

THE BLACK BELT BOOK OF LIFE

TOPIC #1

MARTIAL ARTS IS LIFE

Let your hands
give wings to your mind,
that you may find
an ever-greater Power of Life,
a Power preserving the
sanctity of your soul
and illuminating the radiance
of your Perfection.

If you believe that martial arts training is designed to enable you to beat up on others, I would suggest you look within yourself to assess why you feel a need to impose yourself on others. I would then suggest you look more deeply within yourself to determine the true meaning of martial arts training, that training that guides you upward to the higher ideals of nobility and self-mastery, for in the end the true test of our skill and achievement lies not in our mastery of others, but in mastery of ourselves. As the famed Pythagoras so eloquently stated, *No man is free who cannot control himself*, and most certainly, martial arts training teaches us to control ourselves before anything else.

Martial Arts is Life. Everything we do when we train has some correlation to life outside the milieu of our training ground - be that ground the floor of a dojo, studio, gym, backyard, living room, meadow, forest, or mountain top. It doesn't matter where we study. The thing of importance is that we do study, that we engage ourselves in the process of learning and developing our character, courage, strength, will, devotion, discipline, dedication, concentration, commitment, consistency, focus, flexibility, respect for ourselves and others; patience, tolerance, tenderness, kindness, poise, calm, centeredness, self-control and the integration of our body, mind and spirit. The list of attributes is endless, but everything mentioned above is a life principle and they are all an integral part of martial arts training and education.

Martial arts is an internal path, not an external path, although ostensibly it appears to be external. Often in our training we are pitted against an opponent to hone and test our skills, but in reality our real opponent is life, and he is a very worthy adversary. When he attacks us, as he does often with great tenacity, we

need skills to defeat him and advance ourselves onward and upward. Yet, his purpose is not to destroy but sculpt, to strengthen and make us worthy of greater achievements.

Therefore, to get the most from our martial arts training, my suggestion is that every time we train we see such training as life training, not simply martial arts training, because in the final analysis martial arts is not just an extracurricular activity. Martial Arts is Life.

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