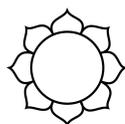


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改善 KAIZEN



IMPROVEMENT OR CHANGE FOR THE BETTER



改善 *Kaizen* ***(Improvement or change for the better)***

The main purpose or intrinsic purpose of one's [Karatedō](#) 空手道 is for one to improve or make a change within oneself that is transcendence; this is known as [Kaizen](#) 改善. For instance, when one partakes in Karatedō, one is striving to better oneself; i.e., there is usually something “missing” or lacking on one's life that motivates one to seek a change. Granted many sign up or into a Karatedō [Dōjō](#) 空手道 道場, because they wish to learn how to fight or protect themselves. However, via one's training, one realizes very soon that the pugilistic aspect is the smallest part of one's Karatedō, because the visceral factor of Karatedō is for one to manifest a better self; this is then represented in one's life by being calm, patience, respectful, loving, empathetic, and humble. All of the bowing (“rei-ing”) 礼 is down for one to learn to be or act humbly; too many think of bowing to another as a sign of submissiveness and thus, catering to another person's Ego, which truthfully, many times it may be so; but, that is not the true essence of bowing or showing anyone respect; the truest form of one lacking Ego and thusly, understand the Dō 道 (path) or Way (road) in Karate is for one to be demonstrating humility constantly and manifesting that reality at all times; i.e, being [Zen](#) 禅 or in the moment, which is also known as [Genjōkōan](#) 現成公案, or the Actualization of Reality.

Accordingly, one continues one's practice to maintain a balanced state of being in one's life. That is transcendence, but that only comes to fruition via dedication, discipline, humility, and getting lost within the moment of one's training or as I say, “Shikan Suetto” 只管 スエット, which means ‘just sweat.’ This is brought to realization through training alongside other Karatekas 空手家 (practitioners of Karatedō), as well as heeding a seasoned Sensei's (teacher's) adages of acumen (proverbs/words of wisdom). And by Shikan Suetto, one is therefore in one's moment at the very instance, and can realize that is True Reality. This underscores how wonderful Karatedō is and why so many older Karatekas in their senior years still practice with vigor and are lucid and strong, not just physically, but more imperatively mentally, spiritually, and psychologically. One good example of this is a relationship that I have and have had with

Lehner Shihan (in his 70s) from [Worldō Oyama Karatedō Organization](#) 総道 大山 空手 協会, but whom was with [Kyokushinkai Kan Karate](#) 極真会館 空手 in its hey-day He is sharp as a [Katana](#) 刀 and super strong; his spirit is [Bushidō](#) 武士道 (The Warrior's Way). Suffice it to say, there are many like him across the world, but these are true Karatekas and should be listened to with open ears and venerated. Now, I am not talking about older people that walk or parade their new Obis 帯 (belts) with their high ranks and tell these exaggerated or bloated stories of prowess. Albeit, that it is hard to discern for the beginner, and even some advanced or senior ranks, but one way to recognize a True Karateka from a self-postulating one is their demeanor, their posture when talking, their overall interaction with ALL ranks high and low, as well as who was their [Sensei](#) 先生 (teacher)/ [Shihan](#) 師範 (Master)/ Hanshis 範士 (Expert). Today, sadly, a lot of Sensei or Shihans gloat over their accomplishments and overstate their heritage or experience, to gain respect from their students and thus, gain a following.

In my [dharmas](#) (experiences or phenomena), I have been around many other higher ranks (Senseis/Shihans/Hanshis) and they talk about who many tournaments they won and who many people they beat up and or how strong they used to be. But knowing the history of the style that I was in, e.g., [Kyokushinkai Kan](#) or [World Oyama Karate](#), I knew stories or fabrications when I was listening to them and quickly discerned who was talk and who was for real, per se. Of course to be respectful or not to embarrass them, I nodded and said “Osu,” because it is not my place to “call them out” or try to undermine them; neither is it my prerogative to judge them, which it may seem that I am doing presently; however, that is not what I am demonstrating, rather, I am just pointing out experiences that I have had that illuminate one who does not represent or epitomize [Kaizen](#) within oneself; because as one does change for the better via one's truing, one manifests a many new improvements, which starts as one enters the threshold of one's dōjō with a big “OSU!” 押忍. This initiates one ready for a change, but not expecting one, because that is Ego-laden, so one strives to be in the moment ([Zen](#) or [Genjōkōan](#)) and hence, Kaizen will be exhibited. Ergo, freedom from the tethers of Samsara (continuous cycle life) and the brambles of social pressures, such as job, matriculation, and ‘friends’. And tis wonderful kaizen allows one

to see one's Ego-laden perceptions about everything, hence, releasing oneself from delusion or Abstract Reality.

Therefore, in one's [Kihon](#) 基本, [Kata](#) 型, or [Kumite](#) 組手, one improves oneself, as one does in one's [Mokusō](#) 黙想 in [Seiza](#) 正座 (Karatedō's Meditation in Formal Sitting Position) or Zazen 坐禪 (Buddhist Meditation). One embodies all aspects of one's life through one's practice, which is repetition after repetition. A superlative expression said by [Rōnin](#) 浪人 (Fuedal contracted Samurai) [Miyamoto Musashi](#) 宮本 武蔵 opined, "One thousand times: practice; ten thousand times: refinement." This achievement for one is Kaizen; i.e., one's initial desire as well as one's committed personification or embodiment to train in the Martial Arts, and in this case Karatedō already displays the aspect of Kaizen. It is the cornerstone of one's training; it is one's essence to train, even if one is not aware of it, which is fine, but through training, one understands that is what training in Karatedō is truly about: the betterment of oneself or succinctly, improvement. Thankfully through this, we as Sentient Beings and more aptly stated as Karatekas learnt that the journey that one is on is only about oneself. I.e., the path or road that one is on is not about comparison or juxtaposition. It is only about oneself becoming more balanced and "complete," so to speak; not to suggest that one is incomplete as that is Subject versus Object, dualistic or discriminatory and thus, an insular paradigm, but rather, one feels that change in oneself via the attributes of patience (instead of impatience), veneration (instead of insolence), humility (instead of arrogance), love (instead of hate/anger), compassion/empathy (instead of selfishness), and bestowing/giving instead of avarice/greed), all of which is simply the removal of one's Ego or Egocentric viewpoints/beliefs. That is [Kaizen](#).

So, by stripping away the layers of Ego like a [Katana](#) slicing through its target, or [Mizu](#) 水 (water flowing and one of the 5 Great Elements: [Godai](#) 五大) one can remove Egocentric values that are shackling oneself from any growth or [Kaizen](#). The maxim of *Mizu No Kokoro* 水の心 or **Mind Like Water** highlights the correct mindset. That is why [Karatedō](#) and its training is so important; one has to commit to oneself or one's craft and from this sweating, pain, and

unmitigated perseverance, change happens; it becomes happenstance on a daily basis. The aforesaid layers is how one progresses and can reach one's desire for betterment without compulsively fixating on it. And for most, [neuroticism](#) or compulsion is at the forefront of one's being or consciousness, because of how society is or the societal paradigms of success, which almost always has to do with money, power, fame or celebrity, i.e., all having to do with the satiation of one's Ego via externals, and nothing to do with one's true character or being, i.e., internal expositions. Thusly, one does this when practicing one's craft, which can also include one's [Makiwara](#) 巻藁 (sandbag or brick conditioning for the Seiken/Fist 正拳 or Sune/Shin 卜ウ), as well as literature to further one's understanding of one's Martial Art or [Budō](#) 武道 (Martial Way). Conversation or discourse about paradigms is good as long as Ego does not rear its insidious head; meaning, as long as one keeps one's Ego at check and does not get into a dualistic contention from a black or white, good or bad, or superior/inferior point of view. Moreover, with helping others, one is helping oneself; i.e., when we help each other in [Kihon](#), at a, or [Kumite](#), we are actually looking into a mirror. The other person is a reflection of ourselves, and thus, we need to acknowledge that, so that we can remove or discriminatory mindset and assist the other as one would assist oneself. So, when we show or help another in the aforesaid aspects or when we are talking in a [dōjō](#) or at a [Karatedō](#) event as an Organization or visiting another dōjō, we better ourselves since we are helping others. So, know that with helping others, one is helping oneself; not that it is the motivation for one to help another, but what tenet that is underscored here is the act of not being biased or thinking that someone or something is external to juxtaposed to one; that is **Daishin** 大進 or [Magnanimous Mind](#), i.e., that everything is equal or in balance with another or not viewed as external or individual. It also literally means "greatly generous" or possessing the virtue of being of great mind and heart. Furthermore, [Kaizen](#) is buttressing of the [Seven Great Virtues of Bushidō](#), which are: [Rectitude](#) 義 [Courage](#) 勇 [Benevolence](#) 仁 [Respect](#) 礼 [Honesty](#) 誠 [Honor](#) 名誉 [Loyalty](#) 忠義.

The aforementioned morals are all encompassing in the term or use of diction "Osu!" And every time one says it, one is stripping away the layers of Ego and thus, allowing one to feel an Interconnectedness to all living beings in the Universe. The journey is again within oneself and

all the hard work and discipline that one puts forth is only a reflection of one's [Original Face/True Nature](#), which is one's true self or being. So, remember to shake hands with all Karatekas regardless of rank and title; i.e., always use two-hands, always say with conviction; "OSU!" Always help one another, always take care of one's [dōjō](#) by cleaning it or helping the [Uchideshis](#) 内弟子 (live-in apprentices) there if there are any in the task(s) of overall cleanness of a dōjō. Know it is a "home" away from your "home"; i.e., that it is an extension of oneself or one's "home," which is a label for one to identify with, but instead of a cold label or an absolute designation, know that a dōjō and thus, one's training in it, is where one's "home" truly is. One is at "home" when one is lost in one's training and demonstrating [Kaizen](#). This is what we are supposed to strive for, in which we remove our Egos and Shikan Suetto. We are supposed to always be doing Kaizen, which has nothing to do with rank, title, system, or organization. It is a Way/Dō that one aspires to and [Karatedō](#) is one's means in doing so.

OSU 押忍 and Namaste नमस्ते!

リベラ 先生 開帳
~ Rivera Sensei
Kaichō