



David M. Valadez
Senshin Center
Dojocho

Purification

By David M. Valadez

Sensei: I am watching you sweep the floor. I notice that you leave a lot dust – even where you have gone over an area with the broom. Can I ask: “Why do we sweep the floor? Is it only to travel up and down the mat ten or more times?”

Deshi: No Sensei. We sweep the mat to clean the mat.

Sensei: No. Cleaning the mat is an incidental of why we sweep the mat. If all we wanted was a clean mat, we could hire some cleaning service to do it for us. Dojo all over make use of a cleaning service – we do not. Instead, we sweep the mat before practice as part of practice. We clean the mat to clean ourselves – we purify one to purify the other. We seek to purify ourselves of distraction as we seek to cultivate within ourselves awareness or attentiveness. When we leave dirt and dust behind we cease to cultivate awareness and instead reinforce our habitual way of distraction. In this manner, you are being distracted by the notion of a “clean mat.” The clean floor is only an incidental of the cultivation of awareness. It is like this with all of your waza as well. The waza that is perfected because it has found a way to always include greater and greater amounts of detail is just an incidental of the cultivation of awareness and the purification of distraction. When you can understand this, your waza will be perfect. When you understand this, and stop focusing only on “cleaning the mat,” you will finally stop leaving dust behind and actually give us a clean mat to train on.

Deshi: It seems easier to understand this in regards to our waza, but should we act like this with such mundane things as sweeping the mat – a thing we have to do every day, at least twice a day?

Sensei: If when you look around and all you see is the mundane, all you will ever become will be the mundane. When we reduce ourselves to the mundane, we become blind to the virtues of our creation and to the graces of God. If we by choice, or by a lack of action, restrict ourselves to the mundane, our “meaning” in life and/or our attempt to discover meaning in our life, will thus also be restricted to the mundane. Life then will seldom ever move beyond the job, the chores, small talk, finding rest, eating food, having sex, etc. In the end, you will come to find that your life is void of meaning. This is terrible time for the seeker along the Way. How much easier it is to make ourselves sacred by making everything we must do sacred.

Deshi: I understand Sensei.

Sensei: Then, please – clean the mat.