

Starting Over

Bunzo Takamatsu

"Why do you think Shudo sensei is so popular?" I once asked this journal's director, Mr. Mizutani. "It's his personality," he said. Though his eyes are small, Mr. Mizutani's insight about people is a reliable one. He also said, "Shudo Sensei seems very relaxed, so much so that he may look even lazy, but actually he is a very studious student. He just doesn't show it." I decided to take his seminar.

I used to take various seminars everywhere, but I always found myself doing the same old stuff after the seminars. As my practice got busier and busier, my participation in seminars has become a rare event. However, I have always been aware that my style had a lot of room for improvement. Moreover, I used to really enjoy my work. Not that I don't enjoy what I do now, but it really became "work" for me. I realized there was something missing. I participated in the Shudo Seminar in Hawaii with the hope that it would give me some kind of enlightenment.

The very first thing that impressed me while watching Shudo sensei giving a demonstration was that he looked like he was truly having a good time. It was as though a kid was playing with his most favorite toy. Just watching him made me feel happy. Then I asked myself, "Am I enjoying it as much? Do I really like what I'm doing? Isn't this the most important thing?" I had to think hard from the start of the seminar.

I enjoyed his lecture just as much, if not more, than the demonstrations. His narration reminded me of Rakugo (Japanese comic story telling). Hangover and his wife were two key words in his story telling. It was so convincing that I seriously thought that I had to drink a lot to become a good acupuncturist. I'd like to share some of his words that made me think.

"You have to use one acupuncture point at least ten thousand times to master the use of that point."

This remark reminded me of my Aikido teacher who once told me, "You have to throw at least ten thousand times to master that throw." Even when we are using the same point, it manifests differently on each individual. After locating the right point on each person, it means little if it doesn't work.

Fukaya sensei (very well-known moxibustion master) said, "An acupuncture point is not to work, but to make work."

"You can improve yourself if you constantly keep trying to."

Shudo sensei mentioned this when he talked about Nogami sensei. Mr. Nogami was not a superb technician before. Then at one point he made a big mistake, and from that time on he became very serious about studying with Shudo sensei. He kept working to improve himself without knowing he had made a big progress. Shudo sensei said, "Any situation in your life can become an inspiring turning point for change, such as Nogami sensei's case, and from that time on you can improve yourself almost indefinitely if you continue working at it." This was very encouraging to an acupuncturist like me who doesn't have any teacher around. What he says is nothing new but somehow it sounded so refreshing. Maybe it is because the words came from someone who made that change.

"Even now I sometimes wonder if my needle technique is right."

I'd like to quote a story about my karate grandmaster, Masutatsu Oyama. Even at his peak when he was called "the strongest man in the world," he would wonder if his way of making a fist was the right one. A master never thinks he is the one. Maybe that's why he could get to that point. No matter how good he is there seems to be no end in learning. This also reminds me of what one very distinguished Bunraku Tayuu (Japanese old puppet theater narrator) said at his retirement, "I need one more life time to master this art!" The same thing can be said about the art of acupuncture. I feel very fortunate and proud of what I do now.

There seems to be much more that I should remember, but these three most impressed me. I hope I remember correctly. I'm not so sure because he said these things in his rather digressive talks. As is usually the case of a bad student, I tend to remember only digressive talks.

Inspired by the seminar, I re-read *Meridian Therapy—Introduction of Clinical Acupuncture* by Bunkei Ono, and ran into this phrase:

"Meridian therapy is not just one school of acupuncture therapy, nor a special style of acupuncture. It is the orthodox, traditional acupuncture therapy."

I finally realized that Meridian therapy is really the basic of the basics that any acupuncturist cannot do without. In order to practice Meridian therapy properly, one should be able to distinguish the movement of Ki in meridians (in other words, to make an Oriental medical diagnosis), and to adjust the movement of Ki by needles and moxibustion. In this sense, I thought it was so appropriate to have an opportunity to

learn about "The arrival of ki" in this seminar. Least of all did I expect to master "Arriving ki" just with this seminar, but it gave me a feel of where I should be headed. Hopefully I will make this seminar the turning point and as Shudo sensei said I could improve myself with my continuous effort. It's almost embarrassing to say that after nearly twenty years of practice, I feel like I stand on the starting line. The only difference from twenty years ago is that I know which way I'm going to run. Actually I don't feel so bad.

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Questions & Answers

Column

If you have any questions on Japanese Acupuncture or Japanese medicine, then send your questions to us.

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and

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will

answer your questions.

Questions and answers received by the next deadline will be published.

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