

Last message from Chiba sensei:

Sensei, do you have your philosopher's hat on?

OK, I am ready. This tape is for posterity.

What is the most essential, important message, perhaps, that you have for not only your past students, your present students, but your future students. What is the most important thing that you would want any of us to carry with them about your Aikido and your teachings?

Well, you know I've been thinking about it for quite a while... What it means to enter retirement. And I'm biting, chewing, and trying to digest it. But I don't know what it means to be... Still I am lost on that notion of retirement. I think, in time, it will become a natural process... So I am not worried about it. But I'm kind of, a little lost. My message to future Aikidoists or present practitioners... Is to keep up your Shoshin. Shoshin is Beginner's Mind. Shoshin is, if I may say, unstained mind. Preconceptual mind. Whenever you come on the mat, not necessarily on the mat, but because the mat is where our center of training, is expressed. I say on the mat. You must clarify your own motivation, right from the bottom. Clear up, Purify. Sit there and wait for instruction with unstained mind. That has to be continuously carried out throughout your Aikido life. Whatever rank you may attain, does not really make a difference. Always go down to the bottom with heart, and check your Shoshin all the time. That's a word I like. Shoshin.

Sensei, could you talk a little about the process... We've talked about it before the levels of awareness and the present, so that people can have an idea about the path of Beginner's Mind. As you have said to me, to clarify the workings of the pillars. Could you talk a little more about that? About attaining Shoshin or reclaiming it?

Well, everything has to be oriented from Shoshin, upwards. And what holds underneath, is a strong foundation of Shoshin. It's a kind of love affair. Committing yourself to such a way of discipline throughout your life. Is indeed a love affair. It can turn to hate, anger, frustration, like a relationship with a human being. Like a woman and a man. But there is a strong notion of affection. That's what I want you guys to keep up. Aikido, in essence, is very fragile. It can be forgotten, it can be destroyed, it can be diluted by ignorance and self-indulgence. I especially have a message for teachers. We teachers have to take precautions, measurements, to preserve our art very carefully. Aikido itself, as an art, doesn't have any means to protect itself. It has to be provided. That is what I mean by being affectionate. That's what I mean by love affair. To take care of this very fragile, sensitive art which requires protection. That's what I think.

I remember when you talk about your love affair with Aikido, you speak of her as a Princess. That's a good way to put it. The story of the Princess. And that is really something that has really impressed... Especially the older teachers, who know that story well. Like Mike Flynn. He understood when we were talking about that. Can you describe your relationship? Is that too personal?

No. no... That's my full heart, my core heart toward Aikido. That's what kept me up as an Aikidoist. You know, when I was young, eighteen... I had fallen in love with a Princess. And that's how my love affair started. She's out of my reach. I have no way to reach her, to express my feelings. Or get closer. Or even to keep her. Grab her... To be mine, to my satisfaction. No way. She's far away, behind silk cotton. She's the Princess of my road. So I decided to

be... I determined within myself... Well, she's unreachable to me. But my love is pure, and forever. So I decided that I'll be captain of her Royal Guard. I'll protect her. That's what happened to me the past 50 years. I have been living up with my own affair and carried out my mission to be captain of the Royal Guard of my Princess. And, one time, a long time ago actually I taught one Summer Camp held in Great Britain over the drink, over the wine, I told this story to my senior students and gradually the story started spreading out... It was very dynamic... Being captain of the Royal Guard... I have to be very obedient to the holder and the system, the structure and so forth. But I was not. I was a bad captain... I revolted against authority many times.... Back and forth. But she has never left my heart. She's still there. That's about it. That's what I meant by, Aikido does not have its own means to protect. It's fragile, noble. Sensitive. Precious. You have to provide protection. And I am the captain for that company.

You've trained many soldiers. Many, many through the whole world.

Yes, I know. And the most privileged I feel about my career being a professional Aikidoist is that I met so many quality people. Of course, that has something to do with Aikido's power. I have done judo, I've done karate, I've done kyudo. I have done Iaido and so forth But I have never met as many quality people as I've met in the Aikido community. And I'm very proud of it. And that quality, actually, itself is A large part of protection, you know. So my intention is always how to keep up the quality providing natural protection to this fragile, sensitive, noble art of Aikido.

Thank you.