

## **Bac Fu Do and the individual.**

Many people start the martial arts journey for many different reasons. The word journey is used because the study of the martial arts is like that of a journey. It can take a person down many different paths, but it depends solely on the individual on which path they may take and how far. How long a person may wish to travel on such a journey is entirely up to them. It may all sound a bit out there and mystical but ask anyone who has studied any martial arts for a considerable amount of time about what it means to them and they would most probably agree that it is a lot more than just punching and kicking. The saying that “Kung fu is a lifestyle” couldn’t be any closer to the truth.

The reasons why a person takes up kung fu differ. Maybe they felt the need to be able to protect themselves and their family. They may have wanted a change in their life and thought taking up kung fu would be a good start. Sometimes its just because they wanted to use it as fitness. The reasons for starting are endless. A common thread though is that any who takes up a fighting art, takes it on because they want to learn to fight.

No two humans ever look, act or think exactly the same way therefore we are never going to be able to fight like carbon copies of each other. In Bac Fu Do the student is treated as an individual from the very beginning, not as a product of the system. Bac fu do is an eclectic style combined of both southern and northern kung fu systems. The fighting methods are adapted from different parts of china, where not only was there a height difference but there was a difference in living conditions. Different provinces consisted of different terrain and habitat. From the mountains through to the open plains of rice patties and into populated cities the kung fu trained was different.

Factors such as these determined the fighting style which best suited their people and their surroundings. Whole chapters can be written on the history and evolution of martial arts from different regions of the world. Topics could include how people of different height and surroundings trained, fought and the reasons for doing so. Many battles were between the people of the land and the invading foreign enemies. Enemies from different provinces and countries fought differently and used different weapons therefore the attack towards them adapted to suit. This is also relevant in one on one combat; each person fights differently and prefers different weapons or tools to others. Therefore the attack on each individual would differ.

This is also seen in Bac fu do students where individuals of the same rank have a different fighting style uniquely their own. The same can be said about other arts such as western boxing where the weapons used are the same but it is easy to see the difference between fighting style. Take for example Kostya Tsyu and Muhammad Ali; a noticeable difference in height, strength and style but each is still a boxer. The tools used are the same but the way they move and punch has changed to suit their needs.

Each person is born with different genetic make-ups. Some people might be tall or short. Others might be small with a strong natural build while others might be small with a slight build. Other factors such as personal attributes like being naturally fast, flexible or strong also get taken into account. Another point is that no two people think exactly the same. Give two people one situation to work on you’ll always get more than one answer. People see things in their own way. They see it in light of what works from them. Each way may neither be right or wrong.

Two words that spring to mind when mentioning Bac fu do are “Adaptable” and “Efficient”. Bac fu do practitioners are taught to be able to adapt to the given situation in the most efficient way possible. An example could be that a person may be in kicking range and for some reason decides to start lunging forward with wild elbows, missing the target by miles. That wouldn’t be very efficient. Another person might be in a confrontation with another twice their size and decides it would be best to try and wrestle them to the ground. Not a good position to be in. It also shows a lack of being able to adapt. Different weapons work best at certain ranges. In Bac Fu Do the three main areas of weapons used are Tertiary weapons, (all kicks and sweeps), Secondary weapons, (punches, locks and traps) and Primary weapons, (grappling range, head butts, elbows, use of shoulder and hip thrusts, and if a must biting.)

**Primary weapons hands and feet secondary weapons elbows,knee Tertiary shoulder and hip thrusts,headbutt** Different people are accustomed to different weapons. A tall person might use their reach and power as an advantage and opt to use mostly Tertiary and Secondary weapons. A smaller person with fast hands and feet may opt to try and override a taller person's use of Tertiary and Secondary weapons and hit vital areas using the Secondary and Primary weapons. This is not to say that all tall people are long and powerful and that all small people are fast. Governing factors such as how much a person trains, their given attributes, their age and health come into play. Bac fu do incorporates the use of efficient body mechanics and common sense so that the system itself is adaptable to the any of these factors.

The nature of fighting can never be set in stone. A victim may never be able to say when an attacker does this I'll just do this and then that and so on. Fighting cannot be set out like dance routine. Anything can happen in any given situation, the fight can suddenly be turned over in the attackers favour. Without the ability to adapt efficiently the chances of losing the fight greatly increase.

Take the whole theme of being adaptable and efficient out of combat terms and place them in other areas of life and the results speak for themselves. Instead of stressing about a particular problem a person could work on finding more efficient ways or solutions. Being adaptable in the home or in the workplace makes it easier to deal with troublesome people and also makes a person more approachable.

Wouldn't it be great if more people learnt to be adaptable? Kung fu and its relation to other aspects of life and the individual can work in such ways:

It can improve the way an individual sees the world and others around them. It teaches them that kung fu transcends gender, race and status. It is well proven that women play a fierce role in kung fu, proving that the issue of size and strength is no barrier. The cultural or ethnic background a person is from has no bearing on the quality of the martial artist. The social status a person may have also has no effect on their martial arts skills. \* "A person can be from a poor background and work as a waiter yet their techniques are no less effective than that of a highflying executive." Also with new open mindedness in the new generation of martial artists, there is less hostility between different schools. In Bac Fu Do the practitioner is taught to respect students and instructors of other styles. Encouragement to see and learn from different martial arts is the basis of Bac Fu Do. Even though techniques differ in different styles the lessons and principles to be gained all flow along the same line. To improve the health and awareness of the individual.

The individual can sometimes be blessed with certain natural abilities. These are determined at birth through genes. Mentally, some people have the ability to learn quickly. For others it may take them a while to understand what is being taught. Physically a person may already possess good reaction speed even without prior martial arts knowledge. This can be gained through sports or other activities that require such movements. A person may be a natural at punching while another may be able to kick more swiftly than others.

In Bac Fu Do we train on developing a person's attributes both mentally and physically. Mental attributes may be the ability to perceive openings in attack and awareness of ones defence. Awareness in what is going on around them. The ability to be able to judge what is non-safe situation. Being more aware means that in the event of threatening situation the person can usually see the event unfold and take necessary action before it goes any further. This could mean walking away from a heated situation or if need be, being able to turn on their killer instinct. \* "It is best to be judged by twelve than carried by six" **Sifu DSA Crook** is a saying that is constantly repeated in the training halls of Bac Fu Do. Even though kung fu is a way of life and the benefits are good we are constantly reminded that what we are studying is a serious form of self-defence and if the need to use it arises we do so by putting 150% of ourselves into it.

The concept of physical and mental attributes is different in kung fu in that instead of treating them separately they are treated as a whole. They both supplement each other. Physical training teaches one to overcome inner barriers such as low confidence and self-esteem by using self-determination and perseverance. Kung fu is sometimes referred to as meditation in motion. The concept behind this is that when one is training in kung fu the sole focus is the technique at hand. All other troubles and worries seem less troublesome. Learning kung fu takes a lot of attention. A person doesn't have the time to worry about what they're having for dinner whilst trying to get out of chokehold or deflect a punch aimed at their nose. It also focuses around the "fight or flight" theory.

Before the involvement of money, work, lifestyle, self-image and other worries of the twenty first century. Man's only worry was shelter and food. In prehistoric times when man was challenged by it from beast or fellow man he had two choices to either fight or run. In either case most of the body's chemicals that produce the feelings of stress and anxiety are dissipated. If they fought the chemicals would be released. If they ran the chemicals were released also. In modern day however these same reactions and chemicals can also be released. Sometimes, many times a day in such examples as we are late for an important meeting, or the car won't start, we've lost the car keys, the boss is on your back, your assignment is two weeks late, your best friend is giving you a hard time or you can't decide what to have for lunch.... The list can go on and on.

Today's culture highly condemns any physical violence in the workplace, and it would not be wise to go for a quick jog in the middle of an important boardroom meeting just because it was stressful. Kung fu can be seen as an outlet to these stresses and aggressions. If trained regularly kung fu calms the system down, and makes it a bit easier to deal with life's up and downs.

Physical attributes include fighting traits such as speed, power, flexibility, co-ordination, and balance. "I'm too uncoordinated to start training"; "I'm too little I'll never be able to do that". "I'm big and strong enough as it is I don't need to learn how to defend myself." "I don't have any flexibility", these are all common excuses that are used when it comes to training in the martial arts. By training the body the mind will follow. "Healthy body = Healthy mind" is something people are taught from an early age. We are taught that exercise and healthy eating is a must and that slouching around and eating fatty foods will undoubtedly bring ill health.

By training our bodies it makes us more aware that maybe that big Mac and coke might decrease our performance or that if a person has three months off from training and just slouches around their performance will dramatically decrease. There are many health books about the benefits of regular exercise on the market. Depending on how seriously a person takes their martial arts training will depend on how much outside research they are willing to do. Some people only train twice a week in the training hall. While others might make it a lifestyle ambition and research the arts constantly, training six days a week.

The amount of training a person does is solely on the individual. In Kung Fu you only get what you put in. If a person only trains four hours a week that person will only be as good as what four hours effort a week can make them. In Bac Fu Do no one does the hard work for you it is an individual effort. Instructors can only show a person a technique, that person has to take the initiative and make that technique work for them. Another point to be added is there is no overnight success in the martial arts. Even masters say that they are still learning even after many years of study. Learning is constant in kung fu and is always evolving.

As students become instructors and the circle continues there will be constant evolving. In Bac Fu Do different instructors have different ways of teaching. Some might gravitate more towards different techniques while others might add their own interpretations on certain techniques. The instructor has then created their own style of teaching which works for them. Seeing certain techniques from different angles the student is encouraged to ask why a technique works and what makes it so powerful. Bac fu do students

are given the freedom to enquire. In other styles rooted in tradition this may be shun upon or even called disrespectful.

Answers from instructors like “This is done this way because it has been done this way for thousands of years, this is the tradition of our martial art and should not be questioned.” is something an eager student should be wary of. This type of enquiring is not an issue with Bac Fu Do students as it is a natural part of learning and understanding.

Bac fu do covers all aspects of combat and has a very solid base from which the individual can flourish. These aspects include one on one combat, multiple opponents, weapons training and defense against weapons, ground fighting and simulating fighting in real world surroundings such as public transport, crowded clubs or even while walking down the street. The student is trained to be proficient at all areas because if attacked the situation may include one or more of these aspects. A scenario could read as follows:

The victim is having a quiet drink at the local pub when in the case of mistaken identity a pre-empted attack starts on them. The victim tries to talk the situation through but because the attacker is intoxicated they don't let up. The attacker pushes the victim off his chair and onto the ground. The attackers friends sees a fight break out and because they are also intoxicated they decide to gang in on the victim. Beer bottles are smashed and the use of weapons such as bar stools and pool cues are used. The brawl gets ugly, leaving the victim fighting for his life on the pub floor. This is a worst-case scenario in which the victim may or may not have had martial arts training. Whatever the case the actions taken to get out of a situation would have to be realistic and effective. Fly kicking your way through a mob of drunken violent attackers would not work.

In Bac fu Do the students are taught that situations like this do occur and without the ability to defend effectively against such attacks the likelihood of escaping with your life is slim. With the modern day thug deciding to carry more likely weapons such as pocket knives, small clubs and other concealable weapons, aims of being able to protect against the samurai sword or sai seem unlikely.

In conclusion, Bac fu do and the individual are seen to go hand in hand, it is one the few styles able to accomplish this. It is versatile in that it can adapt easily to the changing times and also to the needs of the individual. Kung fu can be used also as a vehicle in overcoming one's inner hurdles. It is said that the mastery of martial arts is ultimately the mastery of oneself. Kung fu is different for everyone and Bac fu do allows the individual the take it to whatever level suits them.

#### Bibliography

\*As quoted by Sifu David Crook

Wilson, Paul. “Completely Calm” Penguin Books (1998).