

The attentive reader has already concluded that the difference between static, soft, and flowing aikido training, has less to do with how the techniques are done than with when they are initiated. Gotai starts when the attacker's grip is properly applied, and jutai when the attack is commenced but not completed. *Kinagare* has no starting point.

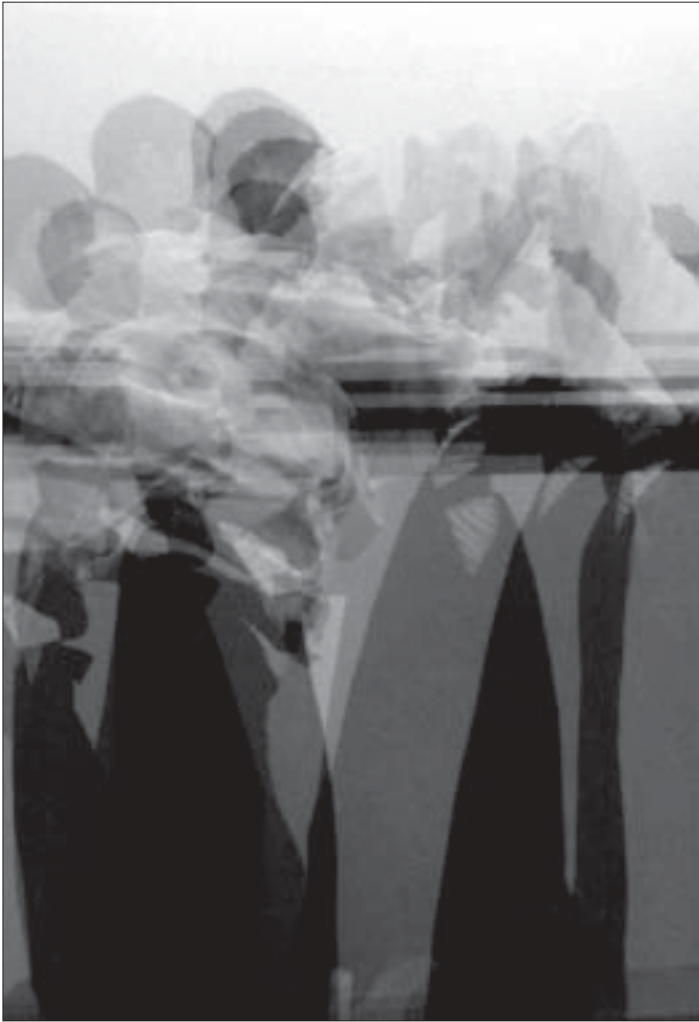
The aim of aikido is never to get stuck in a self-defense situation, a battle between two wills. No matter how big an advantage you may have, there is a risk in accepting the challenge, and at the end of the fight there is a bitter loser, whether it is you or the other person. No, in aikido we want to reach a state that cannot be disturbed by aggression, not shaken by challenge, and in no need to take cover from hostility. You just walk on, as if nothing happened.

That is *kinagare* (or *ki no nagare*, as it is sometimes written), a constant flow of ki. The attacker is sucked into this flow, and led away, without the defender having to halt or change course. The aikido techniques are done during the walk, without any distinguishable beginning or end. Only the attacker is able to point out some kind of start – that of his own attack.

### Taninzugake

When there are several attackers, which is called *taninzugake*, it is both natural and necessary to shift to *kinagare*, which does not stop at someone or contain a foreseeable strategy. It is quite entertaining to watch, when well done: The aikidoist wanders about randomly in a crowd of adversaries, who all miss their target, tumbling this way and that, like bowling pins at a strike. But the aikido principles are clear and not that difficult to apply in such a situation. Actually, it is more difficult to be one of the attackers, who runs a risk of being hit by one of his companions, and has a hard time indeed to keep track of the defender.

In *kinagare*, this natural flow of ki and the body move-



*Aikido training in the author's dojo Enighet, Sweden. Photo by Gisela Döhler.*

ments are trained by continuous taisabaki. Because you never stay on one and the same spot, the attackers are unable to join in an ordered charge, and because you always make irimi and tenkan moves, no individual attacker will succeed with his strike.

You can also observe the clever way the aikido techniques are constructed. They are such that all through doing them, you move in repeated taisabaki, so that surrounding attackers miss if they try to strike you when you do your technique on one of them. This was a necessary component for the martial arts of the samurai, since they prepared not only for duels, but for the battlefield as well.

The most common techniques in kinagare are the throws, because they are quick and do not demand that you stop in some position. But the pinning techniques can also work against several attackers, although slightly modified. For example, they can easily be converted to throws or quick felling techniques, or they can be used to put one attacker in the way of the others. And the pinning techniques, too, can be done in a series of taisabaki evasions.

Still, all the aikido techniques get a more flowing character in kinagare – spirals and ellipses that are like whirlwinds as they fell the attackers, also often those who are not actually touched by the aikido techniques.

Of course it is also possible to practice kinagare one on one. Then the attacker has to hurry to get up after each felling, to attack anew. The defender should always be on the move, and preferably toward the partner instead of away from him or her, so that the tempo increases. It can be quite a demanding kind of training.

Another rewarding way of raising the tempo is by *kakarigeiko*, where several attackers stand in line, and hurry forward one after the other, as soon as the defender has thrown the previous attacker – or better: right before the defender has done so. With this kind of training, you also learn to adapt immediately to different attackers' temper, size, strength, and so on.

### **Improvisation**

In high tempo *kinagare* it is impossible to do your techniques with your conscious mind. The brain is far too slow a commander. The initiative has to come from the reflexes and the intuition. You release your flow and let the aikido techniques express this naturally, following the flow where it happens to go. It can be compared to improvisation in music, where the brain is far behind the rapid advancement of the fingers on the instrument.

Certainly, *kinagare* is the training form that comes the closest to the essence of aikido. The aikidoist should always be in the middle of this flow, which automatically leads to techniques as soon as somebody attacks – and it happens immediately, naturally, as if the whole chain of events had been prepared and learned by heart. Contrary to this impression, it is impossible to accomplish such aikido by preparation and rehearsal. It must be born unprepared, out of a center awake and living.

When this works, less and less of physical contact is needed to do the aikido technique. You become like a current that the attacker is sucked into. Neither pinning techniques nor throws demand physical exertion, or a firm grip on the attacker. It just flows.

Although to those who do not yet comprehend it, this seems like unreliable self-defense, it is the way to an aikido that is really fascinating – both to the one doing it, and the one it is done to. Eventually, you should be able to treat your partner with the same ease as the conductor leads an orchestra – maybe one day also at the same distance.

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### **Zanshin – extended spirit**

残心

When in *kinagare* you go like a whirlwind among the attackers, it easily happens that tenderness and care get lost. The attackers are thrown around and into one another, leading



*Former doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba (1921-1999), the son of Osensei, at an aikido demonstration in Aiki Jinja, the small temple beside the dojo in Iwama. Kisshomaru Ueshiba was very instrumental in the world-wide spread of aikido.*

to injuries and bitterness. That is no good. The benevolent aikidoist wants to protect the attackers from unnecessary harm. There should be no retribution. It is enough to show the attackers a better course of action than the malice they intended. Nobody should get hurt. Instead, everybody should learn, and leave the fight as wiser and more placid persons.

Therefore, an aikido technique does not end with the throw, but is extended all through the trajectory of the falling attacker, remaining with him until he chooses to interrupt his malice and walk away. The aikidoist's attention and ki flow continue to encircle and lead the attacker all through the throw, making sure that it is lenient. Also, the continued attention makes sure that the attacker becomes aware of what the laws are in the defender's sphere, the aikidoist's universe.

Judo has the same friendly spirit, which is shown in how the thrower holds up the thrown partner's arm, so that he will land safely on the side, and not hit his head. In aikido we rarely hold on to the person we throw, but with the direction of the movement and with our ki, we show the best way for the fall. It is not enough to throw the attacker. We also make sure to cushion the fall. Correctly done, the aikido throws are not that unpleasant to the victims of them. They fall just as softly as they are snared in the pinning techniques.

### **Remaining**

This is accomplished by *zanshin*, extended spirit. This concept is particularly stressed in karatedo, but is also significant in aikido. It consists of two kanji pictograms: *zan* means to remain, and *shin* (also pronounced *kokoro*) means heart, mind, or spirit. A remaining spirit. Concentration that does not falter.

In Japan, the heart is used in connection to countless things. Contrary to western use of the word, it rarely has anything to do with emotions, but with willpower, mentality, and spirit. *Zanshin* means not to lose contact with the

partner in the throw. Your attention remains when you lost physical contact with your partner, sort of how in javelin you follow the flight of the spear until it pierces the ground. It definitely has a martial aspect. The defender guards and controls the attacker all the way until the latter is no longer a threat. With forceful zanshin it is even possible to deter the other from attacking anew.

It is also with zanshin that the partner is controlled in a pinning. Zanshin is the force of attention and resolve, showing one's center and remaining in it. You continue to surround and penetrate your partner with your ki, so that no other courses are accessible than the ones you have marked out. That makes the partner immovable in a pinning, and kind of stunned after a throw, having a hard time standing up again – as if you were standing over him, pressing him to the ground.

### **Protection**

The friendlier side of zanshin is also practical. By extending your attention beyond the reach of the aikido technique, it becomes harder for the partner to resist, and the technique is free of weaknesses. By guiding the partner's fall with your mind, he is unable to change its course. By applying the extended spirit of zanshin to the pinning, it becomes solid without needing to inflict pain on the partner.

Zanshin is the clear and decisive spirit that shall reach and penetrate the partner already before the attack, so that it comes as the defender wishes. Of course, it must remain during the attack, and after it. Zanshin is the defender's connection to the attacker, and it should be like that of a ruler to his or her subject – a kind ruler, with compassion for the subject. Noble zanshin is not exclusively for the protection of the defender. Also the attacker is protected and preserved by it. When your zanshin becomes like pure benevolence, I doubt that it is possible to attack you at all.