

On Karate-do, Budo and Technique

By Master Kawanabe

End is beginning and life is the repetition of good and bad, fortune and misfortune. They say that without experiencing hardship or sadness, we can't feel sympathy with others; neither knows what's on the other person's mind. I would like to try to interpret hardship as a polisher of myself to be a real man. Through Karate-do we would like to change everything into the bright light as our final goal. We are in the pursuit of returning to the light, just like our soul is in our Karate-do.

In my view on Budo, theory and practical technique must be like two sides of a coin or two wheels of a car. If either one has a defect it will not be a correct or ideal Budo. Theory and practical technique must always be matched with each other. Therefore this Do (Michi) consists of both the technical and philosophical factors in balance with each other. As for practical technique, according to physical law we can first attain a desirable technique with full power and natural movement. Even a strong muscular person, whose technique is against this physical principle, will have performance different from the desirable correct technique in Budo.

As for the mental aspect as an idea or philosophy, Michi is a way leading to the spirit of the harmonization which is a symbol and genius of the great nature and supreme virtue. I think the way, Do, or Michi is the most dignified and respectable one every person should follow and this is the only way to realize real peace in the world.

I recently feel keenly how little movement and power can produce big power and effective moves through a relaxed and integrated movement. With regards to the physical theory on Karate, *chyu den* may be better called *kaden* but is also generally known as *Tanden*. In our karate-do, *jyu* is upper, *chyu* is middle and *ka* means lower, and the part just below the navel is what we generally call *Tanden* or *kaden*. *Chyu* means middle and points to the pit of stomach and *Tanden* is the lower part of stomach located about 3 centimeters below the navel.

Every ideal movement should be generated with this part called *Tanden*. *Tanden* which is regarded as a very important part in Budo or yoga is the source of breathing and relaxation and controlling our sentiment you know very well. The greater, stronger (centripetal) force generates the greater centrifugal force. How the power generated in the *Tanden* is expressed in movements and technical aspects as an ideal one is the problem. This is what we have to study so seriously.

The content generated in the *Tanden* can be first transmittable to the ideal techniques with the support and coordination of the lower part (ankles and knees). Of course the waist must be in peace with the lower parts, especially with the *Tanden*. When this is done, every movement can be done in a relaxed way and the techniques with your upper body can also be done in quite a relaxed way. You can punch using the power of the lower part of the body. Here again we need to study the standing pose which is the

source of generating everything. I never wish to lead you into a maze. Anyway, you will become your very best as you pursue karate-do seriously.

Here is a rough description of the Zen priest Dogen who lived more than 700 years ago. He said “Michi ni shitagatute yuku ni tokudou su, tokudou no toki wa michi kanarazu michi ni shitagau mononari.” This Japanese saying means when you devote yourself in the pursuit of enlightenment along the passage, you may attain enlightenment.

Then after that, the passage will take you higher automatically. Tokudou means enlightenment. As you see here, theory and practice are completely matched. One illustration can be available in various fields. Karate can be viewed in the same way as Yoga or Zen in some sense.

The most important observance for samurai is not to be disgraceful and maintain honor, pride, loyalty and to despise meanness and cowardly actions. In order to practice and follow the “bushi-do” samurai need to be strong mentally and physically as well as intellectually. These are the reasons why they were so devoted to the practice of the Ken as to risk their life either in accomplishing the skill of ken (Budo) or attaining their duties.

I think we should all learn the Samurai’s earnest desire and passion for making our karate skill as well as our crystal spirit.