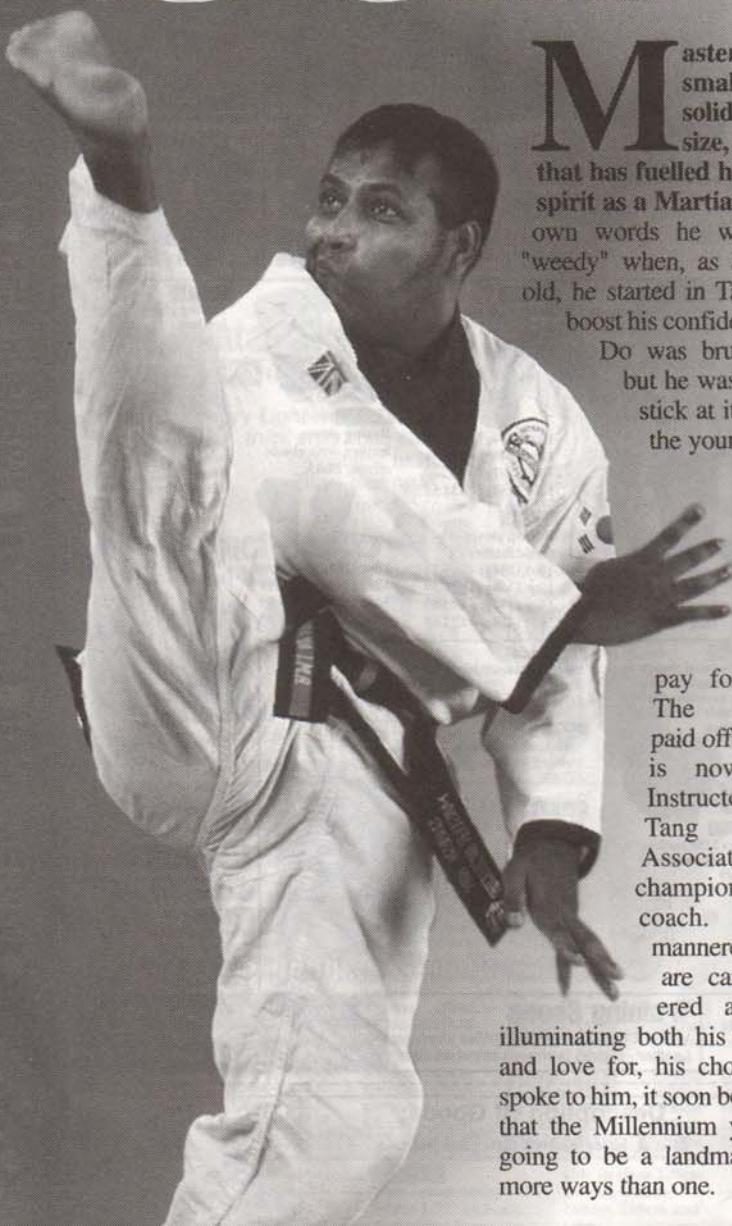


Master Suresh



Master Nar is of small frame, but solid, and it is his size, or lack of it, that has fuelled his indomitable spirit as a Martial Artist. In his own words he was considered "weedy" when, as a thirteen year old, he started in Tang Soo Do to boost his confidence. Tang Soo Do was brutal back then, but he was determined to stick at it, despite being the youngest student at the club. So determined, in fact, that he saved his school dinner money to pay for the lessons. The determination paid off, as Master Nar is now the Chief Instructor of the GB Tang Soo Do Association and a championship winning coach. Modest and mannered, his answers are carefully considered and articulate, illuminating both his knowledge of, and love for, his chosen art. As I spoke to him, it soon became apparent that the Millennium year 2000 was going to be a landmark for him in more ways than one.

TKD-KMA: Master Nar, could you tell us more about the Tang Soo Do World Championships scheduled for next year?

MASTER NAR: Due to our previous successes in tournaments overseas, Grandmaster Yi and the executive committee have nominated me to host the Millennium World Championships. That's a really big honour for me and it's something that I've always wanted to do but there is a lot of work involved, hotel accommodation, training facilities, ancillary things such as transportation etc. It's a very big task but we're hoping it's going to be a very enjoyable tournament and one which will surpass any other IMA event.

TKD-KMA: When and where, will it be held?

MASTER NAR: It will be held on June 24th in London. It is both a daunting and exciting prospect because obviously there's always the apprehension that something might go wrong, you always want to make sure that everything is spot on. I have a very good team behind me, black belt instructors, parents, volunteers, and they are grouped into preparation committees to take on various tasks. For example my task is accommodation and looking after Grandmaster Yi and his international organisation. We have a

The Will To

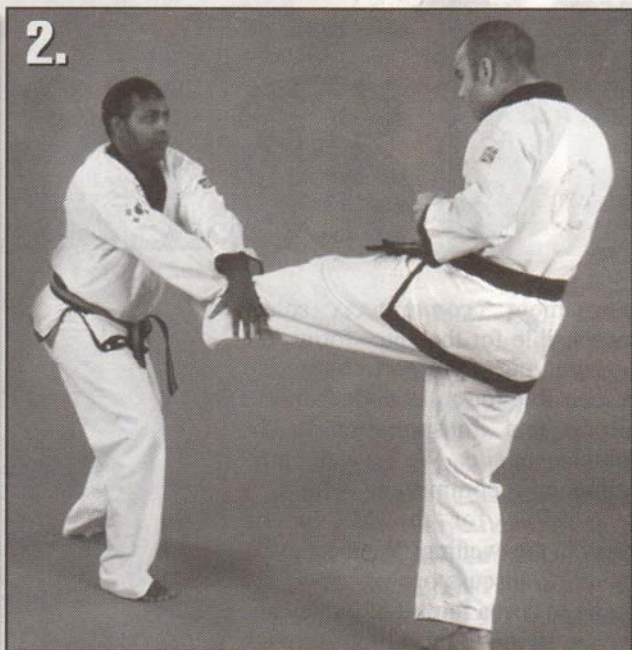
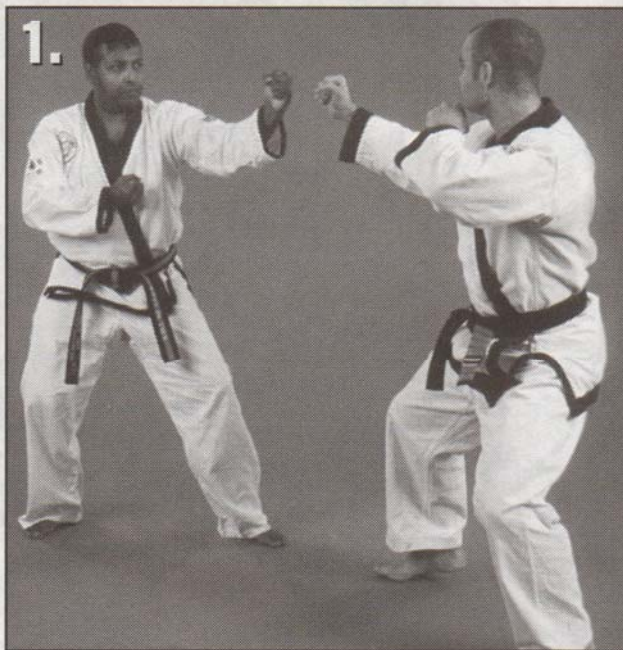
Nar

tournament committee, solely responsible for the entry forms and registration, a transport committee, responsible for collections from the airport and transportation to the tournament site. We have an entertainment's committee, which is responsible for the Millennium party in the evening. We meet every month to discuss our progress. It's going to cost a fair bit of money and we are trying to raise funds through sponsorship but we are not solely reliant on that, most of the funds will be found via the registration fees.

TKD-KMA: *Good luck with that, but it's going to be a busy year for you because something very close to your heart is a Tang Soo Do Open Friendship tournament. What's that?*

MASTER NAR: This is something I've been thinking of for quite some time. In Tang Soo Do we train very much in the spirit of brotherhood. When you train with someone for a number of years you get to know them pretty well, but when you part ways or go your own way you lose contact and that intensity you had, training under that umbrella of brotherhood, gets lost. I would like to hold a friendship Millennium tournament and put aside our differences, meet again for one day, regardless of associa-

Succeed!



tion, and work towards enjoying a great Tang Soo Do day, have a party afterwards and renew friendships. I hope we can generate enough interest from other associations to put an event of this nature on, it's never been done in Tang Soo Do and I feel it's time somebody took the initiative and did it.

TKD-KMA: *Back-tracking to your own personal history, you started Tang Soo Do when you were thirteen. Tell us more about that.*

MASTER NAR: What got me into training was not so much the whole Bruce Lee thing. My brother was doing ITF Taekwondo and I hadn't seen him for a couple of years. He came to visit us and showed me pictures of him doing jumping kicks and I didn't think it was possible for people to defy gravity in this way! I didn't have a clue what Taekwondo or Tang Soo Do was, I went to a local sports centre and it just so happened that there was a Tang Soo Do class in progress and it had that certain "feeling". After one class I never looked back.

TKD-KMA: *At the time your parents were against you going,*

why was that?

MASTER NAR: They thought that it was too aggressive, that I was going out learning to fight, and they were worried how would I use it. I wasn't financially supported, so I had to fund my trips to the club myself, and as a thirteen year old that's quite difficult. So what I had to do was save up my dinner money to pay for my classes at the end of the week. My parents would cringe at this revelation now, because they have since supported me for many years, once they realised it was a positive influence on me. I was the smallest and youngest person at the club and the training was very hard but as I said, the class had a certain feel and I kept going back for more.

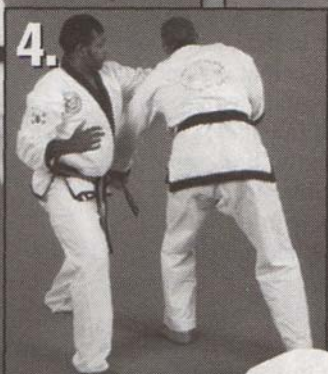
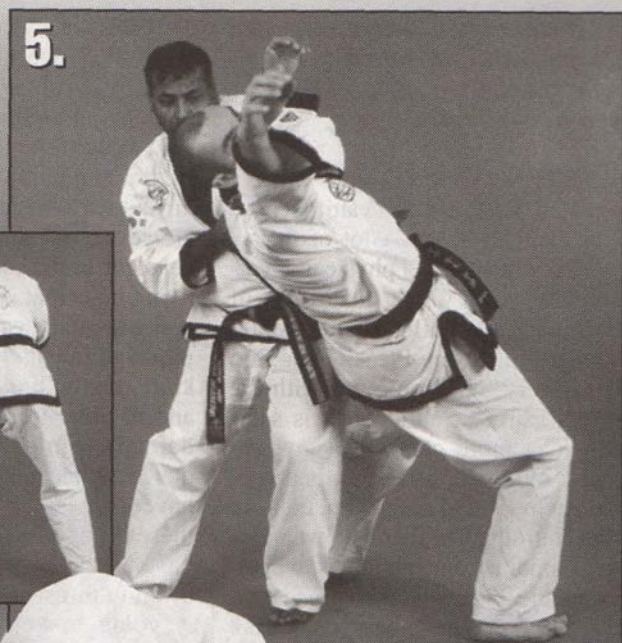
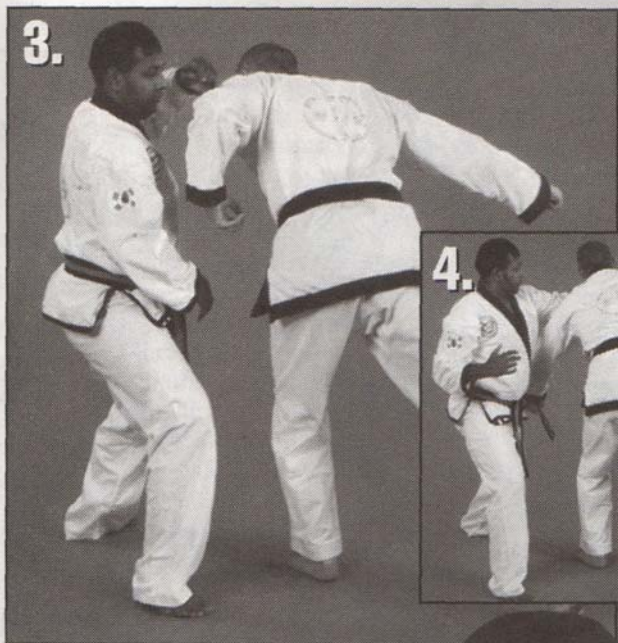
TKD-KMA: *Can you put into detail that "feeling" that kept you going even though you were missing out on your lunch daily?*

MASTER NAR: Well, because of my size, I'm still not particularly "big" built, but at thirteen I really looked quite weak, I did get bullied a little bit at school and lacked a little confidence and I felt this was the way to gain confidence and learn how to fight.

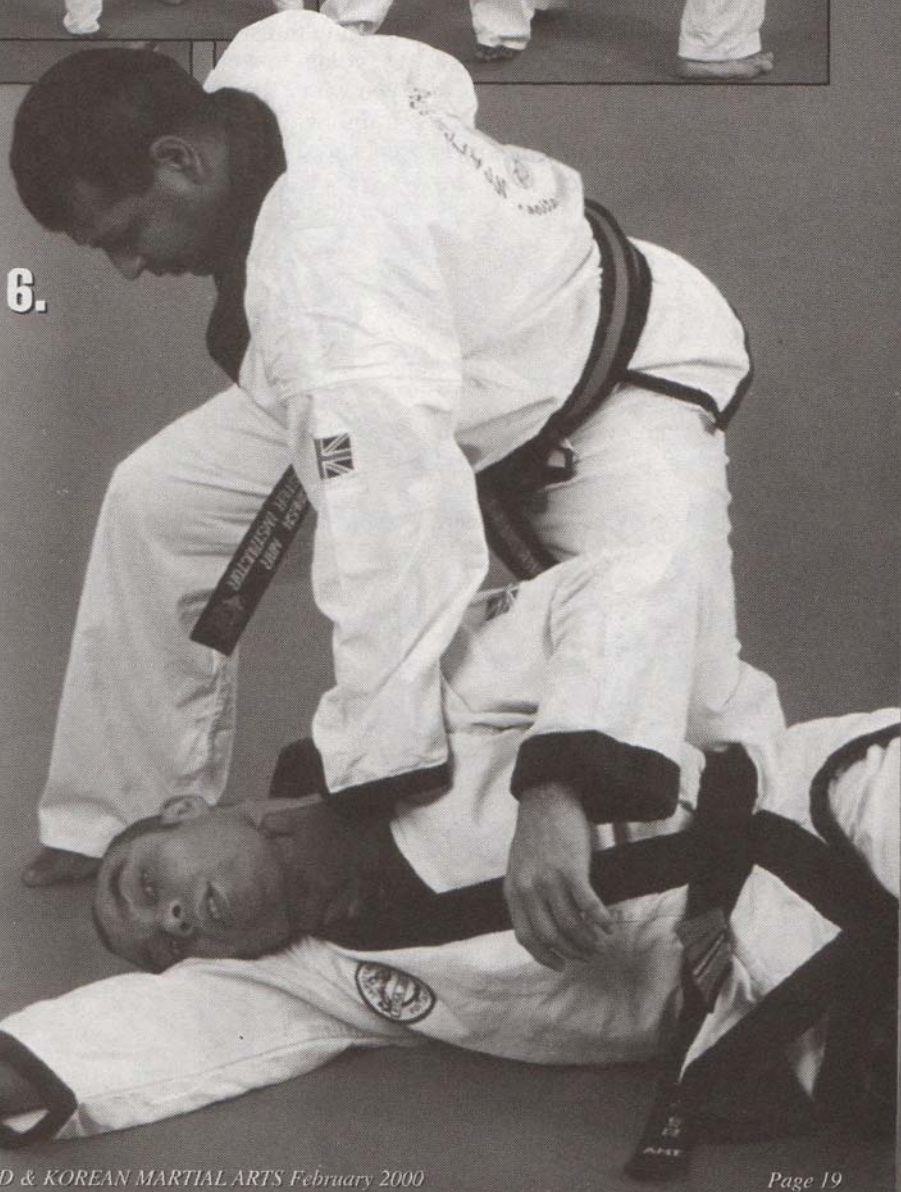
TKD-KMA: *You're now a fifth degree black belt and with those years of experience, what would you say separates Tang Soo Do from the other Korean arts?*

MASTER NAR: Every Martial Art has its own rules and regulations, ethics and code of conduct. Tang Soo Do is very deeply rooted in Korea's history, there is documented evidence to show that it goes back two thousand years. However, the main focus of Tang Soo Do is the development of *Neh Kong*, *Weh Kong*, and *Shim Kong*, that is internal, external, and spiritual power. Those are the key areas that one must always strive to develop to create a person who is complete, without inner or outer conflict. To work towards a person of good character who is confident, not only in training but in everyday life. A person of honesty and integrity. I believe those are the three areas which distinguish our practice in the Martial Arts from other arts.

TKD-KMA: *How has Tang Soo Do changed over the years in your perception? I have been told that training was rather brutal in the past.*



MASTER NAR: I think "brutal" is quite an apt word to describe what we had to go through. In free fighting the punches were not withheld, there were no pads and if you did not block and say got a kick in the ribs, you would get told off for not blocking properly. Now, the scientific elements have been brought into the Martial Arts and Tang Soo Do has moved with the times. Years ago our warm-up was someone in front of us telling us, without any stretching, to forty jump push-ups on the knuckles, a hundred leg lifts, in retrospect not only was that brutal, but it was very dangerous. We now know more about ballistic and static stretching, cardio-vascular training, and also in those days we would practice one blocking and one kicking technique forty times up and down the hall, whereas now you'll have more advanced combinations, the training has opened up and I think that we, the English people, are responsible for that. When the Koreans originally taught us they kept most of their knowledge to themselves but that's changed and there's also influences from the States and it has really helped Tang Soo Do.



TKD-KMA: Yet in your personal training you still retain the "attitude" of the old days. What do you mean by that?

MASTER NAR: I have always retained the "yes I can" attitude, the will to succeed and a lot of that is from my mental and physical development and I think that type of training did build your mental strength. The way I teach Tang Soo Do is very much on a par with the way I learnt it, although it is safer and in a more controlled environment. Where it differs is when people get to around fifth kyup, then we start introducing them to weapons and combination techniques, whereas in the past you never had that opportunity, even when you were a black belt.

TKD-KMA: Weapons training is a very volatile subject, what are your views?

MASTER NAR: That's a very good question. We're learning to use our hands and feet as weapons, that is always the foremost reason for training, that's what you have to teach first. However, what you must consider in the society we are living in, is that if someone is going to attack you it will be more than likely with a knife, bottle, brick or stick and in order to be able to defend yourself confidently one must also have an awareness of how these weapons work. To have an idea of what sort of knife thrust someone is going to come at you with. Reaction training can be enhanced if you have an understanding of

how a weapon is used. We focus on the traditional Bong, which in every day life could be an umbrella, a stick or a piece of three by four coming down on your head. We have the Dangum, which is the dagger, a common tool used by muggers, and we use the sword. Now it's very unlikely that someone will attack you with a sword but it has an historical background in the Korean Martial Arts, it's probably the oldest weapon and one which requires a lot of discipline and respect.

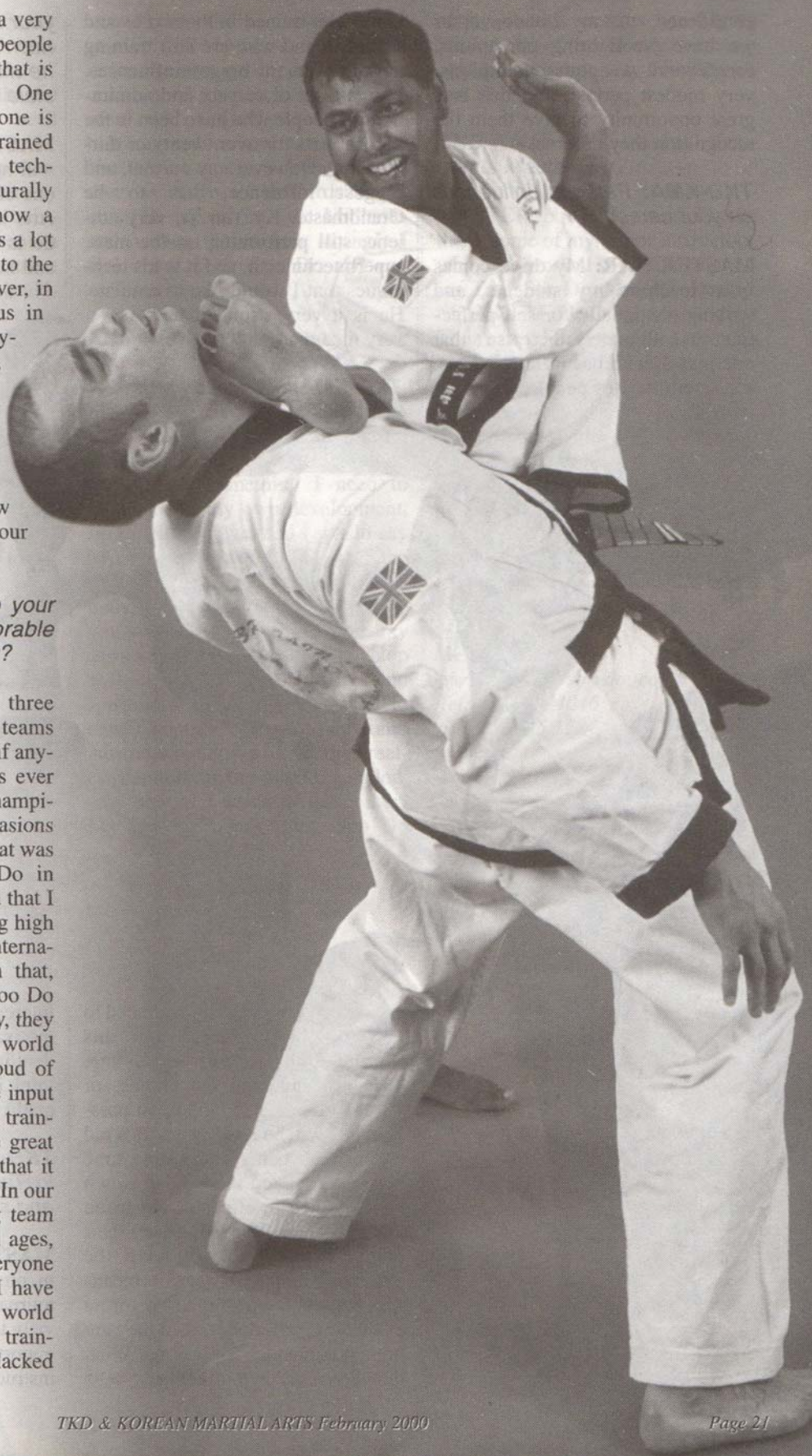
TKD-KMA: Korean arts have been pigeon-holed as "kicking" arts, is this a fair summary?



MASTER NAR: Kicking is a very visual aspect of the art, when people see Korean stylists kicking, that is what visually captures them. One must realise that when someone is kicking perfectly they have trained mentally in order to do that technique, not everyone is naturally flexible or supple, so to show a technique with precision takes a lot of hard work. People relate to the kicking in Korean arts, however, in Tang Soo Do the main focus in training is meditation, body-conditioning, callisthenics, self-defence, breaking techniques, weapons, so beyond the kicking you can say that it is a very intricate, comprehensive art and the way it is going to work for you is how you use those elements in your everyday life.

TKD-KMA: *Going back to your own career, what memorable moments stand out for you?*

MASTER NAR: To train three world championship winning teams is some feat and I don't know if anyone else in Tang Soo Do has ever done that. We won the championships on three separate occasions (1992, 1997, and 1999) and that was tremendous for Tang Soo Do in Great Britain. I'm very proud that I have put Tang Soo Do training high on the agenda, as practiced internationally. To further explain that, when people think of Tang Soo Do in Britain they think of quality, they think of class, they think of world champions, and I'm very proud of the fact that I have had some input into that. I love teaching and training people, I love it, and the great thing about Tang Soo Do is that it appeals to people of all ages. In our world championship winning team the competitors have been all ages, from ten to fifty, and not everyone has natural ability, so what I have done is sculptured people into world champions who, before their training, couldn't kick or punch or lacked



confidence. At my London clubs we have freefighting champions, forms and weapons champions, very modest people, and this is a great opportunity to give them the recognition they deserve.

TKD-KMA: Personal influences on your career?

MASTER NAR: My drive comes from teaching my students, and striving continually for self-perfection, and ultimately there isn't that one person who has influenced me, it's a multitude of people, generally

those who trained in the sixties and seventies and who are still training now, they are my biggest influences. I have a lot of respect and admiration for people who have been in the Martial Arts for over twenty or thirty years. However, my current, and biggest influence, has to be Grandmaster Ky Yun Yi, very athletic, still performing on the mats, superb technician, and it is his techniques that I would like to emulate. He is a very strong man but a very nice man.

TKD-KMA: He's also earned

your admiration as an innovator, hasn't he? For example the way he minimises black belts getting stale or leaving.

MASTER NAR: Can I just say you will never stop black belts leaving, one of the biggest killers in Martial Arts is ego, however, what we can do is have systems in place to try and keep people with you. One of the ways in which we do that is the black belt evaluations.

What that means is after someone has gained their black belt, every

six months they need to be evaluated and this could be by way of Hyung, forms, breaking techniques, or some other aspect and upon passing they will be rewarded with a red tag on their belt. The testing time between first and second dan is two years, which in effect would mean that one needs four red tags on their belt. If they do not have the required amount of tags it means that they have not turned up for an evaluation, or failed it, then they are not recommended for testing. What this does is keep the black belts

interested in their training, keeps them motivated, and enhances the student/instructor relationship, and I think it's a great way of maintaining quality in our association.

TKD-KMA: Is the balance right in Tang Soo Do between sport and self defence?

MASTER NAR: I think it is, within our association. We have two tournaments a year. The way we view tournaments is that they are an opportunity for all our clubs and instructors to get together, to meet,

exchange techniques and unify our friendships. The people who train solely for tournaments will always need somebody to train with and secondly they do not really need that mental attitude, if they are simply fit and fast they can score points. In Tang Soo Do you can train by yourself and mentally you are training as well. The two tournaments a year release the physical expression but the rest of the time we are building our confidence and the internal aspects.

TKD-KMA: *What is your definition of "spiritual" within a Martial Arts context?*

MASTER NAR: To the lay person it might mean religion, but I would not put my religious beliefs on anyone, nor would I expect them to put theirs on me, so when we use the term spiritual in Martial Arts we are referring to your inner self-development. Most seasoned Martial Artists, when they see something performed well they would normally say that person has got good spirit, that's my interpretation.

TKD-KMA: *And what about "tradition"?*

MASTER NAR: To me tradition is a code of conduct, not necessarily a physical way of training. It's more a way of ritual, you start the class by saluting the flags, we respect each other, we bow. For a Martial Art to develop it has to evolve. The tradition is not so much the Martial Art but it's an attitude, the state of mind you bring to your training.

TKD-KMA: *What are your future plans for the association in this country?*

MASTER NAR: I have developed Tang Soo Do in London since 1982 and it is

very strong now in that part of the country. However, I feel that in order for us to get bigger, we obviously need to teach in different areas and I can't ask one of my black belts to uproot and teach in the North of England. What I have done is move to Bedfordshire in order to expand into the Midlands and further, that is how strongly I feel about Tang Soo Do and our association.

TKD-KMA: *What about your future on a personal level?*

MASTER NAR: I regularly go to the States to train with Grandmaster Yi for my own advanced training and this is something I need to maintain for my own development. I train on my own, and I would say to anyone doing Martial Arts the way you learn about yourself, your body, will improve if you train by yourself, as well as in class. As my association develops I will develop with it, mentally, physically, and spiritually. I have been asked to teach in the United States and Australia but I'm in one of the greatest capitol in the World, London, why should I want to leave that? My life is making Tang Soo Do

strong in this country, producing black belts of world championship quality, there is no way I would give that up.

TKD-KMA: *Any closing comments Master Nar?*

MASTER NAR: I would like to thank some of my senior instructors, who have worked so hard in promoting Tang Soo Do, Mr. John Heslop, Mr. Paul McManners, Mr. Andrew Young, and Mr. Gregors Young, who work tirelessly for me in the promotion of the association and Tang Soo Do in general. Also I'd like to thank my wife for supporting me throughout the years and who continues to support me in what I do, allowing me to devote my time to Tang Soo Do. In fact when we got married, part of the honeymoon was attending the world championships and I guess that's why we won it!

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