

## AIKIDO & SERVICE TO MANKIND

The way of the warrior is usually synonymous with killing, the destruction of life. War has been the scourge of humanity for centuries, but it has often been said that war is at times necessary to establish peace. In my opinion, as long as the warrior spirit focuses on the destruction of life there can be no peace in this world.

It was O'Sensei's "The Art of Peace" that first drew me to Aikido. At first I couldn't help wondering how a martial art could claim to be about peace, but I was quite taken by his writings which I felt had a similar spiritual wisdom as Lao Tzu's "Tao Te Ching". O'Sensei's spiritual writings touched me at a deeper level however than The Tao so I decided to give Aikido a try, and never regretted it!

Why is Aikido a way of service to mankind? What greater service could one give to this world than the precious gift of peace? But how can there be peace in the world when it is so often lacking within the self? Surely peace has to start within then it radiates out, affecting everything and everyone it touches.

During my first Aikido classes I was struck by the amount of power that was being generated and also by the degree of care that was displayed by the participants towards their opponent, even though the techniques could be quite painful. This was a new thing for me as my previous experience of Wen Chung Kung Fu had been about encouraging aggression and was very much ego-driven, and this wasn't what I wanted.

After 5 years of Aikido training, when I think about what the art means to me, one particular phrase keeps coming back to my mind time and time again: the way of the gentle warrior. I realise that most people who practise Iwama Aikido would not think of it as a gentle martial art, especially when they are privileged enough to be picked by Sensei for a Nikkyo demonstration on their wrists! However, the power or spirit that flows through correct Aikido practice, it seems to me, is not about the destruction of life but the protection of it. In Aikido one learns to use just enough power or force against the opponent to render them harmless, thereby protecting not only one's life but also the opponent's life. Surely this is the ultimate act of compassion and respect towards the life of another human being, even though they may be one's enemy. It is also the ultimate act of peace.

So, I suspect that after years and years and years of correct Aikido practice one might hope to develop the gentle warrior spirit within oneself, or in other words become a spiritual warrior. I know it sounds "new agey" but I make no apologies!

Some time ago I was reading about "Morphic Resonance" and the "100<sup>th</sup> monkey" concept. You may have heard of it but just in case you haven't: scientific research on isolated island monkeys has shown that a new pattern of behaviour (such as washing food in warm streams before eating it) was reproduced by the following generations of monkeys not only on the same island but also on other isolated islands despite the fact that the monkeys on the other islands could have had no contact whatsoever with the original monkeys and their offspring. It was as if the new pattern of behaviour had been transmitted telepathically through the monkey "group mind". The research also suggested that there needed to be a sufficiently high number of monkeys displaying the new behaviour in order for the Morphic Resonance to take place and for the new pattern to spread across the other monkey islands.

"What does all this have to do with Aikido?" I hear you say. Well, if it works with monkeys, it might work with human beings too. This might sound crazy but ... if the number of

people practising O'Sensei's martial Art of Peace reached the "100<sup>th</sup> monkey" level, could this trigger a Morphic Resonance in the human group mind? I don't mean to say that everybody would start doing Aikido but that the power of peace generated by all those Aikido people might have a transformative effect on the destructive warrior spirit that has run through the human psyche for centuries.

I have no doubt that the practice of Aikido can infuse a sense of peace within the self, this is certainly the experience that I have been blessed with from my own training. Aikido has helped me develop self-confidence and it has empowered me, and by that I don't mean power over others, but the power to tackle the negative aspects of my own psyche: fear, anger, jealousy, resentment, emotional insecurities etc.. the stuff that makes us human but which is so destructive for the self and for others.

Self-transformation and development through correct Aikido practice means a change in consciousness itself. Incidentally, the process of altering one's consciousness at will is described by some esoteric mystery schools as "high magic". There is certainly something very magical about O'Sensei in later life when he demonstrates Aikido in his white clothes and with a flick of the hands he sends his ukes flying left and right of him.

O'Sensei served mankind by gifting us with Aikido. The least we can do is honour that gift by using it to develop the art of peace within ourselves and in turn serve mankind by living the spirit of peace and healing in our relationship with others.