

HKF Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki Seminar

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C. Curtis

Day One:

The name of our seminar is *Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki*. This is a very important phrase for Tohei Sensei. If I may, I will help you to understand this in English. *Shugyo*, though you probably already know what this means, is “true training” or “true practice.” *Tassei* means “to achieve.” OK? This is a literal translation. *Kigan* means “to pray, or to hope.” A nice mythical phrase, praying and hoping. Look out. And *shiki* means “ceremony.”

Again, this is the literal meaning. If you were to say this in English, you would say “This is the ceremony for hoping to achieve true practice.” But I would like to change this a little bit, because this is a very limited and old-fashioned way of speaking. Even though this word we use here is *shugyo*, this phrase is a *keiko* way of seeing the world. In other words, this way of seeing the world is very *shoga*, dualistic, or relative. Because, when it is expressed this way, you are hoping that sometime in the future you can achieve some level of something. Even though your intention may be very sincere, and you might even be very committed, still you are hoping for something some other time. So, some other time means some other place. Some other time and some other place means some other person that you hope to become. This is a person that you don’t even know yet. This is useless, a hopeless way to conduct your mind.

Therefore I want to change this here. I am just going to say it this way:

Shugyo – true practice

Tassei – experience

Kigan – open to

Shiki – celebration

Now it reads that we are here tonight having a “celebration of opening to the experience of true training.” This means we can experience it now. We don’t think it is coming from somewhere else. This is now what Tohei Sensei would call *taiga*, or absolute way of seeing. And as we just read in the *Shokushu* (Ki Sayings), the way to unification for each of us is to recognize this and practice it in each moment.

Let’s explore this a little more. There are basically two kinds of training we talk about, *keiko* and *shugyo*. *Keiko* means an exercise, or going through the practice in a carefully proscribed way. You know, this would be like getting up in the morning on time, doing your one hour breathing, taking your shower, shaving your face (no laziness), brushing your teeth, wearing clean pressed clothes, having a modest

breakfast, going to work on time, working diligently and intelligently in a committed and sincere way, stopping at the correct time for lunch, having a modest lunch (nothing too heavy), finishing work on time, driving home carefully (always according to the speed limit), getting home, greeting your wife and family in the appropriate manner, which reminds everyone all the time what a good and appropriate student of the way you are. Then maybe you have a little glass of wine, or not, but if you do, never too much, always just the right amount. Then you go to bed at a reasonable hour so you can get up at a reasonable hour the next morning and you begin it all over again.

This is *keiko*, not *shugyo*, OK? This is the ideal, sensible, straight-forward way for a student of the way to act, according to the rules of our society. *Keiko* is what you do when you do everything correctly. Now, does anybody have a life like this? Does anybody know anybody that has a life like this? Why not? Didn't your parents and teachers tell you to do all those things? But none of you do them. Why not?

I would say the reason why we don't live like this, even though we might aim at something like this, is because life happens to get in the way of it. Life is real. It's changing all the time. We make those plans and follow those strict rules in order to become happily married, raise successful children, make a lot of money, be comfortable, and die happy. That's what all those plans are for. That's what all that *keiko* practice is for, to achieve something desirable in the future.

You practice in a *keiko* way, even in the dojo, because you want to succeed. You may want to have stronger Ki, be more charismatic, or be more loving and helpful to others. However you want to word it, you basically want to be something that you don't see yourself as being now. This is *keiko*, not *shugyo*. Anybody who has these hopes and dreams must realize, sooner or later, that they are mysteriously being contradicted all the time. Stuff happens in this world, and it never works out the way we plan. It's not that it is always bad news. Sometimes "not working out" leads you to something else that does work, for a while. So it is successful sometimes and not successful at others. But it is never enough, and it always looks greener over there. The other person always seems more successful, more on it, a little more beautiful, a little more sexy. It just seems like, whatever you do, you can't control everything according to your plan, whatever that plan is.

Now, if you are lucky, you notice that you always run into this brick wall called change, whenever you try to live in this proscribed way. If you are lucky, you notice that there is nothing you can do to organize and control what happens to you in your life. And when that happens, then *shugyo* as a chance to begin for you. *Shugyo* practice happens always in the present. And if *shugyo* always happens in the present, then what takes us away from *shugyo* back into *keiko*? What takes us away from the present, for instance in a Ki Test?

Student: Wanting to pass.

Wanting to pass. That's the future. Any thought or any concern that takes us away from the present to the future or to the past, in memory ("What did I do last time that made this work?") takes us away from living a vibrant, alive, true life. It takes us out of *shugyo* and into *keiko*. So if we don't long to succeed, that means we have avoided the other side of that, which is a fear of failure. Which means we don't have any preference one way or the other. We call this having a mind of equanimity. Win or lose is not in our vocabulary, it's not in our mind. The whole idea of winning and losing is not there. But think of this. We say that if you want to win, you fail the Ki Test, but if you don't have the wanting to win you can pass the Ki Test. But if you pass the Ki Test, isn't that winning? And wasn't there a desire for that somewhere in that passing? This can be very subtle.

What I'm leading up to saying here is, look out. Because when you are working on equanimity, which is a mind of no preference that allows you to be in a state of *shugyo* (remember I said *keiko* is doing and *shugyo* is being), look out. Why would you want to achieve a state of no preference, if you don't want to use it to win?! So there is some big trouble in there, right in the middle of that. Do you see?

And this is Tohei Sensei's genius with the Ki Test, because you can't lie to yourself in a Ki Test. If you are not clear in this way, you will move, you will be disturbed. You may not physically fall over, if you are very clever. But you will be disturbed, you will know it, and the Ki examiner will know it. So even though you manufacture a state of something like equanimity, there can still be a subtle goal involved, and if so, then it's still *keiko*. And if it's *keiko*, you will be disturbed. It has to actually be a state of being where there is no consideration to be anyone at all. Because the person you want to be, the one you are looking forward to being, is always one who wins, the one who doesn't lose. We have a deep yearning for this. This means to us that we can live, survive. It's directly connected to our instincts.

We are talking about transforming on a very very deep level. How is that going to happen from coming to class once a week? Not a chance folks. Even if you get up and sit every morning, that's only one hour out of 24. What are you doing the other 23 hours? You're doing *keiko*. So somehow we have to find a way to begin practicing in *shugyo* all the time. So that is the subject of this seminar, practicing in *shugyo*, what takes us away from it, and how to return to it. In other words, our practice is to be constantly in this state of being Tohei Sensei called *shugyo*, or true training, what takes us away from that, and what brings us back, and how we can do this 24 hours a day. But it's not something that we conceive of, figure out how to do, and then practice it. That makes it *keiko*. It's an experience, and since an experience only happens now, we can only experience it in the present moment.

Day Two:

Now we have been together for one night and two days practicing in this vein and constantly reinforcing this way of seeing our life and our practice. So can someone tell me what kind of effect this has, right now, on how you are experiencing this moment?

Student: For me, it certainly is a lot more vivid.

What is more vivid?

Student: Well, everything. Especially after we did meditation this morning, colors, etc., all of my senses were much more intense.

When we are in this condition our senses are really heightened, but also our emotional condition. Not that we are crying or laughing all the time, but we are much more sensitive to others, and much more clear in our thoughts. So our whole experiential world is heightened. This can be that way all the time, right? This is our practice.

So now it's really clear how to practice, and that we actually can give ourselves permission to practice correctly in *shugyo* all the time, at every moment. Of course, just like with Ki Tests, there are levels and levels and levels of participation in our own life. The more we allow ourselves to be distracted by "stupid," the less we get to participate in our own lives. The only thing that takes experience is recognizing stupid. Because for most of us, a good solid portion of stupid is a good solid portion of who we are. Just like I was talking about the other day, that's our story.

For instance if I ask you, "Who are you?" You would wonder exactly what category I am referring to. "What religion are you?" "Oh, I'm a Buddhist." "I'm a Christian." "I'm a Muslim."

"What is your job?" "Oh, I'm a scientist." "I'm a doctor." "I'm a lawyer." "I'm a landscaper."

But are you that? The problem is that we identify with our role. There is nothing wrong with the beautiful thing, whatever it is we're engaged in. People love their work, they love their spouses, they love their friends. We love life. We love engaging in all of this stuff. The problem is that, because we identify with it, we can't be without it. We can't be alone, which is being no one. So we have to practice being no one, so that even when we are with friends we're still alone. Because that's the truth of it. Well, we don't recognize that maybe, but the more we practice, the more we are in *shugyo* and not *keiko*, the more fully our experience is enhanced and the more deeply we enjoy everything that we are engaged in.

Conversely, the more we are in that, the less we are moved, distracted, or seduced. Life is there to be enjoyed, so enjoy it. At your own risk, of course.

So, we know what to do, we know how to do it, we are doing it.

Are there any questions then?

Student: If we are born of the Ki of the Universe, and we know how to practice in this shugyo way of being, then why after thousands of years is man still blowing it? Why are we still no getting it? What are we still doing wrong?

Student: Because it's not easy?

It may be simple but not easy. So why is it not easy?

Student: Because I think it would require commitment.

Aren't you committed to your life? Don't you want to live?

Student: Yes.

Well, everybody is committed to what ever it is they are doing. Remember what ever you are practicing is what you will end up being tomorrow. Everybody is committed to something. It might be heroin, but you are committed to something. So I'm not sure it is just commitment.

Student: To me, I think, we have a lot of problems because the "stupid" thing is so seductive. And because it seems the easy way.

Yes, it seems the easy way. Usually it is the hard way.

Student: It's not the right way.

Well, I don't know about right and wrong, but it doesn't often seem that what makes it seductive is that it seems the easy path, but we always get bit in the end. So it might have been easier just say "no," or "yes," as the case may be. Is that fair?

I recently sent out the transcripts of the discussion groups for chapters 10 and 11 from our book *Letting Go*, and asked you to read them before this seminar. I did that because the subject has come up, not only in those two discussions, but very strongly in my recent seminar in Los Angeles. The question has been what you just brought up about commitment.

My student from Maui is here today, and he was the one who said in the discussion on chapter 10, "I really want to get up and breathe every morning. How come I don't? What can I do? I want to get up and breathe." So I asked him, "If you want to get up and breathe, why don't you just do it?" And what did you say?

Student: Apparently I don't want to.

Because apparently you don't want to. Yeah, there is a big difference between truly wanting to do something and thinking that you should do it. Never do anything because you think you should. That's *keiko*. Do what ever you want, and see what the results are. The problem is we are not paying attention. People don't wake up and even begin training until they notice the connection between the choices they make and the results they get. Once you see the connection, then everything blows up in your face. Then you realize, "Oh by God, I'm stupid. I'm doing these crazy things and having these horrible results, and at the time it seems like a good thing. OK then, I want to practice."

At this point, in the beginning, you get a whole list of rules to follow, to show you how to do this practice. You should do this and that. Get up early every morning, get to the dojo on time, do all the right things with your family, and then follow the society's rules, and then that depends on what society you are in, and there's books and books and books written about this, this utter

Well, before I use that word..."bullshit, I'll just say all that is *keiko*.

All that I discussed in the beginning of the seminar about the way to be, that's all *keiko*. And when I asked if anyone was running their life like that, no one said they were. I described somebody who does *keiko* perfectly, and of course no one does. But the truth is that we are all doing that, and feeling guilty when we fail. And I wanted to have that to juxtapose against *shugyo*, which is just being completely present, with no thought of self, which is a separation, right or wrong. When you are completely present, there's no time, no space, and there's no self.

The *keiko* world is designed to control the people that haven't yet noticed that what they get is a result of what they gave. If you don't know that, if you haven't put that together yet, then you need rules to follow and organization. Otherwise we'll end up killing each other. We have to have control over the society. We have to make sure people don't misuse each other. Because most people in society have not noticed yet that when "I misuse you it actually comes back and misuses me." When you haven't got that connected up yet, then you just follow the rules. But once you see that, then everything changes. That's when you can burn the bible, or cut the Buddha.

So I don't say any of those rules are wrong, necessarily. When I say "bullshit" I am saying it is all just folderol, endless advice about what you should or should not be doing. And we do it to ourselves, you know. We have our own little book, don't we? We have our own little bible that we carry around. It's called a "superego." And it tells us exactly when we are being all right and when we are not.

So, discovering how it works and therefore allowing our selves to move into *shugyo* practice, is the beginning of true practice. And then we have all of our structures to deal with over the next how-ever-many years as they arise and attempt to take us away from being in our current state, away from the moment, from here, now. Everybody wants to live in this brilliant clarity of the immediate moment, so why don't we live like that all the time?

Of course, there's no answer to your question, "If we are so perfect, how come we are so screwed up." I mean, all of this is the answer, but the words are not really an answer. You are the one that knows this, and your concern should be for that. And if your concern is for that, then it is automatically transferred to everyone you meet. We think we have to have a *keiko* reason to do that, but we don't. If you are true to yourself, you are true to everyone else at the same time. You don't have to manipulate or control or have a set of rules or a philosophy to follow about how to be the right kind of person. We do that with children, and with people in society

who haven't connected that up, as I was saying. They haven't gotten the evolution thing down yet.

You plant an oak seed, you are going to get an oak tree, guaranteed. You won't get celery. (sings) Plant a radish, get a radish, not a brussel sprout. Don't you remember? That's from the play and movie *The Fantastics*. Well, they've always wanted to hear me sing, so...

OK, next question.

Student: The last three years I have been training, and though I have been trying the whole time sincerely, I think I have been pretty much following a keiko way all this time. But then, recently I had an experience during Shokushin no Gyo (Misogi) where, in the fastest moment, I saw your zuzu bell actually slow down. And I saw your bell going all the way to the end. This was a different experience than what I had previously. Before, I was just lost in the rapid movement. But this was the first time that I experienced that. I also had a similar experience this morning in meditation. So I have started to notice these things more and more.

Is your question what is that?

Student: Well, how do we maintain that?

Ah, how do we hang on to that? We don't. Look, we live with a set of assumptions that have to do with time and space. We believe things move at a certain speed, so they do. That's how we perceive them. I mean, it's not limited to time or space. How we believe anything is, is how we experience that thing. When those beliefs or assumptions begin to drop away, we see things differently, more like how they actually are. That is, not only are colors more vibrant, thoughts clearer, and emotions more poignant and sensitive. When we see things as they are, they are not overlaid with our assumptions about how things are. And you can include everything in this, not just your ability to see my *zuzu* come to its fruition.

I'm sure many of you have experienced this while in the midst of a *waza* or technique, when everything is moving in incredibly slow motion, and it's just not a problem. It doesn't happen all the time and you can't cling to it when it does. But the more you practice, the more that happens. And when that happens it means you are completely in the present moment.

You might be really good at something like golf, or tennis, or basketball, some sport, or even your work. And because you practice it so much and for so long, then you experience moments of falling into what they refer to in sports as "the zone." But easy come easy go. So there has to be a much deeper understanding of how this mechanism works. This is what we practice in Aikido. That's what this is all about. How does this actually work? It's not just having words like *shugyo* for it, but we have actual practices that we do. So you and you and you and you can actually have the experience of being in the zone, being in the moment. And then how it is that that comes about in the moment.

For each of us, we are the master, or not, of that. And the more we practice correctly, in *shugyo* not *keiko*, the more we will experience, and the deeper we will experience. For instance, in the beginning there may be just a little flash of this, every once in a while. But then that flash begins to spread until we begin to experience this level of seeing all the time. Then another flash to a new level occurs, and then that happens more and more, until we become more used to seeing on this level, and then again we begin to have flashes of an even deeper level, and so on. So that's how our capacity of attention builds, so that we can be in a deeper and deeper level of knowing, direct seeing without the scrim of our structures, without our fears and anxieties and troubles covering it over.

Student: You know, before we were talking about why we continue to screw up over the centuries. What is the role of conditioned learning in that? Learning from our parents, learning from society?

We are born without much information. So for you folks that have children, or are about to have some: We're born into these families with not much information, and guess where we get it all? From you guys. We get it from the parents. And they got it from their parents, and they got it from their parents, and so on and so forth. So the cultural patterns, or conditioning, are set in motion instantly, the moment the baby is conceived in the womb, not when it has come out, but while it is still in the womb, the conditioning is going. So, that's a big responsibility. And like I was saying earlier, we have to have some rules for kids, because they don't have the information yet, and they are not having the experience yet. Because the experience itself is a combination of being open and knowing what it is that you are open to. Whereas with a child, they may be very open, but they've got no idea what's going on. They don't know. So you have to go through a period of adjustment where you get all this information and live according to it in a very proscribed *keiko* way. And then at some point you begin to feel the urge to look deeper.

So everybody goes through that pattern no matter what. Of course there are circumstances where parents are more awake themselves, and are able to help their children understand more deeply at a younger age and have a deeper experience of living. And there are, of course, parents that are really criminal in the way they treat their children in what they teach them. And I am not just talking about ones that are mean to their children, but about people that overly emphasize insistence on cultural limitations and prejudice. This is really popular in Hawaii, although popular everywhere else in the world too. That kind of stuff is criminally negligent, as far as I am concerned.

I experienced this. My parents taught me that our family was special, different than the other geeky people out there. And that was pretty devastating for me to have to deal with through high school, can you imagine, and college. And I ended up living alone in a retreat, as a result, for a number of years. So maybe it's a good thing that they taught me that. Because if they hadn't done that, I may have never been bothered enough to make the effort to wake up from the dream.

Student: At the beginning of the seminar you said that we buy into this win/lose, this pattern. So is it necessary to teach children that?

When I was first married, my wife and I were vegetarian. So I told my first two kids, "We don't eat meat, children. We don't eat the nasty animal. No, no." So, uh, it didn't take them long to figure out that there were burgers at school. I never heard about it directly, but indirectly. It didn't take too long.

I mean we can't control our children. We do have a lot of influence, but as to your question, is it necessary to teach them about the win/lose game, I don't think you can hide it from them.

Just like when we have beginning students, with children we do encourage activities and ideas that stimulate them and put them into positions where they have to recognize what's going on, how this came about. And a lot of those are games, as in teaching Aikido to children, games where they see the outcome relative to the cause, they see this connection. And then some people see it very much in their own sports world but don't see it anywhere else. Some lawyers see that connection only in certain circumstances, in the courtroom for instance. But outside with their families they may not see that.

Student: You know there's this book called "Brave New World." And you find out at the end that the architect of the whole thing put all these perfect people on this island. And in the end they all killed each other. And so after all these thousands of years of practicing shugyo and being one with the Universe, do you think that we have established a perfect sense of the world? Because you've said that the Universe is a balance between good and evil, it doesn't recognize that. So do you think that we are in that perfect world now? Because there does seem to be this balance, do you think that we, as humans, have developed over the years?

Well, there are a lot of questions in there. That's a mouthful. Do you see any evidence that people understand?

Student: I think, as a whole, we understand that there needs to be a balance.

What do you mean by a balance, here?

Student: Well, we're not all dead. So it seems like there is something that balances out this idea of good and evil. And if we all thought that we were pursuing something for good that we would be killing each other because we would be in pursuit of something that we are not.

Well, actually, we are all in pursuit of some kind of ideal good, and as a result we are all killing each other. That's what is going on in the world today. That's the way people are. That's what that book is about. That's how people are. We are out there killing people because of that ideal.

There is no balance, like you are suggesting. I didn't say there is that kind of balance. I said that the Universe doesn't recognize when something is one way or another way. So we don't need to worry about that. We don't need to worry about being good or bad. Even though, in the *keiko* world that our parents brought us into, they've taught us how to be good and how not to be bad, because they want us to follow the rules and not screw up before we wake up to the fact that it's not in our interest to do nasty things. Because if comes back to bite us. Once we get that, theoretically, we stop doing nasty things. But we have to get it completely. And we are like a village. So the village headman might get it, and his wife and kids and maybe a couple of families, but there's a whole bunch of others in here that don't get that yet. Do you understand what I mean? There's other parts of me that still are pretty mischievous and perhaps haven't seen that everything comes back to bite, see?

Once you start to get that, as you get deeper into reality, what's actually going on, you can discard those rules. But if you don't get that, you're forever trapped.

Yeah, everybody is doing things that are not in their interest all day long, pretty much. So that's why it is very important to practice. So that you can notice and don't screw yourself up. And if you don't have time to practice in this way, then come to see me and I'll give you a bunch of rules to follow, until such time as you can practice.

OK. Thank you very much.