

古武道 - Karatedo / Kobudo



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空手道 古武道

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Karatedō (Empty-Handed Way/Path) and Kobudō (Old Martial Way) is more about one's journey as a practitioner rather than one of becoming strong and being able to hurt or enact pugilistic tendencies unto others.

“Presumably, as a martial artist, I do not fight for gain or loss, am not concerned with strength or weakness, and neither advance a step or retreat a step. The enemy does not see me. I do not see the enemy. Penetrating to a place where heaven and earth have not yet divided, where Ying and Yang have not arrived. I quickly and necessarily gain effect.”

~ Takuan Sōhō from *The Unfettered Mind* (pp. 112)

As a Karateka 空手家 (practitioner of 空手道 Karatedō), the essence of our journey is about oneself. One is to ultimately learn about oneself. That is what a Sensei 先生 (teacher) strives to instill above all others ideas, concepts, or paradigms. I.e., a teacher imprints unto his/her deshis 子 (students) to look inwardly and to garner strength or purpose via this. In Buddhism 仏教 this is considered one's True Nature or Original Face or the Face Before your Parents were Born. This is one of the main purposes of Mokushō 黙想 (meditation), meaning one is to learn to calm one's mind and sit in a peace-like state where thoughts and perceptions are allowed to flow freely and for one to NOT grab onto or ruminate on or about.

However today, virtually all styles are preachy and demonstrate a dichotomy or Subject versus Object perception, in which one style indoctrinates its students to have a superior mindset or paradigm opposed to other styles as if one is better than another. Needless to say, of course some styles stress Kata 型 or forms or Kihōn 基本 (basics) over fighting as some styles dismiss the aforementioned to solely concentrate on Kumite 組手 (fighting). But, the styles that strive or put forth a healthy balance or Middle Way instill the importance of all facets or attributes of Karatedō. So, when one is partaking in a Way or Do under a Sensei that equally values both and thusly, teaches all attributes of Karatedō, then that school is manifesting Kobudō, which represents what Karatedō is supposed to be about, which again is about oneself (spiritual self or True Nature), i.e., one's journey/path or Do (Way).

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In regards to Sōhō's opine, he defines it: "Not fight for gain or loss, am not concerned with strength or weakness," according to Sōhō means: "not vying for victory or worrying about defeat, and not being concerned with the functions of strength or weakness" (113). And "neither advance a step or retreat a step" means: "taking neither one step forward nor one step to the rear; victory is gained without string from where you are." And the reference to "me" in the sentence of "the enemy does not see me," means one's "True Self," and not one's "perceived self." So, clearly, "I do not see the enemy" means: "[that] because I do not take the personal view of the perceived self, [then] I do not see the martial art of the enemy's perceived self." Hence, the "True Self is the self that existed before the division of heaven and earth and before one's father and mother were born. This self is the self within me, the birds and the beasts, the grasses and the trees and all phenomena. It is exactly what is called the Buddha-nature" (114).

And pertaining to "Penetrating to a place where heaven and earth...and necessarily gain effect," Sōhō expounds: "to set one's eye on the place that existed before heaven became heaven and earth became earth, before Ying and Yang came into being. It is to use neither thought nor reasoning and to look straight ahead. In this way, the time of gaining great effect will surely arrive" (115).

These eloquent maxims from Sōhō explain and rather expressively, the journey of one in Martial Arts (武道 Budō); i.e., Kobudō, which is Karatedō. And wonderfully there are some Senseis that further these concepts/perceptions in Okinawa, Japan in their respective dōjōs 道場, but in the U.S., this is far from what is usually taught or mandated, sadly. Presently, most schools are only concerned or more concerned with the brute aspect or the power of Kobudō or Karatedō; i.e., the lack of emphasis on the spiritual aspect of oneself. Suffice it to say, fighting is imperative and one learns a great deal about oneself within Kumite and therefore, it is an imperative to one's journey, but most schools stress this as the pinnacle of one's so called journey when it is truly the end result of one's journey.

In my former style, the Original Knockdown style created by Sosai Mas Oyama and under his protege Soshu Shigeru Oyama, Kumite was stressed immensely via endless non-timed rounds of full-contact fighting round after round after round; but, so was Kata and Kihōn. The Kumite was of course a way to express oneself with veracity and is how one grows as a fighter and learning how to execute Tsukis 突き (punches) and Geris 蹴 (kicks), and Wazas 技 (techniques), etc., Soshu also massive and thankfully stresses Kihōn and Kata, which he is a master or amazing at the aforementioned; he demonstrates how movements should be, that display proper balance, footwork, breathing, power, speed, and of course beauty. He is poetry in motion when doing anything basically, but I may be biased. There were times that we did one

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Dachi 立 (stance) for 20-30 or 45 minutes and would do one more and that was class with some free-fighting to finish up with, but I digress, but point illuminated.

So, needless to say, this is underscored by wonderful masters (above mentioned) and their students who in turn via True teaching that will refrain from fisticuffs and acting proud or demonstrating Ego in or out of the school; i.e., they are transcended by their Sensei. Ergo, one's Ego is removed and one's True Nature is apparent or manifests from within or internally that exudes outwardly or externally. This is underscored via one's attributes or ethical tenets, e.g., humbleness, humility, veneration, empathy, patience, and compassion, which is only achieved when one is balanced (The Middle Way) through one's practice, such as Karatedō, and Meditation, which is in short: discipline. Moreover, this is also known as a demonstration of Interconnectedness and Universality or Buddha's Nature, which is called Busshō 佛性.

Sōhō articulates on this:

“There is nothing clearer to us than life. Whether a man be rich or poor, if he does not live out a long life, he will not accomplish his true purpose. Even if one had to throw away thousands in wealth and valuables to do so, life is something he should buy. It is said that life is a of small account compared with right-mindedness. In truth, it is right-mindedness that is most esteemed. Nothing is more precious than life. Yet, at the moment when we must throw away this valued life and stand on right-mindedness, there is nothing more highly esteemed than right-mindedness. Looking carefully at the world, we can see that there are many people who throw away their lives lightly. But do you suppose one person in a thousand would die for right-mindedness? It would seem that among the humble servant class, contrary to what you might expect, there are many who would. Yet it would be difficult for people who think themselves wise to do the same.”

The Unfettered Mind (pps. 68-69)

So, right-mindedness is representative of the Middle Way. It is about one's balance of one's True Nature or Original Face, which is manifested via one's journey (Way or Dō). This is how Kobudō or Karatedō is essential to a community as a result of the individual. Hence, it breeds a serenity as does Buddhist Temples, which positively affects the people of a commune by reinforcing that we are all the same, but yet different, however, share the world or Universe as sentient beings. This can ostensibly alleviate or repudiate discrimination or biased, and of course

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hatred and the so-called Seven Deadly Sins, such as envy, greed, lust, pride, pride, gluttony, and wrath, which is in the shroud of Ego. And through one's practice of Kobudō or Karatedō and Zazen 坐禪 (meditation), one manifests one's balance or Middle Way as does water (i.e., it seeks its own level). And as one does this, one transcends oneself and one's perceptions. Then one's temperament is calm and tranquil (nirvana). Therefore, one's practice in Karatedō is heightened or elevated to another level of course. This translates in Karatedō to more fluidity in form or basics and of course fighting. I.e., one does without thinking much as a beginner will do in their first class when trying to keep up with other students. Their mind is a clean slate or empty canvas and they just do (Shikan) 只管. And is why inevitably one reaches the rank of Shodansha 初段者 (black belt with a degree); and with their continued training the Ensō 円相 (No Beginning, No End: Zen Brush Circle) is represented by the Sensei's or Shihan's obi 帯 (belt) that frays and thus, turns back to white due to their longevity in their practice of Karatedō. This is one beautiful physical aspect/manifestation of one's practice and Karatedō or Kobudō.

So, if one can be fortunate enough to have a Sensei that emphasizes the above attributes and instills them along with the physicality of Karatedō, then one has a True dharma in the Martial Arts (Budō) or Kobudō. One's Sensei will lead by example via his/her training, dedication, discipline, tact, acumen, humility, and the lack of Ego. This type of dharma (experience) is everlasting and will ostensibly manifest in one's life translating to all others that one engages. Hence, it is why aspects, such as Kihōn and Kata in Karatedō/Kobudō/Budō are so very important in one's training/practice. They both enable one to focus on oneself and one's abilities and to realize those that are lacking and thus, need improvement. This is how one transcends oneself and why Budō/Karatedō/Kobudō is so imperative to one and to a community. A dōjō should be a place where everyone looks at as a Temple, per se; i.e., a venue that others, especially the deshis have or demonstrate veneration towards, so that not only the people training, but other people who are not training yet, can see the Right-Mindedness and the Middle Way that one should live one's life as. Not to be better than others, but rather to exemplify balance, humbleness, Interconnectedness, and Universality. And via the lack of Ego, sentient being's spirits will be illuminated and therefore, empathy and compassion will reign supreme amongst one another as the unity of humans abounds, which underscores the percepts of helping one another instead of enabling discrimination, segregation, and hatred, which is Ego or more aptly stated: ignorance.

押忍 リベラ 先生 開帳
~ Osu! Rivera Sensei Kaichō

リベラ 道場

リベラ 道場 RIVERA DŌJŌ