

Uncovering the Practicality of Tradition

By Master John Darcy. AImAA



Korean Martial Arts began more than 2,000 years ago and has evolved into the modern day fighting art called Tae Kwon Do. Today Tae Kwon Do has followers and students throughout the world and is considered one of the most effective means of unarmed self-defence. A major part of Tae Kwon Do training is developing and maintaining the Patterns or Hyungs. This requires much discipline, concentration and dedication, and students often wonder why so much emphasis is put on the patterns. We must remember that the patterns will improve every part of our arsenal including, footwork, technique, power, speed and self defence. Everything is there in the patterns; there is no need to look any further.

In To-San pattern, the outer forearm block and reverse punch combination is as much self defence as you need nothing fancy, just effective movements from close quarters to defend yourself and retaliate. Chung-Gun pattern also has some simple but effective self defence with the Knife-hand guarding block and reverse upward elbow attack combination again great for the close combat situations. Each pattern contains these or similar types of useable self defence. Make each technique clean and powerful, and be honest with yourself. Is each move going to work? Is it going to stop this aggressor coming at you? The moves work, you now have to search for ways to increase your own power to make them work for you.

Students can achieve vast improvements in their overall Martial Art ability if they really commit to putting in the time and effort to traditional training. Obviously I am not saying you should not use and actively seek out new methods of training to also improve yourself, that would mean our training would stagnate, but we must not turn our back on our traditional roots either. When performing the patterns each move should be executed with full power and the student should understand exactly what each move is actually for instead of just going through the movements, leaving the pattern empty of any feeling. They (patterns) must be performed forcibly but without sacrificing technique. If you watch and practice the way Grandmaster Hee Il Cho performs patterns you will witness the perfect balance of power and grace.





Personally if I was to perform a pattern in front of Grandmaster (Cho) I would feel it unjust to simply dance my way through without putting 100% effort into each move. The deeper meaning to each pattern should also be understood and we should try to emulate the heroic efforts of the historical Korean figures and events that the pattern represents. Try to visualise the great hardships these warriors endured throughout their lifetime and embody their lives indomitable spirit. For example Won-Hyo would have walked thousands of miles to spread the Buddhism religion he believed in. Bring yourself back to that time and think of each lonely journey he must have taken and confrontation he would meet with, all to promote something that he believed in. Also in Choong-Moo pattern Admiral Lee showed true allegiance to his country, showing his steadfast loyalty. If we could embrace these memories during the execution of our patterns we will become closer to every Martial Artists goal of unity in body and mind.

Please try to focus on your pattern training in both the physical and mental dimensions and you will find the improvements you are looking for. As one of Grandmaster Hee Il Cho's senior students this is the way I would encourage all Tae Kwon Do exponents to train. In my opinion the old hard style patterns work best, this is the way Grandmaster Cho has shown me and I in turn teach all AIMAA students this traditional way also. Please understand this is my way, I would not say another style of teaching patterns is wrong, and there are many different approaches to Tae Kwon Do patterns. Remember all those in martial arts are brothers and we all have basically the same goal of self improvement.

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