

Newsletter "The Source"

NINPO LIVES

by Shihan Richard J. Van Donk

Bushindo as a teaching on Ninpo is meant to be an ultimate path to truth of the heart, wisdom, and knowledge of life.

Bushindo practices will have your heart singing songs of gratitude and the divine dancing on the light of all vibrations emanating from the cores of all existences enriching your soul. Virtue unfolds like a flower expressing knowledge of grace on each petal of wisdom. Life experience is our greatest teacher. The heart leads our actions and answers our quests for truth. Our taijutsu training strengthens our bodies as vessels of power and versatility. Our mental power commands knowledge from even the simplest of life's truths. Our inner work and contemplation practices give us resolve and peace. Our philosophy enhances the wisdom gathered by many minds and strands through many cultures giving us diversity.

Our martial spirit must guide us on the path to inner and outer perfection. It gives us strength and courage to face life's difficult challenges. Keep the spirit of the heart pure. Resolve all conflict by remaining clear and focused on the end result being in harmony and balance.

Soke Hatsumi was once asked, "Out of everything you teach what is the one most important lesson for a warrior to practice?"

His reply was, "Find a way to polish your heart everyday". I enjoyed this simple and powerful message enough that we had sweatshirts made with this statement on them.

This is what Soke, myself, Jack Hoban, and some others have said and have been teaching for a long time. Work on your weaknesses (if you have any) while maintaining your balance and strengthen your strengths. Choose well and be responsible for your actions. When attacked use only the force necessary to subdue your adversary. Intent should match intent. As your skill level increases handling difficult situations will become easier. I have taken away knife attacks without hurting someone (much). Of course in a life and death situation one must do what one must do. (And you must train for this day, while living your life in a way where you don't manifest it).

I remind you that Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu is not taught for the sake of learning to kill, injure and maim (other wise there would be no Hombu restrictions on training bad people). Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu and Ninpo is about learning how to live more effectively as a human being. Soke Hatsumi keeps saying he is teaching people how to live not how to fight.

To learn how to live without the fight one must develop a courageous heart. One courageous enough to look oneself in the mirror of life, face to face. This is the most impeccable warrior.

One who transcends the inner battles well can handle the outer ones. No more fighting the fight.

I encourage you to live with freedom and no longer from survival. For most people these are the most difficult roles of the warrior. I call these people Spirit Warriors, protectors of the freedom. If you only fight everything you will become a miserable person whom no one, including yourself will want to be around.

The great late Takamatsu O'sensei balanced his life with the harmony of deep spiritual practice even though he was one of the greatest warriors of his time. Let us be courageous enough to walk the path of our own heart's desires. In the later part of his life Takamatsu became a priest and said his goal was to see life through the mind and eyes of God. Contemplate what that means for awhile.

It's a very deep statement worth spending time with.

Then spend some time seeing God in everything, yes everything. Trees, plants, peoples faces, everything. It will enlighten you. Keep your heart space open and express the joy. Some of you will remember hearing this old Japanese saying; "Through ten thousand changes your heart remains the same". Soke has said this to me many times and has blessed me with the name Mr. Happy. Be free!

Contentment and freedom is something that we all seek. Our heart seeks this joy. My concepts of Bushindo and Ninpo transcend all religion. A couple Bujinkan teachers have classified Ninpo as being only Shinto or Mikkyo and have made their students follow these religious paths. While these teachings can bring great value to one's life, so can many other religious teachings. Ninpo is beyond religion. The force that drives the nature and allows life to unfold is common to all things living and non-living in every heart that won't let it die. I won't let Ninpo die.

Yours in Bushindo,

- Richard Van Donk -

"See life through the mind and eyes of God." O'Sensei Takamatsu

"Find a way to polish your heart everyday." Soke Hatsumi

"See and feel the joy of God in everything." Shihan Van Donk