A monk once said, “Hundreds and thousands of leaves grow from one root”. Simply speaking, he was saying that even a giant tree with small branches and thousands of leaves comes from one seed. Without the seed no tree will grow. The giant tree depends for its growth on its root system.

I decided to have a chat with a giant tree. The following is the conversation between myself and the tree.

“Hello, Big Tree, how many birthdays have you celebrated?”

“I have no idea. There are so many annual rings in my body I get dizzy counting them!”

“Is that right! Do you remember when you were very small?”

“Yes, I remember eating delicious Nitron, Phosphoric Acid and Potassium, all the good stuff that helped me grow this big."

“Well, Great Tree, for martial arts, we have a teaching of the spirit of three hearts (Sanshin No Kata). This teaching is based on the saying that the spirit of three years old is with a man until he is a hundred years old. We recognize the importance of early childhood and treasure these important years, when one is unaware of ego, independence and consciousness.

This Sanshin No Kata (form of spirit of three hearts) is described in a section of secret teachings of the Gyo-kok-Ryu, which teaches beginners that we have to train ourselves with the spirit of a three year old, not forgetting the spirit even though they think they accomplish these techniques.”

“Wow, what is it, asks the Big Tree?”

“Well, I can demonstrate the Kata for you. This Kata represents the most important feeling as a martial artist. It is a very simple movement, something we do intrinsically and naturally. The basis of Sanshin No Kata is artistic but also very uncomplicated. Your body movement while doing this is quite different from the movements of Kihon Hapoo.

There are a total of 10 Katas: 5 Katas for the right side of the body and another 5 for the left. These 10 Katas are called the Shiokan No Kata (Kata of First Body) in Densho (Book of Teaching). The 5 Katas are classified as the 5 elements of Nature, that is Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Sky.

By training in these Katas, a student begins to recognize the 5 elements and the truth of Nature.”

Here you must refer to the photos that begin on page 3 as I demonstrate the Katas for my tree friend.

(After I have completed my demonstration my conversation with the tree resumes.)

“You are moving very naturally,” the tree whispers.

“That’s right, Answer. The good point of this Kata is to move naturally and not to make Kata (forms) intentionally. Every movement is very simple and flows from one form to another.”

“I see, every thing should be done simply and naturally. Many of us forget the important point of being simple and natural nowadays. I hear so much about lethal ashes, acid rain, and other air pollution, which is a result of people damaging Nature.”

“Sorry, friend Tree, that we have caused all these bad things. That is why I try to introduce Budo to as many people as possible so that we can preserve Nature. I want to make a bigger circle of Budo (friends of martial arts) who treasure Nature. Budo teaches us to flow with nature not against it.”

“If so, we trees can continue to supply you with more oxygen.”

“Thank you so much, I appreciate your support. There is a lot for me to do such as making people aware of their destructive action and stopping it so they become better people. My calling also...
enounter the archenemy of the big tree, the lightning. The taller the tree is the higher the chance of being attacked by the lightning.

"You have a point there, Tree."

"So some of the big trees grow sideways instead of growing taller. They still are pretty but they are so called, 'street smart' because they won't be targeted by the lightning nearly as often as the tall tree."

"The way of living for the tree and man could be similar," I reply thoughtfully.

"Hatsumi kun, I understand you are Ninja. You can go freely in the world, whereas I am rooted in the ground and have no liberty of movement."

"The truth is the same, Giant Tree. What is most important to man is his roots. One has to stand firmly on the ground being nurtured by its roots. The roots provide the truth which is most important to man. Unless we have roots we can't live a wholesome life."

"I don't understand what you are saying."

"In Eastern medicine, the liver and kidney are considered the key to one's health. If either one of the organs is not functioning properly, one tends to fall ill. In Budo, the key to the wholesome way is to have 'Kishin Kigen' (God's heart and God's eye), just like the healthy liver and kidney are the key to good health. So the Ninja has to have a heart of justice and use the right method to fight for justice against evil. The right method comes not only from your will but from some natural force, some may call it God. In order to catch or receive this right method one needs the roots because they work as either earth or antenna. Unless you gain the right method and know how to handle it properly, you won't be a Ninja."

A happy country, Japan ..... the land of the tree.

THE MESSAGE FROM THE BIG TREE

A cold wintry wind blows right through me and I wonder why I feel so cold inside.

Every leaf on the tree wanted to tell me something, feeling sorry for the change of heart by so many men.

For some reason, they leave without a word.

A cold wintry day, no leaf left on the tree, a bare tree standing heroically by itself.

"Aren't you cold, big tree, without your leaves?"

"Yes, but only if I am bare, can more sunshine fall on you."

The message from the big old tree.
SHOSHINSHA NO KATA
(Kata of First Body)

1. The "natural" stance (Shizen no Kamae) An erect standing position with both feet firmly and naturally on the ground.

2. Pull the right foot back and stretch the left hand as if to shake hands. The right hand is at your right hip in the form of Shito Ken (as if you are holding a dagger). This is the Shoshin no Kamae (posture of First Body)

3. Step in with your right foot, twisting your body. This position has the movement and looks like you are running forward (the weight is more on your right foot).

CHI NO KATA
(Kata of Earth)

4. Carefully watch the shape of the fingers of the right hand — the index, middle and ring fingers are supporting the thumb and little fingers to give a greater force. Hand is slightly cupped.

5. Open your body and thrust your right hand as you step forward and right (being aware of balance) with a weight shift to add great force to the strike.

Following pictures 1 through 3
Like Shoshinsha no Kata the Chi no Kata (Kata of Earth) is based upon the balance of spine, knee and ankle. You must swing and move from right to left as smoothly as possible from the basic position of Shoshin no Kamae keeping in mind not to lose your balance. You can add lots of variations to the Shoshin no Kata by using a sword or spear.

You will understand the truth of YARI NO TSUKI (Thrust of spear) clearly when you master the flow of Shoshinsha no Kata.

Please keep in mind that by understanding the balance, you will come closer to mastering the truth of these Katas. They will become a natural part of you as you give them life. (See four consecutive photos on the next page)
Sui no Kata
(Kata of Water)

Pull your right foot back from the Natural Stance (Shizen no Kamae) and hold that position as in 1 do in the photo above.

Bring your right hand in front of your face as if guarding your body, at the same time bending your left elbow and assume a posture of defense.

As you slide your right foot forward, measure and decide the target point of the opponent. In this case the target point is the left side of opponent's neck.

Open your fist and change your hand into a weapon. At that moment you are striking the opponent's neck. The full force of your right hand blow comes from your spine and knee.

Change the Natural Stance to the Shoshin no Kamae by pulling the right foot back.

Change your position as in #2 of Sui no Kata and lift your right foot.

At this point, bring your right hand up to your face and prepare to make the palm of your fist face down so that you can stab the dagger to the opponent.
Change your posture to the pre-attack position.

This Kata involves the opponent's attack with his right foot. The first stance is Shoshin no Kamae from your natural stance (Shizen no Kamae).

Place your right foot forward as the wind blows from your back. Movement is natural keeping in mind this Kata is Kaze (wind). You move as if blown by wind.

Step forward with your right foot and thrust the "dagger" of your right hand to the side of the opponent's neck in the Kano Kata. At that time your palm is facing down so the dagger points correctly. The name of the vital point at both sides of the neck is called Uko in Gyokku Ryu.

The opponent kicks his right foot and you change positions to Gedan no Kamae to avoid his right foot and at the same instant swing the left arm down and to the left to parry the attack.

Make a fist with the right hand (Migte Kento - right hand dagger), at the same time extending the thumb forward from the fist pointing at the target. Thrust the hand as if you are blowing a weapon to the target.

This is a side view of the position above. Make sure that your posture is in good balance.

You prepare to move forward in a manner as if you were being blown by a strong tail wind.

Kaze no Kata (Kata of Wind)

Kuu no Kata (Kata of Air)
From Shizen no Kamae change the posture to Shoshin no Kamae.

In order to avoid a kick by your opponent, empty your body. In other words, relax and do not tighten or tense your body.

I raise my right hand for balance and send a terrible kick forward to opponent.

Please note the change of posture in this case. The right knee is bent and the right hand is raised behind the head. Make sure the line from right hand to left foot is straight and the body is shaped like a bow.

The change of the body to forward or backward will be determined by the length of the opponent's leg and his strength.

As you lean back, thrust your foot forward like an arrow toward the opponent. (Remember in the prior move the heel is thrust forward with great power.) The toes act as a foot dagger (Sokushi Ken).

As you receive the kick, swinging your left hand downward, (Gedan Uke) you kick the opponent with a right heel kick. In these pictures I raise my right hand, avoiding the opponent's left hand, and my right thigh is pressed against my chest at the same time.

Henso Jutsu
Here are two more paintings of ancient disguises from my archives.

The disguise of a Katsu fish merchant. (Selling only the Katsu fish) During the Senkoku Jidai (the War period) when Hoojishi (of the Hoojo clan) battle boats sailed out to meet the enemy a Katsu fish was seen to come flying out of the water and the battle was won. This initiated a tradition that the Katsu fish be served at banquets with the "Winning Wine" to wish for everlasting victory before an army went into battle. During these banquets the Ninja, disguised as Katsu fish sellers, had a good chance to sneak into the enemies' quarters and accomplish their missions.

Saru, the Japanese word for "Monkey" is pronounced the same as the word for "leave" which fosters a Japanese proverb wishing for the "leaving" of all disasters and misfortunes. For this reason the people there liked to have a Monkey show near their houses to cause the departure of bad luck from their homes. Naturally, the Ninja saw this as one of the best disguises for getting close to enemies and their quarters. In such a disguise the showman could shoot poisonous darts at enemies while the monkey performed.