

NEWSLETTER

No.262 June 2017

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: yoshinkan.info Facebook: facebook.com/BrisbaneYoshinkanAikido/ Twitter: twitter.com/YoshinkanAikido

May Report					
New members 3		Total number of adults training 51		Total number of children training 41	
Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 26th & 27th					
Jun-3rd Kyu	Avinash Premnath	7th Kyu	Sanae Macphail	5Y3 step	Lawrence Monforte
4th Kyu	Van Morris	8th Kyu	Ana Cuthbert	3Y8 step	Cameron Blake
6th Kyu	Rebecca Qiu Tejaswini Badre	9th Kyu	Liam Cantwell Ishika Gupta	2Y7 step	Andrew Crampton
Events in June					
1. Sogo Shinsa			2. This Month's Holiday		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 9th 7:15pm~• Steps, Friday 23rd 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 24th 1:00pm~			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dojo Holiday: 26th Monday		

A little more knowledge for your Aikido

A way of art ~Aikido

In 1986, during my first year of uchi-deshi life while training as a Senshusei (student taking Riot Policeman's Course,) Yoshinkan Headquarters received a request from Japan-India Culture Association to send an instructor to India to teach Aikido for their policemen/soldiers. Master Gozo Shioda gave willing consent to it. However, no senior uchi-deshi agreed to fulfil the mission. There, they threw the handkerchief to a young uchi-deshi who was still wearing a white belt and had no experiences of teaching yet. Right, they decided to send me to India by drawing a plan. Firstly, let him graduate the course at the end of the year with Shodan rank, which was the course's graduating rank anyway, and then give him the second-dan rank (sounds better than the first-dan) in March in the following year. Then, send him to India in May no matter if he was good or not. Well, it was a quite crazy and irresponsible idea, I think.

I followed their plan obediently in a blind way being the lowest positioned uchi-deshi and surely, I was standing in India in the next year. I was only twenty-one years old, as green as grass, looking very young and skinny. Certainly, I did not look strong nor an experienced martial artist. I was forced to answer a lie by the Japan-India Culture Association when I was interviewed by a local newspaper to say I was twenty-five years old with an Aikido 3rd-dan rank. Because a young and weak-looking Japanese so-called Aikido instructor came to the town, the local young men decided to tease him. Whenever I was walking outside they gathered around me and asked me to demonstrate Aikido techniques on them. They were ready to prove that the techniques were useless and I was weak. I could not avoid their challenges. They did not easily yield to the force of my techniques but fought against it. I used all the might to make the techniques work, but with smiles, and shook their hands as if we became good friends immediately after the technique. In this way, I was able to avoid starting fights and leaving hatred between us. These daily challenges from ordinary people who knew nothing about Aikido became my effective training to learn how techniques worked, how people reacted and how I should manage and adjust the techniques in reality.

One day, when I was stretching in the dojo after a Judo class (we shared the dojo) a Judo student approached me with a tanto (wooden knife) in his hand. He questioned while grinning if Aikido used it though Judo never did. I answered yes and told him we had disarming techniques. He happily listened to my reply and said, "Show me." This was a proper challenge. It was not an official match, of course, and there was no starting call. As soon as he said "Show me," the fight had begun. I was already judging *maai* (distance between opponents) when I saw him approaching me. As I answered his questions, I closed *maai* to avoid receiving unnecessary feint attacks and observed his movements carefully. I saw his empty hand, not the tanto hand, made a fist.

NEWSLETTER

So, I realised he was intending to punch instead of stabbing or slashing the knife. At the moment he pulled back his fist I pressed his fist backwards with my right hand so that he could not punch. In conjunction with my action, I saw he pulled back his tanto in the line of Yokomen-uchi. My body naturally reacted to his motion and I stepped diagonally forward blocking the tanto arm, and applied ude-garami. His body was smashed sideway, without knowing Aikido ukemi, and slammed his side of head heavily. His face got distorted harshly. It was not him, but I, who was so surprised at the brilliant effect of technique.

Aikido takes kata-training method (form training - detailed choreographed patterns of movements practised either solo or in pairs) and though this method is very efficient it is hard to feel if one is really obtaining useful skills. Myself, I was not confident at all whether I was growing stronger as a fighter or not. I assume everyone has a similar doubt. The purpose of kata-training is to imprint the specific body movements thoroughly and train one's body through the certain movements either by oneself or with partner, shite and uke. This method was created about 400 years ago by samurai who actually used the skills they earned from the kata-training to survive the battles. We, however, who live in this modern society hardly have any chances to try the skills in the real situations and we are sceptical about one's own ability. It was a great joy to find out that I actually picked the slight movements of an opponent and my body reacted to them without me thinking against the sudden challenger. It was all because I repeated hundreds of times the same movements against the same attacks and the body remembered them. This was the first time I appreciated the value of kata-training through this incident in India.

Today, MMA type martial arts are very popular which take a show style match. I understand that this is one of the ways to appreciate martial arts, but when the purpose of hard training is to beat someone up it is unsuitable for me. I indeed did not enjoy the feeling of boxing matches when I was training boxing during my high school age. As I won the matches I had to punch more men whom I did not hate or have a grudge against. You know, how can you punch someone when you even do not know him with a sane state of mind? I could not see the reason to punch a stranger or to give a dirty look to each other in a threatening attitude before the matches.

I believe that the beauty of *bushido* is about fighting against oneself but not against someone else. "Do" means a way, a path, a life and can be interpreted as an art. It is the "do" in Aikido. For instance, the purpose of the professional blacksmith's in medieval times - the masters of *katana* forging - was to pursue the sharpest blades and the most beautiful shape and radiance even though *katana* were used to kill people. It was in their art and life that they kept aiming for further heights, always fighting to defeat one's own skills through repeating the tedious same movements -melting, hammering and edging, just like kata-training.

Our Aikido is the same. This is a path to pursue the ultimate Aikido technique through repeating the kata techniques thousands of times as we study the angles of hands and feet, ways and angles of moving and stepping, timing to move, ways of using the centre power, ways of adjusting balance as such by applying fine and subtle changes and attempts, all while we enjoy the taste of each technique being edged and polished. You know, the height of Aikido technique I believe is the technique to disarm an opponent's mind by your presence; as Master Gozo Shioda said, "Becoming friends with the man who came to kill you." The true Aikido is the art of ultimate harmony. Finally, one thing I can say is that the most important thing about the kata-training is the accumulation of them, and each accumulation of kata-training gives a steady step towards the height of the art without failure. Please, keep enjoying your training!

Osu,
Michiharu Mori