

SAN DAN GRADE LEVEL

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS ON THE BIRTH OF SPIRITUAL AWARENESS

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Goal of Third Dan Student

To demonstrate the ability to manipulate and overcome opponents with minimal force, energy and movement during a 3rd Dan grading. Done over 4 deltas.

How do we strive to attain this degree of competency?

Let's go back to the beginning.

Martial Artist world wide would join a martial arts school or take the practice of the art itself for many different reasons.

Some join because they are timid and need confidence. Others start because they are bullied. More begin for fun and exercise. More so again for health issues and general well being , whilst others understand they are looking for something meaningful in their lives and have heard the arts are a great way to find it.

What ever the reason for beginning, the common reason for starting in the first place remains the same.

Each and every person is looking for EMPOWERMENT.

Empowerment in its simplest form is about the understanding of oneself. This is then known as enlightenment.

This however, comes in the guise of many forms and is achieved in a multitude of methods.

The most common method used is in the form of simple exercise.

Physical training. In the martial arts context.

Stretching, strengthening, repetitive coordination exercises, cardio work and so on. Understanding your body and the body mechanics is a must in the step towards enlightenment.

Thus we have established so far that in order to begin spiritual awareness there needs to be an awareness of the physical. Reading books on anatomy is a starting point. Knowing how the body bends and reacts to being struck in certain areas is a key element to being a good martial artist.

To know what happens to the body's mechanics and how it responds to being struck in the solar plexus will give you a better plan of action if you know how to follow up on the next technique. Each action creates a reaction.

This is important for especially a 3rd Dan student to know. Being able to incapacitate an opponent in the shortest possible time is essential to be able to do a group attack onto one person.

Studying through a short course should be a requirement for a student looking to undertake this grading level.

From white belt (beginners' level) to black grade (2nd Dan level) the training seems only physical to a student. However there is a certain amount of personal and spiritual growth along the way.

With Nidan training, it is required for you to push yourself constantly. Push yourself while running regularly to become faster each time. Same is said again to go a longer distance. This is the physical level.

What the student does not realize is that the spiritual journey has already been set in motion. It's just not as obvious.

The body continues to achieve greater times and distances only because the mind is telling it- one more step further/ get round this lap quicker.

The mind is driving the body because the goal is to become fitter. The spirit is the continuous driving force that eggs the mind to push the body, even when it wants just to give up and rest.

The spirit is the driving force, continually reassuring the mind that it must push the body to faster or go harder. As the spirit becomes involved and takes over. The body just goes into obedience mode and does as it is told.

So, at 2nd Dan you have harnessed your body's maximum physical potential.

You can now kick faster, punch harder, go for longer while being able to deliver power efficiently and effortlessly and seem superior in doing so.

Teaching.

Another Method used to gain greater empowerment on a personal level.

(Enlightenment)

When we teach, we can then, really decide as to whether or not we believe in what we have been taught and are now teaching our students.

If the explanation to the student is simple and the technique sound because it produces the desired effect we are looking for, we then believe the application or strike works.

To believe in what we have spent much time learning is important and the way to test this is by teaching it. As students pose questions as to the complexity of a technique, the need for a teacher to break it down to simple mechanics can then highlight the fact, as to whether or not the teacher understands the intricacies of the applications and techniques themselves.

More importantly does the teacher believe in it enough to teach it and stand by it?

To share knowledge and be removed of ego is important. For if a teacher is self aware only, this becomes shown through arrogance and ignorance.

In actual fact, such a display is really a lack of knowledge- because if they realized that everything they taught was discovered before them, they would then realize that the reason they feel something works for them is only because they have understood correctly. Nothing more.

Teaching should be a must for any student wishing to participate in a 3rd Dan grading, otherwise how would we then know what works for real and what is just a watered down showy display of crowd pleasing.

Studies on a deeper level involving energy.

This is new ground for most people and a necessity in a San Dan and above tool kit.

This area is vast and wide but the knowledge of energy in the human body and how it works is an important step into leaving Nidan mentality behind.

To know of meridian points in the body (the study of pressure points) will enable a martial artist on the know how, of how to overcome a much larger, stronger, physical opponent than oneself, and to be able to do so with particular effortless.

Striking the body on a physical level to gain a reaction is the first step.

However, directing a series of specifically targeted attacks to certain areas of the body, in a specific order to render an opponent powerless, with out drawing blood or creating bruising, should be the goal of any one above 3rd Dan.

The belief to be able to kick and punch your way through 10 opponents with nidan intensity at the age of 60yrs plus is completely ludicrous. The human body cannot sustain this type of intensive training or activity forever.

Therefore energy study is definite requirement.

Yoga.

Through stretching and correct breathing in particular postures (to attain maximum energy output, while remaining as efficient as possible so as to not exert excess energy where it is not required. This is an undervalued practice that every teacher should have some experience in.

Learning correct breathing not only promotes greater health and vitality, but also encourages a better energy path for our natural internal energy source to follow.

The mentality and practice of yoga compliments every thing our Kata and forms are about.

Having said all this, as a teacher it is important to have a certain amount of muscle and tendon elasticity so as to be able to perform at our maximum potential with out hurting ourselves. This information is then invaluable in passing on to our students so as to help them to gain the most benefits that they can from their bodies and training itself.

Remembering that, the importance of passing on all this knowledge is for a longevity and quality of life. We have as teachers and Senior students a duty of care to our students as well as to ourselves and family.

Nutrition

You are what you eat. That is the expression. This is very true and everyone and anyone seeking to attain an optimum output in their training should look at what they put into their mouths.

Knowing what is good for you and how the body uses fuel is important in the overall health of your body.

If the body is machine, then it must be run by fuel. What type of fuel do you require according to your body type, blood group and activity levels going on in your life?

Once again, longevity and quality of life is what it is about. Otherwise why exercise and eat healthily.

This should be a requirement for any teacher or senior student to know.

Kinesiology.

To understand the energy types and elements the internal organs belong to.

Including their relationship to certain meridian points on the body. This helps you to discover the existing operating energy sources in your body and how to work with them, instead of fighting them or trying to change them. At the end of the end of the day if a better quality of life is what we are all after through reaching a beginners level of enlightenment, then -

Understanding energy in our bodies is where our intentions should travel towards to. A cross referencing of information is what a 3rd Dan student should be open to.

Meditation.

What is meditation?

For some it can sitting in lotus at a Buddhist temple regularly.
For others it may mean having some quiet time to sit still and
Enjoy being outdoors in nature.

For others again it can mean sitting in a circle of like minded people
and doing the ohm chant together.

Meditation is all of the above plus more.

This is a regular practice in our karate classes both at the start and at
the end of it. However, for someone to become better at something,
regular practice is required. Why meditate?

Simple !

Meditation is

- Living in the present
- Sensing without words and in tune with the environment
- consciously absorbing in one activity

Meditation produces a state of deep relaxation where, unlike sleep,
your mind is wide awake and alert. Not only is it a sure technique for
finding peace and harmony in a troubled world, it will also allow you
to be more positive, more creative, more alive, more tolerant, more
able to cope. And of course, more calm.

A skill we need to have as senior students and teachers, so as to be
able to assist other students and family and friends alike. After all, if
we possess such skills and knowledge, isn't helping others what its all
about.

Assisting them to heal on an emotional level, spiritual level and physical level.

It is a simple exercise to do: still the mind. Once the mind is stilled, all the other benefits flow naturally, and of their accord. Through relaxation comes a loose, supple body. Proper lower abdominal breathing develops the ki to provide more power and stamina. Perhaps most importantly develops a calm, quiet mind that allows you to react with wisdom to any circumstance.

Seeking one on one guidance may be the way to go with a trusted practitioner who can guide you through personally.

Remember that when something does not seem to come about the way you want it, even though you try and try again, the message may clearly be to "Let evolve what needs to evolve and not interfere with the natural progression."

Enlightenment comes about through Constance as nothing remains the same. Once something is learnt, the knowledge can never be taken away. This is enlightenment.

All of this should be a part of any San Dan ho training as it is no longer the focus of physicality but a balance of all levels at all things of which lie beyond this realm.

Forever in learning,

Steeve Mackay.

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All-stars Martial Arts Academy.