

A REFLECTION ON YEARS GONE BY

From Sensei Pervez Mistry

KIHON

And why it matters with Sensei Torben Svendsen

IOGKF

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE P. 8

Interview with Sensei Sydney
Leijenhorst



iogkf.com

April 2023



CREDITS

EDITING
DAVID LAMBERT
TETSUJI NAKAMURA
SITA GANESAN

DESIGN & LAYOUT
SITA GANESAN
THEODOR TETZ

PHOTOGRAPHY
ROMAN BOLDYREV
TETSUJI NAKAMURA

02

Address from Sensei Pervez Mistry

04

Kihon: Why and what good does it do for you?

08

Interview with Sensei Sydney Leijenhorst

TM

CONTENTS



Address from

SENSEI PERVEZ MISTRY

IOGKF INDIA CHIEF INSTRUCTOR

I arrived at the Yoyogi Dojo in January 1976, with a letter of introduction from my first Karate-do Sensei, Masafumi Suzuki Kancho (Principal) of the Seibukan Academy in Kyoto, where I first learned Karatedo in 1967 over a period of just under a year.

Training at the famous (or infamous, as some had mentioned), Yoyogi Dojo, was to me a lifetime of experience rolled into my initial three months. I was training every day except Sundays. There are quite a few sessions I remember, but one that stands out in particular, is where we practised San Dan Gi for the entirety of the one and a half hours of training. And one guess as to who my partner was? Right, Sensei Terauchi. All the other partnered groups took six steps to reach the other end of the dojo, while Terauchi Sensei took just three, with me running backwards in utter desperation. That taught me a serious lesson; how to block correctly!

Today Karate-do sessions are always taken by a high ranking Instructor or Sensei, but many a times during this period my teacher would tell us to train by ourselves. There was no talking, just doing, and if you were doing an incorrect technique, a he or a senior would come up to you and show you the right way. Kata, Hojo Undo and Kumite were part and parcel of nearly every training session, and I would often limp back to the Yoyogi Train station on my way back to my hotel. I remember once, an elderly lady who saw me limping sadly shook her head and questioned me asking "Yoyogi Dojo?" I replied in the affirmative, while she nodded and kept on walking.

I was fortunate to be present at the formation of the IOGKF in Poole, England in 1979, and when the name of our organization was first suggested as "The International Okinawan Goju Ryu Karate-do Association", I advised them that Association was not the right word to use and a better word would be "Federation" which was accepted by all.

My first visit to Okinawa was in May 1981 and I stayed back for the First World IOGKF Championships and was later accompanied by 12 of my students, who came later to attend the training and tournament.

I will never forget the Kumite fight with a Japanese participant representing America versus Sensei Terauchi. As the time elapsed, several attempts to score by Sensei's opponent were to no avail. Then a single lightning fast mai geri by Sensei Terauchi, lifted his opponent off

his limbs and landed him with a back roll just outside the mat area right at the feet of the spectators. My great respect to Sensei's opponent, as he stood up and continued the fight. To conclude might seem superfluous.

With all that's happened over the past year, it's a painful reminder that even in the best of times things can take a different turn, and each of us have to live with the decisions we make. However, what is most important is to continue to do what we do and to keep up the legacy of our founder and all those after him. We must train ourselves and the generations yet to come in the "WAY of IOGKF Karate-do".





KIHON

Why & what
good does it
do for you?

WRITTEN BY SENSEI TORBEN SVENDSEN
(DENMARK)

Did you ever sit in nature for a while, letting your thoughts drift?

In the beginning you might think that you see everything in front of you. You might start getting bored by looking at the same thing... but if you get passed your boredom and sit a little longer, details start to appear. You might see a different tree, a bush or even an animal might appear for you for the first time, even though it was there all the time...

Kihon (Basic training) in Karate is not any different than this. In the process of training Kihon it is almost inevitable that you will get bored, that your mind will drift and you will feel a strong urge to do something else... something more fun or less boring... Just keep on going.

Your Physique

Kihon teaches you the fundamentals of Karate, it's the basics, the foundation of your "Karate

house". Through this training you'll achieve a greater physical strength, better precision, better reflexes and the ability to concentrate your power at the moment of impact (Kime).

Proper Kihon training also helps you to avoid injuries.

The numerous repetitions are important to create a natural body response.

Awareness and Boredom

You might find it boring to do the same thing over and over again, but if you open up your mind, your senses and your curiosity, then you start opening up for a greater and deeper understanding of the basic techniques and ways to move in Karate.

This is as important for the novice as for the most advanced Karate-ka. For the beginner, you have to learn the new ways of using your body and this requires thousands of repetitions of each technique. For the advanced, you have to keep polishing and refining all your techniques in order to fully master them.

Beware that boring can come in different shapes. Especially if the technique is fairly new to you, after a certain amount of repetitions then you might start getting bored... well, this is the time to continue...

If you are a more advanced student, and the technique is well known to you and you have repeated it numerous times, here too there's often a sense of boredom kicking in, you start to lack attention to what you are doing because "you know it so well already". This is often where you get sloppy, you forget the small details and you start making mistakes.

No matter if you are a beginner or a very advanced student, the most important thing you have to train is your awareness. This is in fact no different than in our daily life...

every day we have to keep aware of what we actually are doing or else life is slipping past us.

By having your Kihon technique to focus on, it is a very beneficial way to train your awareness and we might also learn that the trivial things in life are maybe not so bad or boring and that we can gain wisdom, if we are curious and aware.

The Mental Benefit

Kihon techniques should be 'simple'* (and yet advanced enough to challenge your brain) so that you can do them again and again without thinking...

In this way you can reach a point where your brain can "switch off", yet still be aware, and your body just does the job.

The task of co-ordinating hands, feet, tanden... the whole body in each technique is very beneficial for developing and in keeping your braincells "alive".

Visualizing opponents or other obstacles while performing Kihon techniques helps you to become stronger as well as more precise and focused.

Allowing your brain to be in "free flow" while performing numerous repetitions of physical techniques despite your exhaustion, self-pity and an urge to give up, can open a deeper dimension

of yourself, an "emptiness" or a zen-like feeling. You will not be able to reach this state if you are giving up.

An important thing to be aware of which will help build mental strength and persistence is to keep your promise towards yourself. When you decide on a certain number of repetitions then you have to follow them through, even past the point where you feel like giving up.

When you make a promise to yourself you have to keep it... If you can't trust your own promises how then will you be able to trust others or expect others to trust in you?

*Simple Kihon is actually not that simple at all...E.g. take an Age Uke (rising block) in Heiko dachi; arms are crossing in front of the chest, one arm goes up and stops just above the head one fist in front of the forehead, the other goes down to the armpit. The arms rotate in opposite ways. The feet are parallel and grounded, knees bend. At the moment of impact the Tanden is tight. These and more small points have to be taken care of by our brain, nervous system and body... It's actually a quite big task when you think of it.

A Little Calculation

It is said that in order to master something you have to do 10,000 repetitions... So let's do a little calculation to see how many 10,000 actually is?

If for example you do 100 Age Uke every day. Then it'll take you approximately 6+ months before both your arms have done the 10,000 Age Uke.

Then think about your Kata...

How many repetitions of one particular kata is it likely you can do every day?

Let's say you do 10 kata every single day then you'll have to do it for 2 years and 8 months. In Goju-Ryu we only have 13 kata, still I guess it's enough for a lifetime!

Prepare for self defence - Prepare for fighting

To continue past the boredom, past the trivial, past your minds excuses for stopping, past your self pity, past the point where you are exhausted, past the point where you think you can't go any further, past the discomfort, you will have the opportunity to open up to an "emptiness" a zen like feeling.

This is a way to overcome your own limits in a safe way.

... This is your true fighting skills continuing even though it's not comfortable, a fight is not comfortable either. 🥋

Never give up - Nana korobi Ya oki.

(Fall down seven times, stand up eight)





SENSEI SYDNEY LEIJENHORST

IOGKF NETHERLANDS CHIEF INSTRUCTOR

INTERVIEW BY DAVID LAMBERT (AUSTRALIA)

You have a background in several other martial arts such as Judo, Kempo, etc. Why has Goju-ryu, and particularly IOGKF, become your main focus of training?

One of the main reasons to shift from Shaolin Kempo to Okinawa Goju-ryu Karate was that I was looking for more in-depth knowledge on things like breathing, ki, movement principles, body-mechanics, etc, than I had access to in the Netherlands. Talking to the late Sensei Harry de Spa [1951 – 1999], seeing the BBC documentary 'The Way of the Warrior' and having a glimpse at Traditional Karate volume 1, convinced me there was more to discover through this style and through Sensei Higaonna.

Another thing that spoke to me was the rich and condensed nature of the style. At that time, I was also practicing Hung Gar Kung-fu. That was also a very rich style, that included breathing techniques, forms, partner drills, weapons, etc. But as a system it was too big. Too many forms. The first form to learn in that system was about as long as all the kata from Gekisai dai ichi up to Shisochin combined and there were seven of those and dozens of others. The only way to fully learn that system was to go and live in Hong Kong where a lineage holder lived, I had trained some weeks around 1982. I actually tried to get a job in Hong Kong as a physiotherapist. However, I did not get a response and I had meanwhile encountered Okinawa Goju-ryu. So after a few years, I also dropped the practice of this system.

As a qualified physiotherapist, what is your opinion on the effects of Goju-ryu training on the body?

I would say the benefits are rich and diverse. It improves lung-heart functions through aerobic exercise; it uses various forms of power training [body weight, external weight, isotonic exercises, etc.]; there is an extensive use of breathing techniques; the refined biomechanics that help to use the body in a healthy and impactful way; it requires both gross and refined motor skills, etc.

But, to be honest, I think the frame of thinking in physiotherapy is too narrow to understand the full benefit of our practice. The energy work of Sanchin and Tensho kata, that underly the whole system, do not yet fit in the mainstream frames of modern Western medicine. We see an increase in understanding of the integration of body, mind and breathing in modern neurology, which I find very interesting and complementary, but it will take a while before this can really cover the depth of body, breath and mind integration as it is understood within the traditional views of the martial arts, healing methods and meditation. This will require more data and a bigger paradigm shift.

You are part of the newly formed IOGKF technical committee. What can you tell us about this group and what projects it is currently undertaking?

We have first started with the 'Kihon' of our tasks. This includes things like reviewing and aligning terminology, discussing the variations in and reasonings behind the Bunkai Kumite as they are done in various countries, reviewing the guidelines for theoretical and practical grading, etc. This will be the foundation for what I feel are even more valuable future contributions,

such as for example developing modules on certain specialist topics like 'Heishugata', 'Karate for older people', 'Kakie', 'children karate', 'vital points', 'power training', 'health maintenance', 'Zen & Karate', etc. This can be further developed into a teacher training, in order to develop the level of teaching in our organization. Both these can be offered in a hybrid-style or producing expert manuals and / or videos.

Do you think Goju-ryu training has evolved since you first started training and if so why?

The first thing that comes to mind is the fact that there has been an increase in health awareness. In the old days everybody, regardless of age, health, etc, would train to the max and do all the exercises. These days, I more often see that different trainings and different advices are given to different groups or individuals. Certain very demanding exercises, as for example bouncing up and down in a low squat and jumping up from there in the air, are done less often or only with those whose bodies are fit enough to do so. I believe this development prevents injuries.

I have also noticed an evolution amongst many of my colleagues and seniors in terms of focusing more on details and underlying principles. In the past training was first of all hard training, now I more often I see a combination between hard & smart.

Finally, I believe that more instructors specialize in certain areas and shared their specialization more and more on national and International Gasshuku. This has been very enriching.

You are an experienced practitioner of meditation and yoga. How do these practices support training in Goju-ryu?

They have been very supportive and elucidating for me. They gave me a more in-depth and refined understanding of the energetic and meditative aspects of our style.

But, Karate, and certainly Naha-te, clearly already have energetic and meditative aspects, as well as practices that address these. Sanchin and Tensho are in fact hard forms of kiko, or qigong in Chinese. Kiko or qigong means 'energy work' or 'energy skill'. It is a Chinese form of yoga. Apart from being energy practices, Sanchin and Tensho, are also dynamic forms of meditation. And of course we start and end our classes with sitting meditation.

However, the understanding of these aspects within the Karate culture is not as deep and detailed as it is in some of the traditional yogic and meditative traditions from China, such as for example qigong and chan meditation [Japanese : zen], or neighbouring countries. Studying these can therefore be elucidating and supportive. Especially, I guess, if the system has historical relationships with our style, such as chan or zen meditation; the tendon transforming and marrow washing qigong systems, that are attributed to the founder of chan or zen Buddhism, Bodhidharma; or white crane qigong from Fujian. But for me, also Tibetan yogic and meditative practices have been elucidating.

But one doesn't really have to add anything to our system if one 'gets it', although some

qigong exercises maybe interesting and helpful in order to 'get it' at a deeper and more refined level. For me, for example, practicing white crane soft qigong helped me to get a better understanding of the 'ju' aspect of our style.

Even if it just makes us ask the right questions about how we do things in our own style, it is already valuable.

Can you please tell us about your KenKon Centre in the Netherlands?

KenKon is a centre for various activities around health, personal development and spirituality. The main activities we organize our self are Karate, qigong Tibetan yoga and meditation and Zen meditation, but there are also other groups that host ongoing classes – such as Aikido or Taijiquan – and seminars – such as System Centred Training, Psychology, Shiatsu, etc. Our own offerings are rooted in traditional East Asian disciplines, but there has always been an interest in the meeting and integration of East & West, old school & new school, body & psychology & spirituality, etc. That is the background of the subtitle: 'Integral Life & Training Centre'. In the last 15-plus years we have been very blessed with a big affordable building at the edge of town. As an organization it has always heavily relied on volunteer involvement and support, especially from the Karate group. I have often

received complements for atmosphere in the building and the community. I am glad that my students and I have been able to provide this for many others.

If you had to sum up martial arts mindset in one concept or ideal, what would it be?

Having a wakeful and respectful attitude towards life and others, that faces and embraces whatever comes on our path.

Goju-ryu is often a quite repetitive style. Do you have any advice for Dojo instructors and practitioners on how to retain 'Shoshin' or the beginners mind feeling.

That is an interesting and big question ...First of all I feel it is important to understand that when I – or anybody – gets bored, it is my failure to open up to more of what Karate is about and more of what I am. It has nothing to do with what is practiced and how often it is practiced.



transmission directly from Sensei Higaoinna, Sensei An'ichi Miyagi, Sensei Aragaki and their students.

In addition to the above one can of course make all kinds variations on the basic practices that will both inspire and challenge our students. Some instructors also like to use all kinds of gadgets to spice up their training. These can also offer new challenges, cut through boredom or catalyse the developments of specific skills. But 'spicing up' isn't the same as 'deepening in'. If we only 'spice up', we are just dispersing our energy and attention. 🙏





国際沖縄剛柔流空手道連盟
IOGKF INTERNATIONAL INC.

