

# Grandmaster Jae Chul Shin (9th Dan)

## The Tang Soo Do Interview part 1

Around 15 years ago a student gave me a signed copy of Traditional Tang Soo Do by GrandMaster Jae Chul Shin. Apart from those written by GrandMaster Hwang Kee, very few Tang Soo Do books have fired my interest or imagination but this one did! Most publications follow the same theme with a brief history, photos of basic technique and positions from each hvung, in fact nothing more than you could learn in an average class. This, however, was different, a real insightful and detailed study of the art including Philosophy, Um/Yang theory, vital points, breathing techniques and Ki Gong finishing with the intriguing Tang Soo Do Parables. I have read the book many times over and became an instant fan of GrandMaster J.C. Shin.

I am now extremely fortunate to be in a position to ask in depth questions of this great GrandMaster. He trained during the early years of the Moo Duk Kwan under the founder Grandmaster Hwang Kee until 1968 when under the auspices of the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association he travelled to the USA and established the United States Tang Soo Do Federation in Burlington, New Jersey.

Grandmaster Shin, it is indeed a privilege to discuss Tang Soo Do matters with you. Firstly, I would like to add my own appreciation and congratulations on your personal achievements in Tang Soo Do. It is now 27 years since inception of the WTSDA and I believe you were recently awarded your 9th Dan.

**GM Shin** - I am very proud of my achievements. It is not the number of the rank but what has been accomplished that is important.

When an individual has contributed, developed and helped people; changed someone's life, it represents an amazing accomplishment. That is the true meaning of what rank is about. There are over 100,000 proclamation signatures requesting I accept this honour, which I can no longer deny.

It is also the 25th Anniversary of the GBTSDA which has gone from strength to strength under your guidance together with the hard work and dedication of the UK Masters and Instructors. What factors do you feel are responsible for this success?

**GM Shin** - First of all I must recognize Master Khan's firm belief in the WTSDA principles. He has carefully followed that. When there is a problem, he doesn't bend or surrender, but just keeps moving on. Also all the Masters in Great Britain believe in the principles of Tang

Soo Do and trust that the WTSDA is carrying on the original essence of the art. Of course, any organisation can satisfy a few followers. However, Great Britain Tang Soo Do keeps growing at an impressive rate through strong, firm unbending leadership.

Now to the Art itself. What does Tang Soo Do mean to you personally?

**GM Shin** - Personally, Tang Soo Do has been my guide; my roadmap that I have followed my whole life. Tang Soo Do taught me how to live, and how to die. Some people are born in to a family culture but I learned Tang Soo Do at a young age and that is all I know and believe in. I continue to apply the essence of Tang Soo Do, its principles and philosophy to my life. Without question this has ensured that I have lived a clean and proud life.

Sir, Can you give some words of advice and encouragement to



# TANG SOO DO

By Master David Allerton  
(5th Dan)

UK students regardless of their association?, What attributes should they strive to achieve in 2011 and beyond? Often I feel the Gup/Dan ranking system fails students unless the Master/Instructor has a clear vision of each student's individual needs. How do you monitor personal progression in your own students?

**GM Shin** - Any culture or country has many different ideas and all organisations strive to achieve their goals. The same thing applies in Tang Soo Do studios. All of our studios strive to achieve the principles and quality that is recommended by World Tang Soo Do headquarters. We are all uniquely different human beings. Everybody has likes and dislikes; however, we have to teach the essence of Tang Soo Do and its true purpose. That is our duty and commitment as instructors. The Great Britain Tang Soo Do has been a strong organization for two decades. I agree, a good instructor must have a clear vision of each student's needs. Everyone is unique, and an instructor

should know the student's limits and capabilities. It is not solely about passing or failing a rank test. Our Tang Soo Do training must focus on Improving on each individual's capacity. That is our job. I do not have a right to tell someone whether to practice Tang Soo Do, it is in itself a culture. There are many small groups, or organisations that proclaim that they are teaching Tang Soo Do, and yet, they fail to teach the essence. Unfortunately, this will result in confusion and will not produce the real value and purpose. Traditional Tang Soo Do has value in its hundreds of years old heritage. Therefore, all students should be trained to develop a better life. I saw many self-made alleged Tang Soo Do schools and associations fail. True traditional Tang Soo Do has lasted centuries. My wish is for anyone to follow the path of pure Tang Soo Do. Train traditionally, from the heart.

It has often been said that in Tang Soo Do our aim is to be one with nature. I appreciate this is an ideal given the right conditions and perseverance on the part of each student. Can you give some guidance on how this can be achieved in practise for those who live in a large town or city, work long hours and have the pressure of family commitments?

**GM Shin** - Yes, the ultimate goal of Tang Soo Do is to become one with nature. It seems very difficult to understand this concept but as in Um - Yang we must strive to live our life harmoniously and in a balanced way. That is the way to live the healthiest life, both physically and mentally. We are a creature of universe, and we must become a balanced part of it. We should not deny this fact, but rather work with it. Our training focuses on how to achieve this balance; how to breathe; how to move; how to think and so on.





Ask nature the answer. Through training, we can be a part of nature, as long as we are aware of it and accept it. It can be done anywhere and any time.

Sir, how do you feel the current trend of Mixed Martial Art impacts on a traditional art like Tang Soo Do? Clearly each has different aims and objectives but do you feel it is positive or negative? Does it demonstrate our technique and syllabus is effective in combat or reveal gaping holes which need to be filled?

**GM Shin** - I saw TV shows of Mixed Martial Arts and it is exciting and very untraditional, that I know. In the past, I have seen many individuals create various versions of so call Martial arts. After a few years they tend to disappear, and no one ever remembers them. Newly popular Mixed Martial Arts seems to appeal to many, but to me, it is not any form of ART. It is purely a physical sport. I wish they would not call it "Martial Arts," but rather create a new name for it. I do not see any thing that can be learned from its training, except how to fight brutally. A true martial art must offer much more!

In this modern era, which is high tech with computers etc, it is called the information age and it is quite different. It is easy to accept other styles, other techniques, which can easily be acted out in your living room. But, I am afraid this will eventually lose the essential values and heritage of the martial arts as everybody seems to be chasing after instant excitement, or other incentive, such as financial gain. I am sorry that this kind of thing has appeared. In the World Tang Soo Do Association we have kept the traditional art passed from century to century, and under my leadership, we will continue to follow the principles of a traditional martial art.

How do you teach Self Defence? Do you interpret movements

from our Hyungs or, advocate a separate catalogue of techniques? Where does one step sparring fit into the equation?

**GM Shin** - The basics and Hyungs offer the perfect grounding for self defence. Of course, one step techniques, sparring, and self defence are only the practical application of the basics and personal experience. I believe that hyungs enable us to use combat techniques, and teaches us to build our techniques with certain moves and angles which will help us with unusual circumstances where we have to defend ourselves. Compared with the non-training individuals our efficiency and accuracy is much better and this is why in the older days we did not teach self defence as separate classes.

Sir, the WTSDA sword form looks very similar to Kuk Sool Won. Can you share the origin of this hyung? I had always believed the basic aim of Tang Soo Do was to be a weaponless art and forge hands and feet, etc as weapons of protection. When did this philosophy change?

**GM Shin** - Yes, when I was training I only learned and trained in Dan Gum Hyung, (short dagger). Gradually the WTSDA students demanded weapon training so at our Board of Directors meeting we adopted additional weapons including three sword Hyungs. The first two hyungs we created our own way with a Technical committee adopting techniques introduced by Baekchae Dynasty warriors and the third form was adapted

from Kuk Sul Won forms with many changes that were made at our Master's Clinic.

GrandMaster Shin, many thanks for sharing this information and the benefit of your considerable experience.

*In the second instalment of this interview I shall explore some more advanced concepts including Ki Gong training, meditation and the role played by the Tae Kuk Kwon hyung in the history and development of Tang Soo Do.*

