

English Translation of  
**THREE MORNING TALKS**  
About Kendo

By

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On

- 1. The Art of Kendo**
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# 1. The Art of Kendo

It is a great pleasure for me to discuss Kendo for three days. Today I shall speak a few words on the art of Kendo. Tomorrow I shall compare the art of Kendo with the art of earning a living. The day after tomorrow, I shall discuss a few features in common between the art of Kendo and the art of living, or philosophy of life.

We, Japanese, have Kendo, the art of fencing, a characteristic national sport which, since ancient times, have served so much in forming the backbone of the Japanese people. Since Kendo is supposed to cultivate the human mind, I should think, it is reasonable for us Japanese to avail ourselves of this sport in building up a superior nation.

Kendo, unlike other sports, demands little physical strength. In practicing Kendo, therefore, it little matters whether you are large-size or small-size and whether you are stalwart or delicate. Nor has age much to do with it because you can train yourself to it at 5 or 6 years of age as well as 70 or 80 years. Therefore, you can keep on practicing it as long as you live. And more emphasis is laid on developing the mind rather than the body. Isn't this a unique feature?

Training or fighting for point-getting, which is seen in every Dojo (drill hall) and which is indispensable for learning and improving the art as well as building the body, should be regarded, after all, as a necessary means, but not as a final aim.

If you come to think of these features, you may say that Kendo, especially at this moment, will serve most extensively and effectively in recreating the Japanese people. In this meaning, I consider Kendo the best medicine for improving our health, both physical and mental.

**What are the real merits of Kendo?** That is a question I often hear. My answer may sound too dogmatic, but after some contemplation in my way, I have made it a rule to offer the following explanation for those people who don't know much about Kendo. Any child may enjoy the four following merits by practicing Kendo.

1. He may learn good manner
2. He may develop spiritual power for facing anything and anybody straight.
3. He may naturally acquire presence of mind and remain unmoved by excitement or happenings.
4. He may develop enough quick action and instant judgment for rising to the occasion.

These four merits may be attained by anybody only if he trains himself faithfully.

When I speak on this subject, I usually introduce four Chinese characters to represent them. REI 礼 (Good manner), CHOKU 直 (Uprightness), SEI 静 (Calmness) and SOKU 速 (Speed). If anybody is equipped with all these four virtues, I am sure, he will never drop out of ranks, but enjoy a happy life even in the severest conditions. That is a point I often mention in my discourse.

There is only one correct method of practicing and mastering Kendo. You must teach yourself through your experiences, both physical and mental. "Do it yourself and learn it" as the old proverb says. It is an art must be learned while it is being practiced. The way of learning anything, not only by knowledge but also by practicing it has been expressed by another familiar saying "Knowledge and practice should be united." There are other proverbs such as CHI-KO-GO-ITSU 知行合一 (Practice and learning come together) and GYO-JITE GAKU-SURU 行じて学する (Learning through practice). In short, the basis of learning the art is only through practice, namely, through learning it with the body.

The beginners are physically trained exclusively to master the Kendo techniques. After a while, they will gradually turn towards mental training so that, as they advance in age, they may be engaged mostly in mental training.

So, the ratio of your physical training to your mental training should be 90 % to 10% for a beginner, 50% to 50% at middle age, and 20% to 80% at an advanced age. That is the correct routine of training. Therefore, it is necessary for you to continue training as long as you live. That is the essential element in learning Kendo.

Now, as for the ultimate aim of Kendo, it may be said that it cultivates power for observing the substances of anything. That refers to cultivating power or creating the mind for accurately observing the real substance or state of anything. It is more difficult than anything else to acquire power for accurately observing the reality of yourself, but this is the very final goal.

If a Kendo aspirant reaches this stage, there will be no ego or self-conceit in him. Now he will stand where he will be able to observe himself as fairly and correctly as other people. We may say that this is the very Mecca for all Kendo pilgrims. That is sometimes called MUGA NO KYOCHI 無我の境地 (No ego stage), or MEIKYO-SHISUI NO KYOCHI 明鏡止水の境地 (The stage at which the mind is as bright and clear as a stainless mirror or still water), or FUDO-SHIN 不動心 (The immovable mind). All these expressions refer to the identical state of mind. Those who have reached this stage are called TATSU-JIN 達人 (Accomplished men). They now stand where it is impossible for them to overlook or misjudge anything.

Since ancient times, we have had SHI-KAI 四戒 (The four injunctions), or SHI-AKU 四悪 (The four evils) among the Kendo teachings; namely, KYO 驚 (Surprise), FU 怖 (Fear), GI 疑 (Doubt) and WAKU 惑 (Perplexity). The four evils or obstacles we are taught to fight against and conquer. We are also told that SHI-SHIN 私心 (Selfishness or sticking the mind to anything) should be guarded against as the mind is often checked by the will or sentiment. Self-conceited or greedy people are usually defeated and can never become TATSU-JIN 達人.

As they are beaten and beaten repeatedly, their self-conceit will fade, and they will gradually come to know how to look at themselves objectively until their egotism will fade and they will be able to approach their calm minds thoroughly polished like cloudless mirrors. That kind of mind alone will contain an infinite movement controlled by nothing.

That accounts for the existence of such an expression as SHU-SEI-DO 中静動 (Movement in tranquility) and also for the development of FUDO-SHIN 不動心 (The immovable mind) never influenced by any outside power.

After all, the art of Kendo is supposed to create a calm, cloudless mind. In this point, ZEN 禅 (Zen Buddhism) and KENDO seek one and the same thing, because such an expression as KEN-ZEN-ITCHI 剣禅一致 (Kendo and Zen Buddhism agree) has existed since ancient times.

## 2. The Art of Earning a Living

Yesterday I spoke on the art of Kendo, the spirit of Kendo, and so on. Today I am going to discuss the resemblance between the art of Kendo and the art of earning a living and the possible contribution of the former to the latter.

For earning a living in society, the four merits or virtues I mentioned yesterday; namely, REI 礼 (Good manner), CHOKU 直 (Uprightness), SEI 静 (Calmness), and SOKU 速 (Speed) are quite useful in everyday life. Furthermore, there are a large number of more profound Kendo teachings which may at once prove useful in the art of living in society. Of course, we are to keep on trying to learn them as long as we live. Considering its great serviceability in the community, I would like to select only one. My choice is "Seek the power to observe correctly." It is similar to "Grasp the substance of everything." I am convinced that this is the most important point in earning a living. Unless you kill your ego and do away with your self-conceit, give up your greed and sentiment, and keep your mind as clear and calm as a mirror, you will be unable to see or know anything accurately. In my view, nothing is more important than the cultivation of this power.

Whenever we go through the wide world, we notice everywhere the existence of management in a broad sense. Some people think that the word means something prosecuted by a manager or some specified person. It does not. Management means work; and management is indispensable to the State, a government office, a school, a firm, a shop, or household.

Whenever a man forms a plan and endeavors to make it a success, he will invariably be engaged in management. To make it a success, he will surely need accurate observation, correct judgment, and proper operation; and unless these three are happily combined, the management will never succeed.

So far as this point is concerned, it is the same as in the art of Kendo. Therefore, if you come to think of it, society is a Kendo Hall, and everyday affairs are all Kendo exercises. You might say so. It would be exceedingly pleasant to think that way. Without wearing a mask, or holding a bamboo sword, you could practice Kendo by availing yourself of the routine work at your community, your firm, or your household. Anybody who has been practicing Kendo for his youthful day can readily enter into this mental state.

Now, there are several suggestions for cultivating the power of accurate observation. I want to take up one of them expressed by the character KEI 敬 (Respect) and say a few words on it. KEI means respect as included in the phrase SON-KEI 尊敬 (Honor and respect) and is often employed in the phrase KEI-NO-KOKORO 敬の心 (respectful feeling) and the phrase KEI-NO-ICHI-JI 敬の一字 (The single ideograph representing respect).

TAKUAN-OSHO 沢庵和尚, the famous Buddhist priest, has a book entitled FUDO-CHI-SHIN-MYO-ROKU 不動智神妙録 by which he explains the secrets of Kendo for YAGYU TAJIMA-NO-KAMI 柳生但馬守, and says as follows: "This is nothing worth considering for a man who has already attained spiritual enlightenment. However, a man still struggling to attain spiritual enlightenment must learn, as a preliminary step, what respect means".

To observe your opponent accurately, you must respect him. If you despise him or make a fool of him, you will be unable to observe him correctly. If you observe him respectfully, or with a sense of respect, you will be able to study him. This attitude should not be confined to Kendo alone. For instance, in the world of science, it is the same. Matters of supreme importance have been discovered to cite an example even out of mere mold or bacteria. Nothing would have been discovered from them if you had rejected them exclaiming "Oh, nothing but bacteria." Simply because they have been treated with respect, I believe, marvelous investigations and discoveries have been achieved.

In this morning, you should respect every tree, every grass, or every ceramic cup for its existence. I believe that to respect and approach everything is the very way of earning a living in the world. And this will be quite effective as a means of attaining "the mind as clear as a mirror." Therefore, I should think that this teaching on respecting your opponent is a lesson nobody could afford to ignore.

Now, if you contemplate on such a subject as success or failure in the world, you will realize that the secret of success lies in accurate observation and correct apprehension. For achieving this, the mental attitude of KEI (Respecting people and things) is extremely useful.

To reverse the statement, I think, every failure in life may be traced to mistaking, oversight, or misjudging. Failure always occurs because a man is egotistic, and looks at things only from his standpoint and according to his will and sentiment because his self-conceit is too strong. However, as this egotism is taken away, his substance will show itself more and more clearly. In this point, training in Kendo is the same.

For instance, GORIN-NO-SHO 五輪の書 (The Book of Five Wheels) by MIYAMOTO MUSASHI 宮本武蔵 contains a passage entitled KAEN KEN FUTATSU-NO-KOTO 観見二つの事 (KAN and KEN are two different actions). In which he is employing the two expressions KAN-NO-ME 観の目 (Looking with KAN eyes) and KEN-NO-ME 見の目 (Looking with KEN eyes). The former defines as "Looking without self-consciousness" and the latter as "Looking with prejudiced eyes."

In settling worldly affairs, you have to confront a large number of people. Quite frequently, you confront them for discussion, competition, or transaction. In this point, therefore, it is similar to training in Kendo.

Chinese passage, PING-FA (martial art strategy) by SUN-TZU read; "If you know him and yourself, you will be in no danger even if you fight against him a hundred times." It teaches that if you thoroughly know the substance of your opponent and thoroughly know the substance of yourself, you will win every game even if you fight against him a hundred times. For this purpose, it is necessary that you should train yourself thoroughly that you may know your opponent by respecting him and by studying his substance and by studying yourself objectively and knowing your substance correctly. It is also necessary in Kendo that when you fight for training or game, you should regard your opponent as a mirror which reflects you for yourself.

While you are engaged in training yourself or fighting for a game, your opponent is always standing in front of you to serve as a mirror by reflecting you. Respect your opponent as a mirror which reflects you for yourself. It is very important that you should throw yourself with all your might against the mirror so that it might reflect you in every state of form and mind. Don't you think that this is extremely useful not only in Kendo but also in earning a living?

### 3. The Art of Living

The day before yesterday I spoke on the art of Kendo; yesterday I compared the art of Kendo with the art of earning a living, and today I am going to discuss a few features of the art of living in common with the art of Kendo,

The man is endowed with only one lifetime. Nobody could repeat it. Therefore, everybody wishes to live properly and yet happily. There is not a single person who does not aspire to a perfect life. What should we do to achieve it? That, I am sure, must be an essential problem in life.

Here I am again compelled to recognize the necessity of observing humanity accurately.

Your first duty is to understand humanity. Otherwise, you would never find out what to do with it.

Therefore, you must first know the essential qualities of a human being and then find out thereby how to lead a proper human life.

We come across a large number of worthy teachings as all this has been discussed by innumerable people since ancient times.

However, when we in modern society, as individual human beings, on what is the best method of training given the characteristics or essentials of human beings, the most recommendable answer is that of training ourselves every day. That is my view.

In other words, we must remember that we, human beings, are to train ourselves every day as long as we live, because we are creatures who require continued training and that we are so fated.

If we continue efforts, development will result, and progress will naturally follow. If we neglect the efforts, retrogression will at once begin, and decay will increase till self-destruction visits. A human being is a creature which without effort cannot thrive as a human being. It seems to me that this is the most intrinsic human quality which we should observe. From ancient times, people used to advise enthusiastically on this point saying "Make more efforts." But I think they were rather abstract in their teaching.

Nowadays, however, this is taught using scientific demonstration. I consider it a remarkable progress. Especially since as psychophysiology has lately been developed successfully since unsolved problems on the development of the mind and the cultivation of the mind have been scientifically clarified as well as the development and cultivation of the body. Now we clearly understand that the two are inseparable.

The ancient proverb "*Men's sana in corpore sano*" (A sound mind in a sound body) has been scientifically demonstrated.

You may say that within a human body, an innumerable number of the terms of talent are stored as it is born as a baby with a meal and that any one of the terms if taken out and cultivated, may be developed beyond our knowledge. You might define the human being as such.

For taking out and cherishing the terms, some efforts and training are necessary. Today we clearly know the fact that a human body is composed of an innumerable number of cells each one of which must keep on living from day to day. But the living cells cannot last long unless they are provided with nourishment and assistance. And the mental function appears as the total sum of the wholesome activities of the cells in the whole body.

I should like to say that the most important requisite in life is to keep such a definition as “Man is a creature to be trained” indelibly impressed in his mind. When various words as training, hardship, practice, etc., are used for explaining this requisite, some people too often take them to refer to something painful or unpleasant. However, even so, called pain contains a certain inexpressible joy. On the other hand, if a man should indulge exclusively in a comfortable life or in seeking only knowledge, he would be maimed for life. Therefore, we should continue our efforts by every means.

The old saying GYO-GAKU-ITCHI 行学一致 (Action and knowledge should agree) means that, since a man is a creature to act and learn, he has to train himself throughout his lifetime. That is an extremely important precept.

Here I am ready to discuss training. Both mind and body we have to develop by training are provided within ourselves and cannot be imported from without. The fact that we have to train what we possess within ourselves, and we have to polish ourselves by our efforts without relying on other people’s help, seems to be the most important point to us human beings.

Before closing my discourse, let me quote my favorite phrase from JINSEI-KUN 人生訓 (Teachings on life) by our ancestors. It is GANZEN NO MATSUGE 眼前の睫毛 (Eyelashes in front of the eyes) which emphasizes the fact that eyelashes are provided in front of the eyes.

As for “The eyelashes in front of the eyes,” they are provided next to your body. In spite of the fact that they are provided so immediately in front of your eyes, you never can observe them.

Your eyelashes you never can see. Likewise, a human being would find it extremely difficult to observe his substance.

The same is also true of the mind. It is quite difficult for one to develop a worthy mind. Still, it is located never elsewhere, but always within oneself as a very common substance. The duty of a human being is to polish his mind as much as possible. That is what it teaches.

In this connection, I will quote an admirable expression by PO-MU, a Chinese poet who lived about ten centuries ago. *CHIEH-TSAI-YEN-CHIEN-CHAN-PU-CHIEN. TAO-FEI-HSIN-WAI-CHIN-HO-CHIU.* (Your eyelashes are in front of your eyes, but you never see them. Truth never exists outside your mind. What else are you seeking?).

Your eyelashes are in front of your eyes, but you will never be able to observe them. But if you look into a mirror, you will see that they are there. What makes you run out in a hurry and search for it when the same is true of truth which never exists outside your mind? Truth does not exist outside your mind. For what else are you looking? That is what the quotation means, I believe.

After all, your final goal is to build up HEI-JO-SHIN 平常心 (The everyday mind; namely, the normal mind). You only have to polish up the mind provided by you. You must keep training your mind till it becomes one healthy, living, and so clean and dustless as to reflect anything. That is the everyday mind. A common proverb says HEI-JO-SHIN-KORE-MICHI 平常心是道 (Everyday mind is the ideal way). “The eyelashes in front of the eyes” also refers to the same point. A certain Kendo master in ancient times composed a poem on the secrets of Kendo: GOKUI TOWA ONO GA MATSUGE NO GOTOKU NITE, CHIKAKU ARE DOMO MITSUKE ZARI KERI 極意とは己が睫毛の如くにて近く在れども見付けざりけり (The secrets, though provided as near as your eyelashes, are seldom discovered).

That shows that it is not impossible to learn the secrets of Kendo if you solve this clue.

I have spoken three days on the art of Kendo, the art of earning a living, and the art of living. I shall be very happy indeed if you understand that these are all identical.