would I have looked at things differently if I had become a true professional (I always thought I had been a shrewd business man) or has it been better the way I have practised, showing dedication to my club and fellow students. I can only conclude that I have practised all these years trying to harmonize with family, religion, and friends, making my dedication a way of life.



I hope that some students find a peace of mind in my article, as I am not a literate man and often find some articles written about Aikido difficult to understand (especially the spiritual side of the art) I hope it helps to find the joy and pleasure that I find in my practice. The satisfaction in Aikido discipline, as in life comes from the basic - no revenge, no hatred, no jealousy, from listening, watching, achieving and failing - not from copying all things from our peers. Some masters' lifestyle is more to be avoided than envied. To help students with their quality of life through their training is I believe the ultimate aim.



I believe for Aikido to succeed and accomplish the values that are talked and written about - the basic techniques must harmonize with basic life. In the world we live in today with so much accent on material possessions, for anyone to put their hand on their heart and say they have a true friend is rare indeed. The way I try to practice and teach Aikido has allowed me so say this many times.



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