

Judo Principles

Last Updated Wednesday, 18 March 2009

The Way of Seiryoku Zenyo-Jita Kyoei and Its Instruction
By Shinichi Oimatsu (Kodokan)
The Bulletin for the Scientific Study of Kodokan Judo
Volume VI, 1984

I. Preface

Jigoro Kano (1860-1936) studied the representative forms of Jujitsu known as Tenjin shinyo-ryu and Kito-ryu, and was eventually able to comprehend the heart of their mysterious natures. He felt that these forms of Jujitsu had something of value for the contemporary education of young people. He also achieved the three purposes of physical education, self-defense, and moral training for young people at the same time as improving upon the fundamentals of Jujitsu. Jigoro Kano went on to establish Kodokan Judo based on mastery of the fundamental truths of the "Way", the basis of human and social life. In the 15th year of Meiji (1882) Professor Kano named the place of such teaching as Kodokan.

Jigoro Kano continued to pursue the Way of Kodokan Judo even more and in the 4th year of Taisho (1915) he proclaimed "Judo is the most effective way to develop the strength of the mind and body" as the fundamental meaning and declared his guideline of Seiryoku Zenyo-Jita Kyoei (Worthy Use of Human Efforts. Mutual Prosperity) based on this concept.

II. Judo is the Way of Seiryoku Zenyo-Jita Kyoei

(1) The Concept of Kodokan Judo at the Time of Its Founding

Professor Kano stated this fundamental attitude in an address seven years after the founding of Kodokan: "Judo is a valuable asset. The more one strives to improve, the more Judo will collectively become an educational method of physical growth, mental growth, and moral growth at the same time. The reason for this is that as a consequence of much study of the former forms of Jujitsu the necessary elements were kept, needless elements were discarded, and the most suitable thing for today's society was formed." Moreover, Kodokan Judo "achieves the three purposes of physical growth, challenge, and moral training simultaneously." For the following reasons the term "Judo" was chosen instead of the more general term of "Jujitsu": (i) Jujitsu was dangerous as including the arts of strangle-hold and joint-twisting, (ii) Jujitsu lost its value as an art since it was being taught by unqualified people, and (iii) Jujitsu came to be thought of as something vulgar because of charging admission fees and entertaining people by showing Jujitsu. For these and other reasons as well the name "Judo" was given.

Professor Kano synthesized the three purposes of Judo and what he regarded highly was "the realization of the Way of managing human and social life." This was especially deeply related to moral law." That is to say, 1) cultivation of morals, 2) refinement of mental development, and 3) application of the doctrine of the challenging spirit of Judo to everyday life. Regarding the third point in particular, what is taught at the dojo (training hall) and what is learned about Judo are not where Judo training stops but where it starts. All that is taught and learned should be made a part of one's own life as well as a part of society.

(2) Seiryoku Zenyo: Theory of Application

The principles of technique of Kodokan Judo are "kuzushi (unbalancing the opponent), tsukuri (movement and positions to prepare to throw the opponent), and kake (throwing)". These are explained as the principles of Seiryoku Zenyo today; however, in the early period of Judo the principles were explained mainly by such terms as "Gentleness turns away the sturdy", "the unity of gentleness and strength", and other phrases. What provided the pioneering role of "Judo", namely "Seiryoku Zenyo" were Professor Kano's ideas which were set forth in the 43rd year of Meiji (1910). This is also substantiated by the recollection of Shuichi Nagaoka (10th dan) of what was already being taught to Professor Kano's disciples in the 30th year of Meiji (1897).

What is the Application of Seiryoku Zenyo:

1. To Be a Person of Value

As a human being, one must set his/her goal in life and discipline his/her naturally endowed abilities. Moreover, since people "are not something that can exist apart from society" and since the fortune of today is a result of the past, everyone should develop his/her given abilities. If one contributes to society, the personality traits-even if there is a difference in achievements-can develop.

2. Determination-Judgement-Effort

To become a person of value one should make it a purpose to believe in one's best, one should judge the steps to achieve this purpose, and once this has been done one should gather all his/her strength and work hard.

3. Seiryoku Zenyo--Application

The momentum of determination, judgment, and effort comes from one's own strength. All the phenomena of the universe function on strength. In comparison of similar living beings those with much seiryoku will have a more magnificent life.

Therefore, everyone must strive to nurture seiryoku. To achieve this one must be moderate in eating and drinking, exercising, sleeping, etc. However, on the other hand, training in the spiritual aspects of life must not be neglected. It is also important how this Seiryoku is utilized. This utilization is important not only for one's own problems, but also for society and the nation.

(3) Judo is the Best Application of Seiryoku

Research and study in Professor Kano's Judo principles and techniques continued and the following was written in "Kodokan Judo Gaisetsu" (Outline of Kodokan Judo) in JUDO, No. 2 published by Kodokan from the 4th year of Taisho (1915):

"Judo is the most effective use of the body and spirit. Judo training is to practice attack and defense to strengthen one's own body and spirit, and is the realization of the essence of Judo. From this, one is perfected and becomes a person to benefit society. This is the ideal purpose of Judo training."

(4) The Way of Seiryoku Zenyo Jita Kyohei

Professor Kano stated in the kunwa (discourse on teachings) of the kagamibiraki ceremony, (the first day of Judo practice) at Kodokan in January of the 11th year of Showa (1936): "The fundamental meaning of Judo is the most practical application of seiryoku. With virtue as the purpose, it is the most effective application of seiryoku. Virtue aids in the continued development of group life and anything that hampers this is bad. In this meaning loyalty and faith are virtues. The continued development of group life and social life is attained by sojo sojo (mutual help and mutual compromise) and jita kyohei. Therefore, this is also a virtue and is the fundamental meaning of Judo".

The meaning of Seiryoku Zenyo was clarified even more. According to Kodokan Judo research, the Kodokan Bunkakai (Kodokan Culture Association) was established [in 1922] with the purpose of serving society through practice of the principles of Seiryoku Zenyo, the nature of which is found in the following pledge:

PLEDGE

This association idealizes the achievement of all man's purposes in accordance with the best application of seiryoku.

Based on this doctrine, this association:

1. is determined to develop each and every body into robust health, to refine one's knowledge, and morals, and to become an effective part of society;
2. with regards to the nation, will respect national unity, esteem history, and be diligent at improving what is necessary for the prosperity of the nation;
3. with regards to society, will effect thorough harmony through mutual help and mutual compromise with individuals and with groups;
4. with regards to the world in general, will remove itself from racial prejudice and strive just as equally to elevate culture, and seek the prosperity of mankind.

ESSENTIAL POINTS

1. the best application of seiroku-zenyo lies in one's self-realization,
2. one's self-realization is attained through the help of others' self-realization,
3. self-realization is the basis of human prosperity.

(5) Judo and Dojo Training

In the Kunwa of the 11th year of Showa, Professor Kano stated the following regarding the relationship of kata (form) and randori (free practice) in a dojo to Judo: "Just as there are many ways to climb Mt. Fuji, there are just as many ways to understand Judo principles. As for me, I started from the randori training of old Jujitsu. The same way is also applicable to Judo. However, this is not an explicit explanation of Judo. Study is never ending and the definition evolves that Judo is the most effective way of using mental and physical strength". The "ju" of Judo is the way of gentleness and is in contrast to "strength". Even in the Chinese classics such phrases as "gentleness turns away strength" can be found. The "do" of Judo is not the sense of the word "way" that means a street, but the sense of the word that is a path commonly referred to in spiritual matters of man. It signifies the path which should be followed in personal and social relationships. The method of "ju" that Professor Kano got from kata and randori as a method that pervades human and social life is what became "Judo".

Therefore, it is easier to learn by actually experiencing through the body from the first step of kata and randori, and this should also be made an active principle in life.

III. Items to Be Seriously Considered in Instruction as a Way of Education

How is Judo taught in the dojo?

(1) Jita Kyoei and Rei (Etiquette) Instruction

As long as people are alive, human relations is an important matter. If respect and affection towards others are lost, then we are just like animals. Hence, "bowing" etiquette is important. Just as the character indicates, the left half symbolizes the "gods" and the right half symbolizes "a religious offering". In an agricultural society an offering was made to the gods at the end of the harvest as appreciation and to pray for further divine protection. This conventional practice is rei and is the present-day aspect of respect for mankind and conforms to equality in the Constitution.

Rei is classified as that towards individuals of higher rank, towards those of lower rank, and towards those of equal rank. However, what should be seriously considered today is the rei towards those the eye cannot see; that is to say, the public spirit. It is important that this last form of rei be taught in the dojo over a long period of time. This rei is also exemplified in the term omoiyari (thoughtfulness) of Confucius. Sympathizing with others are not causing them trouble- this is the true spirit of rei. And this also constitutes the basis of the spirit of Jita Kyoei.

(2) The techniques of tai-sabaki (preparing oneself to meet an opponent), kuzushi, tsutkuri, and kake embody the fundamental principles through one's efforts in practice and a rational and scientific nature become part of oneself.

There exists a realization of technique as one of the main points of instruction in a dojo. This evolves from kuzushi, tsukuri, kake, as well as tai-sabaki which leads to the skill of tsukuri. Kuzushi is making the opponent's body unbalanced through rendering him vulnerable to the attack. Tsukuri is making the opponent's body unbalanced (kuzushi=preparing the opponent), and holding your own position and stance ready to attack (preparing oneself). Kake is to pass into the overcoming and deciding movement at the instant of preparing the opponent and preparing oneself. All of the technical principles should be utilized to their utmost.

As for instruction, one must first grasp the importance of the technique of how to overcome and throw one's opponent, and after understanding the theory of the attainment of that technique as technique, one should practice that technique again and again properly as the theory prescribes. You will be aiming at the limit of your power and skill if this is done more correctly, faster, and with more strength. In this manner understanding the principles of technique and repeated practice in order to move as such principles prescribe are the fundamental attitudes of acquiring skill. Since the body will not move as prescribed from the start, notice what movement is not in accord with the principles and practice hundreds of times everyday while adjusting at the same time. It is also important to devise the tai-sabaki movement which produces smoothness in tsukuri and kake. Since the opponent at the same time has also done much to prepare, and while you adapt to these changes one must further the ability to maintain command of movement. Mind, technique, and body are refined by following this form of practice and there is value in this alone; however, the aim is not only the advancement and development of technical skill, but also-through instruction in such technique is more important to instruct this nurturing of the attitude of movement based on theory. No matter how it is studied to compensate or to cope perfectly with this, it is of prime importance to be proper in the theory in all aspects of everyday life.

(3) Attitude of Study and Creativeness

When one understands the principles of technique and tries to embody them just as they are as one's own technique, the degree of training progresses. And when the time comes to test one's technique against various opponents one becomes aware of the opponent's physique, physical strength, muscular strength, the way of grappling, favorite technique, personality, etc. that are unique to each individual. This is done in accordance with the rules, yet the method of attack and defense should be thought of as well as how to perform the most suitable technique in relation to each other. This does not mean using technique haphazardly, but whether it is one step forward or one step backward, that one step must be patterned after the one step that aims at the proper technique for the right kind of attack. And at the same time one must have the mentality and attitude that can change quickly to meet any attack from whatever direction, at whatever instant, and with whatever technique from an opponent. At this stage a comparative study is made of the elements of oneself and others of the relation of attack and defense from the standpoint of technique, of the way to win, of accumulating practice in the right manner, and of pursuing the right direction.

In this case, one must think and study oneself, but one should also consult the seniors and teachers who have already had more experience, read specialized works, and it is important to know the countermeasures of one's predecessors. Kodokan Judo techniques have gradually developed to a great number. There is a special technique of Professor Kano called ukigoshi (floating hip throw) and the story how haraigoshi (sweeping loin throw) resulted from the countermeasure against Shiro Saigo. He also painstakingly conceived tsurikomi-goshi (lifting hip throw) when haraigoshi was thwarted. He studied and developed katame-waza (holding techniques) just as his old high school opponent the large Yoshitsugu (Yoshiaki) Yamashita (10th dan) did, and the fine ukigoshi of 10th dan holders Shuichi Nagaoka and Hajime Isogai. Both katame-waza and nage-waza (throwing techniques) have been studied and widely developed. The objective is a challenge (match) in accordance with the rules and what results is the accumulation of serious training, and the study and development of technique. Today such subtle techniques have become quite diversified.

This attitude of study and creativeness-as well as being important in the study and creation of technique-is important in all aspects of human life and society. The importance of study and creativeness related to a match and technique are taught in the dojo while learning judo, but more than this, it is made to be sufficiently understood that this attitude takes on even more importance throughout the rest of one's life. Without it both personal development and public service would not exist. Without this attitude nothing can be expected of individual advancement and the development of society. Jigoro Kano referred to this attitude in the 22nd year of Meiji (1889) in "Judo and of its educational value". He stated that this attitude "is applicable not only to the purpose of a match, but also in any case of commerce, politics and education it undoubtedly serves a purpose".

This is truly something to which serious consideration should be given.

In order to raise judoists in this manner, nurturing the attitude of study and resourcefulness in dojo Judo training is of first importance. At the same time this does not stop only within the dojo, but forms an association. More than being born merely as a individual, think of one's personal role in helping society as much as possible. For the advancement and development of society, study continuously and foster the attitude that endeavors to create. This is something that should be thought of during the instruction of practice sessions.

(4) Positive Attitude (Courage)

Generally speaking, in order to stand more advantageously than your opponent in a match or in practice you must have overall strength of superior physical fitness, technical skill, and vigorous spirit. This being the case, it is something that depends on continuous effort in practice from whence it results. And in this manner vigorous spirit and courage are able to be inspired.

There have been many cases in which both physical strength and technical skill have been exemplified to a degree higher than normal. Since Judo is a form of personal contact the attributes of spirit, technical skill, and physical strength of the opponent can be directly felt. Without a superior spirit you will be overwhelmed by your opponent. As a result, there will be an inability to demonstrate the necessary technical skill or physical strength.

There are extremely numerous opportunities in Judo practice and matches to heighten a vigorous spirit that uses all one's strength in order not to lose to an opponent. It is through practice and matches that instruction is given to elevate a vigorous spirit and courage. An effort is made to make courage understood as "collectively or spiritually for the purpose of accomplishing a worthwhile goal, unrealistic strength with firmness and positiveness". In order to make this true courage a part of oneself it must be self-realized and instruction should make one strive harder. In other words, uphold truth and reason to the bitter end and nurture the attitude to stand up boldly to that which opposes truth and reason.

(5) Proper Sitting & Proper Posture-Proper Mind

The fundamental posture of Judo is the natural posture of the body; that is to say, the natural standing posture that can counter instantly when either you begin to move or receive the technique of your opponent. In Judo the natural posture of standing is fundamental (or a defensive posture but this is a temporary one). However, the proper sitting posture has also been common due to the nature of the practice dojo having tatami (straw mats) over the years. Proper sitting is maintaining the proper sitting posture, breathing from the stomach quietly, and while this continues deeply and repeatedly worldly thoughts and wicked desires are eliminated when the mind becomes calm. Then mushin (no-mind) and seishin (proper-mind) are approached. The advantageous mental state of natural posture, immobile posture and true self are easy to enter. This is due to the state of blood circulation being forced throughout all internal organs. As a result all such movements are increased and there is also a result of a stable, active effect spiritually. Thinking of one's own daily posture, approximately 2/3 of the time is spent awake and approximately 1/3 is spent asleep. Even if proper posture is maintained during the time of physical education and Judo but most of the other time the posture is not good, there is an unrecognized bad influence on the growth, development, and health of the body and spirit. Through natural posture and proper sitting the importance of posture and breathing is realized.

(6) If There is Effort, There's Always Accomplishment

Professor Kano stated that as a human being, one must set one's goal to be a person of value. There are different kinds of people but of the utmost importance is rishii, setting a purpose. Next is takudo, selecting the way to accomplish this purpose. Professor Kano continued, "Rishii and takudo, from these two things, once what should be done is decided, follows ketsuryoku (effort). We must strive until there is fulfillment" (from Seinen Shuyokun). Judo practice consists of repeating theoretical techniques and progress is measured after such repeated practice. Once an objective is set, search for the most advantageous method for it to be carried out. This attitude of not giving up quickly and pursuing thoroughly until the objective is fulfilled is something that is important no matter what line of work you choose. In the Hagakure the following is found:

"During the course of study, there is no accomplishment. At the point of accomplishment there is a contrary nature. Throughout one's life when you are thinking of dying and thinking of discontent you will become a person of accomplishment when this is noticed later".

Professor Kano always instructed his students to attend to their business with the spirit of "No, I won't give in". When he was asked to write some maxims by his students he often gave them such phrases as tsutomureba kanarazu tassu (if there is effort, there is always accomplishment), katsuryoku (effort), and others that showed the spirit of "Seiryoku zenyo".

IV. Points to Be Heeded in Instruction

Professor Kano expounded on the method of Judo instruction and put forth four items: (1) kata (form), (2) randori (free practice) (3) kogi (lectures), and (4) mondo (questions and answers). Lectures include those of a long duration for the purpose of understanding Judo more deeply and those of dealing with technique, practice lessons, and matches in general. The content of the lectures covers the history of Judo development, fundamentals, the value of training, the sport as a science, theory of physical education, and other topics. This is done logically and systematically over a long period. The latter are directly related to technique, directly related to dojo etiquette and practice attitude as well as social life, and directly related to social life as well as a social attitude.

When such lectures are given it is hoped that they will make an impression on the mind whether it might be 50 minutes or even a short 5 minute lecture on technique. When trying to make logical and systematic theory understood, it should be done within a short time. Since for most a considerable amount of time is necessary, some other time and opportunity must be considered. When planning lecture material, be careful that it is (1) adjusted according to the level of the development of the trainees and their way of life, and (2) sensitive to the trainees' feelings and their understanding. There must be a prudent choice of the lectures given by the instructors. There is a saying in Japan that "ryoyaku, kuchi ni nigashi" (good medicine tastes bad). In the Hagakure: "In the world there are many who teach and few who enjoy that teaching. And those who follow those teachings are rare". To achieve a result through education in the Way is difficult. This is actually a turning point in the life of the young people who learn judo, and since it nurtures the roots of the spirit and the body the instructors should keep the spirit of Professor Kano in mind. We find the following passage by Professor Kano about the quest, realization, and instruction of the Way of Judo: "There is nothing greater under the heavens than education. The virtue of one spreads to many; in real education goes on for hundreds of years".