

THE 2017 NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

To: All the parties concerned
From: Shizuo Imaizumi, instructor of Shin-Budo Kai
Date: January 1, 2017

Happy New Year (Akemashite omedeto gozaimasu)!

The year 2017 is the year of the Rooster (toridoshi) as the tenth of the twelve signs of the zodiac of the lunar calendar. The Lunar New Year begins on January 28 this year. If the year of your birth matches with the year below, that is the year of the Rooster, that is, 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, or 2005.

The 50th year Commemoration of Dr. Daisetsu T. Suzuki was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York under the auspices of American Buddhist Institute on December 11, 2016. The following chronological events of the personal history of Daisetsu T. Suzuki were excerpted and compiled from the Japanese book: "Suzuki Daisetsu no Kotoba to Shiso" (The Words and Thoughts of Daisetsu Suzuki) written by Ryomin Akizuki, published in 1967 by Kodansha, Tokyo, Japan. (The translation from Japanese to English by Shizuo Imaizumi).

- 1870 On October 18, Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki was born in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture.
- 1891 Suzuki moved to Tokyo to enter Tokyo Special School (the present Waseda University) to study English further. Suzuki began to practice Zen meditation under the Zen Master Kosen Imakita at the Enkakuji temple, located in Kamakura, Kanagawa Prefecture.
- 1892 Kosen Imakita passed away. Then Soen Shaku became the chief abbot at the Enkakuji. Suzuki continued to practice Zen meditation under the guidance of Soen Shaku. Suzuki moved to Teikoku University (the present Tokyo University).
- 1897 Suzuki went to the United States by the recommendation of Soen Shaku, and began to work as a translator at the publisher named the Open Court, located at LaSalle, Illinois.
- 1909 Suzuki returned to Japan, and became an English teacher at Gakushuin Junior High School in Tokyo.
- 1911 Suzuki got married with Petrels Lane.
- 1921 Soen Shaku passed away. Suzuki moved to Kyoto to become a professor of Ohtani University.
- 1936 Suzuki travelled to London to attend the religious convention as the representative of Japan. On his way back to Japan, Suzuki visited the United States again.
- 1949 Suzuki left Japan for Hawaii to conduct the semester at Hawaii University.
- 1950 Suzuki moved from Hawaii to the Mainland, and taught Buddhism-related subjects at the various universities there.
- 1958 Suzuki returned to Japan, accompanied by Mihoko Okamura, the American-born secretary.
- 1966 On July 12, Suzuki passed away at the Seiroka Hospital in Tokyo. The cause of his death was intestinal obstruction. Mihoko Okamura heard the last word of Suzuki at his bedside. Okamura asked Suzuki, "Would you like something, Sensei?" Then Suzuki answered her question, "No, Nothing. Thank you."

When I read an article regarding the 50th year Commemoration of Daisetsu T. Suzuki in the Japanese newspaper "Yomitime" in November, 2016, I reminded of the interesting story I had read before when I was young. That was an episode that Daisetsu Suzuki and Morihei Ueshiba (O-Sensei) met with each other for the first time in 1958. The following is a quotation from the Japanese book: "Zen no Tankyu (The Quest for Zen), written by Ryomin Akizuki, published in 1976 by Sampo, Tokyo. (The translation from Japanese to English by Shizuo Imaizumi).

In fall 1958, after his ten years' staying in the United States, Daisetsu Suzuki was living in Kamakura. One day Suzuki asked me (Ryomin Akizuki), "What kind of Budo Aikido is?" Although I did not have any knowledge of Aikido, I explained him that I heard from Zen Master Sogen Ohmori that he had witnessed Morihei Ueshiba standing with his vigorous figure full of ki energy at the receptionist's desk at the funeral service held at Zojoji temple in Tokyo. Then I asked Suzuki, "Why does Aikido matter to you?" Suzuki answered me, "A foreigner (American) sent me a letter saying that although he could not understand Zen even though he read my Zen book, he could understand Zen well after he studied Aikido for three months in Hawaii. That is why I am asking you about what Aikido is." So I consulted with Mitsujiro Ishii, who was one of the members of the board of directors of Aikikai in those days and also a Zen practitioner. Ishii contacted Kenji Tomita, the then chairperson of the board of directors of Aikikai. After that, Tomita asked Koichi Tohei, the then chief instructor of Aikikai Hombu Dojo, to visit Daisetsu Suzuki who had lived in Matsugaoka Bunko that he established in Tokeiji temple in Kamakura. Tohei went to Kamakura to meet with Suzuki in order to explain about Aikido.

At last Suzuki and I visited Aikikai Hombu Dojo in Shinjuku, Tokyo by making an appointment through Tohei. When we arrived at Aikikai, Morihei Ueshiba came out in person to greet Suzuki and me at the front entrance. After Suzuki and Ueshiba exchanged their personal conversation, Ueshiba guided us to the dojo, and he performed Aikido demonstration for us.

After Suzuki and I left Aikikai, Suzuki told me, "Ueshiba is indeed the man of being spiritually enlightened in the eastern philosophy. According to Ueshiba, his students merely study his techniques and complain about his words that have been too inspirational to them. It is a pity that his students fail to understand his heart and intention. You should carefully listen to Ueshiba's words in the near future, and then try to analyze his words systematically so that the people of the present generation can understand his words well. Shinto (the Way of Gods) has no power to persuade worldwide people in order that Aikido becomes everyone's art around the world in the future, Therefore, I think that Aikido should utilize the theory of Mahayana Buddhism, especially the theory of Zen Buddhism in order to spread Aikido around the world."

I guess you have enjoyed the above episode. In May 1959, I began my Aikido training at Aikikai Hombu Dojo, but I did not know that episode in those days. Also I was of little interest in religious matters and just continued practicing Aikido. In January 1965, I became an apprentice shidoin (instructor) of Aikikai Hombu Dojo.

After Aikikai's new three-story building was completed in circa 1968, Master Koichi Tohei opened children's class in the dojo. Soon Ryomin Akizuki took his second son to join that class. Although I did not know Akizuki, he had already known both Aikikai and Tohei Sensei. Akizuki was both Zen priest and Zen scholar, and his Zen temple and home were located near Aikikai Hombu Dojo as close as his son could walk from his home to the Hombu Dojo.

Tohei Sensei studied Zen when he was young as well as Misogi training at Ichikukai Dojo in Tokyo. He often talked about his experience of those shugyo (spiritual training). So I started to realize the necessity of religious knowledge to become a good instructor. I began to collect Zen books, including Akizuki's books. I recommend you to buy Daisetsu Suzuki's book although it is difficult to find his book at a bookstore nowadays.

The years flew rapidly (Die Jahre vergingen wie im Flug). I can now explain about Zen, but cannot explain Zen. In the same way, I can explain about Aikido, but cannot explain Aikido. In past November, I had an opportunity to translate the 11th-century Chinese poem of the Sung dynasty from a hanging scroll. Let me quote that beautiful poem first:

“Heaps of clouds move gently along the ridges of mountain;
A spring trickles slowly through bamboos with murmuring sounds.
At that moment, only a king fisher (over there) understands the meaning
Of boundlessness.”

(A poem by Shou Kou-setsu in Japanese, or Shao Kang Jie in Chinese).

After you enjoy the above poem, I would like to ask you a question like Zen “koan” (a question given to ascetics in Zen): “There was no boundary between the heaven and the earth. Only a bird understood the meaning of boundlessness. Who witnessed that?” If you do not answer that question, I answer it on behalf of you. “I did.” Please realize, in this case, that the word “I” of “I did” no longer means the grammatical I of the first person. This “I” now means “the now-here-self” that all of us possess from the beginning.

In Zen, there are four training methods: ”gyo (moving), juh (standing), za (sitting), and ga (lying down). In other words, you can practice 1) ”dozen” (moving Zen), 2) “ritsuzen” (standing Zen), 3) “zazen” (sitting zen), and 4) “nezen” (lying-down Zen) in your daily life. The following things to do in Zen are useful as a check list: 1) to maintain your correct posture, 2) to do your soundless breath, 3) to keep your concentration, and 3) to take your action before you think.

For example, Aikido corresponds to “dozen” (moving Zen). You can practice “ritsuzen” (standing Zen) by holding a bokken (wooden sword) with migi-chudan posture and concentrating on your mind toward the tip of the bokken and standing still with your breath calmed down. You can also practice “nezen” (lying-down Zen) with your body straightened on the floor, and with both legs opened naturally, and then breathe quietly. Most of you know how to do “zazen” (sitting Zen).

I would like to introduce to you the two simple words in Zen: “tai” (figure and nature) and “yoh” (ability and function). For example, all of us have three “tai” : 1) the body (instinct), 2) the mind (intelligence), and 3) the heart (intuition). From the viewpoint of “tai” (figure and nature), all of us possess those three equally. However, when each individual develops and uses those three, each “yoh” (ability and function) works differently as if each of us were discriminated. Although no one eventually discriminates against those three, we discriminate against ourselves in the process of developing those three.

Finally, what is intuition mentioned above? The following is a quotation from “Intuitive Being” by Jill Willard, published in 2016 by Harper Elixir, Harper Collins Publishers, New York:

“What is intuition? Put in its simplest terms, intuition is a knowing....Intuition also draws upon the creative side of the mind....Intuition is a knowing and wisdom that flows through us. It is an inner voice that, in order to have it, we must quiet the mind.”

“Intuition comes in many forms—it can roar in like a tornado...or arrive as a slight whisperIntuition may involve synchronicity....intuition can serve as a homing device through life.... It ensures that we’re always moving forward....”

“Depending upon how we look at the world, we may believe that intuition comes from an outside source that is larger than us—that it is a sort of universal knowing or guidance system. Or we may believe that it comes from within us, from a quiet, center space that remains strong, stable, and untouched even in the midst of the chaos of our daily lives. It can be both of these things.”

I guess you understood what intuition was. In Buddhism, there is “kon” (sensory organ) at first, then each “shiki” (sensory perception) corresponding to “kon” appears. Sensory organ is divided into six organs: 1) “gen or me” (eyes), 2) “ni or mimi” (ears), 3) “bi or hana” (noses), 4) “zetsu or shita” (tongue), 5) “shin or karada” (body), and 6) “i or kokoro” (mind). As the total is six, they are called “rokkon” (six types of sensory organs). Sensory perception is divided into eight types of recognition: 1) “genshiki” (recognition through eyes), 2) “nishiki” (recognition through ears), 3) “bishiki” (recognition through noses), 4) “zetsushiki” (recognition through tongue), 5) “shinshiki” (recognition through body), and 6) “ishiki” (recognition through mind, i.e. consciousness). As the total is six, they are called “rokushiki” (six types of sensory perception). In addition to “rokushiki,” two more specific types of sensory perception exists in the deepest bottom of mind. They are called “senzaiishiki” (subconsciousness). In Buddhism, 7) “nanashiki or manashiki” (the seventh consciousness) and 8) “hasshiki or arayashiki” (the eighth consciousness) correspond to “senzaiishiki.” Normally, you cannot recognize those two types of subconsciousness. It is said that intuition arises from there.

In conclusion, I would like you to endeavor to train yourself through the three “I” initial elements of human being: 1) the instinct (the function of your body), 2) the intelligence (the function of your mind), and 3) the intuition (the function of your heart).

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