



Morality of Karate and the importance of Kata/Hyung

The most difficult task in teaching Karate is to instil belief in the moral aspects of the martial arts. Most students are interested only in the immediate results of fighting techniques and care little about the morality which is the foundation behind them.

We are all fully aware of the violence inherent in man, and that the art of Karate embraces within itself techniques to kill with an empty hand, but there is morality involved, woven into the fabric of Karate that controls the violence and the use of the art except under one condition – absolute necessity and dire peril.

The rhetoric is good, but the question itself is academic. How does one go about teaching fighting techniques and instilling morality at the same time? How does one accomplish this? The answer is found in Kata, the heart of Karate. Kata is meant to train the mind, and is not intended solely for conceptual and intellectual self-defence. Indeed, to bring it in contact with the real self is its true purpose.

Kata, in its traditional sense, is a religious ritual. The art of Karate does not mean the ability of technical excellence, which can be developed by physical training, but an ability of attaining a spiritual goal through the practise of the Kata, so the player plays against himself and succeeds in conquering himself.

*“He who conquers himself is the mightiest warrior.”
Confucius*

The basis of a Kata is in the concept *“Karate ni sente nashi”* literally translated, *“In Karate, one does not make the first move.”* All Kata begin and end with defence, it instils the belief that the true Karateka never strikes first, and never strikes in anger.

“If your hands go forth, withhold your temper; if your temper goes forth, withhold your hands”

The achievement of self-perfection is more important to the martial artist who possesses it than his physical and technical ability. Kata takes great faith, tenacity and hard work to master. Every time one practices the Kata, his first move and his last move remind him of *“Karate ni sente nashi.”* It is stressed incessantly. In Karate, there is no advantage in the first attack.

The Kata also has another advantage. In sports there are physical adversaries, without the adversaries, set of rules, judges and arbitrators, there is no contest, no fame, no fortune. In the dojo your only opponent is yourself. The Kata is a teacher in itself forever. One does not have to go to the dojo except to be under the eye of the sensei whose function is to see that one is going in the right direction and on the correct path.

However, many believe the Kata is meaningless, probably because their first exposure to Karate was in mere technique and the realm of physical fighting. Where the morality of Karate is missing, there is no Karate.

The practise of Kata must be maintained the same at all times, even if no one is watching or supervising. You are not practising for your Sensei or society, you are practising for yourself, for your self-improvement and total awareness. If you eliminate or add movements to the Kata, you are cheating yourself, and the art.

“Kata is Karate; Karate is Kata”