

Aiki



News

The Newsletter of the Sri Lanka Aikido Association—Sri Lanka Aikikai Vol. 3 December 22

Ref: NL/Dec22



1st Dec, 2022

Friends,

It is so exciting to come out with this 3rd volume of the Newsletter, which will be the X'mas and New Year edition.

The past three months have been eventful, to say the least.

Farewells

We had to say goodbye to the head of the Commonwealth, HRH Queen Elizabeth and saw the heir King Charles III take over the troubled monarchy.

Closer to home, we said goodbye to two of our most accomplished Senseis who left our shores, in search of greener pastures. Sensei Indika Maligaspe and Sensei Yuvraj will sorely be missed at training sessions for the knowledge and expertise they possess was a great asset to the Association.



We are confident that the Aikido philosophy, to which they strongly subscribe, will help them to be successful wherever they go. We wish them and their families all the best in their future endeavours.



At a meeting the Association had at his office, the affable Kenji-San assured of the full support of the Embassy in the future endeavours of the Association.

In Dojo news, practices continue to be held at Nugegoda and Wattala on a regular basis and attendance seems to be picking up.

Sensei Mahesh is now conducting practices at the Borella Dojo in the TASS Gym. Members are encouraged to attend these classes when-

ever possible in order to boost the attendance. We are still hopeful of starting up classes at YMCA Colombo and Dehiwela. Ideally, we should be able to finalize arrangements quickly and schedule a startup at these locations in the New Year.

In other news, it was really great to meet with Mr. Kenji Inoue, the new Cultural Secretary of the Embassy of Japan.

In the meanwhile, the members of the Executive Committee have been having their monthly meetings on a regular basis and much work has been done on the administration side. Members will be pleased to know that the on-line banking facility is now in place for your convenience. Please check with your respective Senseis for the Bank details.

If all goes well, events planned for next year include a visit from Shihan Kumenoi as well as a Senior Sensei from Hombu, Dan Gradings and much more fellowship and training events. You will be updated on the dates and times through your Dojo notice boards, Whatsapp and email addresses.



Cheers and all the best
Neville Kroon

Traditions and Customs of New Year in Japan

By Anna Suzuki

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are considered as some of the most important holidays in Japan. Japanese people get together with their beloved families and friends to welcome New Year by practicing customary traditions that are believed to



bring them good luck, good health and happiness in the coming year .

Joya no kane

One of the traditions, Joya no kane, refers to the annual ringing of bells for 108 times on New Year's Eve. "Joya" is one way of saying "New Year's Eve" in Japanese while "kane" stands for "bell." The bells are rung by the monks for 107 times on New Year's Eve and the last 108th bell is rung after the dawn of New Year's Day and it is practiced all over Japan. According to Buddhist teachings, the number 108 represents the 108 worldly desires that a person experiences throughout the lifetime. Once the last bell is rung, it is considered that the last year's problems and worries are wiped away to start a fresh year.



Toshikoshi soba

Toshikoshi soba is a dish of buckwheat noodles which symbolizes a long life and it is enjoyed with hot dashi broth and a variety of toppings. This



traditional dish is served on New Year's Eve with the belief of letting go of the hardships of the year because soba noodles are easily cut while eating and it is also believed that it brings a fortune, good luck, money and health to the year ahead.

Osechi Ryouri



Osechi Ryouri is a traditional Japanese cuisine served on New Year's Day. Osechi was tradi-

tionally offered to the Gods as a way of reporting the harvest and expressing gratitude and was consisted mainly of seasonal vegetables, tofu, kelp, etc. that can be stored for a long time.



Each dish has its own meanings and people would eat Osechi for a few days so that the Kamado (kitchen) God and the housewives could take a rest over the New Year's.



Editor's note:

Ms. Anna Suzuki is the 2nd Secretary Public Relations and Cultural Affairs of the Embassy of Japan in Sri Lanka

Why should Girls and Ladies Take up Martial Arts ?

By Arosha Jayasundera

For some reason, this was something I wanted to do from the age of 12 or so! I guess it was in my blood.

I first got the chance of fulfilling my dreams in London, where I started Karate. Was it hard? Well I would say that it was far better than Aerobics which were very popular there. Why? I found it to be less tiring and also better for flexibility as we have to commence the session always with a lot of stretching exercises. It is like yoga in that sense as martial arts do involve a lot of flexibility. I would say that is a lot less tiring than these high intensity exercise drills done in rooms.



Deadlier than the male



In Karate, one learns punching and kicking which help your balance and posture and tones your body too. The additional benefit is

that you can also become a competitor in it and train for belts which reflect your abilities and experience.

I also took up Judo subsequently and this sport teaches you to use the other person's weight to take them off balance and throw them if necessary. It does not require a huge strength but technique and flexibility again. Today in Sri Lanka a large number of schools have trained girls in this sport and they are very enthusiastic and are good competitors too. Even in karate, there are a lot of girls and women who have trained in this.

Aikido is a little different to karate and judo as it is not a competitive art but nevertheless is based on sword fighting without the sword!! It teaches you how to handle a person and disarm them or to remove an attacking weapon from their hand and immobilize them in a very speedy manner. This martial art is more attractive to watch than karate or judo as the movements tend to be very circular and shows a lot of harmony with natural forces. Whilst there is no kicking, punching, body lifting or grappling, it focuses on movement a lot and there is a significant motion required on the mat. Again it required one to



train for flexibility and is very good for core body strength. In Sri Lanka, there is a good opportunity for girls and women to join this for self defense and exercise motives as it is not a competitive sport. Nevertheless it is highly perceived in Japan and one can get the opportunity to train in Japan too.

I would definitely recommend girls and women to do a martial art as it gives them more confidence and strengthens their body which is especially important when one passes the 40 year mark.



These are some of my hobbies I have described above, but I have many more sporting hobbies and I find that when you are very good at one, it is much easier then to start another sport as all require balance, strength, flexibility and focus.

Arosha Jayasundera

Photo Corner

Farewell to Sensei Indika Maligaspe and Sensei Yuwaraj



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Extract from a study on "Physiological page 5 & 6
& Psychological benefits of Aikido
Training" by Zsuzsanna Szaboics,
Ferenc Koteles and Attila Szabo
of the Eotvos university in
Budapest, Hungary

This January, why not start the year with an empty jar and fill it with notes about good things that happen. Then, on New Years Eve, empty it and see what awesome stuff happened that year.



Journal of Aikido

In a 2017 study on the “Physiological & Psychological benefits of Aikido Training” by Zsuzsanna Szaboics, Ferenc Koteles and Attila Szabo at the Eotvos university in Budapest, Hungary the following interesting results were found.

Results: The authors of the half of selected articles examined the physiological benefits (flexibility, wrist strength, functional efficiency, balance stability, scoliosis, and injuries) while the other half looked at psychological benefits of aikido training (mindfulness, self-control, self-esteem, health-related behaviour, mood profile, and goal orientation) but also on Type A behaviour, as aggressiveness and anger. In line with the analyzed reports, the gist of these studies suggests that aikido training has positive benefits on both physiological and psychological measures, including flexibility, scoliosis, balance stability, mindfulness, anger control, and/or ego-orientation indeed.

The field of study addressed the following: Aikido is a Japanese self-defense art (part of budo) invented in the early twentieth century and practiced nowadays in 130 countries around the world. It's founder Morihei Ueshiba developed it after studying extensively several armed and unarmed systems of combat. Aikido is a fighting art, a method of self-defense, and philosophy, with the goal to *improve one's character according to the rules of nature*. Its meaning can be interpreted as the “way of spiritual harmony”, where “ai” means harmony, connection, “ki” means spirit, life or cosmic energy, and “do” is method, the pathway.

Basic practicing aikido is typical in pairs, with the aim to defend oneself without causing harm to the attacker, instead to create a harmony of movements (no competitions are held in aikido). It is performed by blending with the motion of the attacker and redirecting the force of the attack, based on moving from the centre of the body in a calm and controlled way, with a heightened state of awareness, using circular and spherical movements. Numerous positive physiological and psychological health effects of aikido could be proposed by its philosophy and the anecdotal statements of the art's practitioners.

Psychological effects of aikido training

The first Group studied children and adults practicing aikido or judo, while the second Group examined a large sample of youth to identify the mediating factors that could influence involvement in martial arts and

combat sports (MA&CS), such as aikido, kick-/ Thai boxing, judo, and karate. Among children, both studies showed that aikido practitioners are more task-oriented than those practicing judo and Thai kick-box. Prompting the hypothesis that aikido fosters task orientation in children, which is an advantageous goal orientation from many perspectives and in many aspects of human behaviour. In the study reported by Gernigon and Le Bars [5], results only prevailed in adults when comparing the different MA&CS styles. In the First Group's study, the differences surfaced when comparing different styles, and when comparing only the advanced practitioners, the aikido group showed higher scores than the karate group and was less ego-oriented than Judo and Thai/kick group. Since these studies did not reveal differences in goal orientations at beginner levels, we could posit that not the choice of the MA&CS style was determined by the goal orientation of a child/ youth, but maybe the different goal orientations were the results of the practiced MA&CS.

Regarding adult practitioners of aikido, the above findings with children seem only be partially justified. Gernigon and Le Bars' results showed that experienced aikidoka were less task and ego-oriented than beginner aikidoka and experienced judoka. In another cross-sectional study it was found that successful aikidoka do not appear to use anger to psych-up themselves in competitions as found in other martial arts (tae kwon do, karate). This finding is in accord with aikido's teaching and philosophy.



ground could affect the choice of martial arts, probably in function of the philosophy and contemporary social image of the given art. The group also examined the differences in psychosocial behaviour in various martial arts. They found that that kick-/ Thai boxers showed more behavioral difficulties, conduct problems, and physical aggression than aikidoka, but there was no significant difference between the less experienced and advanced aikido practition-

ers.

In a two-part study a strong positive connection was disclosed between mindfulness and regular aikido training. In the first part of this research, a 9-month aikido training resulted in increased mindfulness as compared to the pre-training baseline and a control group. In the second part, the research employed a cross-sectional design with a larger sample in which the aikido group showed again higher scores of mindfulness than the control group; the effect was higher among advanced practitioners

Two of them interviewed women practicing aikido. The first was conceptualized within the postmodern feminist framework and aimed to explore women's experiences in long-term aikido training by studying those who trained for three or more years in the martial art. The interview results indicated that *“participants, through aikido, learned to enjoy the full expression of physicality, to redefine and reconstruct behaviors which were once confined to the limited territories of the male or female genders, gained a framework to connect their own individual intellectual, physical and spiritual spheres and, through their empowerment, connect in a positive way to their communities.”* [The second qualitative research, explored the experience of corporeality among women who practice aikido. Corporeality constructs have emerged in three areas: body, emotions, and interpersonal relationships. The former two were characterized by a functional dimension, whereas interpersonal relationships were linked to group affiliation. The women also exhibited a need for self-realization, self-control, and persistence. The author concluded that women who practice aikido appear to focus on the functional aspects of their bodies and emotions through which they motivate themselves to gain an increased self-realization while studying martial arts.

The third qualitative study identified in the review explored the effect of aikido training on the work of psychotherapists. Its results indicated that aikido practice provides a deeper context and theoretical pathways in satisfying human relationships, and also yields strategies which help psychotherapists to be safe in a conflicting relationship while exploring their own emotional and psychological states. As such, aikido strategies work intra-psychically as well as interpersonally; it helps in achieving a harmonious and effective way of being in and being out of therapy.

Goal orientations in sport.

No gender differences. *Children:* aikidoka more task-oriented than judoka, experienced aikidoka less ego-oriented than beginners and experienced judokas. *Adults:* experienced aikidoka less task- and ego-oriented than beginners and experienced judokas.



Women's experiences in aikido

Five major themes emerged: female values in a masculine environment; empowerment and self-development; spirituality; social behaviour and intimacy; sport, martial arts and aikido.

Mindfulness

Aikido group scoring higher than control (in both settings), and dan holders higher dan kyu holders.

Health-related behaviour

Aikido showed higher levels of health-related behaviour, (regarding subscales in healthy practices) than control. No significant difference between capoeira and aikido.

Goal orientation Physical aggression Social background Psychosocial behaviour

Aikido group more task and less ego-oriented than judo and kick-/Thai boxers, less psychosocial behaviour problems, and aggression and come from more privileged social categories than kick-/ Thai boxers. Advanced aikido practitioners more task-oriented than beginners, and more task and less ego oriented than advanced practitioners of other martial arts.

Five cross-sectional studies examined the physiological effects of aikido training in healthy participants. One conducted studied the flexibility of the upper extremities in aikido practitioners having five months of experience. Better flexibility, in all classes and ranges of motion, was disclosed in the aikido group compared to the lower-body sports and sedentary controls, and better than in the upper-body sports group, except shoulder flexion, lateral shoulder rotation, and wrist extension, when analyzed separately.

Another research assessed functional efficiency among men practicing aikido and found that long-term aikido training results in better functional efficiency, which is in connection with a lower incidence of past injuries.

Two investigations studied healthy postmenopausal women and found that eight years of aikido training was more beneficial than fitness training of equal length, or no training at all, in decreasing the psychophysiological costs of standing up and in increasing motor and cognitive efficiency. The authors concluded that aikido training decreases the cost of maintained vertical position and dependence of motor coordination on visual contri-

Explanatory Note

Type A and Type B – in personality theory, there are two contrasting types: Type A is more competitive, outgoing, ambitious, impatient and/or aggressive; Type B is more relaxed personalities.

Budo (Budo) – originally a term denoting the “Way of the warrior”, it is now used as a collective appellation for modern martial arts of kendo, judo, kyudo and so on. The primary objective of these “martial ways” is self-perfection (ningen-keisei).

Capoeira – noun a martial art and dance form, originally from Brazil that is used to promote physical fitness and grace of movement.

Mindfulness – state awareness of thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Pliability – elasticity, flexibility.

Scoliosis – a lateral curvature of the spine.

Stabilometry – the objective study of body sway during standing.

State anxiety – momentary worry, fear, or apprehension connected to a challenging situation.

Competitive state anxiety – noun a feeling of stress caused by competition, especially when the athlete does not feel able to meet the challenges.

bution

Studies of people with health ailments

Four studies examined participants with certain health dysfunction. Three tested the effects of a one-school-year modified aikido intervention training program on boys prone

to scoliosis in contrast to a conventional corrective exercise group and a regular physical education class control group. The results showed that the angle of lateral spinal curvature decreased in aikido group, while there were no changes in the corrective exercise group, and an increase was noticed in the control group. Aikido group's results also showed a reduction of pelvic anteversion angle (no change in the control group), but no change in α , β and γ spinal curvature angles in the sagittal plane were found (neither in control and comparison, except γ increase in the comparison group). In children with scoliosis, the angle of lateral spinal curvature decreased, similarly to the corrective exercise group, and it was more pronounced than in the control group. In non-scoliotic (just threatened) children the increased spinal angle was smaller in the aikido group than in the other two groups. Reduction in asymmetry values of the back pelvis spurs was only found in the aikido group. In children with asymmetry,

Balance stability



Positive findings: Increased balance and fluency of movement paralleled by enhanced alpha-2 EEG and lower frontal EMG power in the aikido group.

CONCLUSIONS

There are several findings that merit future evaluations from a physiological perspective. It is likely that aikido training enhances the flexibility of the upper extremities in young adults, balance stability in postmenopausal women compared to other physical activities. Intervention studies of sufficient

Empirical studies suggest that aikido training has both physiological and psychological benefits;

matches the anecdotal reports about this self-defense art

Editor's Note. If anyone is interested in reading the full report, please contact me.

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