



Zen Master Ven. Hae Dong and Grandmaster Kim Soo at the Chayon-Ryu 1998 Reunion and Seminar. Master Hae spoke to the participants on "Zen and the Martial Arts"

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## The Real Meaning of Martial Arts

by Grandmaster Kim Soo, 10th. Dan & Founder, Chayon-Ryu Martial Arts

Long ago, a poet named Mei Hwah Sun wrote about the Dan Oh Festival held in Korea during the month of May.

In this poem, he mentioned a friendly competition called Tae Kyon, held between villagers. The written Chinese characters used to describe the art of this event could be translated as meaning "excellence in knowledge."

It was understood that through training in this combative art, one would gain knowledge and be wise--not only in self-defense and fighting, but in human development as well. Thus, the practice of Tae Kyon offered two benefits: better physical well-being, and a path to travel in search of personal enlightenment.

This Tae Kyon comprised the older Korean arts which set the stage for the Tae Kwon Do of today. Today it still offers tenets for enlightenment. Through diligent and conscientious effort, martial arts students strive to develop themselves. Under proper instruction and guidance, they learn of the destruction these arts can render, and through spiritual and mental growth and enlightenment, they learn to forgive adversaries and refrain from violent behavior.

The physical abilities developed through martial arts must be hidden at times, and practitioners must refrain from public display, thereby learning humility. Though everyone wishes to excel in knowledge, only a small percentage of those in martial arts training will achieve the ultimate. This does not mean that others should abandon their efforts, however. Martial Arts is not only for the gifted, the strong, and aggressive, but for everyone, regardless of basic ability or potential. A good instructor can sense the need of each student, and give the type of training needed to help each one.

The results of Tae Kyon values can be seen through the abilities (physical, mental, and spiritual) of the instructor, according to the time spent and effort expended in search of enlightenment offered by practice of these ancient arts.

Martial arts have been practiced for centuries as unarmed defense techniques and healthful exercise. Many martial artists have learned the Buddhist principle of self-cognizance, which can't be achieved the martial arts practice alone, but through a combination of religion, education, introspection, and other philosophical virtues. I found this self-cognizance through persistent training in both physical and spiritual fundamentals.

Many people spend their entire lives searching for such a principle. Consequently, many of the problems in society today are caused by those who, in their early lives, were not given appropriate guidance to search for self-cognizance. A person receives a physical body from parents, but often the spiritual guidance to harmonize that body with the soul is lacking.

This is where traditional martial arts study enters the picture. It strengthens the body, and if practiced in its truest sense, nurtures the mind as well. The body-plus-mind principle guides one along a favorable path in life.

The traditional martial arts -- judo, karate, kung-fu, kendo-- originated to satisfy a need for self-preservation as people fought against wild animals and human enemies. Through the centuries, martial arts developed and broadened into multi-aspect principles and theories of the physical and spiritual, leading to results greater than a mere knowledge of self-defense.

Regular practice of martial arts forms, movements, and technique has vitalized my own physical and mental coordination and enhanced my self-confidence and control.

I hope that those who study traditional martial arts will not only apply the values to their lives, but also share their learning with others, so they who seek guidance may take their first steps along the path to a better way of life.