

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*  
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***Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting***

**Ueshiba's Philosophy of *Aikido***

Ueshiba Morihei, *O Sensei*, reached a level in *budo* in which all postures, movements and techniques had a meaning beyond combative purposes. Although most of us do not reach this level, Ueshiba gave us insight into it. We can, therefore, strive to understand it, and increase our performance as well as our knowledge. In Ueshiba's thought processes, *shihō* represented gratitude, *en no irimi* was a symbol of harmony and *kaiten* (open and turn) was a symbol of openness and flexibility. For Ueshiba, *irimi-tenkan* symbolized a circle, *shihō nage* symbolized a square and *suwari-ikkyō* symbolized a triangle. These were considered the prime outer factors of *Aikido*. (*Kokyu-hō*, *ki-no-nagare* and *aiki* were considered the three prime inner factors.) *Shihō nage* was the "practice of infinite mobility." One received the ability to move with ease from any direction to any other direction. *Shihō nage* was based on the old *kenjutsu waza*, *shihō giri*, or cutting in four directions. *Ikkyō*, or the First Teaching, was considered a lifetime technique of learning to connect through the arms. In *Daitō Ryu Aiki Jujutsu*, this was one of a number of techniques in a group called *Ikkajo*. These were done from kneeling (*idori*) and standing (*tachiai*) postures. Entering into a technique done as *omote*, or outer form, was considered hard. It was represented by *irimi*, which represented the element of fire, and was hard in execution. To execute it correctly required a critical movement of surrender and decisive action. The exponent had to move directly into the heart of an oncoming attack. This was *chokusen no irimi*, or entering directly forward. In *Dōka*, or *Songs of the Way*, Ueshiba wrote:

“Seeing me before him,  
The enemy attacks,  
But in a flash,  
I am already  
Behind him.”

It was done from the front of the opponent (*mae*) and represented the *yo* (yang) aspect of *budo*. *Irimi nage* was considered a technique of twenty years, that is, one must study it for twenty years before truly understanding it. Ueshiba considered it to be as the striking of a sword. One cuts (enters) without hesitation or doubt, and the technique cuts through to the heart of *Aikido*. Ueshiba also likened *irimi nage* to threading a needle. It could not be forced, but when lined up correctly one, as the thread, enters easily. He extended the analogy to comparing the technique with the "thread of compassion." with the soul of a sword. *Irimi* requires the need to be assertive and extremely focused in a brief moment of time. *Ura*, or the reverse form, was considered soft and was done by *tenkan*, or turning. This was represented by the element of water and done from the side (*yoko*). This was the *in* (yin) aspect of *budo*. *Tenkan* was achieved through *tai-no-henko*, which is a practice of blending and absorbing the power of an opponent's attack. *Tenkan*, denoting pivoting or turning, draws the attacker's force into a spiral (centripetal force) and then releases that force (centrifugal force). Turning the body is a way to continually check the situation

surrounding you. As well as being the practice of body placement, it is also a change in the viewpoint in relation to events surrounding you.

*Dōka*, or Songs of the Way, are didactic poems written in the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable *waka* form. These types of poems are written by masters to inspire their disciples.

### Visualization

Visualization is the process of using mental imagery to improve techniques, or to prepare for actual combat. Individuals in law enforcement use this in what was called the “what if?” “What if” you are attacked getting into the patrol car (POV)? “What if” you find someone in the building (home) you are inspecting (going to enter)? The old formula of *shi-ki-chikara* exemplifies how this works. Before the technique can be learned it must first be imagined. The nice thing is, the mind controls the body, so the “perfect” technique can be seen in thought (how’s that for mixing metaphors? – or creating an oxymoron, whichever you prefer). When you visualize a technique, the body believes you’ve actually done it. Visualization can be done anytime you have free time without distractions – not as you’re driving! All major athletes use this method to better their performances. It is also excellent for imaging your *kata*. Your *hanshi meiyo kyoju* was taught a form of meditation which takes visualization to a new level. He can “see” the *kata* from either side of, from the front of, from the back of, and even from above and below the performance line. And, he can see the form being done correctly. Such visualization takes time, but it may be achieved by anyone willing to spend the time to learn it. The benefits are well worth it.

### ***Karate Dō* or the Way of the Empty Hand**

Following is a brief outline of what composes *karate-dō*. Although some explanation is given, realize this outline is brief and the definitions are simplistic at best.

- I. *Karate Dō* or the Way of the Empty Hand
  - A. *Karate-hō* or the methods of the empty hand.
    1. *Kamae* or combative engagement postures.
      - a. *Yuko no kamae* or the physical components of engagement postures.
        - 1) *Ashi no tachi kata* or the forms of the placement of the feet; terminology sometimes differs from school to school.
        - 2) *Kamae kata* or the forms of physical attitude; this usually refers to the position of the upper body, especially the hands.
      - b. *Muko no kamae* or the non-physical components of engagements postures. These refer to *heijoshin*, or a placid state of mind, which allows complete control of the self. This state is attained through *mushin* or a mind without preconceived opinions. The *mu* in *mushin* is related to the *kara* (*ku* or *sora*) in *karate*.
        - 1) *Zenshin (kamaete)* is mental preparation with intense concentration.
        - 2) *Tsushin* is the mental state of *zenshin* throughout confrontation or *kata*.

- 3) *Zanshin* is mental awareness of everything around you after completing *kata* or at the end of a confrontation.
2. *Kumite* or engagements of the hand (sparring).
    - a. *Ma-ai* or combative distance prior to engagement. This would include *hyōshi*, or timing, and reflexes. *Hyōshi* is the synchronization of one's own movements with those of the opponent. *Hyōshi* is a combination of speed (*hayai*) and the concentration of energy (*kime*). Timing includes both spatial and temporal factors. Also included are *tsukuri*, or fitting in, and *kuzushi*, or off-balancing the opponent (this includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual off-balancing).
      - 1) *Chika-ma-[ai]* is near interval in which neither person need take a step forward. This is also referred to as *sō-ma-ai*.
      - 2) *Uchi-ma* (also called, *issoku-ittō no ma-[ai]*) is the interval in which one opponent must take a step forward to attack.
      - 3) *Yudo-ma-ai* is a median interval of one and one-half steps before an attack may be made. This is usually taken to lure the opponent into stepping closer than intended.
      - 4) *To-ma* is distant interval in which one or both persons need to take step/s forward. Two steps must be made, either one by each exponent, or both by one exponent. This distance is usually used to rest and plan the next sequence of attack.
    - b. *Senjutsu* are fighting strategies based on psychological factors.
    - c. *Waza* are the actual techniques of which the system is composed.
      - 1) *Kuzushi waza* or setting up by creating opportunity through off-balancing the opponent.
      - 2) *Kime waza* or scoring techniques to an effective conclusion.
      - 3) *Engo waza* or follow-up techniques; also known as supporting techniques.
  3. *Kumite sen* or attitudes for "sparring." These are based on the concept of *kobo no ichi*, or attack and defense are one. *Kobo* is a coupling of *kogeki no katachi* (forms of attack)

and *bogyo no katachi* (forms of defense; sometimes referred to as *bogeki no katachi*).

- a. *Shin* is winning before the opponent can attack. The exponent is constantly offensive. In this an offensive technique is used to counter a defensive technique.
- b. *Gyo* is winning by counterattacking. In this method a defensive technique is used to counter an offensive one. It is based on the concept that soft controls hard.
- c. *So* is adapting one's attitude to that of the opponent and is a combination of *shin* and *gyo*.

B. *Buki-ho* or the methods of weapons.

1. *Nippon buki-ho* or weapons methods of Japan. Traditionally, these would be the *bugei juhappo*, or eighteen martial arts [of Japan], although there are many others.
2. *Ryukyu buki-ho* or weapons methods of Okinawa. These would include, but are not limited to, the *bo*, the *kama*, the *tonfa*, the *sai* and the *nunchaku*.

### ***Judo* Instruction**

Instruction in *judo* is done through four mediums. The first is *randori*, or free play. The most important aspect of *randori* is that it is not *shiai*. *Randori* should be a time of learning, not of competition. The ideal is not to win, but to practice with a partner and for each exponent to help the other in improving skill. The second is *kata*. Again, *kata* is to be used to better technique. The idea is that under ideal ("perfect") conditions, you should learn the correct time and method of *judo waza*. *Kata* is not meant to be static or "used for the next promotion." It should be a living medium to discover the best way to execute technique in *randori* and *shiai*. Third are *koza*, or lectures. These are generally reserved for the advanced ranks, and should explain why techniques are done as they are, as well as the best times to do them. With lectures, principles of the art should be covered, not just technique. Again, these should be helpful, not dry and lifeless. The fourth is *mondo*, or question and answer between sensei and *montei*. *Mondo*, as is *dojo*, is derived from a Buddhist term. Consequently, the use has a deeper meaning than a simple question answered by a stock answer. Often the Master may speak in parables. The answer should give meaning to the item being discussed and encourage the student to research the technique to include and go beyond simple body movements. Arima Sumitomo, Kodokan Yodan, stated: "Mondo (queries and answers) consists in asking the teacher for an explanation of what one cannot understand, while, in turn, the teacher questions his pupils to see whether they understand what is taught them."

### ***Everyday Warriors***

*Everyday Warriors* is the name of a book, written by Ruth Hunter. If you have a child in your class who has anger issues, this is a great book to recommend to him or her. It ranges from the classic martial artist (Cynthia Rothrock, Chuck Norris, Bill Wallace

(whose name is William Wallace!) and Erinie Reyes, Jr.) to the not so well known (Christine Bannon-Rodrigues, who was Hillary Swank's stunt double in *The Next Karate Kid*). In between are the ones who should be well known, but aren't, such as Katelyn Sleznikow, a young lady with bone cancer who takes Tae Kwon Do. Each chapter is based on a warrior virtue, Concentration, Courtesy, Empathy, Perseverance, Harmony/Balance, Honor, Humanism, Humility, Indomitable Spirit, Integrity, Justice, Respect, Self-control, Wisdom and Focus. Each chapter has a vignette of stories about Everyday Warriors who have achieved this ideal. Children (and adults) will learn how the virtues carry from the school to everyday life – and something different about the warriors who live it.

### **Errata**

The original name for *Shorin Ryu Karate Do* was *Shorinryu Gokoku An Karate*.

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