

Aikido - meditation in motion

A great variety of martial art styles are known as they put emphasis on defeating/destroying the opponent. However, Aikido is an exception as it trains the body and the soul without bringing strength into focus. Children, adults and even elderly people can cancel the attacker's force and movement effectively by using its techniques. I met and interviewed Iván Ozorák, the founder of Aikidó Gyöngyös club, in his Aikido dojo in Gyöngyös.



B.L.- What does "Aikido" mean for you and how did you get closer to it?

O.I.- I got my first experiences of martial arts at the age of 15, when I started to practice Kyokushinkai karate. Otherwise, I have been practicing Aikido since 1995. During these years, I have participated in trainings in many countries regardless of the style of Aikido there.

Aikido, in general, is a traditional (based on traditions) martial art and in narrow sense, it is an educational system which emphasizes cooperation and helping each other instead of destruction. During trainings, the students have to "solve" a "problem", execute a technique which demands equal contribution from both parties in an ideal case.

If executing a technique means 100%, then both the opponent and the defender have 50% role in the success. The less effort is shown from one side, the more endeavour must be presented by the other side. If the execution of the technique lacks the missing part it is finished untimely. *It is also a practice, of course, but a different kind.*

B.L.- Where does Aikido come from?

O.I.- It originates in Japan, developed by Ueshiba Morihei, as a synthesis of more martial art styles, but especially derives from Daito ryu Aikijujutsu techniques.

B.L.- What is the purpose of Aikido?

O.I.- The ultimate goal is the development of the spirit or character.

In order to be really forceful, at first, we need to become better men.

To practice Aikido, we have to own a certain physical fitness and strength but the most highlighted values are empathy and humanity. We always stop at some stages and let the attacker decide whether he continues the attack or ceases the aggression. Our aim is to control the situation and the aggressor and not to crush him.

B.L.- How far is it effective as a self-defensive system?

O.I.- I can't give you an authentic response for this question because I have never had the chance to apply these techniques in a real life fighting situation. Maybe, there's no such a system, a so called exclusive effective self-defense. We can modify the odds but there are no similar situations. Talking about self-protection, prevention and avoidance are more important "techniques". If it comes to fight, winning or losing, dedicated manner outweighs the application of techniques.

I am the winner 9 out of 10 fights but I am stabbed by the 10th. Am I effective or not?

According to statistics, yes, but in practice...?

After the Olympic Games in Rio, 3rd-place Belgian judo student (judoka) was hit at the beach by some thief. Is judo not suitable for self-defense then? I don't think it is the right deduction. Maybe, people should change their attitude towards conflicts, like in case of illnesses. Prevention is better than looking for a solution afterwards. It is very difficult though, and many times, it is impossible to view a situation that way as it depends on more people, not just me.



B.L.- Is there an age limit when applying to your dojo?

O.I.- The youngest ones of us go to kindergarten, but age is not a key factor when making a decision of this kind. We are diverse with different values. Some of the youngsters are wiser than some of the elderly people. The teaching evolves according to the students' capabilities, actual moods and mental and physical states.

For most of us, Aikido is not a profession but, if we are lucky enough, it will be a life-long experience.

We also have to take into consideration that people arrive at the dojo after a hard working day, or school, with different degree of openness and determination day by day. Perhaps, as a result of that, the presence of whole families have increased which is heartwarming. In addition, many times it is really hard to leave for training because we know that we have to work again. On the other hand, by the end of the practice we are filled with energy, brightness and satisfaction.

If you feel like joining the trainings, don't hesitate but come! The dojo is open for everyone, we have no secrets, you are very welcome!

B.L.- What is the training like?

O.I.- The training has got three parts. At first, sweeping the dojo before the practice. It is not only for making it tidy but to make students motivated and respectful. Then, in the first half of the training, children and adults practice together. It means steps, diversion, falling down, rolling and techniques on a basic level. In the second half of the training the advanced students practice executing attacks and techniques faster and on a higher level. Moreover, on Tuesdays, we have a one and a half-hour weapon practice which contains jo (128cm) and bokken techniques.



B.L.- What does an applicant need to have?

O.I.- A comfortable track suit, a T-shirt and slippers are advisable.

B.L.- Are there any competitions in Aikido?

O.I.- There are no such things here. Many martial arts become "fighting" arts, sports, obviously, to increase their popularity among people. Aikido remains a form of practice where practitioners view each other partners and not opponents. This attitude lacks egoism and selfishness. Mutually built and achieved targets are the sources of motivation.

B.L.- Are there ranks and levels here, like in Kyokushinkai or Shotokan karate?

O.I.- We have got ranks, called kyu and dan. In some dojos, students wear belts in different colours, in this dojo, aikidokas have got white or black ones and in addition, hakamas. These

are Japanese culottes, black or dark blue, which come from the traditional clothing of Aikido.

B.L.- What kind of master should we choose?

O.I.- If we are interested in martial arts, it seems that at first, we choose a style according to our film experiences or shows, friends' recommendations. We can also consider, whether both physical and spiritual sides of the style are important to us. We need to take a sport or combat style martial art if competitions mean a lot to us.

No matter which approach we are dedicated to, in a longer period, the trainer will be more important than the style. All in all, martial arts want to make us be better men but this purpose can be achieved in different ways with regards to their teachings.

If we are persistent enough, given the right instructions, apart from extreme cases both combat sports and martial arts have a positive effect on our personality.

It can happen, that after a while, we realize that the chosen master is not suitable for us - do not be afraid to change! The invested work is ours, no matter in which system we are practicing! At last, it is crucial not to treat ranks and real knowledge as equals, the latest is more precious, especially outside the dojo, in real life!