

KATA'S RELATIONSHIP TO KUMITE

We have emphasized in the previous sections kata's relationship to Zen and Karate tradition. In recent years, particularly in the United States, there are some practitioners who suggest that kata is not really essential, at least not as much as the traditional schools claim. These karate-ka see little relationship between kata, Kumite, and self-defense. They feel that students might more profitably spend their time in additional kumite or in training to develop specific fighting skills. This lack of appreciation for the benefits of kata stems from many sources. One is the exaggerated claim some instructors have made in regard to the relationship between kata and kumite. Some instructional books suggest that a student will become a good fighter solely through the practice of kata. Such notions create disappointment and cynicism for students, who after their first kumite session quickly become aware their first kumite session quickly become aware that there is much that kata has not prepared them for directly, Kata is not irrelevant to developing fighting skills because it does strengthen technique, coordination and balance. It also fosters the kind of control of body and mind essential for good kumite in developing practice, as well as having a deeper significance all its own.

KATA AND EVERYDAY LIFE

The purpose of karate is to prepare the karate-ka for life not merely for physical battle. The simple truth is that, of the many challenges we will face in the world, few if any will call for a strong kick or a timely punch. Although a strong, healthy body is important to well-being and success, a strong, disciplined mind is paramount. Kata is central in developing these qualities, and this is what makes it particularly relevant to everyday life.

One of the challenges of life is knowing what to do setting goals and priorities. Once these have been established, realization becomes the challenge, Education, work, relationships, all require sustained effort. Being able to concentrate and focus your mental energies are prime ingredients for success. For example, suppose that you decide to become a lawyer, Long hours of study are required, often when you are tired or when you would rather be doing something else. Often, your eyes will be on a page of text, but your mind is not there, having wandered off to other thoughts. You may have the intent, and you may put in the time, but because of the lack of concentration and focus, progress will be slow and tedious.

We are all willing to accept that to have a strong body, we must do physical exercise. To have a strong mind, we must also exercise systematically and consistently. In kata the student must first learn the movements. This is as much a mental chore as a physical one. Each time you practice kata you are exercising concentration, striving to attain the harmony of body and mind that allows you to focus your energy, or ki, As you progress in your training, and the kata become more complex, deeper concentration and focus are required. The mind, like the body, responds to this progressive training, becoming stronger through work and repetition.

Some students feel bored or oppressed by the detail and exactness required in the polishing of kata. Students feel, "What difference does it make if my hand position is not exactly like the instructor showed? No one will notice if my leg is slightly bent in that stance too." However, it is precisely the attention to detail demanded by kata that cultivates self-discipline, making yourself repeat something until you get it right. Concentration and self-discipline are both attitudes and skills. They can be learned, and they must be practiced.

The discipline and concentration developed through the practice of kata will permeate your every effort, no matter what you do. It becomes a part of your way of being.

In karate, no one will tell you what specific goals to pursue in life. Once you have made choice. It is the purpose of your karate training to help you focus all your energy and talents on the accomplishment of your goals. Kata is a vehicle for developing that ability, which will help you in every aspect of living.

Excerpt from [Renbukai – India website](#)