

To develop a healthy spirit of harmony by Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba

Doshu expressed sincere grief and concern over the victims of terrorism in his 1997-year-end address published in the AIKIDO SHINBUN (Japanese language periodical). He emphasises the importance to develop the healthy spirit to avoid tragedies.

We approach the end of the year with the disheartening news of the senseless slaying of many innocent people still fresh in mind. Generally speaking, people act upon beliefs in principles, but in these recent cases one would have to seriously question whether the hearts of those who perpetrated these terrible deeds can, in fact, be those of true human beings. Even in the case of terrorist acts we can detect the working of the human heart, even when resorting to extremist actions in their attempts to appeal to others. The difference here between totally random acts of manslaughter and terrorist acts is, I believe, significant. As a result, I think it is important that we endeavour to remove the causes of the former, as they reflect the serious illness of the heart to which many people have succumbed of late. Without conscious effort focused on correcting this situation, I fear we may be faced with a truly tragic future.



Here I would like you all to ask yourself the question, 'Why do we devote precious time and energy to the practice of Aikido?'. As from before, I encourage you to all continue practising in order to develop healthy bodies, improve your techniques, interact with your practice friends and endeavour to improve your own minds and spirits by introspective reflection. In addition, I would also suggest that you reflect upon the Wa, or Harmony, that the Founder taught. This harmony, Wa, may not be practised by one person alone. Wa is only first born as a result of recognising, and then loving, another. Put another way, not recognising and denying other persons is against the true spirit of Aikido.

It is, of course, not always easy to understand or accept the opinions of others in this increasingly diverse and complex world of today. but all people have the same basic desire to enjoy a happy existence. To ignore this and to force a person to stand alone is, in fact, to spread the seeds of social unrest.

The values and cultural backgrounds of those of us who practice Aikido are many and varied. This year there were numerous instruction trips from Headquarters, including for the first time the Balkans and many Asian countries. Despite the differences in language and culture, there was a common understanding and mutual friendship was developed. this was achieved, not because of opposition or a desire to defeat the other, but because our objectives were harmonisation and winning over ourselves.

There are many contests in modern society, but the truly healthy contests all have rules. In the case of Aikido, the guiding rule is 'the spirit of Harmony'. for those who practice this Way of Aiki, we all carry with us a responsibility to spread this harmony, not only amongst other Aikido practitioners, but throughout society at large. This is where the true value of Aikido training lies.

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