



David M. Valadez
Senshin Center
Dojocho

Exchange by **David M. Valadez**

Deshi: Sensei, in this set, at times it seems the jo is the stronger weapon. Other times, the bokken appears to be the stronger. Whenever I am glad to have one weapon, in the next moment, I wish I were holding the other.

Sensei: There is strength and weakness in both weapons. There is strength and weakness in all things.

Deshi: It is like this in all of Nature?

Sensei: In that way, the weapons set we are practicing now reflects Nature. In Nature, there is the classic example of Fire and Ice. The fire grows hotter. In growing hotter, it melts the ice. In the ice melting, it becomes water. The water extinguishes the fire. Man too is not free from these cycles of exchange. One has to only look at the classic example of the stonecutter. He, dissatisfied with his life, went from being a quarry worker, to being the sun that was beating down on him, to being the cloud that covered the sun, to being the mountain that stopped the cloud from passing through the sky, to again being the stonecutter eating away at the mountain. With each wish he went from what he thought was stronger to what he thought was weaker to again become himself.

Deshi: What in the weapons set then decides victory if both sides have an equal potential to lose?

Sensei: The man or woman that wields the weapons decides victory or defeat for him or herself. He or she must capitalize upon his or her strengths while all the while preventing his or her weaknesses from coming into play.

Deshi: Is that all there is?

Sensei: He or she can also use the strengths of the opponent against him or her. Using one's own weaknesses to one's own advantage can do this.

Deshi: This would mean that there is weakness is one's strengths and strength in one's weaknesses. Can this be so?

Sensei: Why should strength and weakness fall outside of the Law of Nature? Of course, it can be so. It is so because everything can be exchanged.

Deshi: Can a Man be exchanged?

Sensei: Of course, he or she can. This is the very underlying principle of spiritual cultivation.