

Reconciling the Kiap to Christ

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The student of Taekwondo is taught from the very beginning that there are certain attributes that they must develop that are much more important than physical training and discipline. These attributes are intended to help build one's self not only physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. The emotional and spiritual training in Taekwondo are philosophical teachings that stress concepts such as honor, loyalty, courage, bravery, integrity, honesty, respect, morals, love, benevolence, magnanimity with humility and compassion. Another important attribute often mentioned but seldom emphasized, the Taekwondo student must be concerned about the pursuit of truth. Truth is the highest standard for which the student should aspire, for without it, all of the other tenets of emotional and spiritual training are in vain. In order to lay a solid foundation for training in Taekwondo, one must possess an unyielding desire to know the truth about every aspect of their training. In order to understand the truth about the "kiap", one must know the history of Taekwondo, the truth about the universe, and how to reconcile the kiap to God.

Taekwondo is an ancient Martial Art whose history can be traced back 2000 to 3000 years to the ancient Korean cultures. The origins of Taekwondo were heavily influenced by traditional Buddhist religious doctrine. This religious doctrine was founded in the sixth century before Christ by Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Gautama Buddha. Buddha was a man in search of the truth whom, according to legend, merely picked a flower in silence, and so began a major ascetic world religion.

A fundamental concept of Buddhism is the dualism of the cosmos; in other words, the concepts of good and evil, darkness and light and other juxtaposed antonyms symbolized by the Tae Guek, commonly recognized as the yin and yang. The kiap, an audible expression used in the Martial Arts, is a derivation of the "ki", which in Buddhist philosophy represents a universal energy or life force that permeates the universe. Students of traditional Taekwondo are encouraged to tap into this force to obtain personal benefit, whether in breaking a board or gaining spiritual, emotional and physical health.

In fact, these concepts of dualism and universal life force are not unique to Taekwondo or Buddhism, but are used in other religious philosophies such as Zen Buddhism (a cultic offshoot of traditional Buddhism), Hinduism and the New Age or "Cosmic Humanist" movement. As an example, the student of Yoga, a form of physical and spiritual exercise heavily influenced by Hinduism, practices a breathing exercise to control the "prana" also known as the ki, the universal life force that resides in the chakra, an energy center of the body. In Taekwondo, the student is taught that the chakra through which the kiap emanates is located at the middle portion of the abdomen or the solar plexus. The Yoga student is taught that the chakra is one of six spiritual energy centers in the body through which the Hindu serpent goddess Shakti rises from the base of the spine to unite with her consort Shiva, the seventh chakra, who resides in the forehead between the eyebrows. This union leads to the fulfillment of yoga, or union with Brahman, the Hindu concept of an unknowable and inexplicable god. The Taekwondo student that uses the ki has simply failed to understand the ultimate purpose of this ancient religious concept.

To fully understand the truth about these philosophies, one must turn to the ancient writings of the Holy Scriptures, also known as the Holy Bible. By studying these writings, the seeker of truth learns that the universe is controlled by an omnipotent and personal being who is directly involved with every detail of life, from the color in the flower that Buddha picked, to the affairs of the heart of man. This God who created the universe, and all that is in it, revealed himself to the world in these writings, and then in the form of the God-man Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ made claims of deity about himself, and then proved his deity by his death and bodily resurrection from the grave in the presence of many credible witnesses. Jesus Christ claimed to be "the way, the truth and the life". The Bible states that from his throne flow the "rivers of the water of life".

If this teaching is truth, then the concepts of dualism symbolized in the Tae Guek are false, as is the ki, because the omnipotent God is the ultimate force that controls the fate of the universe. In fact, the Bible teaches that God is light and there is no darkness in him. There is **not an equal opposite**. Satan, an angel God created and gave a free will tried to proclaim himself equal with God. This resulted in his expulsion from the presence of God. By virtue of God's plan for mankind, this fallen being was exiled to earth for a period of time prior to the Great Judgment. Bitter because of his banishment, this once beautiful angel became the epitome of evil, and to this day, he seeks to separate men from God through all kinds of deceptions and false teachings.

Because of these facts, the religious tenets of Buddhism and Hinduism, and therefore Taekwondo are irreconcilable with the teachings of the truth revealed by Jesus Christ. However, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is a God of mercy and compassion, virtues to which every student of Taekwondo should aspire. Because of His great mercy, this God of love is slow to anger and quick to forgive those who recognize their inability to live up to the standards of holiness required to enter into His presence. Instead of judging them according to their own merit, He chooses to empower them through their own weakness, in order to reveal himself as a God who cares about those that he created.

When God created men and women, He included a free will in their nature in order for them to know and understand love. That will also has a tremendous potential for creative ability and accomplishment. Learning to focus that will in order to accomplish a task is the objective of the student of Taekwondo. The kiap, in reality, is simply a method of focusing the will. The proper execution of the kiap is a complete burst of human energy released at the moment the physical body strikes the real or imaginary object. This is accompanied by a guttural expression that emanates from the diaphragm. The effect is not a sound, such as the yelling of the phonetic enunciation of "kiap", but rather a complete release of the energy developed in the physical movement directed by the student. The audible sound of the kiap is more similar to the grunt a man makes when lifting a heavy object. The student must stay focused on the objective in order to properly complete the movement.

Even though the kiap was developed through false religious teaching, the Bible teaches that what the evil one intended for harm, God can turn into good. Because Jesus Christ is a God of mercy, when he exercises his grace, men are no longer bound by the legalistic aspects of the law. God no longer holds against men simple physical acts or words that are not conducted in idolatry or disobedience to his commands. The Bible teaches that "physical training is of some value, but spiritual training is of much value". God recognizes man's need for physical exercise and accomplishment, and is willing to help the man or woman that seeks the truth about every area of life. When the student of Taekwondo looks to the ultimate and wise God for every need, then the student's will becomes properly focused. Then he or she understands the Holy Scripture: "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength."