

## *The Gateway & Heart of Jitsu*

One of the most important of Japanese concepts is that of "Ki". Many articles have been written on this subject and everyone has their own individual interpretation. The concepts and philosophy of "Ki" are complex and can be very confusing, especially to beginners in the martial arts arena. Simply put, "Ki" is the breath of life, life spirit, center of one's existence both in the mental and physical connection to the universal force of energy. It's invisible, yet tangible, asleep, yet alert, passive yet focused. It's movement in flowing grace and beauty yet immovable in rigid strength. It's the *Yin* and *Yang* (Chinese) or *In* and *Yo* (Japanese), in unifying two opposites into one. It's freedom from thought yet freedom to think. It can be concentrated or dispersed and gives a pleasurable sense of inner peace, strength, power and calm. It's all of these things and more, yet to those unfamiliar and untrained, it's nothing more than mere mumbo jumbo.

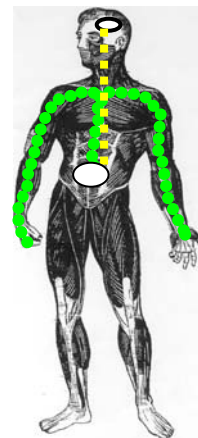
Explaining where "Ki" comes from and how it's put into motion is easy. Explaining or identifying exactly what it is ... is difficult to answer as it has many applications with different meanings to certain individuals. Like many mystical unknowns in our universe, "Ki" cannot be (initially) seen, heard, felt or touched. It must only (in the early stages of learning) be accepted that it is present and does exist! So again you may ask ... what is "Ki"? By accepting its existence (for the time being) and concentrating on where it comes from and how it is put into motion ... the knowledge of "Ki" will begin to become clear and understood. Hopefully, by the time you finish this article and with my interpretation of what it is and how it's applied, it will help you to better understand one of the hardest to learn concepts. My interpretations of *Ki*, is;

*"One's inner untapped energy developed to an outward flow of strength."*

Realize that "Ki" is something that everyone possesses but is unaware of its existence. It's an art in it's self that needs to be developed and continually cultured. It's something that cannot be learned over night or in a few quick lessons. It's a continuous process in learning and development, as you will never cease to learn and understand its potential. In time it will become natural without thought and can be turned on and off like a light switch. Jitsu is nothing without "Ki"! ***It's the final nail that closes the coffin for every technique.*** Without it, one must rely on physical strength alone. **For now, don't try to understand its depth, just understand where it comes from and how it's applied.**

### *Where does "Ki" come from?*

The source of this energy lies hidden at the base or foundation of our center of gravity and balance. If one were to become ridged, then having a rope tied about the mid section of the body and it hung from the ceiling, your balance from head to toe would be at the place known as the *Hara* or *Itten* (the one point), a few inches below the navel. At this point you will be parallel with the floor and at your center of gravity and balance. Standing upright this area of

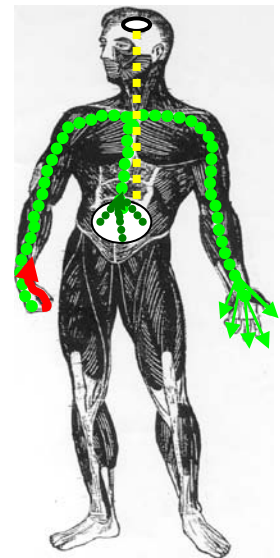


*Hara*, is the reservoir or holding tank for "Ki". *Think of this tank as water or steam under pressure!* Before explaining how "Ki" is put into motion, emphasis must be put on three important principles.

*Proper breathing:* One must breathe from the lower abdomen or diaphragm. Although the lungs are filled with oxygen, the chest must not expand. This is how most individuals breathe, especially as we grow older. The correct method is to expand the diaphragm and force the air up and out through the mouth, like a pump. It's like doing a bowel movement! Also, the correct method comes naturally to newborns. Watch them as they breathe ... the lower abdomen rises instead of the chest.

*Avenue of escape:* For "Ki" to effectively work, it must not be allowed to stay confined within the body. When picking up heavy objects or arm wrestling, most individuals (after taking in oxygen) hold their breath. You will note that the neck muscles expand ... the upper arms, chest and shoulders become extremely tight and the face swells and becomes flushed. "Ki" in this case has not been allowed to escape and bounces around inside the body like balls in a bingo machine. By exhaling through the mouth and forcing the diaphragm upward and in, the upper body (as described) is not as tight and "Ki" has an avenue of escape.

*Open hand:* Another important factor (as noted in green) is the outward flow of energy through the limbs of the arms and fingertips of both hands. By closing the hand(s) and making a tight fist (in red), the outward flow of energy is short-circuited and returned back into the body. Physical Strength is then required over inner strength and "Ki" is deprived and lost. Try the following experiment.



Have two people firmly grab each of your wrist and forearms with both of their hands and tell them to keep a strong grip no matter what you do. Then ask them without telling you, "**what do you think has more energy, focus or strength** (without hitting or striking), **an open hand or a closed fist**"? Start the experiment by going through a series of a closed fist, relaxing then into a very wide open hand then relaxing back into a closed fist. Do this several times at your own discretion going from one to the other. *As you did not tell them or plant a suggestion in their head prior to the experiment, they should prove to themselves what they believe it to be.* After you stop and they take their hands away, **repeat the question again as stated earlier.** Next, tell them to close their eyes, then ask (you can do this with as many people as you like), those that believe the fist has more energy, focus or strength ... raise your hand then have them open their eyes. By having the eyes closed, no one will be influenced by someone else. You will note ... if they believe the open hand has more energy, focus and strength ... their hands will remain at their sides. You can also ask the question another way ... raise your hand if you feel the open hand is more effective. In either case, this experiment proves to the individuals over 95% of the time that the open hand does have more focus and energy, **and this is the Key to "Ki"!** By referring to the figure above, we can now begin to put all principles into practical application.

## *Putting "Ki" into motion!*

Now that we know the location and source (water or steam under pressure) of "Ki", the basic breathing and escape routes required, the next process is putting it altogether by following the below five principles.

- 1) *Think of Hara:* As this is the reservoir or holding tank location, picture in your mind that this pressure ... will, can or needs to be released at your command.
- 2) *Spin the source:* Continue to think and picture in your mind that this holding tank is like a washing machine on spin cycle. As it spins faster, the water is being forced outward by centrifugal force from the hara to and through your limbs of the arms like a fire hose.
- 3) *Reach outward:* Open the hands and stretch the fingers as wide as possible (cock both thumbs inward as well as both hands) and think ... about reaching into infinity. Note: The arms and hands may extend in any direction.

Pointing downward, think about reaching the center core of the earth. Pointing straight out, think about reaching around the world and choking yourself from behind. Pointing up, try to touch the most distant star. In each case, picture this centrifugal force or energy expanding from the hara through the limbs and out through the fingertips with great pressure, force and focus.

- 4) *Breathe the abdomen:* There are several breathing options and techniques. Quick intake and release, moderate and slow with variations of slow intake and quick release etc ... For now, take a two count oxygen intake using the diaphragm and hold for four counts. Then exhale for eight counts, concentrating on the above three principles.
- 5) *Relax the upper:* The energy flow must be smooth and free to escape from the hara directly to the fingertips as shown on the figure in green. The shoulders and neck must stay relaxed. You should be able to do the eight count exhale out loud in your normal voice. Should you not and your upper body becomes tight ... "Ki" has been lost!

**NOTE:** Of all the five principles above, relaxing is the most difficult. Do not get discouraged as this is not easy and does take considerable time to develop. In time with constant practice, it will become a natural part of you without thought or hesitation. **Following is a good training exercise that must be practiced often.**

1. Hold out your arm at approx a 130-degree angle with a closed tight fist. Have someone interlock your arm and bend it towards your upper arm. Forget all about the five principles and simply hold back your partner's force of direction. You will note that it's difficult and your biceps and triceps are very hard as well as your shoulders and neck. "Ki" or the pressure has not been allowed to escape and the molecules of steam are bouncing around in your upper body just as they were when contained at the hara. Resisting as best you can your neck expands like a Cobra and you eventually lose.
2. Doing the same exercise over, but opening your hand and fingers then concentrating and applying the five principles, its now difficult for your partner to bend your arm. You will note this time that your upper body is relaxed. Of special note, your biceps and triceps will become very loose and relaxed as the forearm, wrist and becomes expanded and hard. "Ki" is now working for you. With time, you will be able to do this with both arms and at the same time, as well as all techniques will become powerful and smooth without thought.

**Note:** Remember the key words: *Think-Spin-Reach-Breathe* and *Relax!*

**Y**ou will also discover too that "Ki" will become a part of your everyday life and surrounding. With adrenaline flowing, you will become instantly alert and ready in unfamiliar situations. While asleep and hearing an unfamiliar sound, I'm immediately awake and alert like a watchdog. When I realize what the sound is, I'm back asleep. *In the beginning page of this article I mentioned invisible, asleep and passive, yet tangible, alert and focused ...this is "Ki" developed and is your personal friend and protector. Learn it well!*



尚  
武  
道

In Budo,

Robert Morton  
Kaicho

*Shobudo Bujitsu Kai*