

## MODERATION

I once had the opportunity to see a framed calligraphy that impressed me deeply, written by Tesshu Yamaoka, an eminent statesman of the Meiji era of Japan. The character for Hodo, meaning “moderation,” was boldly inscribed at the beginning. This was followed by a sentence written in smaller characters which read, “Everything in life depends on this one principle.”

This calligraphy imprinted itself upon my mind so strongly that even to this day I have not forgotten it. During the last twenty or thirty years, recalling it to mind has been immensely beneficial to me on many occasions.

There have been numerous noteworthy proverbs since ancient times, but it seems there are few that are more impressive than this one. It is only a single word, but what amazing power it contains! When we look at different things in the world with moderation as a standard, it serves us well.

Human beings are inclined to go to extremes, such as doing too much on the one hand, not doing enough on the other; leaning too far to the right or too far to the left in thinking; feeling superior when rich, inferior when poor. The cause of failure in many cases seems to be this lack of balance.

Confucius, the great philosopher in ancient China, taught that one should keep to the middle path, which is simply another way of stressing the importance of moderation. We often hear such Japanese expressions as, “Practice moderation,” or, “Maintain moderation.” In other words, do not go to extremes but maintain a balance and stay in the middle path.

To apply this spiritually, we teach the importance of the Izunome principle, or balance, which is the meeting point of the vertical and the horizontal, Shojo and Daijo. Quite simply, it means moderation. Therefore, one of the most important things for us to keep in mind at all times is moderation. If we only live by that standard, everything will go well, I assure you. Moderation is indeed really important in our life.