



# MARTIAL LORE

With MICHAEL P KLIMENT

**Karate is a Japanese word meaning empty hand. It is basically a system of fighting against armed or unarmed opponents, in which the karate man uses nothing more than his own body parts.**

Karate is the ultimate form of self-defense. The purpose of it however isn't aggression but to protect one self. It is a way of life; it is to aid its practitioners on their way through life, hence making him a better person. A superior personality, moral and physical improvement can be accomplished through proper practice of karate. Due to the fact that this martial art has originated in China it was called "Chinese Hand". Mr. Gichin Funakoshi, founder of modern day karate, changed the characters to meaning "Empty Hand". However the meaning goes deeper than the dictionary sense of the word. Mr. Funakoshi chose the characters for it's meaning in Zen Buddhist philosophy, rendering oneself empty. In fact to its practitioners it is a martial art. But more importantly then that it is a way of building character.

Karate basically can be broken down into 4 categories:

1. Budo
2. Self-Defense
3. Physical Education
4. Sport

**Karate as Budo:-** To people who practice karate it is a form of martial art, but more importantly it is a form of human development through which we can change our habits, become more valuable to our community as well as to everyone we touch in our life's. We will learn the meaning of the 5 important words with which we finish every training session. These are Character, Sincerity, Effort, Self-Control and Etiquette. In order for us to be able to compete in these fast moving world of ours we must learn discipline. We must learn patience and we must have the endurance which will help us go through and accomplish those heard choirs that life puts in front of us in our every day life.

**Karate as Physical Education:-** As a form of physical education karate is unparalleled. Almost any sport due to its nature will develop one part of the body or the other, this is not so in karate. Karate, because of the wide variety of techniques practiced involving all parts of the body, will develop a well-balanced and coordinated body.

**Karate as Self-Defense:-** Almost every part of the body can be used in karate providing it is trained properly. For example the hand itself can be used in ten different ways such as punching straight forward or in a circular manner, back fist strike using the back of the fist, hammer fist strike with the bottom part, knife hand block or strike using the knife edge of the open hand. First three fingers drawn tightly together on the open hand can be used for spearing. Elbows and knees can be used very effectively for close fighting. There are a number of kicking techniques in karate. Front kick and roundhouse kick, which are performed with the ball of the foot. Side snapping or side thrust kick in which case the edge of the foot would be used. Unlike any other form of self-defense, a karate man, hardly ever comes in contact with his opponent until he is ready to deliver his punch, strike or kick. This of course gives him a definite advantage.

**Karate as Sport:- (KUMITE)** Karate, in addition to being a superb form of self-defense and exercise, is an exciting sport. Basically there are two types of events in a karate contest. Free-style fighting and kata. Free-style fighting resembles sparring in boxing, but unlike in boxing, attacks are stopped short of contact, this is to avoid obvious injury. (KATA) Kata is a formal exercise made of karate techniques performed in a set sequence. They consist of various types of hand, foot and body shifting techniques. Katas are based on imaginary opponents numbering from four to eight attacking from any direction. There are more than fifty katas. Some are relatively simple; others are quite complex and require a high degree of skill. Katas by many is considered as the essence of karate.

If you have any story, news or history on your martial art, please feel free to send it to me at [michael@jska.co.za](mailto:michael@jska.co.za) or call me on 0828883100. This section is to uplift the image of all martial arts."