



# Twin Ports Haidong Gumdo

A Member Dojang of WTMA Haidong Gumdo and the U.S.A. Haidong Gumdo Association

## Martial Arts History and Culture

The practice of martial arts extends far beyond the mere execution of a sequence of physical movements or ignorant observance of rote tradition. The martial artist, particularly those bearing responsibility at higher ranks, must be as proficient in the realm of knowledge pertaining to the martial art as he or she is in its physical requirements. This compilation of history and culture of the martial arts relevant to the study and practice of the Korean sword art provides a cursory summation of key elements of knowledge helpful for those dedicated martial artists wishing to delve deeper into their field of study and discipline.

The inspiration for this paper derived from the remarks and instructions of Senior Chief Master Marshall Parnell at the Spring Training Seminar of 2013 (Odyssey Academy, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota). We are particularly indebted to our Sabumnim Robert Frankovich whose tireless efforts to advance the practice of martial arts and his knowledge of its history and culture has enriched his students greatly. We seek to honor our teachers by studying their wisdom. The views contained herein are solely the responsibility of the author and do not represent any official view or perspective of WTMA Haidong Gumdo or the USA Haidong Gumdo Association.

~ *Kyosanim Andrew C. Chiu, 2013*

### I. Warrior Culture

Chinese society of the late Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046 -256 BC) codified a hierarchic social class structure dividing commoners into four major categories. The four "occupations" were at the time of their inception, "shi" (warrior/knight becoming later gentry/scholar), "nong" (farmer), "gong" (artisan/craftsmen), "shang" (merchant/traders). The Chinese system was generalized throughout the Asian Sinosphere in similar though slightly varied manifestations and has had deep influence on Asian social structure for the past three thousand years. The Japanese pronunciation of the four classes are shi, nō, kō, shō (士農工商), whereas in Korean it is sa, nong, gong, sang (사농공상). The "shi" in Japan were essentially samurai class with the Korean "yangban" class analogous in position and role.

The warrior class practiced martial arts relevant to the style of combat their weapons and battlefield roles required with senior warriors generally armed with sword or saber fighting from chariots or horseback. The leadership of the warrior class occupied positions in society similar to medieval knights in European history. The Japanese samurai being perhaps the most familiar and most recent to still occupy this role in Asia serve as a good example of the warrior elite.

Warriors throughout history and in every civilization have fought to serve and to protect their lord or their nation. Although physical and martial capabilities superficially defined the warrior role in warfare, the very nature of what was required of the warrior in combat inevitably extended itself beyond the physical battlefield to life outside of armed conflict and ultimately to a philosophical plane.

The character traits desired in a warrior are necessary to the function of warriors. In order to succeed in battle, and perhaps survive, warriors rely upon individual traits of dedication, commitment, courage and initiative. These character attributes in an individual warrior may suffice in solitary combat but warfare in groups or armies require far greater character attributes that ensure the ability to fight in coordination above the individual level. Loyalty, honor, self-sacrifice and ultimately internal integrity to hold each individual warrior responsible for his own conduct are emphasized out of necessity. These virtues, some in stark contradiction to man's natural tendencies, cannot be practiced merely during time of war. In order for warriors to manifest these battlefield qualities in times of greatest duress, the practice of warrior virtues demands a life devoted to their pursuit.



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The extension of the warrior ethos beyond the physical battlefield inevitably required the overcoming of moral weaknesses injurious to the warrior's ability to adhere to their code of conduct. As loyalty to lords began to give way to loyalty to nation states, societies, way of life, and creed, warriors sought to live life in righteousness and right action upholding at all times their defining values and virtues. The intersection of warrior ethos and religious faith is also no accident. In every civilized society, the code of conduct necessary for individuals to function in a society is codified in either religious faith or philosophies of life. The behavior and character virtues required for living cooperatively in a civil society strongly overlap those of warriors. However, nowhere is the test of character more starkly manifest and demanding than in combat. Warrior classes commonly lead their societies in upholding character virtues emerging in many instances as the leading class in their societies.

The commonality of warrior classes throughout the civilized world is often striking. For the martial artist, the best described and studied group of warriors in Asia are perhaps the samurai of Japan. Their code of conduct and philosophy, bushido, is well documented and bears many striking resemblances to the chivalrous Christian knights of European history.

## II. Bushido



The three characters, read from left to right, are *bu-shi do* (*bu-shi* means warrior while *do* means way or path). Together, the characters signify the Samurai's code.

Bushido is the unique philosophical system of the Samurai. The approximate equivalents to European knights, Samurai were the preeminent warrior class of Japan for hundreds of years. Bushido governed both the Samurai's martial training and their day-to-day life defining conduct and bearing as warriors and upper class bureaucrats. Bushido, like chivalry in Europe, was largely an unspoken code. Bushido reached such popularity that certain elements were incorporated into law during the Edo period (1603-1868). Unfortunately, it was also exploited and corrupted by the ruling militarist fascist oligarchs behind the Chrysanthemum Throne who used it to further their control over Japanese society during the time of the Meiji Restoration leading up to and during WWII.

A few decades after the Samurai class was abolished by the Tokugawa Shogunate, Bushido became known in the West through Nitobe Inazo's *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Although Inazo's characterization of Bushido has been criticized for romanticizing a chivalrous age, the book is considered grounded in fact and Samurai were generally followers of what we know now as Bushido.

Historical debates aside, the relevant question for warriors and modern inheritors of the martial arts culture lies in how Bushido may apply in the modern practice of martial disciplines and to life in general. The core elements of Bushido as detailed by Inazo, "*The Seven Virtues of the Samurai*" or "*The Seven Virtues of Bushido*" have great appeal and universal relevance today with many parallels found in Western thinking, culture and even faith.

A seldom noted historical fact demonstrating the close parallels between followers of pre-militarist Japanese Bushido and the defining values of Christianity in Europe is worthy of mention. Early Christianity in Japan traces back to when European Catholic missionaries from Portugal traveling to Japan in the middle sixteenth century established the first Christian missions finding favor among many of the most literate and philosophically astute of all Japanese, the Samurai. The parallels between the virtues of Samurai and those of the Gentile European followers of Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ) were strikingly similar. Christianity's articulation of agape love, the atoning self-sacrifice of Jesus and his lordship over all earthly masters had as much immediate appeal and recognition among the samurai followers of Bushido as it did among European knights. The faith spread rapidly in



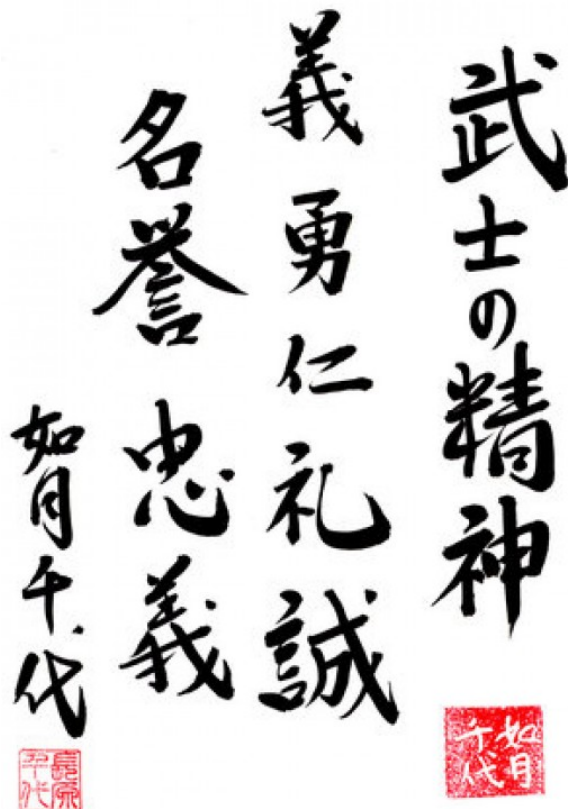
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those areas governed by Christian Samurai. So great was the appeal that the Shogun began to view the loyalty of Christian Samurai with deep suspicion. A purge among Samurai ranks throughout Japan followed and Christian Samurai and commoners gathered at the Christian stronghold of Hara Castle (present day Nagasaki) to escape persecution. Punitive taxation from the shogunate eventually led to an open tax revolt from the Christian Samurai. The Shogun's armies, aided by the firepower of the Dutch navy, were dispatched and besieged the Christian Samurai and peasants numbering approximately 37,000. An extended four month battle ensued embarrassing the Shogun's numerically superior forces (125,000) but eventually ended with the capitulation of the Christian Samurai. In keeping with their Christian faith, they did not commit ritual suicide but they were all martyred by the Shogun's forces in gruesome executions. Surviving Christian Samurai escaped to outlying islands to continue living underground as *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians) according to their conscience and dictates for the next several centuries not reemerging until well after the Second World War.

After the Second World War scholars have studied and critically examined of the subordination of Bushido to the political goals of the Meiji militarist-fascist oligarchy. Bushido, like the Emperor himself, was used to lend legitimacy to the de facto rule of the oligarchy. Research into Bushido therefore requires considerable knowledge and discernment as literature in regards to Bushido varies considerably in emphasis depending upon authorship and proximity of the author to the interests of the ruling Meiji oligarchs. However, the seven core values, rather than their application, are not disputed.

### III. The Seven Virtues of Bushido (quotations from Inazo's *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*)



Read from right to left top to bottom:

First right column: Warrior's spirit

- First two characters are *Bu-shi* meaning warrior.
- Third symbol is *no* equivalent to apostrophe S.
- Fourth and fifth characters indicated spirit.

Second column: first five virtues

- Gi - moral rectitude
- Yu - courage
- Jin - benevolence
- Rei - respect
- Makoto - honesty

Third column: sixth and seventh virtues

- Mei-yo - honor
- Chu-gi - loyalty

Fourth Column: calligrapher's signature

- As Moon, Thousand Generations

Chop seals:

- (right lower - negative) calligrapher's name as above
- (left lower) possible place name, Thousand Generations

The redundancy of two seals placed separately is not a traditional classical Chinese usage but may be a common practice in Japan. Classically, a single seal is placed below the signature line. If two are used, they are placed one above the other with the negative seal above the positive seal.



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## 1. Moral Rectitude 義 (Gi)

Translated as "rectitude" Gi implies moral righteousness conforming to the regulations or principles by adhering to what is righteous and morally correct.

## 2. Courage 勇 (Yu)

Courage, the eminence of psyche and strength of mind that allows one to face peril, is an extension of morality and only useful when matched with correct morals. Courage, or the spirit of daring and bearing, as it was first translated was a major focus in raising children of the samurai class. Parents challenged their children constantly in Spartan-like training.

"It is true courage to live when it is right to live, and to die only when it is right to die."

## 3. Benevolence 仁 (Jin)

Samurai, who possessed both the legal and physical power to destroy and kill, were also required to keep their powers in check with benevolence and mercy even to the extent of befriending enemies in times of peace.

"Indeed valor and honor alike required that we should own as enemies in war only such as prove worthy of being friends in peace. When valor attains this height, it becomes akin to benevolence."

## 4. Respect/Propriety 礼 (Rei)

Rei, respect or propriety, is considered as a manifestation of a personal quality or ability that is wielded by honor, admiration and a high regard. Deference and politeness is based in Chinese Confucianism but practiced throughout the Far East.

"By constant exercise in correct manners, one brings all the parts and faculties of his body into perfect order and into such harmony with itself and its environment as to express the mastery of spirit over the flesh."

## 5. Honesty 誠 (Makoto)

The quality or fact of being truthful through an act or condition.

As a principle, the Samurai did not lie and there are many tales of those who did being put to death for it. The Samurai also didn't see the need for written contracts as that would be doubting the truthfulness of their word.

"*Bushi no ichi-gon*...was a sufficient guarantee of the truthfulness of an assertion. His word carried such weight with it that promises were generally made and fulfilled without a written pledge, which would have been deemed quite beneath his dignity."

## 6. Honor 名誉 (Meiyo)

A quality of loyalty, honesty and having integrity in ones beliefs and actions.

There is hardly a more profound concept in Bushido than honor. The Samurai lived and died by their honor, with harakiri (*seppuku*) being the final way of preserving lost honor. Although no longer practiced



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in modern Japan after 1970, committing suicide by other means, still commands respect in certain circumstances where honor is involved.

*"He was born and bred to value the duties and privileges of his profession. Fear of disgrace hung like a sword over the head of every samurai ... To take offense at slight provocation was ridiculed as 'short-tempered.' As the popular adage put it: 'True patience means bearing the unbearable.'"*

## 7. Loyalty 忠義 (Chugi)

The adherence to a sovereign, government, allegiance to the laws of the country, being faithful in commitments or obligations to a person or a cause.

During Samurai times loyalty was thought of as being more valuable than life itself. To this day some of what remains of loyalty survives in modern Japan where it is still commonplace in Japanese companies for employees to remain employed for their entire lives. The obligation is reciprocated as a point of honor.

"Life itself was thought cheap if honor and fame could be attained therewith: hence, whenever a cause presented itself which was considered dearer than life, with utmost serenity and celerity was life laid down. Of the causes in comparison with which no life was too dear to sacrifice, was the duty of Loyalty."

Three other associated virtues were also commonly observed by samurai and included:

1. **Filial piety** (孝 *kō*<sup>2</sup>) is a virtue of respect for one's parents and ancestors. Chinese Confucian in origin (pronounced: xiao<sup>4</sup>) this value is universally upheld in Far Eastern cultures.
2. **Wisdom** (智 *chi*<sup>2</sup>)
3. **Fraternal love** (悌 *tei*<sup>2</sup>)

Interestingly, the number of deep pleats sewn into the Japanese samurai's *unamori hakama* (cavalry skirt-pant) is identical in number to the seven cardinal virtues of Bushido. There are five pleats in front and two in back with three front pleats worn to the right and two to the left asymmetrically according to Japanese esthetic traditions. The Korean *chima baji* (horse riding skirt-pant) is identical in this characteristic.

## IV. Chivalry in Comparison

A brief review of European chivalry helps to illustrate the strong similarities it bears with Bushido. From Wikipedia: "The Knight's Code of Chivalry was a moral system that stated all knights should protect others who cannot protect themselves, such as widows, children, and elders. All knights needed to have the strength and skills to fight wars in the Middle Ages. Knights not only had to be strong but they were also extremely disciplined and were expected to use their power to protect the weak and defenseless. Knights vowed to be loyal, generous, and "of noble bearing". Knights were required to tell the truth at all times and always respect the honor of women. Knights not only vowed to protect the weak but also vowed to guard the honor of all fellow knights. They always had to obey those who were placed in authority and were never allowed to refuse a challenge from an equal. Knights lived by honor and for glory. Knights were to fear God and maintain His Church. Knights always kept their faith and never turned their back on a foe. Knights despised pecuniary reward. They persevered to the end in any enterprise begun. Essentially, a chivalric knight is a Christian military soldier. "



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When examining medieval literature, chivalry can be classified into three basic but overlapping areas:

1. Duties to countrymen and fellow Christians: this contains virtues such as mercy, courage, valor, fairness, protection of the weak and the poor, and in the servant-hood of the knight to his lord. This also brings with it the idea of being willing to give one's life for another's; whether he would be giving his life for a poor man or his lord.
2. Duties to God: this would contain being faithful to God, protecting the innocent, being faithful to the church, being the champion of good against evil, being generous and obeying God above the feudal lord.
3. Duties to women: this is probably the most familiar aspect of chivalry. This would contain what is often called courtly love, the idea that the knight is to serve a lady, and after her all other ladies. Most especially in this category is a general gentleness and graciousness to all women.

## V. Korean Warrior Ethos

The history of Korean martial arts is complex due to Korea's history and proximity to powerful neighbors. Unfortunately, as much myth as fact populate the supposed history in part due to the brutal forty one year occupation of Korea by Japan and the systematic suppression and eradication of the Korean national identity. Only a few reliable sources of actual Korean martial arts history predating the Japanese occupation in 1904 survive. Based upon the surviving documents and accounts from neighboring nations the following is known.

The Hwa Rang (flower boys) of the Silla Dynasty (51 BC - 935 AD) were elite young men from aristocratic families initially formed into social clubs to promote social standing. Though they were initially selected based upon physical attractiveness and clad in makeup, jewelry and fine clothes, the constant military tensions and conflicts arising between Silla and the two other Korean states eventually led to their development as elite voluntary military warriors with social standing and popularity equivalent to medieval European knights. Schooled in all manner of armed, unarmed, and mounted warfare, they eventually succeeding in unifying all three Korean states under the Silla dynastic rule which lasted 986 years. A warrior's code of conduct defined the Hwarang. Won Kang, a Buddhist monk and scholar, developed a five point code governing Hwarang conduct. The five points were known to be:

1. Loyalty to the king
2. Honor your parents
3. Trust and kindness toward friends
4. Fight to the death in combat
5. Kill only when it is for justice.

The art of training the body and mind in all disciplines was given the name Tae Kyon which lent its name centuries later (1945) to taekwondo.

## VI. American Warrior Ethos and Virtue

The warrior ethos of the American soldier contains many of the same qualities of warrior codes in other societies but there are unique attributes worth noting.



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The basic required attribute of the American warrior is commitment to serve the nation defined as its people and its enduring values embodied in its Constitution. Beyond that, seven "Army Values" of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage are emphasized. Additionally, professional conduct expected of each soldier stipulates that he or she must always place the mission first, refuse to accept defeat, never quit, and never leave a fallen comrade. The values emphasized are similar across American military service lines.

American officers and enlisted swear a similar oath of office: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God."

Another distinguishing value of warriors of the American Republic lies in the example of servant-leadership by the commander in chief of the Continental Army and the Republic's first president. Washington's voluntary turn away from absolute power on two separate occasions, perhaps inspired by the example of Roman general Cincinnatus, was monumental in establishing a precedent for warriors of the new Republic and in ensuring the philosophical integrity of the new nation to its foundational principles set forth in its Declaration of Independence from Great Britain.

The unique attributes of the American soldier's creed and oath of service lie in their allegiance to the nation defined as its people and its Constitution. This distinguishes the American warrior from others whose allegiance is sworn primarily to a monarch, an executive office holder or a military superior.

American civic virtue was codified by Franklin in his autobiography. These enumerated virtues were the personal standard by which Benjamin Franklin sought to measure his daily life. His discipline in aspiring to moral perfection manifested with a daily written self assessment. The thirteen virtues were:

1. Temperance: Eat not to Dullness. Drink not to Elevation.
2. Silence: Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling Conversation.
3. Order: Let all your Things have their Places. Let each Part of your Business have its Time.
4. Resolution: Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.
5. Frugality: Make no Expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e. Waste nothing.
6. Industry: Lose no Time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary Actions.
7. Sincerity: Use no hurtful Deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. Justice: Wrong none, by doing Injuries or omitting the Benefits that are your Duty.
9. Moderation: Avoid Extremes. Forbear resenting Injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. Cleanliness: Tolerate no Uncleaness in Body, Clothes or Habitation.
11. Tranquility: Be not disturbed at Trifles, or at Accidents common or unavoidable.
12. Chastity: Rarely use Venerly but for Health or Offspring; Never to Dullness, Weakness, or the Injury of your own or another's Peace or Reputation.
13. Humility: Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

## VII. Relevance of the Warrior Ethos

Author Steven Pressfield wrote "each of us struggles every day to define and defend our sense of purpose and integrity, to justify our existence...to understand, if only within our own hearts, who we are and what we believe in." Though our nation's warriors presently fight in faraway lands, today's battlefield is no farther than our mirror. Our nation today is endangered by the promotion of a social ethic eschewing basic concepts of moral right and



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wrong preferring to embrace a nebulous noncommittal position regarding any creed, any conduct or lack thereof. Our society shies away from taking any stand lest anyone can claim to have taken offense. The ardent promotion of blind undiscerning acceptance under the guise of "tolerance" wielded as a political weapon has itself taken on an oppressive irony silencing those too unsure, too afraid to speak out in defense of core, foundational virtues. At no time has the warrior upholding the warrior ethos ever been more necessary to the survival of our nation.

## VIII. Meaning of Black Belt Rank

The use of color belts to denote competence in martial arts originated around 1880 with Kano Jigoro, the founder of judo. Originally limited to white and black wide sash (obi worn over kimono), the development of judogi or specialized sturdier uniforms for judo practice also incorporated narrower belts of a variety of colors denoting different levels of achievement or seniority. The practice spread to the other martial arts disciplines of Japan and Korea. Black belt is considered to be the attainment of a *minimal level of competence in a martial art* and seniority within black belts are commonly noted by "dan" grade often signified by a stripe marking embroidered or sewn to the black belt. Some martial arts disciplines denote very senior status with special color belts but specifics vary considerably depending upon the martial art.

Generally, in Japanese and Korean martial arts, the teaching of a martial art is reserved for those at second or third dan in recognition of the skill set necessary to teach being distinctly different than the mere physical practice of techniques.

## IX. Expectation of Black Belts

Expectations:

- Demonstrate competence in required martial art skills.
- Demonstrate competence in leadership maintaining conduct and bearing consistent with the responsibilities of a leader.
- Demonstrate competence in education.
- Assume initiative to fulfill duties and responsibilities of the dojang.
- Adhere to and uphold core values of the warrior ethos in martial arts and personal life.
- Work toward unification of the mind, body and spirit in the discipline of the sword - shingum.

Black belt rank is conferred only to those who have demonstrated the minimum level of competence in the beginning levels of the art. It is the duty of each practicing black belt holder to maintain their skills in the basics while pursuing the advancement of their knowledge and training to higher levels.

Black belts are expected to demonstrate not only competence in the physical execution of the martial art but also skill in leadership and in education. As role models, black belt conduct and bearing should serve to inspire admiration, enthusiasm, the highest levels of commitment and engagement and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Conduct and bearing befitting a black belt encompasses all that should reflect alertness, competence, confidence, and control. Black belts are expected to manifest exemplary management skill and organizational foresight personifying command allegiance, military bearing, and a strong code of ethics. Black belts are in essence the noncommissioned and officer ranks of each dojang. It is upon the black belts that the responsibility for the dojang's strength and success ultimately rests.

Upholding the virtues defining their martial art tradition is a solemn obligation of black belt rank holders. The black belt role as respected practitioners of a martial art also obligate black belt rank holders to adhere to a martial or





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warrior ethos. The code of conduct should be no less than the highest aspirations of predecessors of the sword art and should incorporate civic values and ethics consistent with our American heritage.

Black belts are expected to demonstrate initiative; seeking and fulfilling responsibilities proportionate to their rank but without exclusion from or disregard of responsibilities below their rank. Black belts are expected to work towards achieving *shimgum*; the unification of the mind, body and spirit expressed in the use of the sword. It implies a technical mastery of the sword, but transcends technical limitations. One can be "technically perfect" but still not achieve *shimgum*. Conversely, one may be technically imperfect and still achieve *shimgum*.

The three areas of discipline are:

- Mental preparedness: mental discipline, analytical understanding of the sword art, knowledge, intellect, capacity for independent and critical thought
- Physical preparedness: cultivation of strength, agility and endurance. Appropriate stewardship, care and nourishment of our bodies to include a responsible diet, avoidance of injurious intoxicants and tobacco
- Spiritual preparedness: meditation as appropriate to one's spiritual foundation

Meditation is time spent in focused thought intended to either benefit the individual in mind or mode of consciousness. Meditation refers to a broad variety of practices that includes techniques designed to promote relaxation, enhancing focus and application of one's energy and in some cases, development of higher spiritual qualities of compassion, love, patience, generosity and forgiveness. Substantial and important differences between Eastern and Christian meditation exist and should be very carefully considered by martial artists before practicing meditation.

Senior Chief Master Marshall Parnell offered the following Cherokee legend; a parable of the wolves illustrating the dichotomy of good versus evil and how one or the other may gain predominance in our life.

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.

"It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego." He continued, "The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."