

## **Extend Ki Discussion**

### **Friday, Oct. 28, 2011**

#### **C. Curtis**

Good evening everyone.

Tonight is our last Four Basic Principles discussion, and the subject is Extend Ki.

You know whenever I think about Extend Ki I can't help but think about Suzuki Sensei. One time we were in Japan and Otsuka Sensei was trying to express the meaning of Extend Ki to us, and even he was struggling a little bit. Then finally he said, "Oh, just look at Suzuki Sensei. When he walks into a room, the room lights up. That is Ki Extension." And it's really true. Suzuki Sensei was almost always extending Ki, meaning he was always completely engaged in whatever was going on. If it was low-key he could be low-key. If it was high energy he could be high energy. But he was always completely engaged.

For instance, let me just read the five principles of Extending Ki.

- 1) You are not overly conscious of your body.
- 2) You make full use of centrifugal force in your movements.
- 3) You have soft eyes and a poised body.
- 4) You show composure in your posture.
- 5) Therefore you are bright and easy-going.

I think that's really telling, for a couple of reasons, to me anyway. Again, thinking of Suzuki Sensei, of course Extend Ki doesn't mean to do something. Whenever we are enjoying ourselves and we are fully engaged in whatever it is that is happening around us or within us, it's effortless. Enjoyment means we are shining like the sun. That's what Otsuka Sensei meant when he talked about Suzuki Sensei lighting up a room, because he shined like the sun. He was always in a great state of enjoyment.

We can know if we are experiencing Ki extension, because we are not just poised, but serene. We feel the sense of joy and fullness and deep calmness throughout our body. It is a deep sense of pure, unadulterated, inexplicable enjoyment. It's just pleasure, but it's pleasure on a very deep level, without any apparent cause. It's not because of something someone says or because of who is with you or because of some nice object, food or drink. It's not because you have something that you didn't have before. It's not because of money. It's not because someone cares about you. You just experience it because it is your state of mind.

This is a very important part of this. So not only is it natural, but it is completely effortless, because it is natural. There isn't anything to do to extend Ki. In the beginning, of course, like when we practice unbendable arm, we do talk to the students about consciously sending their Ki, or sending their mind, or sending their attention through that arm to get a feeling of a living

presence in the arm. And in the beginning stages, because we are so used to just being in our thinking mind, that is a way to use our imagination to get out of thinking mind. But as we become more and more used to this, (and remembering of course that these Four Basic Principles are all the same, so you could say the same thing about any of the other three, Keep One Point) we practice just being in the body in full enjoyment of the moment, without any doubt, without any hesitation. And then you are paying it forward, you are throwing yourself completely into the moment, you are abandoning yourself to the moment, without any reservations, restrictions, judgments, doubts, or conditions. All of that is the thinking mind that we think is so necessary to qualify and quantify the pleasure in our lives.

So this, to me, is Extend Ki. It's an experience, just like the other three principles, in very much the same way that I described them before. All I have to go on is my own experience, and to me Ki extended is a feeling of complete freedom and openness. And so then we have this serene and wonderful feeling of deep pleasure in our body, deep satisfaction. It just doesn't come from anything on the outside, from any person or object. People are wonderful, and objects have their place too. I am not saying that's not good, or something like that. But when you are experiencing Ki extension, what's going on around you can be very challenging, maybe even very sad, it might even be a funeral. But you will still be experiencing this sense of deep joy throughout your body.

And of course, the more we have the capacity to give our attention over to this moment and to stop thinking about, or reflecting on this moment, the more we can enjoy this. In the beginning, maybe it just happens every once in awhile that you have a kind of hint of this feeling. Then after twenty, thirty, forty years of this kind of practice, it's with you all the time. It's just here all the time.

OK, so that's my introduction, so it's your turn to ask a question or make a comment.

*Student: Sensei, you know in Tohei Sensei's Shokushu he talks about Ki being formed from infinitely small particles. And this has always been tough for me, because it seems to like relate Ki to like matter. He says, "smaller than an atom," and that's always been something that's difficult, though I don't know if the difficulty arises from the translation or what?*

Yeah, that's very interesting. Tohei Sensei uses "Ki" in a lot of different ways, doesn't he? In this case he seems, on the surface of it, to be referring to matter. And I have heard him say that Ki is the basis sub-strata of the universe. It's what the universe is made of. But think about this for a minute. I mean, if you look from the point of view of a physicist, a physicist would tell you that the closer we look at a cell, a molecule, an atom, a sub-atomic particle, and smaller and smaller, when you get down to the smallest elementals, we can't tell the difference between matter and energy, or they call it particle and wave. There is no difference. There only is a difference when we look at them with our senses. You cannot see this at this smallest level. And not only that, but a physicist will also tell you that whether you see it as particle of wave depends upon how you look at it, who it is that's looking, and what they have in mind, what

they expect to see when they look.

Clearly it's a mystery. And I think it's worth saying right here that we are not here to figure out what is Ki. It's a natural curiosity, but if you bother your thinking mind trying to figure out what is Ki, you will spin around in circles forever and never get to experience it, whereas today, you can let that go and experience it right away just by being present.

*Student: So Sensei, bearing that in mind, that you are saying that there is no way we can understand what Ki is, we still have to use the word a lot in teaching Ki-Aikido. And I have heard you use the word "awareness." I heard you say recently, if I am not miss-quoting you, that your Ki is your awareness. And there is something to be said for that as an explanation when we teach people to be extending Ki in every direction in the sphere around you, not thinking that it is just going forth from your eyes and fingertips and so forth. For clarification, to help students, what would you be able to say about using the word awareness, in terms of people understand Ki?*

Well, you are sort of asking me to throw the dog a bone. We just said, don't waste your time trying to figure out what it is. But I understand what you are saying. By "throw the dog a bone" I mean that we do have many students coming into the dojo who definitely want to figure out what is going on and spend a lot of time trying to do that. And in a sense, we want to help them to have some understanding. Now I didn't say that you can't understand it. It said that you can't figure it out. But it is possible that when we experience this, that is a kind of direct understanding. You know, when you are experiencing this Ki. You know it in your body. You know it directly. You might not know what to say about that, beyond what I have said tonight, which I am just relating an experience. Of course, just like tasting sugar, you can't know that unless you also taste it. My explanation of that may sound attractive, let's try that sugar, but of course other people don't get to know what that is without directly experiencing it. And then you know what that is.

To answer your question more directly, I like to use the word "awareness" almost as synonymous with extension of Ki, just as I always like to use the metaphor of listening, opening to all the sounds in the area. Right now we can hear the fans going up there, and some activity in the tennis courts, and of course the buzzer across the street in the gym, and Tyler jumping around in his chair. And we could just sit and listen. So in a sense this is just extending Ki, except extending Ki means not just extending the sense of listening, the sense of sound, or hearing, but all of our senses and all of our intuitive mind, or intuitive sense, all of our sense of wonder and awe. What's happening when we are experiencing this kind of joy or freedom or this sense of lush and complete satisfaction in our mind/body, it's not a kind of personal pleasurable selfish experience at all. It's very open to everything, so very vulnerable. You are opening yourself completely. To me, this is what Tohei Sensei means when he says "Extend Ki."

So you can use the word "awareness" or "openness," willing to experience everything without judgment. Suzuki Sensei loved awareness. Everything to him was awareness training. So I

know he was experiencing this, and that was his way of expressing to me and to everyone how he wanted us to have this experience. Just expand your awareness, or extend your Ki. "Let your awareness be out" he would say. "Fill the dojo with your awareness. Let your awareness be full." So as soon as we do that, our thinking mind ceases. So there is no more figuring out. There is no more trying to understand what is this thing. See, that's collapsing down on a thought about it. That is just the opposite of extending Ki. Extending Ki is just accepting it completely, being present.

So that's really the only way I know how to say words about it, about this experience. You know, Tracy asked me tonight about this. I said to him that we haven't done one of our short sessions lately. And he said, "Yeah, I've been thinking about that and I have this question for you. What are the three things you learned from Tohei Sensei. Not Suzuki Sensei, but Tohei Sensei?" So of course I had to look right away. And you know, I don't know about three things, but this is the one thing. Watching Tohei Sensei and being with him, taking his uke, being in his class, drinking with him, hanging out with him, just being with him, I somehow feel that I absorbed this from him. That's not really the right way to put it. I don't really think you can absorb something like this by osmosis. It's a kind of a transmission. I can't say that I didn't learn the same from Suzuki Sensei, because I certainly did. But these are two masters, who dwell in this state of mind most of the time. And the more you hang out with someone like that, the more it will start to happen to you. You just pick it up. It's a contact high. That's maybe the wrong kind of metaphor, but for Maui, it works.

Definitely this is the very center of Tohei Sensei's teaching to me, what I personally received from him was this. And he could tell. He commented to me on this. "Oh," he said, "I see you are having the experience," when I visited his house. "You are Suzuki Sensei's student." So he could see also. Of course I could see this as well at the time.

So I hope I didn't wreck the fifteen minute session you planned. But I wanted to bring it up because it is so apropos of what we are talking about tonight. This really is a kind of mystery. It's not something that we are just going to explain away. It's so intriguing and go life-consuming and compelling, that how can you do anything in your life but pursue with an open heart, and open mind, this.

*So that answers your question, I think.*

*Student: Thank you.*

*Student: This may be a little off topic, but personally I do Kiatsu work and I find it almost impossible to tell someone who has no experience what Kiatsu is, in a way that I feel good about. So how do you explain Kiatsu?*

Yeah, that's a very good question, and I know what you mean. I think the most important thing for people to understand about *Kiatsu* is that it is something that two people do together. It is not something that one person does to another person. It is something that two people share

and experience together. And if the person that is receiving *Kiatsu* is not participating, it has very much less of an effect. Just like anything else in life, *Kiatsu* is just an extension of everything else that happens between human beings in life. I always say that when we are having a conversation, this is *Kiatsu*. And of course, I may be speaking with clarity, compassion, and great sincerity, but if you are not listening, I am speaking in an echo chamber. It is exactly the same with *Kiatsu*. You may be a very experienced *Kiatsu* practitioner, you may know how to let go and completely experience this mysterious Ki transmission, but if the other person is not participating, open to it, then very little gets through, very little effect is possible.

*Student: OK, but that still doesn't tell me at all what I am supposed to say to them.*

Well, I'm not quite sure what you are looking for there. We want to be very careful we don't try to make it something that it isn't. It's just like a conversation. It's like a student asking what is really happening when you have a conversation with someone. Well, it depends upon how open each person is. If you are really open, then there is a major transmission that happens between you, this Ki connection. If you are not open, it doesn't happen. That's all *Kiatsu* is. It's nothing special.

Of course, that's a dangerous thing to say. Because if we don't treat it like something special, just like in conversation or any relationship, it will die on the vine.

*Student: If I had a bad knee, came to you and wanted Kiatsu, and that's what you said to me, I am not sure that would give me much to go on.*

Yeah, I don't think I can help you there. I think it's beyond words. And I have given *Kiatsu* to people who didn't know what to expect. I just tell them to relax and enjoy it, because the more you can enjoy the feeling of this, the nicer it will be for you. I try to keep it pretty simple.

Also, I've had the experience, in fact it just happened in Russia this fall, I asked a young man to come up and I was teaching stomach *Kiatsu*, and he couldn't handle it. So that's unusual, but he couldn't enjoy it. It was too overwhelming for him in some way. And so I had to let him go sit down and use someone else. It was just too much for him.

So it really depends. It definitely is a thing that we experience together. I would never say "I am a *Kiatsu* practitioner." I mean, what would that mean? To me that doesn't make any sense at all. That's like saying "I'm an Aikido thrower." Yes, I practice *Kiatsu* and I practice Aikido with anybody that I can get to practice with me because it's so deeply satisfying. Whether it does any good or is deeply satisfying for the other person is completely and totally one hundred percent up to them. It has nothing whatsoever to do with me. All I can do is enjoy it completely myself, without reservation.

And I know that's what you do.

*Student: Yes, the doing of it doesn't help people to figure out what it is, but I guess they will just have to wait.*

Yeah, tell them to come to the dojo and train.

*Student: Thank you.*

*Student: Sensei, the question I have is, there's a lot of magical thinking when it comes to Ki. How do you approach people who have the sense that Ki is some sort of secret power?*

Can you give me an example of that so that people who are listening will know what you are referring to maybe a little better?

*Student: And example would be, I've heard some people say, "So and so put Ki inside me." It's as if they think that I can use your Ki to do something. People have actually said that, like, "Oh I've got his Ki in me now," as if there was something such as personal ownership of Ki.*

Yeah. So the question is...

*Student: Well, how to you approach people, how to you actually help them when they have these kinds of reconceived notions?*

That's a big question. How do you help people with their preconceived notions? I just ask them to train more.

Of course, magical thinking is so attractive to us. It has been a big part of Aikido in the past. You know, look at a lot of the things that O'Sensei did, or was purported to have done, dodging bullets and so forth. Of course, even Tohei Sensei, I remember someone had been out with Tohei Sensei and he told us all that Tohei Sensei had looked across the room "tapped someone on the shoulder with his Ki" and the person turned around and looked at him. I haven't heard Tohei Sensei him self promote this kind of thinking. In fact, one day he was sitting smoking a cigarette and had an ashtray in front of him, and someone came up to him and said, "Sensei, I hear you can move things with your Ki." And he said, "Yeah, yeah I can." And he picked up the ashtray and moved it. Then he said, "There, I just did." So he was always undercutting that kind of nonsense. But he knew that people said things like this and I am not sure he made a big effort to make sure that everyone understood that he wasn't capable of supernatural things, because it helped him spread Aikido all over the world. A lot of people, less so now, but earlier on in this century, many more people were involved in magical thinking, or were very attracted to that. I mean there are still these guys on YouTube going "Waa!" with their "Ki" and knocking down six students. So it is rampant still. And maybe if you have trained a lot then you know that is silly, that that is not the nature of what we are doing at all. But for someone who is just off the street and has no understanding and would like to have some power, it's very attractive.

So I would want to get them into the dojo and have them practice. If it is someone out on the street then I probably wouldn't even talk to them about it. If they don't ask, then I am not going to talk to them about it. That can be dangerous. I mean, I have in the past and gotten into trouble. So I don't do that. If you want to learn, then you ask, and I'll help in any way I can. About the same as me talking to them. You can't do *Kiatsu* with them, because they don't know

how to open. They have an idea and they want you to confirm it, is what they want. They don't want to hear you say that is nonsense and they are just being childish. I mean, magical thinking lasts through Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy. After you are old enough to know there isn't a Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy is your mom, you are supposed to be mature enough to let go of magical thinking already. But you know, this is big time in religion. Religion is filled with magical thinking. I mean they still make people saints because they did magic. Come on, it is still rampant in all these religious cultures. So it's not easy to get rid of, and like I said, I wouldn't address it unless you are in the dojo. Then we can train, and you can experience what's actually going on. Then we don't have to have an argument about it, or I don't have to try to disprove something to you. How can I show you something that doesn't exist, doesn't exist? You can't prove a negative.

*Student: So, don't you think, Sensei, in a way the three questions that have been asked tonight are all the same thing? We are all wondering how to explain Ki to people. We are all struggling with that idea, because you know that magical thinking idea has maybe been in all of us, right from the beginning.*

*But I wanted to ask you, the terminology for kakudaiho and shuchuho...we have talked about this before when I have come in for my private conferences with you...but I just wonder if you think that when we say "expansion" in English or "kakudaiho" in Japanese, we are saying "Ki is extending?" With the kids, this kakudaiho and even expansion, doesn't really seem to compute for them at all. I like to just say "Ki is expanding." Is that OK, or is there another way to think about that that would be better, or to express it?*

Well, you can say whatever you want to say. I like using Japanese words in Aikido. I like to use *kakudaiho*. But that's not the operative thing there anyway. I mean, it's what is actually happening in the student. So want to guide them, and you can guide them with your words. You can help them to understand that their awareness is opening to more and more and more. People have a fundamental misunderstanding of what we mean by universe. They are thinking of planets and stars. That's not what we mean by universe at all. So that you can start with, so they don't waste time imagining themselves flitting about the planets and stars out there. That just doesn't add up to anything, nothing happens. It's just a fantasy trip. So helping them understand the process of awareness or attention expanding and including more and more in their world of experience is very helpful. You can call it whatever you want. You might even think of something new to call it. Let me know if you do.

Going back to something you said earlier, Tohei Sensei offers this to us in the *Shokushu*. He calls this the "Definition of Ki." If you are a teacher and you travel around teaching Aikido, people are going to ask you all the time, "Tell me exactly what is Ki." So you know that people asked Tohei Sensei over and over to define Ki. So here, number 11 in the *Shokushu*, "The Definition of Ki." Basically he says it is half, half, half, it's *kakudaiho* and *shuchuho*, both at the same time. And then he finishes and says, "Thus we understand the definition of Ki." Thus! So, you know this kind of thing takes practice. We don't need to reflect on it, or to think about what exactly is

Ki. All of us think way too much. Our practice is teaching us to be in the body, not to be in the thinking state, but to be completely throughout the body. And when we are experiencing our whole body, we are not thinking. We are free of thought. Thoughts might arise, but we can just dwell in the body. That's why we practice meditation. That's why we practice Ki Breathing. That's why I introduced you to that new form of Whole Body Meditation. So we can actually just sit and practice non-thinking, practice not being caught up in thinking mind, practice not trying to figure anything out, practice just being in this wonderful situation we find ourselves in. Which, no matter what is going on in our life, we can still enjoy this on a very deep and profound level every single moment. And those of you who have practiced more know that you are experiencing that more, and those of you that have practiced less have that to look forward to.

*Student: Sensei, it's interesting that you mention the characteristics of extended Ki, or the joy that you are describing, happens at the same time that the world is happening. So whether you be at a funeral...*

Happens at the same time the world is happening?

*Student: Well, it's not dependent on your surroundings. So that you said that if you were at a funeral or a sad event, you would have this still going on. And I guess if you had an auto accident or someone was attacking you, as we practice, you are in this state. That's different that what we normally think of as joy and peace. What is that difference? We normally think that joy comes to us through circumstances, that we experience joy through getting something or doing something or having something. But you are speaking of something different.*

Yeah, thanks. I want to be sure that we are clear here. I am not saying that this state of mind is independent of whatever happens "outside." Finally, when you are experiencing this, there is no outside or inside. There is no other. It's one. So it is very much related to what's happening. It's just experiencing whatever is arising without any judgment about it, without any doubt, without any hesitation, without any conditions, without any requirements. And if we think that our mind state is dependent upon others, either circumstances or people, then automatically we have to place conditions to get the right people and the right circumstances so that we are not miserable. Because when we have this person doing the wrong thing, it makes us miserable. But it's not the other person doing the wrong thing, it's the you doing the judgment. You are making yourself miserable.

I mean, we all know what that suffering is like. We all do that. Does anybody here not do that? Everybody does that. Everybody tortures them self now and again. The more you train maybe the less you do that. Or, in many circumstances in your life you may be judgment free, but there are certain ones that really get you going. Everybody has some hot button or other. But even that, so then you work with those. You see how that reactive mind just kills this experience of peace. I want to say that this is cause-less joy, cause-less peace, cause-less satisfaction, cause-less pleasure. There isn't some thing that it comes from. There is not something that you can do that will make you have this experience. That's why we want to be sure we don't think of

extending Ki as doing something to get a result. Because if you think of it that way, cause and effect, then there is tow, and you missed it already, right from the get go. You've missed it right from the beginning. Which is very difficult to explain to someone who is a beginner, who doesn't have the experience to take that in and have it, "OH!", and be able to practice that. It's too mind-boggling. They can't stop thinking enough to just accept it and practice it. They are too slavishly engaged in their trips, in their subject/object, relative world struggle to make things right, to get things corrected so they can feel all right. And it's endless, and you will never feel alright. As long as you are doing that, that's what's making you feel bad.

So, yeah, it's a really good question. This is very easily misunderstood, even by people that have been practicing for a long time, take it from me. It's easy to get into a moment of misunderstanding. So that's why we sit every day, because when we are sitting, everything drops away and we remember, "Oh yeah, what was I thinking? What did I say that? How silly of me to say that. That's just going right back into the struggle to make things the way I want them to be, so that I could be happy." That's the "Big Mistake." In the book, *Letting Go*, I talk about the Big Mistake we make in our lives. So we want to just practice letting go. OK?

Thank you.