



Karate Sports and its History

Bazarov Komiljon Imamnazarovich

Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute Academic Lyceum physical education teacher

Abstract: We know that karate, which has a long history, has received a lot of attention in the past. This article talks about the history of karate, its development, and its inclusion in the Olympic program.

Key words: World Karate Federation, Karate, History, Olympic games, kata, kumite.

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Karate is an old martial art that focuses on kicking, striking and defending using arms and legs. The martial art which has also transitioned into a combat sport originated during the time period of the Okinawa Kingdom (Ryukyu Kingdom) that was in prevalence between 1429 to 1879 AD.

History states that it originated in the island of Okinawa and was popularized by Samurais during the 17th century. The main reason for the sport coming into existence was the prohibition of Okinawa people, banning them from using weapons. As a result of this, they began developing a self-defence technique that came to be known as Karate.

The Okinawan martial art evolved rapidly during the 19th and 20th century, and began revolutionizing the 'self-defence technique' scene. It slowly spread into mainland Japan following the large scale migration of the Ryukyans, as they came in search of jobs in the country's central areas.

The name Karate is said to have originated based on the Chinese kanji. It was originally written as 'Tang Dynasty' hand. It then slowly semi-metamorphosed to an 'Empty Hand'. It basically meant martial art in China. The first time the word Karate was subject to documented use was in the year 1905. Someone who practises Karate is called a Karateka.

History of Karate: The Three K's of Karate

Kihon, Kata and Kumite are the three K's of Karate. Kihon refers to the basic fundamentals of the martial art, Karate. There is no Karate without Kihon. Only a mastery in Kihon would enable a practitioner to hone his skills further in Karate.

Kata is a solo form discipline. It is practised or choreographed alone. The origins of the same can be traced to China, and today it is practised in an 8×8 mat, and is also a part of the Olympics.

Kumite refers to Karate combat. It is the sparring discipline that involves two practitioners fighting it out in the 8×8 mat. Like Kata, Kumite is also a part of the Olympics. However, there is no Kumite without Kata. To put it in simple words, Kata forms the basis of Kumite.

Karate took shape as a sport during the 1940s. The first known instance of sparring using Karate techniques dates back to 1940 when a few karatekas were sent out from their training since they had learned the same during their time in Tokyo. It was only after the World Karate Federation was founded, the martial art began evolving as a popular combat sport.

The WKF was set up as the International Karate Union in the 1970s and later formed as the World Karate Federation in 1990. Since then the organization had been striving to make Karate an Olympic sport. Their efforts paid off as it finally made its debut in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. It has been a big hit.

In *Karate-Do Kyohan*, Funakoshi quoted from the Heart Sutra, which is prominent in Shingon Buddhism: "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form itself" (*shikizoku zekū kuzokuzeshiki*). He interpreted the "kara" of Karate-dō to mean "to purge oneself of selfish and evil thoughts ... for only with a clear mind and conscience can the practitioner understand the knowledge which he receives." Funakoshi believed that one should be "inwardly humble and outwardly gentle." Only by behaving humbly can one be open to Karate's many lessons. This is done by listening and being receptive to criticism. He considered courtesy of prime importance. He said that "Karate is properly applied only in those rare situations in which one really must either down another or be downed by him." Funakoshi did not consider it unusual for a devotee to use Karate in a real physical confrontation no more than perhaps once in a lifetime. He stated that Karate practitioners must "never be easily drawn into a fight." It is understood that one blow from a real expert could mean death. It is clear that those who misuse what they have learned bring dishonor upon themselves. He promoted the character trait of personal conviction. In "time of grave public crisis, one must have the courage ... to face a million and one opponents." He taught that indecisiveness is a weakness.

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