

THE EVIL DESTROYING YUMI

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(The following talk was given by Shibata, Sensei in May 1985 at the Kyoto Dharma Study Group on the occasion of a Hama-yumi being presented by him to the group). A Hama-yumi is a special bow used in rituals of purification.

Good afternoon. It is now the nicest season in Kyoto. How is your mind? Is everybody happy? Today my talk is about kyudo and Hama-yumi. These ideas have been transmitted from the past, but I will also talk about some of my own ideas.

Western archery is based on the idea of hitting the target. There is no other reason for doing it. Western bows are made very scientifically for that purpose. However, Japanese bows are made from bamboo, which is cut by people. Since they are made in a natural way no two are the same, each one is different. To make a yumi is very difficult and drawing a yumi is also difficult. In western archery there are also steps to drawing the bow, but the goal is completely different.

Kyudo is very difficult, but it makes no difference whether you hit the target or not. In ancient Japan kyudo was the highest form of etiquette. A samurai also needed to know the proper etiquette associated with horsemanship, swordsmanship, and spear. During the time of Nobunaga guns were introduced in Japan. They were more accurate, but made a big noise when fired. The yumi was silent and one never knew where the arrow came from so the Tokugawa Shogun prohibited the use of yumi in battle. The yumi then became a means of spiritual discipline and learning etiquette. It is also during this time that the Hama-yumi came into being. The Hama-yumi or Evil-Destroying yumi is used as a means of purification. To purify the environment and your own spirit. The Buddhist image of Amitabha is sometimes shown holding a yumi and ya. Why is the Buddhist ideal of peace and compassion connected with violent weapons? Because they are not weapons of violence. They are weapons of purification.

About 700 years ago, a demon had appeared at the Imperial palace. It came out at night and made the emperor ill. A skilled archer named Yorimasu Minamoto was sent to the palace and he killed the demon with the first arrow. The emperor regained his health and Yorimasu was promoted. This was the beginning of Hama-yumi. What can we learn from Hama-yumi? They are for cleaning the mind. The Shihobarai was originally performed with Hama-yumi. Everyone is surrounded by "hungry ghosts" - temptations, desires, negative thoughts and so on. The haya, first arrow, is to exorcise these hungry ghosts. The otoyua, second arrow, symbolizes welcoming happiness since one has been purified. How is all this connected to kyudo? Kyudo is based on strict rules of etiquette. It is competition with oneself. In sports one tries to be a champion, but kyudo is not like that. The target is not a target. It is a mirror of your own mind. People have seven basic emotions or defilements. Happiness, anger, greed, expectation, sadness, fear, and surprise. The aim of kyudo is to cut through these defilements in order to experience mu, emptiness. Many people practice meditation, but after fifteen or twenty minutes one becomes restless and wants to be finished. Kyudo is standing Zen. All of these hopes and desires and thinking while you are drawing the yumi, such as "I want to hit the target, I want to have beautiful style," will cause the ya fly of somewhere else.

Know yourself. Know your mind first and then you can practice kyudo. If your mind is right you will hit the target naturally. It is the same in your whole life, not only in kyudo. If you are always wondering about the target or the result, nothing good can be accomplished. If you always look at yourself first - your own feet, your own basis, then things will naturally go right. The word "do" in kyudo means "way". This concept of "do" is difficult to talk about. To practice the way of kyudo is very difficult, although people think it is easy. This is also true for the way of flowers, tea and so on. The practice of "do" has no concept of a goal. The kind of kyudo I would like you to understand is not based on becoming better and better. This discipline is a means of cleaning or polishing

your own mind through self-reflection.

Life seems very long, but it is very short. It is over in a flash. Hansei is the process of looking back over your life. You reflect on your own deeds. America and Europe are highly industrialised. Traditionally, eastern nations have been more concerned with development of the inner life, of mind. Do you think we are living in a happy age? Computers, televisions - we have many such things. Our food and coffee is instant, but does it taste good? Although we have scientific gadgets all around us, something is missing. Aren't people forgetting their own mental and spiritual development? I think human society has forgotten heart and mind. Wonderful mountains are destroyed. The trees and soil taken away and large buildings put in their place. The mountains cry, I think. The mountains say, "Why are the people cutting off my head and my arms?" Sometimes the mountains become angry. When rain falls the water rushes down causing landslides. For the sake of future generations shouldn't we be paying more attention to mind? In the old days people walked everywhere. Now we drive our cars even a short distance to go shopping. Is this really convenient? Shouldn't we think a little more about these things that are happening in the modern world? I am very happy that on such a beautiful May afternoon you have come to listen to my somewhat comical talk. I hope from the bottom of my heart that you all attain happiness. Thank you very much. I am used to speaking at universities where people don't listen to me quite so sincerely.