



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone! Thank you and welcome. This is whistlekick Martial Arts Radio episode 378. And today our guest is Master Ratinder Ahuja. My name is Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host. I'm the founder here at whistlekick and I love martial arts. All sorts of martial arts especially traditional martial arts and that's what this show is all about. That's actually what whistlekick is all about. And if you want to check out whistlekick.com, don't forget to use the code `podcast15` gets you 15% off and you can find the show notes for this and every other episode, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We bring this show to you twice a week, all for free and we've been doing it for nearly 4 years. Wow. It is amazing to think that we are knocking on episode 400. Blows me away. Now today's guest was a referral. A recommendation if you will from someone way back episode 82, Mr. Michael Rowe and he reached out and said you know, this is the guy you should talk to and when I have a great conversation with a guest and then later on they say this is someone you should talk to, I pretty much green light them and say "yeah, let's do it! Let's get them on the show." And that's what we do. Master Ahuja and I share some things in common besides martial arts. We talk about those a little bit, but we talk about a lot of things. We talk about his martial arts journey which as much as it's similar to (01:26). It's unique and we dig in some new territory. Things that we really haven't talked about before on the show. So I really enjoyed that. So I'm going to step back now and welcome him to the show. Master Ahuja, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

Ratinder Ahuja:



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Thank you for having me. I'm glad to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm glad to have you here. You know, I don't know where you are. It's a cold day. I woke up to -1 degree this morning here in (01:53). It's not a day to be outside, that's for sure.

Ratinder Ahuja:

So normally, I reside in Southern California, near San Jose actually. But this week, I happen to be in India. I was on a business trip to Asia. Been to Japan, Indonesia and now India. And I'll be returning this weekend.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's quite a trip. Well, hopefully that's not just a couple of days. Hopefully that's a longer trip. Otherwise it's all on airplanes.

Ratinder Ahuja:

True it's been about 2-week trip.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. Alright. And are these trips related to you said for work. Is work martial arts, or is work something else?

Ratinder Ahuja:

No. Work is actually I'm a CEO for a company called Shield Networks and we specialize in cloud security. I'm a computer engineer by training so that's what (02:57).

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. Alright. And you know I thought I'd seen that as we were scheduling things, your email address it rang a bell I was an IT for a number of years I have a degree in Computer Science so yeah, I've heard of you. Cool. Well, I'm sure that where you are in India right now is far warmer than what we have going on here and I'm sure anywhere in California is warmer than what we have going on here right now.

Ratinder Ahuja:



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Yes. Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But of course, we can talk about the weather and bore all of the listeners cause we're not here to talk about the weather. We're here to talk about martial arts. And I'm sure we're going to talk about a lot of stuff as martial arts relates to your life and all the wonderful things that it's brought you, but we've got to go back all the way to day 1, and how did you find martial arts?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Yeah. So let's go all the way back to when i was probably in like 8th grade or so. Uncle of mine, he had a book on karate and it was just lying around and managed to pick it up and it was just fascinating and it was one of those practice yourself kind of books with pictures in there and you go step by step. It was organized by belt. So i had a friend of mine and I said "Hey let's practice karate". This is in India. This is long time ago. There weren't as many martial arts schools throughout India that time. So anyway, we got a tailor, and we said "make us a dress that looks like this." We got our own first gi and then we got to wear and we said "make us a white belt." So we put together basically a piece of cloth and said you know, "how is this?", and both of us would start practicing and I would go through all the form and strikes and we actually started testing each other, and we graduated through this book. We went down all the way to a brown belt so that was fun (05:13).

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, there is a different element in here than we usually hear on the story. We often hear from people who didn't have access or resources or for whatever reason, they didn't have access to what we would think of as a traditional martial arts education. You know, going to a class, someone who's been doing it for a while shows you what's going on. And so we hear from people who find a book or they check out a book from the library or something and they went through it themselves. But here, you went through it with someone else. And I'm curious because now you've been training a long time. You've got a lot of contacts for understanding what most of us would consider a "proper martial arts education" to be, so your able to compare and contrast. What was it like? Were you getting any of it correct?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Portions of it. I was able to master the basic hit-throw for example. I could get a good roll and I learned all these concepts. The basic fall and I was so surprised it's all from that book. With a willing practitioner, you could easily execute some of the throws and the falls and that was really fun. Fast forward, I went to star in engineer school in India and I still kept practicing on my own when everybody was gone. And then I had a chance to find another friend and say "let me train you few things" and there's a one of those shows coming up in college. When in college you can do this variety show we said



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

"let's put our name up for a judo demonstration", I can't (07:03). So I would demonstrate some throws and falls. That was my second student. I taught him and we did the show and it was fabulous because those days, martial arts in India at least wasn't as formalized, there weren't at the schools so people were really surprised to see that into college.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's really cool and this is one of those points where I find myself feeling a little bit defensive because we have folks who maybe listening out there and saying that old refrain "you can't learn martial arts from a book." But here is an example of you doing what you could with what you had. And in inspiring enough interests, I'm sure we're going to get to this at some point you ended up in again that more traditional than I'm using air quotes martial arts experience. Whereas if those books hadn't existed, if you hadn't had that opportunity, if you hadn't had that training partner, maybe you would've found something else.

Ratinder Ahuja:

That is correct. I think that book, sometimes I just call it karmic destiny and just to found that book and started on this path, and kept me going. And yes you're right: eventually I finished my bachelor's in electronics in India and I ended up in Iowa so (08:37) State University for my master's doctorate in computer engineering and that's where they have formal martial arts program. Grand Master Park ran a program there teaching taekwondo, aikido, and judo. By this time, I had some practice with judo, so it was like falling and throwing us. It was painful a times, and I try to keep up. Aikido have all these locks and joints and it's like "Oh man, this is going to hurt my wrist so i tried a different program, so I picked taekwondo. That's the start of the journey.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You chose taekwondo because it best dovetailed with your career. I can see the importance in that, absolutely. There are people who chose taekwondo for leg reasons. There are people who choose something other than taekwondo for leg reasons. One of the beauties of martial arts I see it is because there are so many different ways of approaching this broader overarching idea of martial arts. You can find things that work within usually when we are talking about physical limitations but you're talking about a physical priority

Ratinder Ahuja:

True. This was 1986, fall of 1986 is going to ended up in Iowa and right away, I found master Park and I said "sign me up", and it was just wonderful so I started taekwondo, but this time I had my home training so i was fairly (10.34) and throughout college I did away with the training and stuff so it's really



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

fair then I did yoga, I was pretty limber. This was fun. I was flexible, I was coordinated, I was fairly athletic and I zip through all them to my black belt in one year so that was fun.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now a few questions about that transition and it really I think it is a transition because you had that time training on your own, training self-directed, I think we may be able to call it home school. I think home school martial arts. Apparently, that's a thing. I haven't considered it as a thing. But, in that year, from joining to earning your first degree black belt, what did you notice of your experience vs the experience of others? How much did you have to unlearn? And how much was spot on? How much was what you expected and how much was really different?

Ratinder Ahuja:

What helped me again was the coordination of the flexibility and the basic physics, the biophysics of how the body works and how do you condition yourself. So that was all spot on. And of course the hitting techniques, and the hand techniques, and the forms, they were all brand new. But I started as white belt so we had sufficient time and training and rigorous practice and that part was classical, fairly traditional grand master. He ran a school to very traditional. So I love it. And as you know, many hundreds of students come in as a white belt and probably 1/1000 probably gets it to the black belt. And I understand I experienced lots and lots students would join and then, you know students come and go, graduate, various reasons. So I really joined the process throughout that time. We have the competitions and they bring the (12:45) so we drove around Iowa, and went to lot of small decent schools all over the state. So that was fun, made a lot of friends in the state including my (13:01).

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah and of course before we started recording, we talked about how this whole conversation is happening because of Mr. Rowan, his kindness in suggesting you. So, just want to give a shout out because a lot of the guest that I get the opportunity to talk to is because someone who's been on the show had a good experience and wants to put somebody else forward so if any of you out there listening, whether you've been on the show, or you've been listening for a while, and you know someone would be a great guest, don't hesitate to reach out. There's a form over on the website and the first time I mentioned the website whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. So there you are, you are travelling around Iowa, I got to say that's a sentence I don't think I've ever heard before. When I hear people talk about Iowa, they usually talk about feeling isolated. Was there a culture shock for you? Or was the foundation that you had in martial arts, the family you had in martial arts enough?

Ratinder Ahuja:



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I think it was. You're right it was a family feeling and it was easy for me when I'm all the way from India, that's the first time ever abroad and it was a (14:20) feeling so, I loved it, made a lot of friends, drove around in Iowa so it was great.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now at some point, you made it out of Iowa. I kind of want to know about that transition because here's my guess: my guess is that because this school, this master, this family that you developed around martial arts in Iowa because that was your first time and again I don't mean, I hope this isn't coming through in any kind of critical way but in this more traditional, this more formalized martial arts environment, I'm going to that, that meant a lot to you. That that was a pretty big portion of your life. Am I right there?

Ratinder Ahuja:

It was. Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You left that at some point so that must have been difficult and for a really good reason.

Ratinder Ahuja:

Certainly. It was a August '89 and there came a time where I was pretty much down with my doctoral course work, and this one week I had to present what is called a prelim- present the idea that you are working on. The same week, I had a job interview out in San Jose and the same week I had the final black belt test. All of these things happened, I passed my prelim, I got the job (15:59), came back and finished my black belt test and by the end of the week, all three things came into positive conclusion. I got the job. pass the prelim, got black belt and then I basically said, "well it's time for me to head west", start my career, and still I like to write my dissertation it's kind of a strange period where everything was done except most students would stay and write the dissertation and I decide I could actually finish off that quality search, while I had my own job. So I decided to move to California and that's why I left Iowa.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's a pretty big weekend however you want to look at that frame of time. That's a lot of big stuff all at once.

Ratinder Ahuja:



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Yeah. I still remember I call us out every time I got the chance. Things happen for a reason and the cycle probably concluded and its time for me to move on and I got everything I need to get there and started to begin the new chapter.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You've mentioned karma a couple of times. Is that a, I want to choose my words carefully, I don't want to be offensive or anything. I don't want to assume, but is that part of your spiritual beliefs?

Ratinder Ahuja:

I think so. Yeah. I think I do believe in the concept of your actions and the subsequent reactions. So it's do good, and do good for your mind and body, do good for others, for humanity. Help and teach as many people as you can so all those do come back with positive and negative reactions so that's why I got to brought that concept up.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure. And I'm wondering if those core beliefs, creep into the way you see martial arts.

Ratinder Ahuja:

Yes. So martial arts for me to slowly summarize it in this fashion. It's to create alignment between your mind, body and soul. So physical exercise, if you just do that in isolation, it's going to take you off physically. And if you do a lot of meditation, practices, that will help you specially if you're in certain field of work that require you to do a lot of analytical thinking, lots of mental aspects, I think overtime, if you just do one of those, that becomes a bottle in a sense like it will reach a point where you can't do anymore, you can't jump any higher, you cannot lift so much weight. Then you need the other 2 aspects to be equally strong and balance it so it can progress in all those 3 places, all those 3 parts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Makes sense. So here you are. You've left this life in Iowa behind. You're in, you said San Jose?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Correct

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Okay so you're in San Jose, California. New job. At some point, not too far into the future, I expect you finish your dissertation. That was all done. You've closed up in a sense your taekwondo training in Iowa. Your first school. And what does California hold for you?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Yeah. So ended up in California and of course I had a job, and the first thing I did was try to find a taekwondo school. So I happened to find one close to where I work. And it was (20:10) Ernie Reyes' school ninja turtle franchise. He was one of the masters who one of the ninja turtles, this was a long time ago. So he had a series of schools they called east west taekwondo. And it just happened to be conveniently close to work and I signed up there and i did my training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. Did you know Master Reyes by name at that point or was that just luck?

Ratinder Ahuja:

No just coincidence. Just pure coincidence that one of his is in that region.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Because that's a name that I grew up with in very high regard. There's a short list of folks who I've really been wanting to bring on the show that I have not been able to yet. I mean absolutely. What did your training there looked like compared to what you were doing before?

Ratinder Ahuja:

So yeah. Good thing with taekwondo is it's fairly standardized no matter where you go. You do have the same principle and the same set of forms so in a way it was pretty straight forward. I came out as a first degree black belt and entered it and continued my training. Same regimen but 5-7 less taekwondo time Monday to Friday so I continued with that schedule and.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Even the same days and times? That's funny.

Ratinder Ahuja:

So that was one. Then great set of instructors there, great masters. Taekwondo students are, we are going up against classes and many of them are wearing white belt on to black belt so there are a lot of



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

family type of relationships so I'm merged right in and I did my training and enjoyed it as usual. We were just talking about daily life and then eventually, now this was in San Jose, I changed jobs, so this is '89 onward and over the next few years, I changed a few jobs and I went all the way up to San Francisco and found another taekwondo school there. This was by another very traditional grand master. He was probably one of the first grand masters to come out to the area and establish some taekwondo schools and I trained with him for a while. Then I ended up in the Silicon Mountainview which is (23:15) in San Francisco. This is now 1995 or '94-time frame and this is where I met my current grand master, Master Kim. Then I started working up for him. This is now I had enough time stability, I wasn't changing jobs as much and I was in one place. So this is where I got the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th degree black belts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So that's quite the journey and I think if we are honest, it's a bit of an unlikely journey. Major life changes are a significant. There is point in time when people tend to lose side of martial arts. Not everyone who relocates halfway across the country especially for a job is going to say "one of the first things I did is I went out and found a new martial art school". But you did. That was such a priority for you. Why?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Yeah, and every time I had to change jobs and go to different cities, all of the bay area here, that was get a new job, find a new apartment and immediately after that you go find my new taekwondo school. So it was just discipline that's ingrain into me and I would feel that it's not complete. I go to the gym, I do workouts, I do running, but for some reason, without those martial arts training, it would not be complete. Picture wouldn't be complete. So there's something in me that's just ingrained into me for the good effect. I just have to do it and that goes on to this day.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right on. Alright. So there's our first question. We just did a lot of time digging through getting some context for who you are and going on a lot of, and wondering side journeys, and those are always my favorites. But now, I'd like to take a step back and ask you some more specific questions. Let's see where these take us. And my first one, my favorite one that I ask people, when you consider your time as a martial artist, certainly you have a lot of stories, but if I was to ask you for your favorite story from your time training, what would that be?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Yeah. I'll recount 2 stories if that's okay? They are both part of the training but very diverse experiences. Right next to my taekwondo school in grand master Kim, there was a small qigong school. And for years, I'll just walk by that, and walk by that, and I would look at that and say "hmm,



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

there's something here". Then one day I decided to, this is about 1999 now, I decided to peak in and ask the master there "hey, so I want to learn qigong. what is qigong? I've heard so much about it so I want to sign up. Anyway, I signed up and I started to supplement very hard physical aspects of taekwondo with a more unique style martial arts. And again, I think somehow, going back to karma concept because by this time I was also studying about preparing for this black belt test. You also have to kind of go back and review a philosophy of things and you dug your nose with these books on taekwondo and martial arts and came into the conclusion that qigong at least in the eastern side became the root of the martial arts where from where many systems emerged. And I was a little bit, qigong as it came into China was actually births in Tibet by South Indian Buddhist monk called (27:42). So he ends up drawing all the little, from the end of South India all the way up modern most part of India to teach Buddhism. And he finds out that people are very weak and life is very tough there and they need more nourishment and practices so he takes portion of Hindu yoga and transform the system, literally translate it as (28:08) transformation exercises which becomes the root of qigong. Qigong then further develops all the eastern martial arts. So anyway, I started making my hard style of taekwondo with the softest style of qigong and in qigong, I learned things like standing meditation and breathing techniques and many of these inner techniques. And one of those is called the dark route training. My qigong master and I, found this 1 school up in Chiang Mai in Thailand where a qigong grand master runs a school and he offers this program for the dark route training. You stay in darkness for 2 weeks. And he's got this specially designed rooms and he colors them and you can't see your hand in front of you. You have your own room and bath, so it's like a 5-star cave. So you stay in there for 2 weeks. Ideally it's routed on some of the ancient eastern practices which state that the brain has these 3 keys: Pituitary gland, hypothalamus, and... these 3 glands are in your brain, they control your entire endocrine system. And overtime these pacifies because what if I don't need any more growth hormone in the body so they stop working. And the idea behind this dark room training is to cut off the visual stimulation so the pituitary gland really can (29:48) in your body. So that's the theory behind it. But nonetheless, I was just intrigued by the whole thing and decided to do it and it was a great experience. That was a little side story but I thought that was a great experience in my martial arts journey.

Jeremy Lesniak:

A 5-star cave. I mean, that's a pretty unique description.

Ratinder Ahuja:

If it wasn't that, you'll be living in a real cave (30:16) closed off and I don't know how the ancient times, how did the dark room practice is in the ancient times. But this was fun.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Fun is not the word I think I would've describe to that. Can you tell us a little more?



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Ratinder Ahuja:

Certainly. The whole point of this qigong and meditation practice is to quieting the mind. The mind is in constant chatter and commencing from having clarity of thought and vision. So the breathing techniques, there's a million meditation techniques and many of them try to align your mind, to quieting the mind so you'll have a clear thinking. Also you have a derive reactions, intuitive reactions and things like that. So anyway, one of the purpose of the darkroom training is also to achieve, quieting the mind, the non-stop chatter that happens with the mind. So what happens is you get in there in the dark room. There is no more information coming in. There is no more text messages, no internet, nothing. And then by the third day your mind is down thinking about anything that needs to be thought of. Now you're just totally relaxed and during the day time in this school, they have meditation techniques and so forth. But you're completely relaxed. There's nothing disturbing you anymore. You are not worried about stock market crashing. So you just calm down and calm down, and lots of people have bizarre experience that they have seen visions and all I saw was darkness. I can't see any of those visions but I did enjoy it a lot. And by the time I came out, you come out at night and they give you dark classes to at night because you haven't seen any light for the last 2 weeks. Then I come out and I have an opportunity to start my next company so while martial arts training is going on, I'm also putting my doctorate reviews and I started my first company got to (32:34) systems, that going to a dark room training, come out, and start my second company, so that's going on as well while doing my taekwondo practice. So this was a unique experience on what I call the practice that supplements my taekwondo training. And on the taekwondo's side, grand master Kim would arrange these really interesting tests. So as far as 2nd degree black belt test, I remember he took us to the beach and pretend "this is going to be a fun day, we'll spend some time with the beach", then goes makes us walk like 10km / 10miles back and forth up and down the beach. And your feet have a lot of wound and if you didn't have the discipline that you have, it's terrible. Lesson was, you guys are martial artists. You should always be ready, all the time. How can you just eat up (33:35) knowing that's going to slow you down so you need to think like warriors. Think like being in that state of mind, every time, all the time. So he would treat us like that. Then fast forward to my 6th degree black belt test, this time he said "okay we'll do a thousand round house kicks" and we were all shocked we will do thousand round house kicks. Then he made us do a thousand round house kicks so that was fun. His point was that your mind, body and spirit will align. You'll surprise yourself. Just let go and focus on the task at hand and what we found out was, this time we were 6th degree black belt, countless many times and he says "reason you get tired and reason you have injuries is because portion to the body is misaligned with other portion of the body. So you're not trying or supporting enough that's why you're (34:42) and he says "just let go. Just go with the flow and just keep on going". And that was a really important lesson for many of us, even that elated within to our training. How to just quieting them training, then go over the flow without injuring yourself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. Some pretty good stuff there. Now before I ask you to go a little bit deeper on that, it sounded like you might have been headed in to a 2nd story, a 2nd anecdote that I cut you off?



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Ratinder Ahuja:

No, just mixing up those 2 anecdotes. The softer side of being in darkness for 2 weeks and not doing anything, and the 2nd one being this extremely intense training at the beach and the thousand test. And there were lessons in all of them.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. I just wanted to make sure I wasn't wrangling you back in when I didn't actually want to. So there's a lot there. There's a lot of contrast there. We've certainly had quite a few guest on the show who have started in some kind of "hard style and spent some time training in something a little softer". However, you choose to define those terms and I think that there is something pretty special. And I say this is someone who has only dabbled in qigong, taichi, etc. There's something pretty special when you can spend time with both. And you just talked about how, at least my take away was one enhances the other.

Ratinder Ahuja:

It is. And if you just do one, my personal feeling is that you don't progress. I've seen people that's only do taichi or the softer styles, the water style we call them and not the hardest styles. And you can see that the physical aspects are lacking. And then you see that people that have done the hard styles for long time and you see the injuries. And you see some misalignment of the body that was kept in all the years because training was really hard. So I think that blend is (37:09) I think it used to be that way. But overtime schools have become more isolated. You study taekwondo, you study judo and you study grappling or you study the meditate ways but I think the intention was these were all be practiced together.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm just pausing to think about where we're going to go next. We've had a chance to hear from you about some of the wonderful martial artist, martial arts instructor that you've had the chance to train with, but if there was someone that you could add, someone that you hadn't had the chance to train with, and let's say, anywhere in the world and even anywhere in time, who would you want to train with?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Now that you added anywhere with the time concept, perhaps I would like to go learn from Adi Darma the father of all martial arts and understand his theories and philosophies and clearly he was extremely talented in many, many ways. And how he formulated and address the system to impart knowledge to people who have absolutely no training at all. And yet he felt that without that training, they would not



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

proceed in their spiritual journey. Like he was practicing Buddhism. But then he paused and actually said "no, I must teach you these transformation techniques so you can live long enough and be healthy enough to actually make past the progress on your special paths because those journeys are even longer and it will take many, many more years. So he invented a new system based on his knowledge background.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't know if we'd had that answer before, it's hard for me to remember. Some of them are easy. Like Bruce Lee is easy to say or Oyama or Furukoshi or General Choi, you know these are easy answers for me to remember but Adi Darma. We don't know if we've had that, you might be the first.

Ratinder Ahuja:

It will take you back 2500 years. But you said it could be anywhere in time.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I did and that's why I like asking that question that way because I think it maybe even more so than a lot of the other questions that I ask gets to the heart of who someone is as a martial artist. And I think if we take that answer that you just gave and your reasoning, I think that makes a pretty good summary of everything else that we've heard from you so far today. Would you agree?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Yes. It sort of brings together the ends of the mind, the good reasoning and trying to understand why and bring it back to a point where it says this is where it started, and the reason why it started. and perhaps, that's a good time to go back and observe.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Now one of the things we haven't heard you mention and is also while not completely unique is rare, is uncommon for a guest who started in taekwondo, we haven't heard from you about competition?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Ah, certainly.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Was competition something that you engaged in?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Oh yeah. That was the point of us trying to when I was driving, doing journeys around Iowa. So those were competitions and have time to spare and I was getting my silver and gold and forms, and it was all fun. In the end master were pretty much all those journeys together. That's why we kept in touch. Then when I came to California, then I did some initial, at Stanford, they would have a standard competition, we'll go there and then I've finally went on the (41:39) side and then we get an opportunity, I'll referee or judge.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. Now have you, sometimes as people progress, as they spend more time in martial arts, their view on competition can change. As someone starts to spend more time in as you call them the water arts, their views on competitions can shift a little bit. Does that happen to you?

Ratinder Ahuja:

No, because I think competitions which is picking in to the hard style and the softer styles, you're only competing with yourself, or you're competing with the environment. But in harder styles you're competing with not only yourself and the environment but also an opponent. I think it's incredibly important, it's truly you have to do those regularly, that's how you improve in those scales. And it helps your life as well because in life, you will always have competition with the environment, you'll have competition at work, you'll have to be sparring, competing other companies. So understanding the competitive process but more importantly, I think in the end it was back to the root of things, the classic art of war which says "you can only exploit an opportunity that the environment provides you". And having that understanding when you're sparring with what my philosophy says, I'm not going to be planning the attack, I'm going to consider my resources, and look for that one opening, that one opportunity that I can take advantage of. And that would be the most logical thing to do so I was telling the art of war forever. And you can study more translations, you can study the (43:41) translations, and eventually I found the system who actually translates them in to more practical terms and he's got translations or adaptations of the art of war for martial artist, you got the adaptations of that for people in the industry, for the executives, for sales people. So big set of learning, but competition is very actually get to apply some of those principles. So it's incredibly important that students do compete but I think you could, even more important is somebody for competitors to learn the concepts of competition. How do you actually compete? What results in successful outcome? That's more important. And I think that many times, that is probably not taught, and you focus on these physical aspect of things. So leave psychology behind competition, psychology of the competitors themselves, how the environment affects you, when do you move forward, or when do you just hold positions. So all of them are very well explained in the art of war. It just has to be interpreted.



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Makes sense. We're seeing a lot of cohesion, a lot of, my words aren't firing away I want them today. We're seeing a pretty steady path and what I'm curious now, we don't usually do this but I kind of like to step away from the martial arts stuff because I'm interested in you as a business person because I suspect that there is something in there as well that relates back to what we've been hearing from you as a martial artist. Can you tell us how you got involved ShieldX. Did you start the company?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Yes I did. This is my 5th start up. So I finished my doctorate, came out in to the bay area, and intuitively and all of what teaches you this formally and the basic concept is that there is a shift in the trends. So something changes in the environment, and we found these trends are mega trends like using the internet browser when we first came along. And this fundamentally changes how things about. So as a martial artist in the art of war, they would say when these trends occur, when these big trends change, it is your duty to take advantage of those trends shift in trend and use that opportunity to improve your position. So it teaches strategy and there's lots of confusing concepts and strategy but I do want to think it is one of the best books to talk about strategy. And the fundamental thing I learned was that strategy is a process to systematically improve your position. So if you go over that mindset, then you can apply it now to everything. So in my business world, in my technical career, so what I sort of learned and hold over the years of saying when the fundamental shift happens in the tech world, how does it impact markets and what can I do about it? And then the rest is once you say "okay hey, internet use is going to rule", this is the opportunity that it presents and then establishing the vision and the mission, the leadership, the organization, the process. And if you look at that the (47:34)

part of things, and it looks like a taekwondo class. You have master whose put structure and everything and organizing things and making people making the same traction. That training intuitively, I think has helped me all the years to do a 1st start up back in '94 which was quite the business systems then I started my 2nd start up right when I came out of the dark room. And I got acquired by a company called Extreme Networks, and then I started my 3rd start up, in the security business then I got acquired by McAfee, then I start it up with my friends and I were running and that started ShieldX in 2015 to address cloud security and cloud usage and became more prevalent. So yeah, this goes back to those concepts of art of war and strategy, and structure, and mission, and creating organizations, and doing the actions to move the organization forward itself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now here's a question that I don't even care if the folks listening find interests in this. I do because here is something we have in common of course is martial arts and entrepreneurship. What similarities do you see between martial arts training and starting a company?



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Ratinder Ahuja:

Excellent. So one is going towards the roots of martial arts and the concept of the competition then some of these concepts we've talked about around how do you exploit an opportunity when you are competing with somebody? When do you know it is the right time to execute a certain maneuver? And it's dictated by what your opponent has done, what opening had to create it. So in the entrepreneurship world, you are trying to take advantage and be a first mover because of the shift that has happened that has opened up an opportunity. And you have to be decisive. You have to take that action, you have to have the years of training behind you to execute that one kick, or to start this new start up. So all of it comes together. Now this is one of course, it's a longer run, longer than a 200 round. But all the things that trained you to excel in that period, structure, the organization, the discipline, so those concepts are very same you have to do in the entrepreneur world as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good stuff. Alright, shifting gears. So I've had a lot of fun here today we've talked about a lot of different stuff. We've gone on some interesting tangents. Certainly some things that we haven't heard from guest before 370 whatever episodes. That's not something that I get to say too often. So I want to thank you for that.

Ratinder Ahuja:

I enjoyed it. Thank you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's kind of shift gears, in a sense. If people want to get hold of you, if they want to learn more about you, maybe they want to learn more about this company or other companies that you've started, as who you are as a person, where do they find that information?

Ratinder Ahuja:

They can just google my name Ratinder Ahuja. It will pop out a number of website of course, company website, my link and profile, very easy to use that I've done, so lot of stuff come up if you google my first and last name Ratinder Ahuja.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. And most certainly link from some of that stuff over on the show notes for this episode right? Okay. Well, I appreciate you being here and there are 2 things I kind of want you to leave the audience with before you go today. The 1st one, we've talked about the present, we've talked about



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

the past, we haven't yet talked about the future. So when you look out over the next 6, 12 months, look out as far as you want to, what do you see ahead of you as a martial artist.

Ratinder Ahuja:

As a martial artist, I see the continuous learning and a path of continuous improvement, I still practice. We have my grand master Kim actually retired. Time is going by so couple of us students, we started a small school, it was mainly to train ourselves, not to be a school but then a few other kids came along and all of a sudden there's a handful of students that work out with us so we continued to practice, to improve. In fact, my other friend, who was part of the original school with grand master Kim, runs this studio now. So he's having a lot of fun and initially taught little course at google as well in Mountain View California. So I continue the journey, I continue on path of self-improvement and continuous learning. Now there's medium like yours, mediums like you tube and there's a lot of places to get ideas and all of this looking forward and saying what can it bring to all the students in class so we continue to experiment and improve.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great stuff. And then the last thing I'll ask you for today: What parting words would you give to the folks listening?

Ratinder Ahuja:

Yes. I think what I would tell people is, follow a path that you can be willing to sacrifice on. So overtime, nobody can force you to do anything. You can't even force yourself to do anything. But if you truly enjoy something and you were able to sacrifice your time and energy on that path, then it becomes a lot of fun. So that's what I always do, lot of people asking me saying "what should I do? who should I become when I grow up?" I always say "pick something that you would be willing to sacrifice for and then it becomes fun. It is easy because this is what you want.

Jeremy Lesniak:

One of the hallmarks of this show is the belief that martial arts make your life better. And we certainly heard a lot of that from our guest today. Talking about business, talking about relocating, talking about the difficulties of living in new places, new countries, pursuing education, and every step it seemed that master Ahuja was more comfortable because of the foundation he had in martial arts. And I don't think it's a coincidence that that benefit of martial arts came from someone who made sure they had a place to train wherever they went. Thank you, sir sharing your story today. I really appreciate it, our conversation and your time. Don't forget head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com for show notes with photos and other episodes and bunch of other great content. Check it out. Don't forget whistlekick.com, use the podcast15 to save 15%. We even have a martial arts radio shirt. I don't know



Episode 378 – Master Ratinder Ahuja | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

that I've ever mentioned that. There's so much stuff over there I forget what we have. If you value the show, help us out, make a purchase, share an episode, leave us a review somewhere. We appreciate you and hopefully you appreciate us. If you want to find us on social media, we are @whistlekick on facebook, twitter, instagram and you tube, and you can email me directly jeremy@whistlekick.com. That's all I've got for you today. Until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.