

The Meaning of 道 – *Dou*

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The literal translation of 道 is Way, Path. It is used in many Japanese martial arts such as 柔道 - Judo (The soft way), 合気道 - Aikido (The way of merged energy), 弓道 - Kyudo (The way of archery) and more.

Another place it is famously used is 武士道 - Bushido (The way of the warrior/Samurai code of chivalry). And of course, 道場 - Dojo (A place of the way).

In all of the above, Dou is a way of life. In most Dojos in Japan especially and all over the world. After every training when in Seiza, they repeat the 道場訓 - Dojo Kun (Dojo teaching/rules) and in every Dojo Kun there are the lines: 礼儀を重んずること - Reigi wo omonzuru koto (To respect others) and 不撓不屈の精神を養うこと - Futo fukutsu no seishin wo yashinau koto (To never give up).

A way every true martial artist sees himself is different but it is the way, spirit, and etiquette that unites all the styles. The goal is similar, to be better than our previous selves and be respectful to others regardless of rank, age, gender, or race. As a student should respect the Sensei, the same thing goes the other way.

Nowadays, many modern martial arts (That have many skilled and great fighters), lack that "Dou", that "Way" unfortunately. They focus on the techniques and fighting skills alone and miss out on a long year tradition that their martial art is based on. A real shame.

Being a martial artist is not only being able to punch, kick, perform Katas, or fight. There is a way that must be kept, a tradition of centuries that should be preserved. It is first of all being respectful to others even if you do not agree with them. It is about being humble no matter what rank you hold and how many years you train. It is about doing your best each time, not giving up, and controlling your ego while you're doing it. It is about striving to be better than your former self no matter how many

compliments you hear from people because pride can blind us if we do not pay attention. And no matter how tough things are, never give up.

In my own opinion, it is those things that differentiate the old Japanese styles and our way from others. Always try to maintain the spirit of a beginner (初心) - Shoshin. Keep moving forward, training hard, and always practice the basics before you move to a more advanced technique. If we do our best to preserve our tradition, the students we teach will take an example and strive to do the same. Most students do not do what we as teachers say but what we as teachers do. This way we can perpetuate our Way.