2nd Dan essay Kim Hedley



Kata and its meaning to me

Kata is by far, my favourite aspect of Karate. I am by no means, a good performer in this field, especially in competition terms but, I always try to give it my all. This is because, for me, Kata embodies the essence of Karate. From beginning to end, each of the 26 recognised Shotokan Katas, contain all of the requirements to become a good exponent of karate technically but, it does not stop there. Just knowing the Kata is not enough, understanding its meaning, and possible applications is the education.

Master Gichin Funakoshi said of this;

“Once a kata has been learned, it must be practised repeatedly until it can be applied in an emergency, for knowledge of just the sequence of a kata in karate is useless.”

Anyone can learn a Kata sequence but, if they don’t understand its meaning, in my opinion they have learnt nothing. In saying that, it’s a lifelong education, as each Kata technique has multiple application possibilities. That’s what makes it so fascinating for me.

From the first move your education begins.

* Yoi. Respect is the important thing here. To name the kata and bow, etiquette, one of, and in some opinions, the most important thing in Karate.
* The pattern. Teaching the student stance, movement and turning.
* Breathing. This is a very important, if not learnt, you can lose all form and subsequently technique is badly affected.
* Techniques. From the most basic block, to advanced strikes.
* Hip movement. An important element that some forget. Power comes from here.
* Yame. Again etiquette.

That is just an overview, as there is so much more, some difficult to explain, as when practicing Kata, I lose myself in it. It allows me to forget the troubles of the day. The concentration needed to perfect it, leaves no room for anything else. That concentration, although tiring, is not difficult for me. Quite the opposite in fact. I find it a calming, and fulfilling experience. It is also so rewarding. When I finally, after many failures, get an individual element right, I am elated, and due to the multitude of elements involved, it just keeps giving me that reward.

I appreciate that Kata is not everybody’s favourite aspect of Karate but, no matter what, they must understand its importance. You may never get it right, or perfect it but, it will give you the tools to become a good karateka. I will always strive to instil this ethic to anyone who takes up the art. In life you learn every day, the same is true with Kata and Karate. In Japan to many it is not just an art, it’s a way of life. Western lifestyle does not allow this to happen for many, but, I will take the lessons I learn through Karate, and especially Kata with me through mine. This is because, it educates me, calms me, fulfils me and most of all brings me peace of mind, in what can be a very stressful life.