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Shugendo and Reincarnation

By Jackson Ito

People from many cultures and Religious beliefs have asked the age old question..... ***“Why was I Born?”***

Shugendo

The answer which makes the best sense to me occurred after I read the English translation of the Doctrine of Master Gedatsu Kongo as it regards the practice of Shugendo. In it, we are taught that there are six physical realms and four spiritual realms on our path to enlightenment. My interpretation of this is that our mission in life is to develop so we can approach godliness as closely as possible. The six physical realms are characterized by improving material comforts from severe deprivation to relative abundance. However, acquiring material wealth itself is no assurance of godliness; nor does lack of material wealth prevent one from acquiring spiritual godliness.

In our *Go Shugyo* practice, we receive requests for repentance on behalf of the spiritual entities for unknowing transgressions they made while living, for which they deeply regret after dying. That is because after one's death, one has no need for material possessions to satisfy one's physical gratification, and spirits can see everything for the first time objectively as things really are instead of subjectively from one's individual selfish viewpoint. Upon this realization, even as early as my high school days, I had a belief that I would understand the secrets of the universe as soon as I died. Furthermore, I believed that I would become really, really ***“SMART”*** really, really ***“FAST.”*** This was way back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, long before fast computer memory and massive data transfer capability became a reality starting in the mid-1990s and continuing on today.

However, just being able to discern right from wrong without a physical body to enable acting upon it only leads to spiritual frustration. I think this is what Master Gedatsu Kongo might have meant when he admonished us to practice ***“Shi Nu Keiko,”*** or “practice death.” If we can get a preview of what we

will learn after dying while still living and still having a physical body to act upon the truthful knowledge, that would be the ***best of all possible worlds***.

Reincarnation

If we can learn the secrets of the universe when we die, why can't we just use that knowledge when we are re-born? I don't know why, but it just doesn't work that way.

Many Westerners have a fascination with Buddhism because of their interest in reincarnation. It is said that the Buddha underwent multiple reincarnations before he acquired his enlightenment. Each life cycle gave him a chance to further his spiritual development until he became the Buddha. However, most of the people who are looking forward to the chance for a reincarnation are not looking at it as a chance to further their spiritual development, or they would already be striving for that goal in their present lives. Most people just want to be reassured that they will have another chance to relive their lives again and all is not over when they die.

Do I want to be reincarnated? No!

Why not?

Because that would require an admission on my part that I failed to develop adequately during my lifetime and that I wasted my life opportunity. To me, it is like flunking kindergarten and being forced to repeat it. Just my opinion .

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