

“THE CRUCIBLE”

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Prologue:

Dear Sukh,

I have been reflecting on this subject for some time now. This subject comes from observation of not just my challenges and growth, but really of ALL OF US (over the years that I have been around to be an observer). Much of the reflection comes from things you have said before or after class. Things that really come from the heart, and some things that "slip out" at the right moments if that makes sense. The concept envelopes the WHY of training. You have come out with thoughtful articles on things such as duty, etc. At the end of last year, you stated it really starts with desire. If the desire is not there, any sense of duty has its foundation in shifting sands. The WHY has to have some amount of self-interest. Some call that "enlightened self-interest". I have heard you say before, that all that you have done in building the dojo (assuming not just physical structure, but building others) is for YOUR Budo. From that strength comes everything else: building leaders, helping your community.

I would like this article to be utilized however it would best serve the dojo.

Respectfully submitted,

Andreas

The Crucible Article:

If you ask various students at **Gi Yu Dojo** why they started training and why they continue to train, you will find evolution in the answer over time in what is expressed and what is demonstrated.

The process of this evolution proves difficult for most. It involves overcoming physical, emotional, mental and spiritual pain. It involves crushing and remolding of ego: hence the description of the environment of change: **“The Crucible”**.

Oxford Dictionaries: A *crucible* is defined as a ceramic or metal container in which metals are subjected to very high temperatures in order to melt the substance and pour it into a mold for instance.

The *crucible* or melting pot would be composed of a “refractory substance” such as clay, graphite or platinum for melting metals to purify them. Made of an unyielding substance, the *crucible* does not change. The substance in the *crucible* is forced to change.

In Biblical times, the process of melting gold or silver was refined using a *crucible* with a fiery furnace underneath. With the extremely strong heat, impurities in the metal would come to the top and could be skimmed off. The process would be repeated until the refiner could see his own image reflected in the molten surface of the metal.

The word *crucible* is used metaphorically, “a situation of severe trial, or in which different elements interact, leading to the creation of something new”. “A test of the most decisive kind; a severe trial”. Also described as a” hardship that is a test and builder of character”. Also “a place or situation in which

concentrated forces interact to cause change or development”. Example:” their relationship was forged in the crucible of war”.

Biblical references to be considered: trials, afflictions, even persecution comprise the crucible that Christ uses to purify His Church until He sees His image reflected in us. The bottom line, it is not things that come easily to us that refine and define us. The idea of being refined by difficult experiences is reflected in multiple cultures and religions.

For those who are newly starting their path at **Gi Yu Dojo** it is easy to be pulled forward by the excitement of something new. There are early successes that lead to a good feeling of accomplishment.

It is to be expected that new students also receive positive feedback to encourage them that progress is starting to become evident. It is also part of our responsibility as senior students to “be a good uke” in not making it overly difficult for a newer student to accomplish a technique.

There comes a point, however, that the brand-new shininess of the experience we thought was **Budo** seems to fall apart. Rather than receiving accolades for progress, we may come to a few classes during which strong rebukes about what needs to be happening to make technique and intent stronger. Flawed mental constructs of what we think we can or cannot do are challenged. Corrections come in waves to test trueness of intent and technique. The techniques that seemed to work so well, are easily shut down with less cooperation from a higher ranking Uke/ Sempai or a non-cooperative Kohai.

Budo- Way of War

武道



Involved are emotional and mental pain and can lead to discouragement. There is also what we perceive as “physical pain”, but physical pain cannot be removed from the psyche. The ability to keep up appearances in spite of pain from a blow to the body is part of maintaining Zan Shin, or awareness. It is part of being a warrior. It is reflected in the **Bushido Warrior Code including Yu – Valor, Courage.**



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Yu- Courage

This is why Sensei often makes the remark, “I don’t care if you are hurt, physically or emotionally I do not care if your ego is bruised; I do care if you are injured”. All of this comes down to the ego. Will you overcome embarrassment, physical pain, rebukes, failing exams, etc?



武士道

Bushido- Code of the Warrior

Ninpo, Perseverance is the crucial subject here. The ninja were known to overcome any pain or humiliation to obtain the objective. We are after all studying the **Koryu Arts**, this will involve pain and challenges from every angle: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. If it was not difficult, there would be no purpose to train at this dojo.

Ninpo- Perseverance

忍術



Koryu- Old Style 古流

If a given student does not take responsibility for their part in this process, the pressure so frequently leads to pain avoidance. This may lead to missing classes, which *artificially* takes the pressure off. In that case, the opportunity to grow by forging on through adversity with honest intent is lost. This is running away from the *crucible*. This is what we do not want. It is a loss that is felt more deeply than that person can expect. Unfortunately, this process of falling away can even happen with people with advanced levels of training. The longer the time away, the harder it seems to come back.

If a student is discouraged and confused, it is time then for the rest of us to reach out with compassion and help them become unblocked. There may be a life challenge that is overwhelming. This is a balance on the other side of the austere *crucible* experience. **This is what makes the dojo a community.** This is reflected in the **Bushido warrior virtues of Jin – Benevolence, Compassion, Generosity, Rei – Respect.**

Jin- Compassion

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Rei- Respect

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It takes honest reflection, humility, and willingness to grow in order to allow for the evolution of competency, the building of character, and growing of inner leadership. This requires descriptors of the **Bushido Virtue Makoto - Honest, Honorable, Moral**, “one must be honest with self, prior to being able to be honest with others”.

Makoto- Honesty

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Sensei often has said, “you do not bend the art to you, you bend to the art”. That is the unyielding substance of the *crucible*. That is why we are instructed to train “in the box” staying within the constraints of the Koryu Arts faithfully passed down generations in form, flavor, and intent.

It is through various stages of being molded by 1) the refining fire that is the dojo and 2) the *crucible*, which comprises the ancient **Koryu Arts** that we study, that we discover a new shiny **Budo** for ourselves. This being with the guidance of those that teach us and who have come before us. Following then is the joyous experience of accomplishment encapsulated in the **Bushido warrior code Meiyo: Success, Honor, Glory**. Then we can stand proudly with the strength, character, and effectiveness representing **Gi - Justice and Yu -Courage**.



Meiyo- Honor

Finally, this allows a stronger expression of the Bushido Warrior Virtue **Chungi – Devotion, Loyalty, Dedication**: “the foundation of all the virtues, without dedication and loyalty to the task at hand, the desired outcome cannot be achieved”.



Gi- Justice



Chungyi- Loyalty

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Andreas Syllaba

References: Gi Yu Dojo Student Manual, Seven Virtues of the Bushido Warrior, Verbal Explanations from Sukh Sandhu Sensei, Kancho, Gi Yu Dayton Dojo.

Dictionaries: Oxford, Merriam-Webster, Webster Revised. YouTube: melting gold in crucible – Archimedes Channel.

“Suffering – God’s Crucible to Prepare the Bride” – www.ChristCrucified.info.

Glossary:

Budo – the warrior’s way or path

Bushido – code of moral principles of the Samurai

Dojo – the training area, with formal/traditional structure, scrolls, weapon racks,

Kata – a pre-determined martial art form; in our arts these are almost always an interplay between two partners, the uke and the shidachi; although one is attacker and the other defender, both are doing the kata, both are learning, no matter who “wins”.

Kohai – junior student

Koryu Arts – the ancient martial way

Sempai – senior student

Shidachi – the training partner “doing the technique”, in essence the one who ends up “winning” in the pre-determined kata; usually the defender

Uke – the training partner “receiving the technique”, the one that ends up “losing” in the predetermined kata; usually the attacker

Zanshin – awareness exemplified starting with entering the training area (dojo), attending to etiquette (such as bowing to training partner, bowing to Sensei), initiating attack/ defense through all elements, coming back to *en garde* posture (specific defensive stance) as completion of the technique, followed by bowing to partner once the interaction is complete.