

PhD SYNOPSIS

Cultural Transmission of Martial Art Studies in India:

Reception and Subject Formation

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By

PADMINI KHAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

KOLKATA – 700032

WEST BENGAL

INDIA

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Padmini Khan

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Synopsis:

The labels attached with 'martial arts' and 'martial artist' in the Indian socio-cultural context have varied across ages. During the Vedic ages, martial arts and study in the art of warfare was considered to be a highly revered skill in India. The Indian epics attest to the popularity of martial art training. For instance, Parashurama, Lord Krishna, Dronacharya, Lord Hanumana, Jarasandha were highly skilled martial artists and the martial traditions practised by them retained popularity in India over the ages. Even during the Mughal period, the Gupta period and during the rule of Rajputs, attaining knowledge in martial skills was a significant part of education in India. Later on, during the colonial rule, martial training was banned by the British because they did not want the Indians to form communities capable of protesting and revolting against them. In spite of the strict regulations imposed on physical cultures and martial art training in India, the Indians maintained secrecy while continuing with their practice in Akharas and samitis. Those who were found involved in training, teaching and learning martial arts and combat techniques were imprisoned and were tagged as rebel nationalists. So as we can understand, the study of martial arts in India has a paradoxical past. During the ancient times, it was a skill that had to be learnt as part of educational curriculum. The colonial rule in India made martial art studies take a backseat but after Independence, people from different sections of the society started showing interest in learning martial arts yet again. This was a result of globalization and the influence of action films, the increasing

popularity of combat sports, the impacts of cultural icons like Bruce Lee and IP Man in India and worldwide. Martial arts like Karate, Kung fu, Taekwondo, Krav Maga, Muay Thai started gaining popularity in India during these times and more people started expressing interest in martial art studies. Besides the reception of martial arts from Japan, China, Thailand, Israel and the USA, the sustained interest of people in martial arts in a culturally diverse country like India allowed the development of culturally rich, indigenous martial traditions across different states. In Bengal, lathi khela (stick fight) and wrestling were widely practised. Besides the prevalence of martial arts, martial dance traditions like Chhau and Raibenshe were also practised. In Kerala, Kalaripayattu has been in practice whereas in other states, we come across different martial traditions like Silambam, Kuttu Varisai in Tamil Nadu, Naga wrestling in Nagaland, Thang ta in Manipur, Pari khanda in Bihar and Gatka in Punjab and Haryana as well as yoga and meditation all over India. The practice of martial arts along with a study of healing techniques in the field of martial arts reflected the cultural transmission of martial arts in India. Although there is a long standing history of martial art practice in India, research has not yet been done in the field of martial art studies in our country, by people residing in India. Noted academicians and martial scholars like Philip Zarrilli and Roman Sieler had worked on the importance of Indian martial traditions but I feel that the representation of Indian martial arts and culture need to be discussed and researched upon, by Indians who have closely observed such cultural practices and have lived experience of the same. As an attempt to fill in the void that existed in the field of research in martial arts and culture, its reception and transmission in India, my thesis has explored the ways in which cultural transmission of martial arts has taken place in India. Reception and subject formation are addressed, while exploring the process of cultural transmission in the field of martial art studies in India. Literary texts, especially those belonging to the genres of folklore, mythology, graphic novels and children's literature and performances as well as oral

narratives of survival are deeply embedded into the consciousness of the masses, the identity formation through these texts regarding the reception of martial arts have largely shaped our subjective thinking. The everyday discourse revolving around martial arts, its practice, research and implementation in the present socio-cultural context of India is often derived from diverse forms of collective representation of the same, be it narrative, performative or literary. This thesis is an exploration and analysis of what the diverse Indian culture allows to be tagged as important and what it marginalizes, in the realm of the insignificant. This thesis has encapsulated negotiations between opposing elements in our perceptions of martial arts in general. A study of how transmission of martial arts takes places across cultures can further help us in understanding the mode of simulation that opens up the dialogic space between the licit and the illicit as well as the sacred and profane, between pure and hybrid, normativity and transgression. This thesis has also charted out the mechanisms adopted by the martial art practitioners in subject formation through knowledge acquisition about these arts. Cultural transmission of martial art studies in India is invariably dependent on the influence of sport, performance, texts, oral narratives and the lived experience of people, with regard to martial arts. The tools and methodology of Comparative Cultural Studies have equipped me with the necessary framework that has allowed me to make productive inroads towards exploring questions related to the ways in which cultural transmission and reception of Martial Art Studies have been taking place in India and also, its consequent impact on the formation of the subject.

Indigenous martial arts and related healing techniques have been in practice since ages but there has been little to no information about the development of martial arts training in India, the impact of the Indian martial culture on self development and the cross-cultural transfers which took place when martial disciplines from Japan, Thailand, China and other parts of the

world started getting influenced by the Indian martial arts and also started influencing the existing Indian martial forms. Cultural differences are inevitable parts of the Indian society and these inherent variations in vibrant cultural traditions make the traditions more valuable. In Bengal, Bihar and Odisha, there have been marked differences in the practice of the indigenous martial dance, Chhau and while such martial forms maintain differences based on their stylistics, technical details, mythical backgrounds in the context of performance, they strive to maintain as well as retain certain commonalities which set them apart from other martial traditions in India. Similarly, the wrestling practised in Howrah is largely different from the one practised in Varanasi. Even in other parts of the world, martial arts which have gained widespread popularity among the people, underwent required changes according to the needs of time, became flexible, introduced subtle modifications, while at the same time preserved their very own authenticity in one way or another. All over the world, karate is extremely popular among people because it is flexible and modifies itself to the requirements of the situation.

A study in cultural transmission of the study of martial arts in India is concerned with the reception, transmission, production and consumption of cultural forms, literary texts, performances, epistemologies and ideas across time and space. The intersection of arts, literature, theory and popular culture, within the context of the thesis, has been considered in accordance with the embodiment and ethnography of martial arts practice, with special focus on its cultural transmission in India, the politics of subject formation and performance in the martial art training and pedagogy. The transition from writing in and about the art form to that of sharing lived experience of the same has been explored. Various methods of ecological analysis and their implicit relationship with cultural practices in Japanese martial practice, as reflected in texts and practice are inscribed in the mode of reception across

boundaries of the nation. These have been talked about in the final chapter of the thesis to provide an eco-critical reading of martial arts.

Through the integration of the martial culture in India, varied overtones of the martial code of conduct, way of life and ethos have been found enmeshed in the cultural, performative and literary landscape of India. Embroidered by the culturally vibrant traditions of indigenous martial forms, martial training in India has assumed eminence. Being positioned in the cross-currents of Indian socio-cultural sentiments, this portrayal of martial culture has been exalted into a state of purity and reverence. The performative equation is embedded with the mellifluousness of different martial arts and martial dance traditions. The narrative becomes something which is not made overtly visible but asks the viewer to introspect upon the scene – a meditation that is forced by humans behind the guise of nature and the divine. The thesis has analyzed the academic essentialization of the incommensurability between the non-modern and the modern and the licit and the illicit, with regard to elements of cultural transmission and reception of martial arts in India. The tradition of the martial art and the related performance of healing can be viewed as a signifying system which can delineate conceptual categories about enchanted, sacred spaces of performance. Its alliance with discursive formations of Liberal Studies as well as Cultural Studies can also be charted out.

The thesis examines the inter-relationship between aesthetics and governance, the situation of body-politics and the extent to which it is allowed, both by the self and the state. Rituals and expressions in the performance have been studied as dialectic movements, as a rite of passage, in a pattern of separation and integration. The conceptualization of the liminal, in its understanding of the body within the performative arena, ritualistic, aesthetic or social has also been explored.

With this cultural belonging, Martial Art Studies has been ascribed an important status as cultural heritage in the Indian topos. More importantly it is embellished by the revered theory of the sociology of sport; a depiction of devotion towards disciplinary training and willing subjection to knowledge acquisition. For instance, upon delving deeply into the martial traditions of Chhau as seen in Bengal, Odisha and Bihar and comparing it with that of other martial traditions like Raibenshe, we see a convergence and a divergence simultaneously. The epics, folklore and myths are worshipped in these martial traditions of the respective regions.

Much of the internal world of the martial art traditions in India, in their indigenous and raw nature, and the stories of its native performing body have not been documented in detail, to help clear the air about subject formation and identity. Moreover, the concern of experiencing the synthesized life world in the context of cultural encounters could only be studied through the narrative of the martial body, involved in training and performance, through its history in India. The type of martial dance and martial arts that existed in the ceremonial milieu gradually stepped out of its initial setting in akharas, samitis and varied events for the advent of new areas of performance which were secular in nature. This opened up a two-dimensional approach. It was observed that martial artists went out of their home to acquire training in these arts, to teach the art in their new adopted habitat, but retain the strict principles of their own indigenous martial traditions, while others went out to seek secular spaces for entertainment, livelihood and acclaim in the field of sports. For example, the kushti practitioners who were, even then fostered in orthodox religious values, were lured into a new profession that of the art of exposure of the body in action in exchange for a living, and recognition, not by a spiritually charged audience, but a secular human congregation with differing agendas on the notion of the gaze. At present the question that is posed in front of us is whether there is a specific identity formation that is achieved through the study of martial

arts. With gradual integration of martial arts in the cultural mainstream, the identity of martial artists in India has gained more significance.

The core world of the autochthonous martial culture and martial arts tradition in India was regulated by strong foundations of ethical and moral values drawn from the beliefs and practices of the people. It manifests the torment in a calamity of a cultural being, where their martial art had been structured, its image framed by the contours of their memories of survival, related narratives and remembrances, their traditional knowledge systems, their thoughts and ideas in intense relationship with their own natural habitat and environment. It had suffered the weight of hegemony, an impoverishment of the inhabitant wealth through colonial imposing of rules against martial practice, exploitation and appropriation of available resources.

Stuart Hall argued while mentioning the prescriptive and descriptive nature of diasporic lives that carries the implication that modern identities actually work, in real historical time; they are not fashioned by blood or birth but are organized through the unpredictable contingencies of the human imagination (Schwarz, 2002). These negotiations form the crux of their distinctiveness. The ambivalences have shaped the notions of performativity as seen in the martial traditions prevalent in India. Through experiments in the theatres, action films, field of sports, the vision of the aspirants is signified by the use of the performing body, utilizing movements which are deliberately borrowed from contemporary body usage and behaviour, thereby re-structuring interstices and processes of performance, but at the same time freeing the performer's psyche from traditional orthodoxies and hierarchical values of physical cultures. It aims at some future state of freedom and emancipation, while envisioning respect and preservation of substantive values of identity and tradition, within the corpus of martial arts.

While situating the study of martial arts in India within Comparative Cultural studies, it is important to note that geography and history inform much of literature and performing arts, though their presence in Indian martial arts may strike us with singular force. When one does not have to travel very far in any direction to be confronted by land's end, a consciousness different from that of its regional assurance develops. This is not to say that the Indian mind in such case is provincial, cultivating suspended indulgence in remote luxuriance or that India is reserved for martial tourist traffic. Rather, the dwellers of this nation represent a scattering of people and their martial traditions throughout a culturally diverse scattering of states, with their own unique cultural practice. The awareness of the rich tradition of martial arts in India is therefore, immediate and historical. As a house meant for performers, indigenous martial arts like North Indian kushti, Naga wrestling and lathi khela have provided livelihood to many people. In its further reaches, these provided a wonderful platform for representing the page on the stage, for voicing the collective, creative concerns of humans that follow the track of martial performance aesthetics.

The variegated voices of the martial artists and performers reflect something of the history of performance, something of the landscapes, city-scapes, and human scenes that make the receiving regions of India a vibrant site of cultural assimilation. For a majority of its inhabitants the ongoing struggle lies in transforming history from a reality that must be suffered or endured to one that has been achieved through a greater degree of self-determination. Given the global nature of modern economic forces, and the tendency of multinational corporations to see the value of the region in terms of preserving the talent pool and low-cost centers for management of the same, such quest is likely to be epic in length. There has been an overlapping of motions from past to present and back to the cultural past, from the realm of the personal to the realm of the social, and finally from specific performative areas of martial arts, while we study the cultural transmission of martial arts in

India and the spread of Indian martial traditions to various corners of the world and back again to the centre.

The existing body of work related to Martial Art Studies is mainly limited to surveys conducted in Japan, China and the Western countries. Previous research in this area by Dr. Paul Bowman established performance based analysis of martial arts and its correlation with hybridity. In a globalized world, any form of art, sport and education can not solely remain rigid in its form. In order to create an impact on a larger audience, martial art, like any other art form, needs to undergo subtle changes in techniques, costume and application, scoring and grading mechanisms. Based on these findings and established viewpoints, I have devoted these six months to know more about how such changes occurred in India, with special focus on Bengal. During the course of study, I have been trying to understand the ways in which the styles and techniques of karate underwent specific changes, when it started getting integrated as a major art form, method of self defence as well as a popular free hand combat sport in the Indian society. I made the draft of the first chapter based on my understanding of how these changes operate in creating a major discursive space. In the first chapter of my thesis, I have tried to address this aspect related to the development of martial art training and studies in West Bengal. Studies associated with the analysis of theoretical and practical training of martial arts help us to understand that martial arts is much more than the disciplinary practice and knowledge acquisition in the art of fighting without fighting. This chapter seeks to show an inter-relationship between martial arts, performance, mythological elements, and cultural elements and even with fields like medicine, films and culinary arts; in order to arrive at an understanding of how reception and transmission of martial arts in India have been influenced by such inter-relationship. The first chapter has tried to focus mainly on the ways in which martial arts training and reception can be impacted upon, when studies in correlation with healing techniques or the field of medicine, the field of dance, music, films,

social media and culinary arts. It has tried to gain an insight into the ways in which the popularity of martial arts increases when the relationship between the art and artiste is analysed in an analogical, parallel relationship with the performance and the performer. Martial art is not just a popular sport but it is in reality, revered as an art and way of life. These aspects of martial training are actively addressed in the course of this chapter. The first chapter has attempted to find out how an inter-relationship between martial art training and different realms of performance like dance, music, staging of the art in films help in making martial arts popular in a socio-cultural setup. This further helped us to study the significance of martial arts in related fields of studies.

It has taken years of practice, performance, involvement and learning to understand and then represent the ethos of martial arts embedded in performance. Reception and cross cultural of transmission of martial arts styles like karate, kalarippayattu, yoga, lathi khela and other martial arts witnessed greater reach and cross-cultural expansion, when martial art is considered to be a field incorporating main aspects of performance, lived experience and ties with local cultures of people who are instrumental in the spread of such arts. An investigation into the intersectional domains has been conducted in this chapter. For the sake of better understanding, the first chapter has also analysed the influence of martial arts on related fields like music, dance, drama, mass media and apparently unrelated fields like cooking and medicine. The aim was to study and assess the importance of elements that go a long way in making martial culture popular in India. While journeying through the lived experience of martial art in different fields of study, it becomes important to state examples of its influence not only in India but also in other countries where martial art is highly popular. Reception of any art form cannot be thought of in a context that is completely separate from its development in the rest of the world. The main reason is that the Indian audience is highly influenced by popular practices of the western world as much as the western society gets

influenced by cultural practices that originated in India, Japan, China and other parts of Southeast Asia. The scope of Comparative Cultural Studies allows us to examine cultural practices from different parts of the world, study inter cultural similarities and variations; understand the layers of meaning contained in such practices across varied regional contours. So this chapter has also not only limited the discussion concerning the representation of martial arts in mass media across India and Japan, but also included related examples from Hollywood movies and games, developed in the Western world. Dissociating popular culture from the already existing mass culture required an inter-cultural mode of study. This chapter seeks to show an inter-relationship between martial arts, performance, mythological elements, and cultural elements and even with fields like medicine, films and culinary arts; in order to arrive at an understanding of how reception and transmission of martial arts in India have been influenced by such inter-relationships. There is an inherent need for inter-disciplinarity in the field of martial arts, especially when we wish to understand the ways in which reception and transmission of these arts get affected positively, due to the inter-disciplinary significance. In a culturally diverse country like India, studies related to the reception of martial arts along with the inter-disciplinary perspectives, contain metaphors pertaining to different, varied yet vibrant aspects of our culture, ritualistic practices and performance. For instance, apart from the significance of karate training as a popular sport (as considered by the World Karate Federation) and way of life, the performance of 'kata', 'kumite' and 'kihon' invariably contain layers of metaphorical representations which are tied to cultural elements. When we delve deeper into the study of martial arts in India and its consequent reception from the broader realm of performance, we find that there is a sense of belonging, across time and place, associated with these disciplinary modes of practice. The literary texts, medical treatises and film texts based on the representation of martial art performance in India seem to have direct or indirect connections with mythology,

performance rituals and even children's literature. These have already been embedded into the consciousness of common people since ages. So when we try to understand the ways in which martial arts including karate have been received in India among different communities, the representations of martial art by performers as well as non performers is very important. If we try to understand the importance of reception, production and consumption of martial arts in India, we can at first try situating this within the realm of culture and cultural capital. In simpler terms, the idea of cultural capital is that of a culturally specific competence, as a mode to acquire knowledge, power or as a resource in a social construct.

The self-justifying pursuit of perpetual self knowledge has been naturalized and ennobled in martial arts movies time and again. The love for the martial way of life requires one to be disciplined for the sake of exerting better degrees of control, not only on oneself but also equips one with an understanding of techniques executed by others (during team work and partner work). Moreover, the practitioners get to understand the subtle differences between domination and counter-play as well as the method of redirection of power and energy. While the play ethics of martial arts might include sport, on the other hand, it also encompasses other lucid forms, such as games of chance or imaginative role-play, shadow practice and reflex training. Its locus is not merely the playground or the dojo, where these artists can spontaneously invent any number of games; rather than the regimented playing field. I am not suggesting that there are essential disparities between the categories of playing, gaming, and sporting (even though some martial arts practitioners draw such distinctions from the perspective of the motif and major goals involved).

Resting on Michel Foucault's explanation on 'the means of correct training', the second chapter of the thesis has been an endeavour to explore the importance of disciplinary power, as is manifested in and through regular and systematic training of karate. With respect to the Foucauldian mechanics of power, knowledge and discipline, we can form a better

understanding of the diffusion and embodiment of physical as well as mental power in discourses revolving around the practice of karate in different sections of our society. In exploring the voluntary subjection of an individual (the subject) to disciplinary modes of training in martial arts practices, the ideas of attaining skills and mastery in these arts can be properly understood.

Little research has been done on the impact of martial art practice and culture on behaviour pattern, reflex improvement and identity formation of practitioners in India. To complete the second chapter of my thesis, it was necessary for me to find out exactly how the disciplinary training procedures help martial art practitioners gain knowledge and power and how such knowledge acquisition helps them in understanding not just power dynamics but also ensures discovery of unique styles related to individual purpose. In order to form a better idea, I tried to analyse the modes of cultural transmission and reception of karate as a major martial art form in Bengal.

The practice sessions and training camps at different 'dojos' helped me to form a detailed understanding of the intersection of theory and practice. It helped to rearrange the main tenets of the second chapter in proper sequence. This has further allowed me to write about the process of cultural give-and-take of martial knowledge between India and Japan. The learning method of any martial form extends to a process whereby the practitioners internalize the martial way of life, willingly subject themselves to certain disciplinary codes and learn to control the mind and body. Depending on the technical knowledge related to martial art training, I have tried to talk about the existing methods like 'ki', 'budo', 'zanshin' and their equivalent modes of practice which were already prevalent in Bengal. These terms added more importance to the already existing concepts like the 'kundalini' and urged practitioners to work more on improving their core physical and mental strength also talks about the ways in which the playground becomes a space of recognition for the team and the

individual who performs it. The knowledge that one has acquired no longer remains solely personal. During the process of rigorous training, only the senior belt holders get to know about secret, deadly techniques from their Sensei. During a performance, these techniques are definitely not showcased because common people may use it in disruptive ways. This difference between the knowledge gained during training and the part showcased in a public space is also equally significant. Interactions with karate students and the Sensei (teacher) during field work also helped me to analyse the modes of spread and transmission of karate in West Bengal as a major field of study. With the results of the field observations during karate teaching and karate practice, I have been able to find out the differences in socio-cultural impacts of karate training in different strata of society. Discipline, dynamics and discovery of the self are considered to be important in correlation with the martial artist's immediate social surroundings.

As a result of observations during practice and teaching, I have been able to revise and complete the second chapter of my thesis. I have tried to show how martial methods of training gradually started gaining popularity among educated circles of the society that had access to not just practice arenas but also popular media: action movies, graphic novels and related cultural elements. These were highly instrumental in the spread of karate as a highly sought after sporting activity. In Japan, karate initially emerged in the midst of socio-economic conditions revolving around crisis and narratives of survival. Somehow, during the phase when karate started gaining popularity in India, it was considered to be a 'high art form' (similar to high fashion) and the transmission of knowledge about karate stylistics, healing techniques, reflex training was limited only to a select few. With the rapid process of urbanization, migration, cultural transfers with regard to martial arts practice and globalization, there has been the emergence of a completely new and accommodating kind of sensibility among different sections of the society. More and more people now have access to

learning karate, even in regions beyond the main city. Urban areas have also become much more accommodating in their perspectives. It is good to see that the practice of indigenous martial arts forms like Chhau, Kalari, stick fight and wrestling alongside the practice of karate has been incorporated. This has further led to the growing popularity of mixed martial arts in urban spaces of experiential learning. In the next six months, I expect to learn more about these indigenous art forms. I would like to know more about the process of transition in an age when karate training, in academic and performative space, is getting glocalized.

The third chapter of the thesis has tried to focus mainly on the ways in which martial arts training and reception (with special focus on the Indian training scenario) have been affected during the global pandemic (March, 2020 – March, 2022). It seeks to gain an insight into the major changes made by martial artists in India, Japan and Thailand, with regard to curriculum, course development, training procedure and parallel methods to develop fitness. In order to combat the pandemic, restrictions were imposed by governments all over the world. This eventually led to the transformation and consequent modification of martial arts practice on a large scale. The purpose of the third chapter has been to find out how an increase in the digital mode of martial training affected practitioners from different parts of the society. This also helped us to understand what the post pandemic scenario of martial arts training will be. Depending on the response of participants, it was observed that the online mode of education changed the trajectory of martial arts training, in theory and practice. Departments of Cultural Studies, Liberal Studies, Physical Education and Performing Arts all over the world tried to include courses based on healthy modes of living, so as to help individuals boost their immunity. With the inclusion of such studies in the curriculum, martial arts training and related disciplines like yoga and meditation gained large scale popularity among the mass, especially in India, Japan and the US. Such knowledge was not just limited to online classrooms of the educational institutions but it was also made

accessible to common people. Digital resources in a way proved to be really efficient for those who could access such resources easily. Another section of society, the one that did not have access to such technology, started losing interest in martial arts. For them, there was a long gap in training and some of them could not really afford digital methods of learning.

During this phase, martial art training was practised in a hybrid mode, which consisted of both online as well as offline training. Reception and cultural transmission was noticeably more extensive, as compared to the pre-pandemic scenario. The incorporation of hybrid mode of learning along with the increased transmission of martial arts and alternative methods of fitness led to significant changes in the way in which reception and transmission of martial arts in India can be studied. Martial arts instructors have also changed and revised their curriculum in ways which would be helpful for online training. Theoretical lectures and discussions have now become more important. Knowing the 'bunkai' of each kata (application based explanation) has become a necessity, when it comes to online grading or examination nowadays. This has, in a way, made martial arts practitioners spend more time on books and media based on martial arts. Pilates, stretching and yoga practice also became more popular among instructors. While trying to analyse the response of participants, I have also relied on the theoretical knowledge related to the sociology of sport, treatise on yoga and available online material on action based video games.

Traditional martial knowledge was valued but it was seen that mixed method of online training gained prominence. Flexibility of such forms that allowed the combination with other forms became more popular. For instance, yoga emerged as a popular fitness alternative in most countries. It is easy to be implemented even in the educational and professional curricula. With regard to practical considerations of time, budget and space, karate training, yoga, kalari, tai chi and qigong proved to be highly beneficial. Sports can never remain unaffected by dynamics operating in different cultural spaces in which literary and cultural

experimentation is conducted, hence, the sociology of sports, dynamics of power-play in the study of martial arts and the impacts of inter-cultural elements also become other important areas of focus while conducting the survey.

During the preparation of the first draft of the fourth chapter of my thesis, I came in touch with martial art practitioners from India, Japan, Thailand, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Conversations with participants in the championships made me feel that the inter-relationship between Martial arts studies and Ecological studies needs to be addressed, if I want to justify the importance of a hybrid martial art like karate, one that has been received and assimilated into the Indian martial culture over the ages. Even when we were discussing about technical differences in the modes of approaching a fight (kumite) or a sequence of artistic steps (kata) or even the practice of basics (kihon), there was a reiteration of how these steps undergo changes depending on the ecological conditions of the practice arena.

So I started reading more about the history of Japan and the origin of samurai culture. I got to know about the transmission of martial knowledge from India to Japan by Bodhi Dharma. This made me think about the ways in which karate training is related to gardening. I had access to books like *Tales the Thangka Tell*, *Astra Charcha*, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion (1590– 1800)*, *Kamikaze*, *Cherry Blossoms and Nationalisms* and I finally started revising the first chapter of my thesis based on my findings about the link between two apparently dissimilar areas: Martial Arts Studies and Ecological Studies. Karate and gardening may apparently seem to lack a visible connection but there is definitely a subtle connection between the two. Extensive reading on the connection between the samurai and the ‘sakura’, between karate and gardening, or in a broader sense between martial culture and the ecological realm helped me to find out the connecting links between the first parts of my final chapter with the final part. The first half of this chapter introduces

martial art training that stood the test of time by virtue of its ability to adapt to minor changes. Karate training stresses on the 'no first attack' policy. It mainly evolved as a form of resistance and self defence. The main idea of this form of martial training is to adapt and develop the stylistics according to the changing needs of the time in which it is practised and also on the demands of people (practitioners as well the target audience) in the society where it starts developing. All forms of traditional art and performance sport initially remain resistant to changes but finally, such forms gain popularity and remain relevant only when the fluidity of the form reaches more and more people. When cross-cultural exchange of karate took place between Japan and India, it coincided with the already prevalent martial forms practised in India. While talking about the integration of this martial way of life in the Indian society, with special focus on Bengal, I have tried to focus on differences in the modes of training that happened due to transnational exchange of knowledge. In order to explain certain parts from this section, I have relied on the field work during training sessions in Kolkata, Thailand and Japan.

In the recent times, with the rise in eco-critical reading of martial arts, it has become clear that the martial way of life was never meant to be restricted only to the male domain. Karate training is not just about understanding power dynamics, strength training and reflex. It is also about flexibility, feminine energy, the flow of movements, redirecting the opponent's energy. So in the second part of the final chapter of my thesis, I have tried to talk about the connection between the warrior and the garden, the link between karate training and other arts (music, gardening). An eco-critical reading of karate training in Japan is based on the appropriation of the gardens (specifically cherry blossoms, in the Japanese context), its symbolism of rebirth, associations with fragility, production and reproduction by virtue of its link with rice harvesting. This carries forward the relationship of the warrior or the martial artist and the garden, but unlike the warriors of old, the kamikaze soldiers and karate-ka were

college and university students, most of whom had a sense of nationalism deeply ingrained in their psyche. The falling cherry blossom became representative of the soul of the falling soldiers who were given the false consolation that they would be reborn as cherry blossoms to be respected forever.