

A poem by Thomas Traeherne

You never enjoy the world aright
til you see how sand
exhibiteth the wisdom and the power of God,
and prize in everything the service which they do you
by manifesting in glory and goodness to your soul.

Your enjoyment of the world is never right,
til every morning you awake in heaven:
see yourself in your father's palace;
and look upon the skies and the earth and the air
as celestial joys
having such a reverned esteem of all,
as if you were among the angels.

You never enjoy the world aright,
til the sea itself floweth in your veins;
til you are clothed with the heavens
and crowned with the stars
and perceive yourself to be the sole heir
of the whole world

Til your spirit filleth the whole world
the stars are your jewels;
Til you are familiar with the ways of God
in all ages as with your walk and table;
Til you are intimately acquainted with that shady nothing
out of which the world was made;
Til you love men so as to desire their happiness,
with an equal thirst to the zeal of your own;
Til you delight in God for being good to all;
You never enjoy the world.

Yet further, you never enjoy the world aright,
til you so love the beauty of enjoying
that you are covetous and earnest
to persuade others to enjoy it.

....When I discovered this poem I immediately felt a rush of recognition - this is how I feel when I practice Shintaido - I see the minutiae of the earth, and the vastness of the Universe and sense my place within it.

I "feel the sea in my veins" when I practice wakame taiso, I feel "clothed in the heavens and crowned with stars" when I do

Eiko and Tenso. If I succeed in making a deep OM, I can understand "that shady nothing out of which the world was made"

Through my weekly study of shoko, I am attempting to "fill the earth with my spirit".

Kumite of any kind is showing me how to "love men so as to desire their happiness" and teaching Shintaido has taught me to "so love the beauty of enjoying, that you are covetous and earnest to persuade others to enjoy it."

This wonderful practice of Shintaido is helping me to enjoy the world aright.

Ula Chambers

Shintaido with People With Learning Difficulties

About twenty five years ago in Japan, I met a boy whom Aoki-sensei, Shintaido's founder, introduced to me. He was autistic and in his agitation he had smashed up his room. He was violent towards his parents. First I felt I could do nothing to support him, so I tried to listen and play with his world. I immediately realized he was not malevolent, I could feel his innocent, pure heart and spirit even when he tried to attack me physically. He became my teacher.

He was happy when he spoke about Sumo wrestling. I was amazed by his knowledge about Sumo. He remembered every match of my childhood and I enjoyed his exciting explanations. After his story we did Sumo practice ; this traditional exercise which is called "Renki Kumite". Aoki-sensei had put in Shintaido's spirit into the practice and had taught it to me. The boy's dream world was integrated into reality, and this showed through in the Sumo Kumite.

During those body dialogues the boy opened his heart day by day. We laughed a lot like childhood friends. We had a wonderful and joyful time together. A few years later he gave me his own published book about Sumo great champions.

We met again just the year before I moved to England in 1990. His father called me in the middle of the night and brought his son who was by then in his late teens to my house. The son wanted to commit suicide. Before killing himself he wanted to talk to either Aoki-sensei or myself. We had a calm and beautiful conversation together like old days and he decided not to kill himself. These memories are still living inside me.

"Shintaido is the light in the shade and the sun in the shadow. "

(Shintaido - The body is a message of the Universe by Hiroyuki Aoki)

I would like to report about one of my most inspiring groups. One day I had the chance to teach Shintaido to ' People with Learning Difficulties' which was organized by ' Choices for Learning ' . I was impressed by their activity. I felt Shintaido movement might fit their aim and suddenly that boy's smiling face came into my mind. Since I moved to this country I am exploring what Shintaido means for me and how I can use it to help others.

This is my Shintaido life journey. Aoki sensei says in his book Shintaido was introduced for only one reason : to help you create a new and healthier life for your self. I believe Shintaido is possible for anyone, in any condition, whether they have special difficulties or not.

First I would like to tell to you about this classes comments. This is what they said:

' Choices for learning' is part of Spectrum Day Services and is a developmental project set up to research and support people with learning difficulties in their communities.

Four years ago we met Masashi Minagawa and employed him to teach the art of Shintaido to six of our service users. Our aim, was , and still is, to make the session a sharing experience with people who live in the local area, but although this has not yet happened, we continue to have fort nightly sessions and have increased our numbers by inviting others with learning difficulties to join us. Four of the six men who first attended have continued to enjoy and benefit from the group and two years ago we purchased Shintaido outfits for them which they wear with pride. Masashi also brings spare outfits for those who want to wear them which dressed up and working together makes a very impressive group.

There are now forty participants, equally divided between men and women, consisting of people with learning difficulties and their care workers. It is rare to find anyone not participating, and even those who are wary at first, join in once they see everyone else enjoying themselves. Both the care workers and service users find the sessions relaxing, enjoyable, and stimulating. Care workers have particularly noticed that their clients become more communicative and manageable and these benefits extend beyond the hour and a half Shintaido session.

Mrs. Ruth Johnson, Administrator

' Choices for learning'

The Shintaido session is a very positive experience. There seems to be a definite feeling of calmness after the activity and staff and clients come away feeling more invigorated. The session is very well geared to the clients needs using gentle techniques to encourage them to join in with group activity. The benefits work on both a physical and spiritual level and some clients definitely gain with regard to enhancing their communication skills.

Adrian Mark, Day Care Worker
Ashworthy & Oakleigh Nursing Homes

Kenneth very much enjoys the Shintaido session, although most the time he sits watching, but does participate in the hand movements. Just observing seems to make him happy and feel part of the group. Masashi is an excellent tutor, his calmness and patience brings out the best in all the participants of the session and I feel more people with learning difficulties should have the opportunity to experience and find the benefits Shintaido has to offer.

Nick Hamilton, Day Care Worker
Beecham Drive

I bring Eileen to Shintaido every fortnight. Eileen only partakes in something if she really wants to so it is obvious her desire to attend is genuine. Not only is she keen, but she looks forward to the sessions and tells everyone at home where she has been afterwards. Eileen benefits from the relaxation and social contact and the sessions has become very special to her.

Alma Bueno, Day Care Worker
Chasefield House

I have been practicing for 4 years with people with learning difficulties in Bristol and recently the class has become weekly instead of fortnightly.

I would like to describe our practice. When gymnasium door is opened every one dashes into the hall cheerfully. I am always happy to see them and can see easily how they are looking forward to do Shintaido. As Mrs. Ruth Johnson told before, they love to wear the Keiko-gi. Thank you very much for the people who donated Keiko-gi, especially Rosy Voss. Starting very naturally people jog around the hall with their favorite partner until everyone is ready to make a circle.

The practice consists of 3 parts. First we do Kenko-taiso and stretching. These simple and gentle exercises are used by most Shintaido practitioners for warming up before the main course. I changed some parts of the exercises from the original. More simple and less movement and taking a long time. For

example starting jumping , we have wheel chaired people and weak people, so just walking step or knee up with holding hand to support each other. Every movement is big challenge for them, they try hard and when they can do a movement everyone claps hands or cheers. It happened naturally, so now after every movement they cheer.

I study from them. They are aware of any tiny movement and they notice if we miss something from our usual routine. I love to watch their expression. A lot of colorful energy flies and fills up the hall. The Care Workers help a lot. Gradually their frustration reduces, then laughing echoes around the hall. It creates a sense of harmony gradually from chaos. Releases tension from top to bottom. These simple exercises opens our body to the next stage. Shintaido as playtime.

You may recognise some of these fun exercises such as Rowing boat stretching exercise, holding hand with sitting position and rowing with each other." River rafting game" " Train exercise'. "Dancing with light' and everyone favorite exercises, Eiko, and Kenka-in Hoko (Offering flower walking meditation). Our version of Eiko is make a line, holding hands (now we have so many members it has increased to two lines!), first everyone crouches to the ground, and I say 'small, small'. and next we explore our bodies and stretch our arms upward, and makes "Ah" with big voices, walking or running to end of hall. Eiko is one of Shintaido's fundamental movements, I nick named it "Flight to the Freedom" for this group.

Everyone separated two groups from edge to edge in the hall for doing walking meditation ' offering flower'. It's a beautiful and funny scene. The students catch flowers from heaven, carrying them very carefully and offering flowers each other. Their image work is brilliant I could see so many flowers they hold, giving and receiving with gratitude. It seemed like party time but it is a most peaceful time. Developing concentration, confidence, communication.

The last part of our Keiko is Breathing exercise: Blue sky exercise. cooling down . Fresh air spread in the hall. Thank you to everyone. After the class everyone goes to home with a big smile, I am holding the Keiko-gi. The silence fills and Everyone's dreams and feelings linger around me.

For more information please ask me or "Choices for Learning" (The Greenway Centre, Doncaster Road, Bristol, BS10 5PY Tel. 0117-987 7754)

We always need more Keikogi, so if you can donate some please send it to me, or give it to me when we meet. The door is

always open so please feel free to come, Thursday morning,
Almonsbury Sports and Leisure Centre, 10:30 am..
Masashi Minagawa

Letters

Dear ed.

I was interested in your note in the newsletter that you are practising 'wandering Shintaido'. I suppose I think of it a bit like you: I am more or less conscious of Shintaido awareness almost every day, and do think about how to develop its insights in my life. Sometimes, I do a little stretching or private keiko and things seem clearer and more meaningful than they did before, when I did the movements five times a week!

Sometimes I want to find something else which can take the place of Shintaido in my life and which I can attend without having to run a class myself; but nothing else I've found seems so healthy, so honest, so enjoyable, or so truthful.

But you asked, do we have to rely on instructors always being there? Well, the way you phrased it shows you know very well the answer must be no. If there is a weakness to the way Shintaido has organised itself over the last 20 years, I believe it is the over-reliance on the instructors - which reached a point a few years ago that people felt they couldn't do anything without at least a senior instructor present. Aoki Sensei said, very loudly, back in 1984 if not earlier 'this is YOUR Shintaido': and even if he hadn't said it, I'd have believed it was anyway, because otherwise how could the knowledge really come from deep inside your being?

So, if we are seeing 'formal', keiko-based Shintaido classes in decline, perhaps all members should do both themselves and all the instructors a favour and REFUSE to attend any classes! That way, everyone will find out, just as you and I have been doing, what Shintaido really means for them.

The trouble is, though, that if you did that, there would be nothing to come back to when you wanted to resume keiko again, as I do now, and as everyone inevitably will. Someone does have to 'keep the flame', keep the faith, keep the flag flying, keep going. I go to my local Quaker meeting, and sometimes there are horrible gaps between my attendances, and yet I know the meeting will be going on without me, and when I go back, exactly the same people are there, sitting in the same chairs, just a few months older and wiser.

I need them to be there; and even though I am such an irregular attender, I am still a valued member of meeting. In the same way, keiko must continue, but it must also embrace those

of us who are 'wandering'. I used to think this even when I was a mainstay regular, but I could never find a good form for doing it. Now, perhaps, it's essential, and we still don't have a form.

Thinking about this, I'd like to offer my services in finding a solution: maybe running a bulletin board for such people; maybe digging out addresses of 'old practitioners'; maybe trying to find a form of event to which people might want to come.

Peter Furtado

Dear ed.

Thank you for your reminder. I really don't know what to do about this. I don't want to entirely let go of Shintaido for I still find it informs my life but I can't pretend to be practising even on an irregular basis. There is no "Oxford branch" that I am aware of and although I am pleased to occasionally receive details of weekend workshops etc it is rare that I can consider going. This is in part because of life's other demands and in part because they seem (to me) unrealistically expensive. Although I would like to keep in touch £20 is more than I feel prepared to part with in exchange for an occasional newsletter. I would like to be kept on the mailing list and would be happy to pay the cost of that, if such is a possibility.

If you see anybody who remembers me give them my warm regards. I suppose I have made a kind of sideways step from Shintaido and am now practising and performing as a member of an Oxford-based Butoh dance-theatre group (see attached file, if you can). There seems to be an affinity between the two forms; not surprising I suppose in as much as they developed at about the same time and in reaction to the same cultural environment. I quite often do Shintaido warm-ups for the group!

Ayala