

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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Contents

Acknowledgements	Page
Introduction	1 - 25
Chapter 1:	26 - 67
The Art and the Artiste: The Performance and the Performer	
Chapter 2:	68 - 111
Identity and Subject Formation: Cultural Transmission of Karate in India	
Chapter 3:	112 - 154
Impact of the Pandemic on Reception of Martial Arts in India	
Chapter 4:	155 - 185
Martial Arts and Gardening: Understanding the Equation in Japan and India	
Conclusion	186 - 216
Bibliography	217 - 233

Introduction

This thesis titled, “Cultural Transmission of Martial Art Studies in India: Reception and Subject Formation” seeks to explore the transmission and reception of martial arts, its study and practice in India, by utilizing the field of martial art as a mode of investigation to delve deeper into the discussion concerning the academic and socio-cultural spheres and the domain of performance. If we need to critically immerse ourselves in a discussion concerning the cultural transmission of martial arts in a culturally diverse country like India, it is necessary to know about the existing martial traditions in the Indian society. It is also important to study the development of martial arts with regard to the interconnecting domains like ecological studies, formation of identity and subjectivity and an analysis of martial art as performance. The methods used to study cultural transmission of these martial arts ranged from observations and inferences drawn from experiences in the realms of the personal as well as the public, with references to the changes that occur with changes in spatial as well as temporal conditions under which martial arts in India can be further studied and practised. The experimental approach towards martial art based research in the field of academics and sport, aims at contributing to the field of Martial Art Studies and Cultural Studies, Medicine, Liberal Studies and Strategic Studies. Through an analysis of theory and practice, it hopes to initiate further discussions in this field; discussions concerned with the importance of martial art as a medium to address resistance, belonging, subject formation and practical strategies towards maintaining a healthy lifestyle and understanding the concept of secret healing methods which help martial art practitioners to overcome injuries.

Physical and mental wellness, cultures of the body, knowledge of the self, knowledge of healing mechanisms based on Ayurveda, yoga, meditation and indigenous martial arts formed part of the socio-cultural discourse in India ever since the advent of the Vedic and Puranic traditions. In the entries on explanations about martial arts all over the world, Thomas Green puts forward his observations regarding the same.

Practice of martial art was a traditional way of life. Informed by assumptions about the body, mind, health, exercise, and diet implicit in indigenous Ayurvedic and Siddha systems of medicine, rules of diet and behaviour circumscribed training and shaped the personality, demeanour, behaviour, and attitude of the long-term student so that he ideally applied his knowledge of potentially deadly techniques only when appropriate. (Green, 2001: 175)

Consequentially, the teachers in the field of martial art training were looked upon as people who could instantly heal, using physical therapy and traditional methods like acupuncture and bone setting.

Expertise in the field of martial arts demanded knowledge of the most vulnerable “death” spots (*marman* in Sanskrit) of the body (Zarrilli, 1992: 25) for attack, resistance or even for the deft administration of carefully designed healing and massage therapies. (Green, 2001: 17)

While exploring the ways in which issues like mental anxiety, well being of individuals and their self efficiency get impacted upon by martial art training, William Kenneth Knight Jr., from the University of New Orleans, stated his research findings in the field of Psychology, in 2021. His research findings can help us to understand the ways in which the study of the inter-connection between martial arts and the field of medicine stay relevant, even in the present times.

Research conducted in the field of medicine (National Institute of Mental Health, 2018) and in the field of evolutionary psychology (Buss, 2016) show that “for effectively controlling issues like hypertension and anxiety, involvement in exercise and physical fitness have indicated positive outcomes. Further research showed that involvement in the practice of martial arts demonstrated stronger, more positive results while battling anxiety, while compared to other physical activities and sports.” (Radochonski et. al., 2011) “Desensitization to conflict in a controlled practice environment, along with perceptions of social dominance through mastery of a field, could lead to a considerable reduction in the human stress response underpinning anxiety as a diagnosis.” (Maner et al, 2008) (Knight Jr. 2021: 1-2) (<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/2920>)

Healing techniques related to the study of martial arts in India have been in practice since the twelfth century. Green’s observations on the Kalarippayattu martial tradition of Kerala clearly reflect the tradition of martial medicine being in practice in India ever since the Vedic ages.

He further observes that Kalarippayattu was a martial form that was practised by most people who wished to learn techniques which can help in maintaining physical and mental wellness.

“Kalarippayattu was practised by both boys and girls, for general health and well-being as well as for the preparation of martial practitioners; the external body eventually should flow like a river.” (Green, 2000: 176)

This Indian martial art tradition thus developed as a method of transforming thought into bodily action.

Kalarippayattu is unique to the south-western coastal region known today as Kerala state. Dating from at least the twelfth century and still practiced by numerous

masters today, kalaripayattu combines elements of both the Sangam Tamil arts and the Dhanur Vedic system. Like their Puranic and epic martial counterparts, the Kalaripayattu martial practitioners traditionally sought to attain practical power(s) to be used in combat— powers attained through training and daily practice of the art's basic psycho-physiological exercises and weapon work, mental powers attained through meditation or actualization in mantra as well as ritual practices, and overt physical strength and power. Sharing a set of assumptions about the body and body-mind relationship with yoga, practice began with “the body” and moved inward through the practice of daily exercises from the early age of seven. (Green, 2000: 176 - 177)

Proficiency in the field of combat has always been a significant part of the educational process in our country, right from the early Vedic Age to the post modern age.

Historically each region of the subcontinent had its own particular martial techniques, more or less informed by the Dhanur Vedic and the Sangam traditions. Among those traditions still extant are Tamil Nadu's varma ati (Tamil; striking the vital spots) and silambam (Tamil; staff fighting), Kerala's kalaripayattu (exercises practiced in a special earthen pit called a kalari), North India's mushti (wrestling) and dandi (staff fighting), and Karnataka's malkambh (wrestler's post). Among these, Kerala's kalaripayattu is the most complete extant South Asian martial tradition today. (Green, 2001: 175 – 176)

These traditional Indian martial art forms, Kushti, Malkhamb, Silambam, Kalaripayattu, Malla yuddha find mention even in Indian literary, performative and cultural traditions. The Sangam literature of South India had clear mention of the practice of martial arts in India during the Sangam period.

Two traditions have shaped the history, development, culture, and practice of extant South Asian martial arts—the Tamil (Dravidian) tradition and the Sanskrit *Dhanur Veda* tradition. The early Tamil Sangam “heroic” poetry informs us that between the fourth century B.C. and A.D. 600 a warlike, martial spirit predominated across southern India. Each warrior received “regular military training” in target practice and horse riding, and specialized in the use of one or more weapons, such as lance or spear (vel), sword (val) and shield (kedaham), and bow (vil) and arrow (Subramanian: 1966, 143–144). The heroic warriors assumed that power (ananku) was not transcendent, but immanent, capricious, and potentially malevolent (Hart: 1975, 26, 81). War was considered a sacrifice of honour, and memorial stones were erected to fallen heroic kings and warriors whose manifest power could be permanently worshipped by their community and ancestors (Hart: 1975, 137; Kailasapathy 1968, 235) — a tradition witnessed today in the propitiation of local medieval martial heroes in the popular theyyam cult of northern Kerala. (Green, 2001: 173)

Literary and cultural traditions prevalent in India also attest to the popularity of archery, sword fight and spear training besides the popularity and widespread practice of Kalarippayattu and Silambam.

The only extant Dhanur Vedic text - chapters 249 through 252 of the Encyclopaedic collection of knowledge and practices, the *Agni Purana* — is very late, dating from no earlier than the eighth century A.D. These four chapters appear to be an edited version of one or more earlier manuals briefly covering a vast range of techniques and instructions for the king who needs to prepare for war and have his soldiers well trained in arms. Like the purana as a whole, the *Dhanur Veda* chapters provide both sacred knowledge and profane knowledge, in this case on the subject of martial

training and techniques. They catalogue the subject, stating that there are five training divisions (for warriors on chariots, elephants, and horseback; for infantry; and for wrestling), and five types of weapons to be learned (those projected by machine [arrows or missiles], those thrown by hands [spears], those cast by hands yet retained [nooses], those permanently held in the hands [swords], and the hands themselves). (Green, 2001: 173 – 175)

Clear references to the practice of martial arts can be found in the *Dhanur Veda*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Shastra shastra*. For instance, Parashurama, Lord Krishna, Dronacharya, Lord Hanumana, Jarasandha, the Pandavas 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*’. These 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 in India, the impacts 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.

Modern competitive sport was brought to India in the wake of colonialism, although some sporting disciplines – such as wrestling, for example – have along indigenous history. (Chaudhuri, 75)

In the fractured, non-homogenous space of cultural ‘modernisation’ as it affected not just the urban bourgeoisie but the rural poor and lower middle classes, the new sports of colonial India existed alongside indigenous forms of physical culture like wrestling, body-building and stick-fighting, which had always enjoyed a degree of aristocratic patronage, but were re-invented in the nationalist discourse of the early twentieth century. The *akharas* [gymnasias] and *samitis* [associations] set up in the wake of the nationalist upsurge of 1905- 06 in Bengal became hotbeds of radical politics advocating a new kind of *swadeshi* [homelandist] physical culture. Many of these organisations were inspired by the ideals of bodily cultivation (*anushilan*) celebrated in Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay’s classic novels *Anandamath* (1882) and *Debi Chaudhurani* (1884). In such works, indigenous sports are largely confined to wrestling and stick-play (*lathi khela*), and it is these, together with *yogasanas*, that came to constitute the core of *akhara* training, and to inspire generations of rebel nationalists. Yet they were also compelled to share the stage of nationalism with subaltern (in both senses) sports like football and hockey. (Chaudhuri, 76 - 77)

Noted academician, Professor Supriya Chaudhuri’s observations on the large scale prevalence of indigenous martial arts in India attest to the fact that martial culture has been a significant part of the Indian culture even at a time when the Indians were not even familiarized with cricket, basketball and other sports which are popular in the present times. The existence of *akharas* and *samitis* shows that physical cultures and indigenous martial arts were popular among the so called rebellious sections or “rebel nationalists”. Martial arts developed in Bengal as a major form of resistance against the colonial powers. Those who were found involved in training, teaching and learning martial arts and combat techniques, were imprisoned and were tagged as rebels. 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. While working on my M. Phil thesis during 2017 to 2018, I had realized the importance of addressing the power-play that is inherent in the practice of martial arts in South Asia. The thesis during my M.Phil research had explored the ways in which different forms of resistance are manifest in the practice of martial arts. As a continuation of the same, I have tried addressing important concerns in the field of martial arts in India. While working on my Doctoral thesis, I eventually figured out the ways in which any kind of research endeavour and writing about martial arts, its reception and transmission necessarily need to be written in a language that common people can understand. Besides the observations put forward by practitioners; observations made by non-practitioners and common people formed a major part of my field work and survey in the course of my doctoral work. My thesis is an analysis of the pivotal role played by sport and arts in martial culture, in medicine that developed as part of martial training, in narratives of survival that led to an understanding of martial art as resistance as well as its role in subject formation and in ethnography. An inquiry into the cultural transmission of martial arts is a step towards addressing the inter-disciplinary embedded in the study of martial arts. For instance, the intersectionality in martial arts can be understood when one addresses the changing dynamics of martial art practice in these realms: class, caste, gender and race and analyse the dynamics from an intersectional point of view.

Kalarippayattu in Kerala was mainly practised “by the Nayars, Kerala’s martial caste, as well as by a special sub-caste among Kerala’s Brahmans, the Yatra Brahmans; lower-caste practitioners known as chekavar drawn from among

special families of Tiyyas (a relatively low-ranking caste); Muslims (especially Sufis in northern Kerala); and Christians.” (Green, 2001: 176)

Closely related to kalarippayattu in the southern Kerala region known as Travancore, which borders the present-day Tamil Nadu State, is the martial art known variously as *adi murai* (the law of hitting), *varma ati* (hitting the vital spots), or *chinna adi* (Chinese hitting). Some general features of the Tamil martial arts clearly distinguish them from kalarippayattu—they were traditionally practiced in the open air or in unroofed enclosures by Nadars, Kallars, and Thevars. These are three relatively “low-ranking” castes of Travancore District. Nadar was used as a title granted to some families by the ancient Travancore kings. During the last few centuries, a number of Nadars in the southern part of Travancore converted to Christianity, and, given their historical practice of fighting arts, some claim to be from the traditional princely class (Kshatriya). These forms begin with empty-hand combat rather than preliminary exercises. Students learn five main methods of self-defense, including *kuttacuvat* and *ottacuvat* (sequences of offensive and defensive moves in combinations), *kaipor* (empty-hand combat), *kuruvatippayattu* (stick fighting), *netuvatippayattu* (short-staff combat), and *kattivela* (knife against empty hand). (Green, 2001: 177)

History of mankind shows that human beings have been persistently involved in wars and have devised effective ways of survival. As one of the major means of survival and resistance, martial arts and sports specializing in physical (armed as well as unarmed) combat have been developed. This was developed in order to prevent the opponent from attacking and strategic martial techniques were devised in order to defend individuals themselves, their communities and their nation from foreign attack.

Especially, hand-to-hand combat military skills are valuable history of traditional martial arts. As shown in *The Iliad* from Homer, Chariot races, Boxing, Wrestling, Running, Armed gladiator fight, Hurling pig-iron (shot put in contemporary era), Archery, Javelin were the eight matches (Moening, 2015) which are still practiced to this day. [...] As a guardian of war, soldiers had to prepare for war and cultivate combat talent even at peace. ('The Future and Prospect of Asian Traditional Martial Arts', 2000: 2 – 7)

Struggles to restrict opposing forces have remained constant throughout the ages but the method of fighting has differed across cultures, social strata and regions. The way of fighting so as to resist opposing elements was a significant part of the Indian society.

Most traditional martial arts that were certainly popular to the people in that era are losing their popularity and rapidly diminishing in the contemporary era due to multiple reasons. Especially, traditional game culture including martial arts in South Korea and other Asian countries has been disappeared through modernized wars and industrialization. In contrast to tangible assets displayed in museums, Asian martial arts and games are important intangible cultural heritage that are animate and must be transmitted to the future generation. ('The Future and Prospect of Asian Traditional Martial Arts', 2000: 2)

The academic endeavour on 'The Future and Prospect of Asian Traditional Martial Arts' upholds the observation made by noted martial art scholar, Allen Guttman, who stated that martial art practice and study "is one process of secularization, specialization and standardization." (Guttman, 1978: 7- 10)

Guttman, in his book, *From Ritual to Record*, stated that traditional martial arts from Asia have been striving to achieve globalization, by emphasizing on the

spread and popularity over regional communities. (Guttman, 1978: 17) ('The Future and Prospect of Asian Traditional Martial Arts', 2000: 7)

In this context, some of the indigenous Indian martial arts practice still remain enclosed within specific regional communities. It needs time as well as community initiatives, legislations and research to be acknowledged as part of the international martial art scene. On a parallel note, an article on the indigenous martial art forms like Silambam and Kuttu Virasai from Tamil Nadu and Gatka from Punjab was published in 'Outlook India' in December, 2022.

While Kerala's kalaripayattu and North India's traditional kushti are quite well known, here are some unexplored martial arts gems from across India to get you started on uppercuts and roundabouts. The true essence of martial arts lies in the journey of self-discovery that one embarks on—mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Above all, there are very few other sports that can teach you to kick ass and be badass at the same time. Mostly designed for self-defence, those trained in martial arts say that it empowers you with an unbreakable warrior spirit to conquer all kinds of adversities. More often than not, martial art is associated with karate, kung fu and Shaolin monks. But closer home, there are a variety of forms and techniques that you can dive right into when you travel to these states.

(Six ancient martial art forms in India you should experience, 'Outlook India', 4 December, 2022, <https://www.outlookindia.com/travel/6-ancient-martial-art-forms-in-india-you-should-experience-news-206256>)

Although India boasts of ancient martial art forms being in practice ever since the Vedic ages to the present times, one of the main lacuna is that most people do not yet know much about physical cultures in India. In China and South Korea, the significance of martial training was

acknowledged and military examination system had been strictly implemented through legislations.

In South Korea, the law to protect traditional martial arts has been enacted from March 28th, 2008. This law is a legislation to preserve and cultivate traditional South Korean martial arts at the government level. The purpose of traditional martial arts law is to protect and provide Korean martial arts. [...] In 2008, Japan introduced martial arts examination at middle and high school and it was mandatory for students to appear in this examination. Since 2012, the study in martial arts has been implemented in the academic curriculum in colleges and universities of Japan. ('The Future and Prospect of Asian Traditional Martial Arts', 2000: 3- 5)

The indigenous Indian martial arts like wrestling, Stick fight, Kalaripayattu, Silambam, Thang ta are unique in their own ways and practice in martial arts have proven health benefits as well. It is unfortunate that till now, there is not much information about these practices, with regard to cross-cultural transmission of these arts across different parts of the world, especially across regions like Thailand, Japan and China, where martial culture is embedded in the survival narratives, literature and culture for the longest time in martial art history. Perspectives towards martial arts and other popular sports in India are still guided by either good performance of sportspersons who are already involved in that particular sport or by an individual's personal goal towards self development through a systematic acquisition of knowledge and power and by public opinions formed through representations of these sports and martial arts on media (films, television, internet) and at times by the role played by regional, state and national clubs and also by the research conducted on these sports. None of the above mentioned processes have been well played out, when it comes to a discussion in the field of martial arts in India. Research has not yet been conducted on the significance of

martial arts in the diverse yet highly interesting Indian martial culture. Researchers from India have not yet participated in the discussion concerning how literature, culture, oral narratives, films concerned with martial arts are inter-connected and how these create an impact on and are in turn influenced by the reception and transmission of martial arts in India as well as in other countries where martial culture has been predominant for a long time. This is probably because of the previously existing gap between theory and practice of martial arts in India. During my twenty two years of involvement with martial arts, as a practitioner and instructor, I have been thinking about conducting research in this field and after locating it within the area of Comparative Cultural Studies, I thought of going ahead with my research and related field work. The idea of conducting research in this field was initially conceived during the phase when I was preparing myself for my black belt 1st Dan grading seminar. During this time, I had attended four different camps which were organized by instructors from four different countries; Japan, Thailand, India and the United States of America. They included new approaches to each and every training session from their own individual perspectives that reflected the cultural differences of training methods, of people belonging to different countries. For instance, Dave Hooper Sensei from Japan made us focus more on partner work, reflex training, stabilization practice (100 kicks with the same leg without landing the leg on the ground; 100 punches with the same hand accompanied by simultaneous waist movement for generating power and harnessing core strength). On the other hand, Dr. Jon Keeling Sensei from Massachusetts had a much more theory oriented approach towards classroom training. He wanted us to be aware of which technical application can be the most efficient at any given point of time and wanted us to focus individually on our own strengths. So in the previous training session, everyone was focusing on improving their basics with a focus on harnessing core strength but in the second session, individuals were asked to find out what they are good at and were asked to try that particular technique against all kinds of attacks.

This was based on the idea of playing up to one's strengths and overcoming the weakness by focusing more on the areas of strength. For example, when a senior belt holder asked Mr. Keeling whether he should practise kicks even as defense techniques, Mr. Keeling nodded in affirmation. He mentioned that if the person concerned was good at kicks, he or she could use a kick not just to attack (during sparring practice or kumite) but can also use the same as a counter attack and defense method. Timing would be important in that case. While attending the workshops organized by the Indian Sensei, we got to know about the mythological and cultural significance of the Kata like Jion, Hangetsu, Bassai dai, Tekki Shodan and the 'bunkai' of each of these techniques so that we can understand the context in which the Kata were conceived. According to the availability of infrastructure in the Indian dojo, there are certain slight modifications in dressing, stylistic renditions, warm up exercise and team work. After experiencing new approaches towards the teaching and learning of martial arts, I started looking up the theoretical background of martial arts and realized that research in this field definitely need to be carried out, firstly, because it can be a repository of information that is not yet available to common people who would have been able to improve their lifestyle if information could be accessed; secondly, because it can inspire people to learn martial arts and alternative fitness forms so that they can lead a healthy lifestyle; thirdly, in order to understand and analyse the ways in which reception and cultural transmission take place in the field of martial art studies in India by approaching it from an inter-disciplinary perspective so that it can be beneficial not just for researchers from the Humanities and Social Sciences background but also for those who want to conduct research on martial arts from the medical point of view or even from the cinematographic point of view. I hope that this thesis will initiate the discussion concerned with the study of martial arts in India and more people from different backgrounds will join in the discussion that will follow, after the work is done. That way, we will be able to contribute towards the development of one of the most neglected

yet prized cultural possessions of India. When we talk about cultural transmission, it is firstly important to mention that in India, there are variations in cultural practice across the country. For instance, even among the different tribes of Nagaland, in the north-eastern part of India, there are marked cultural differences. The martial arts and martial dances practised by the Konyak tribes (the last surviving head hunters of Mon district) are completely different from the martial skills imparted to the Angami, Kuki, Ao and Chakesang tribes in their respective 'morungs'. Although their martial culture is very different from that of one another, the main commonality that binds them together is their unity and respect for the art form. While talking to some of the performers from the Angami, Kuki and Chakesang tribes, during the Hornbill Festival, 2022, I realized that most of the martial artists and martial dance performers have shifted to different domains, with regard to their choice of profession because of the lack of proper financial and infrastructural support, lack of proper research on the importance of preserving intangible and tangible cultural heritage. The same holds true for the wrestlers who used to participate in professional wrestling in the past.

During one of his recent visits to Dimapur in August, 2022, Mr. Israel G Xuivi, the founder of Naga Kiti Do, an indigenous martial art of Nagaland, shared his views on the need to promote the state's indigenous martial art in the national as well international forum.

Sharing on his contribution to the martial arts fraternity, as the founder of Naga Kiti-Do, Naga indigenous martial arts, he commented taking inspiration from the traditional Sumi kick fighting sport known as Aki Kiti. Countries such as Korea and Japan are renowned for taekwon-do, judo and karate; he therefore recognised the need to promote Naga Kiti-do to the outside world. As well as being proud of the recognition that the indigenous sport had received from the International community. Besides revealing that he had given a traditional shawl and bestowing the title of Honorary Black-belt of Naga Kiti-do to Gerard Robbins, President of

Taekwon-do Hall of Fame. (‘Grand master Israel G Xuivi felicitated at Dimapur airport’, Morung Express News, 30August, 2022, <https://morungexpress.com/need-to-promote-naga-indigenous-martial-arts-xuivi>)

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. For example, a karate-ka who has been learning grammatically correct kata and kumite techniques at dojo will definitely not focus on implementing a co-ordinated set of movements, if he/she faces a situation in real life, in which instant knowledge of defending oneself is an added advantage. That is the reason why martial arts like karate and krav maga have been able to achieve transmission across cultures in India and all over the world. The widespread acceptance of karate in India is because of its flexibility to adapt to changes, according to the change in time, place and socio-cultural context in which it is introduced and practised. A detailed study of the development of sports in India attests to the fact that each and every sport that is popular in India at present had to go through a similar trajectory. It had to be flexible to changes, based on the ways in which it would be introduced and at the same time, had to

maintain its own originality. While studying the development of martial arts in India, I found a link between the artist and the art, the performer and the performance and within the context of this significant inter-relationship, one can easily understand the ways in which transmission and reception of martial arts occur in different parts of the culturally diverse Indian society. The first chapter of the thesis addresses this in particular. This brings us to the main research question of the thesis. So the primary aim of this thesis is to understand the ways in which reception and transmission have been operating in India, in the discipline of martial studies and training, while also focusing on an analysis of how the sport-performance binary, knowledge of the self in a martial space, emergence of alternative fitness reveal the extent to which these aspects of transmission get impacted upon.

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 first chapter of my thesis explores the ways in which martial arts, performance, cultural elements are interlinked and talks about the ways in which the study of martial arts holds equal importance not just in the field of sport, but also in the fields like medicine related to martial training and healing, action films, culinary skills, martial music and martial dance. This chapter equips us with research findings and analysis that can help us to develop a clear understanding of the trajectory of martial art training in India, with special focus on its eventual development and increasing acceptance in Bengal. This chapter addresses the inter-relationship between the martial art and the martial artist and helps us to locate their correlation in other related fields of practice.

While studying the inter-relationship between the performer and the performance within broader fields like films, music, medicine, I felt the need to talk in details about the ways in which cultural transmission of martial arts like karate, kalarippayattu and stick fight took place in our society. The perspective from which the research question is addressed in this chapter includes emphasis on how the subject's identity is formed, knowledge of the self is gained in contrast with knowledge about others and the overall discourse related to martial arts also finds mention. An application of the Foucauldian theory concerned with the formation of a discursive space combined with a Lacanian study of martial arts practice within such discourse helps us to form a better understanding of the subject's identity formation in the second chapter. The knowledge – power equation has also been addressed here. The scope of the second chapter has allowed me to delve into details concerned with the ways in which the subject who willingly subjects himself or herself to the disciplinary training of martial arts attain knowledge of the self, in parallel contrast with his or her

knowledge about other people (opponents, in case of martial arts practice). According to Antonucci et. al (2001), the process of interacting with other people can help individuals to feel more integrated in society, that is to say, interactions help in enhancing connections with family, friends and social communities, and it has also been observed that this kind of interconnection and integration can go a long way in improving one's physical as well as mental health. In a discursive space where martial art practitioners interact with their respective partners or participate in team work, reflex and speed based practice, they imbibe the values of social interaction, they learn to appreciate the self and the others and their overall physical and mental health improve. With reference to the Dojo Kun, the practitioners are expected to adhere to the rules followed in a Dojo. This further helps in the process of knowledge and power acquisition, identity formation of the subject through willing subjection to the process of disciplinary martial art training.

For the martial arts practitioner, tradition and history are certainly not *everything*. Indeed, such considerations are precisely *supplements* in the sense given to the term by Derrida: things from the outside that add to and add on but in a way complete and fill a lack. (Derrida, 1982:17) But, the *inside* of martial arts practice seems clearly to be identified with the practice itself – the *physical* practice – the training, the sparring – the *embodied-ness* of the practice. In other words, martial arts and martial artists do not in and of themselves need history. Grand historical narratives are not necessary to the legitimation and legitimization of martial arts. Such narratives primarily legitimate and legitimize other things anyway: institutional hierarchies, ethno-nationalist myths, nationalist structures of feeling, film fantasies, tourist industries, and so on. So, what does the martial artist actually 'need'? (Bowman, 2016: 915 - 933)

In the next half of this article, Bowman talks about the importance of performativity in martial arts and the need for practical training in the arts.

Lyotard proposes that the key alternative and major antagonist facing ‘narrative knowledge’ is what he calls ‘scientific knowledge’. Scientific knowledge, for Lyotard, does not depend principally upon narratives, such as history or lineage, for its legitimation – although narrative cannot be removed entirely from it. Rather, scientific knowledge is legitimated through performativity – through the performative, regular, stable, and predictable demonstration of efficiency and effectiveness. And I think that this provides us with the clue necessary for establishing the source of alternative approaches to the legitimation of martial arts: their performative efficiency. (Bowman, 2016: 928)

One of the objectives of this thesis is to study and evaluate the ways in which reception of martial arts and its subsequent spread or transmission have been taking place in different parts of India, with regard to Martial Art Studies. Yet another objective is to find out the changes that occurred in the reception of martial arts and alternative fitness during and after the Covid 19 pandemic. The devastating phase during the pandemic has brought about certain changes in the overall martial training scenario. Examining the difference in the ways of reception based on representations in popular media, games, literature, and medical field is yet another related aim of this thesis. Research had been conducted in the Western countries by Dr. Paul Bowman and Benjamin Judkins, regarding the impacts of the pandemic on the martial art scenario in the West but unfortunately, there has been no research on the post pandemic changes of the martial art scenario in India. The third chapter of my thesis seeks to study the impact of the pandemic along with its accompanying features on the overall development of martial arts in India. For instance, the resultant hybrid mode of learning, development of alternative fitness styles, increasing popularity of yoga and meditation, recognition of Indian

martial arts and yoga all over the world, are discussed in this chapter. I hope that this chapter will help us to understand the future trajectory of martial arts in India and it will hopefully help others to initiate further work based on the study of physical cultures and Martial Art Studies in India. Pramod K. Nayar observed that the attempt, “to move beyond the traditional humanist ways of thinking about the autonomous, self-willed individual agent in order to treat the human itself as an assemblage, co-evolving with other forms of life, enmeshed with the environment and technology.” (Nayar, 2014: 4) In the course of martial art training and pedagogy that has been included in university classrooms (in Japan, South Korea, Thailand and China), it is also extremely important to study the nuances in the inter-relationship between martial arts and our natural environment. The final chapter of the thesis seeks to provide the background and context in which martial arts developed in India and Japan and how the ecological perspectives got connected with martial culture.

The human as a dynamic hybrid in critical post-humanist thought focuses not on borders [for example, between the human and non-human] but on conduits and pathways, not on containment but on leakages, not on stasis but on movements of bodies, information and particles all located within a larger system [...] Both biological living and subjectivity are “emergent” conditions, the result of dynamic interactions. What is “natural” to the human is, therefore, *the product of nature culture in which materials (bodies, both human and non-human), immaterial (information, data, memories) and the hybrid dynamics – flows, processes – linking these constitute the human even as the human is instantiation of this hybridization.* (Nayar, 2014: 10)

It is necessary to understand the implicit importance of the inter-relationship between the human and the non-human world, with regard to Martial Art Studies, if we want to understand the processes of cultural transmission of martial art training and development in

India. This thesis seeks to explore and analyse the negotiations between apparently contradictory elements in our understanding of martial arts, its study and disciplinary training process, in general. Detailed study of the process in which transmission of martial arts takes place across cultures can equip us with a better understanding of the mode of simulation that can initiate the discursive arena between what is considered to be lawful and unlawful as well as the holy and the unholy, between homogenous and heterogeneous and also between what is considered normal and opposing normalcy, in the field of Martial Art Studies, in the Indian realm and to a certain extent, in the South Asian martial training context. This thesis will also chart out the different mechanisms adopted by the martial art practitioners in training, while subject formation through knowledge acquisition about these arts is addressed. 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 has been taking place in India and also, its consequent impact on the formation of the subject.

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Chapter 1

The Art and the Artiste: The Performance and the Performer

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. The first chapter of the thesis 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. In the next chapter, the focus with regard to the reception and transmission of martial arts in India will be narrowed down and it will focus mainly on the training in karate and indigenous Indian martial forms but in this chapter, we will take into consideration martial art training from a much more extensive perspective. The main reason for extending our emphasis from one martial art form to a combination of related martial art forms in general in the first chapter is that, during fieldwork and survey, I realized that most of the practitioners and non-practitioners have started training in one or more martial art forms or have started focusing on alternative fitness since 2020 (ever since the pandemic made us look for fitness training options which could easily be practised even in minimal indoor set ups). Moreover, the importance of Indian martial arts and yoga has increased much more in the last two years. This is yet another reason for the expansion of our focus from karate to different existing martial art styles in India. Now, before we move on to the main objective of this chapter, we need to understand the profound nature of martial arts which, for instance, finds proper mention in works like Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon*. Dr. Paul Bowman has pointed out that the myths and messages of the discourses and texts of martial arts often insist that there is indeed more to these fighting practices than fighting. He goes on to ask questions like "What more is there to martial arts than fighting?" He further mentions

that the martial arts practice sessions usually consist of long, strenuous training sessions, “without any actual fighting on the horizon”. In that case, what exactly is it about martial arts that make it an intangible cultural form and valuable source of knowledge? In order to find answers to such questions, Dr. Bowman further goes on to explain “martial arts” as a field of study that encapsulates inherent, self-contradicting dualities. Previous work in this regard by noted academician Stephen Chan, shows that during his involvement with “a UNESCO survey of the world’s martial arts” , they had to leave the project mid-way “because the various authors could not agree on the nature of the project.” They could not come to a common agreement about a working definition of martial arts. Taking this point into consideration, Dr. Bowman has observed,

The UNESCO group was unable to agree on *how* to conceive of the martial arts: how to contextualize them, how to establish and assess their limits, their “essence,” and indeed how to ascertain what constitutes their “reality.” They were especially unable to agree on whether the “reality” of martial arts should include or exclude the myths, fictions, fantasies, and fabrications that constantly blur the edges and muddy the waters of this subject. (Bowman, 17)

Stephen Chan’s viewpoint that “mythology plays a large role in the internationalization of Japanese martial arts” was not well accepted by some of the other authors who did not accord much importance to mythological, historical and cultural elements. They were also part of the same UNESCO group. Chan mentioned, “little progress seem[s] possible in separating histories from mythologies” , when we are engaged in the study of martial arts. While addressing this inherent complexity and difference in approach towards martial arts, Dr. Bowman has clearly explained why inter-disciplinarity is important in our in-depth study of martial arts.

So, in order to try to adequately or exhaustively approach and to attempt to understand *fully* what martial arts “are,” one must seemingly cover a vast interdisciplinary breadth. For, to grasp the “whole truth” would seem to demand mastery of realms as diverse as

archival research, history and historiography, translation, comparative philosophy, culture and religion, psychology, sociology, political economy, marketing, aesthetics, politics, cinematography, and popular culture, to say the least.

Given the multiple dimensions of “martial arts,” the question is: what sort of a paradigm could possibly hope to be adequate to the task? The problem here is that any approach will privilege certain dimensions and subordinate, be ignorant of or otherwise exclude others. Every version of “inter-disciplinarity” cannot but be led by a *particular* disciplinary preference, and so will differ from other possible versions of inter-disciplinarity, and therefore produce different (often utterly contradictory forms of) knowledge. Omniscience is not possible. Every account or manner of “understanding” will be enabled and limited by a particular partial bias. (Bowman, 18)

Now that our understanding of the need for inter-disciplinarity in the field of martial arts is clear, let us try to find out the ways in which martial arts and other fields of study and practice are interrelated and how exactly such interrelations help in the cultural transfer, exchange of knowledge and reception of martial arts in India. 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 "power" or as a "resource" in a social construct. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the most elementary characteristic of cultural capital lies in its embodiment. Hence, the acquisition of cultural capital requires one to invest time. Bourdieu further mentions that it can also be found in an "objectified form", that is to say, in a way which focuses on the creation and consumption of objects and even acquisition of knowledge. At times, it may also appear in an "institutionalized form", that is, in the form of educational credentials. (Bourdieu, 1986: 240) "The social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than cultural capital". (Bourdieu, 1986: 245)

Bourdieu had asked researchers in the field of Social Sciences to use the framework he made, as a way to study *practice* and 'trace out operant social mechanisms' (Wacquant, 2011: 82). From my position as a researcher in the field of Comparative Cultural Studies and Martial Art Studies, I have tried to place Bourdieu's framework in the context of martial art practice. The context of martial arts in India, as I have understood from my lived experience as a practitioner and instructor in this field for twenty two years, can provide us with the structure that can help us to find an application of Pierre Bourdieu's notions of *habitus*, *field* and *capital*. Martial art practitioners can be thought of as participating in a *field* of martial arts. Karate, judo, kalaripayattu, stick fight, silambam, krav maga and other existing martial forms can be thought of as *subfields*. Each of these forms will have their own rules and protocols.

An attempt to transition from the broader field to a particular subfield reflects a 'genuine quantitative leap' (Thompson 2008: 73), both as a social researcher and practitioner. Belief in and an approach to the field and subfield occur through an individual's participation in a specific activity (in this case, martial art practice). This in turn, allows one to explore the possibilities offered by this activity from "a filter through which all future experiences will pass" (Cushion *et al.*, 2003, p. 218). According to Bourdieu's theory, there is a direct inter-relationship between practice, field and habitus and these contain socio-cultural implications. Therefore, martial art training as a field consists of core values and it is grounded in the broader culture of practice (Saury & Durand, 1998), which leads to the eventual formation of social conditioning (Light, 2011). Langer further reinstates that any systematic practice 'while composed of individual members, has a structure, a history, a way of understanding the world and an institutional culture' (Langer, 1992 p.72). The construction of habitus takes place over a span of time. This happens through the participation of individuals in the practice of a particular social or cultural field. Furthermore, habitus is the mode in which the socio-cultural history of an individual can be appropriately expressed. (Light & Evans, 2011). Since habitus functions at the level of the non-conscious so as to direct and structure action, the social as well as cultural experiences deeply influence individuals.

Martial art training is an embodied experiential field of sport practice and performance. The opportunity to reflect on "bodily habitus" (Wainwright and Turner, 2003: 6) can help us to gain a deeper insight into the field of bodily culture or physical culture, the subfield related to martial training and the factors enabling the spread of physical culture. An inter-connection between the fields of sport and performance can play a significant role in shaping our subjective thinking about the importance of martial arts in the Indian socio-cultural scenario. If one can study and understand the impact of such thoughts in an immersive cultural environment with respect to the reception of karate in our country, the changing dynamics of

reception and transmission can be properly analysed. A person who is actively engaged in the performance (Martial Art Studies, in this case) will interpret the nuances of reception from a perspective that is quite different from the perspective of the non-performer, or a person who is indirectly instrumental in the spread of martial art, but is not directly involved in the same. By comparing and combining these multiple perspectives, the final chapter of this thesis expects to gain a deeper insight into the role of martial arts as performance and the impacts of this role on its consequent reception in different parts of India. Martial performance is directly connected to cultures of the body. This had always been part and parcel of the Indian life. The discourse revolving around bodily cultures had been predominant in Sports, Literature, Cinema, Defence, Medicine and other Arts. Naturally, if a study can be conducted on major productions associated with martial arts in these varied fields, the presence of martial art training as part of the study in cultures of the body can be easily traced in India. Prevalent motifs related to performance of martial arts can also be noticed. Practitioners as well as non-practitioners of martial arts have successfully used the performance point of view in their practice, texts, films and games.

The first chapter of my thesis will try to trace the flow of reception and transmission, based on interlinks between martial arts and related fields of practice, within the area of Comparative Cultural Studies. The interaction between practice and field is inevitable, if we consider the creation of a training habitus: this is one of the major elements of Bourdieu's concept. Considering that our main field in the context of practice is martial arts and habitus is the martial training, if there is an intersection between different fields like medicine, culinary arts, dance, music, films, will reception and spread of martial arts in India be more extensive? The chapter seeks to find an answer to this question.

The formation of practice, field, subfield and habitus occurs through an interwoven procedure that embodies itself in the individual, that is, the body is in society and the society is in the

body (Wacquant, n.d), which further leads to the formation of corporeal knowledge (in which social and cultural elements get staged through the body, in conscious or unconscious ways). The importance accorded to the main theme of the bodily cultures with regard to performance is reflected in books on Indian martial arts. For instance, *The Wrestler's Body* (Alter, 1992), *When the Body Becomes All Eyes* (Zarrilli, 1998) and *Astra charcha* (Ray and Bhattacharya, 2015) focus on the Indian Kalaripayattu, wrestling from North India and lathi khela, wrestling, karate from Bengal respectively. Engagement with the concerned martial art has been associated with the thematics of performance and embodiment of the self through performance. Such anthropologists immersed themselves in the lives of indigenous and formerly colonised people and started to learn their languages, but also their religions, customs and rites.

It is clear, then, that the field of martial arts and martial arts ethnographies had expanded rapidly in terms of topics, methods, theories and concepts and the disciplinary backgrounds of the researchers. They are well informed by the anthropological, philosophical and sociological theories of Bourdieu, Elias, Merleau-Ponty and Mauss, as well as specific theories of the specific cultures in question. Together, martial arts ethnographies are largely written by both academics and practitioner-researchers, with an interest in the day-to-day practices of teachers and students of various arts across the world. They provide an insight into embodied learning and enskilment, body and bodily culture, spirituality and religion, pain and violence and a host of other topics. (Jennings, 7)

Marcel Mauss (1872 – 1950) was one of the first anthropologists who talked about the importance of ‘techniques of the body’. He states its importance in varying cultural contexts. He opines: “I believe precisely that at the bottom of all our mystical states, there are

techniques of the body which we have not studied, but which were perfectly studied by China and India, even in very remote periods.” (Mauss, 25)

When inter-cultural transfers of martial art practices like karate take place between India and Japan, the form and stylistics undergo subtle changes with the change in cultural practices, across time and space. Karate taught and practised in Bengal and other Indian states have been a combination of indigenous martial dance performances and an import of authentic, Okinawan karate. Similarly, the karate taught in Japan, the UK and other parts of the world are permutations and combinations of their own indigenous styles along with the impact of yoga, tai chi, kalaripayattu and other martial forms. Every time a performance narrative is examined, we find an overlapping of cultural and ritualistic elements. Such constant transformation of martial art styles in multi directional methods brings us to the point concerning influence and reception. The Indian martial art practitioners who migrate to Japan not only start situating their core martial training within the Japanese cultural context but the Indian-ness of their martial styles also influence their overall training scenario in Japan. Similarly, karate practitioners and martial art enthusiasts migrating or even travelling for a shorter time span, from Japan and other parts of the world to India, not only influence the ongoing modes of practice in our country but they themselves also get influenced by the vibrant Indian culture and traditions in which martial arts studies get located. To a great extent, people who are directly or indirectly involved with the practice play a major role in making the society more receptive towards the learning of a new form of knowledge (martial arts, in this context).

Movement, like food and sex, may be universal, but its varieties and meanings are best illuminated through the Humanities and its cross-cultural diffusion and adaptation are best understood with Social Sciences. Investing movement with meaning and values has always been the work of culture: from body language, to

religious rituals, to sexual behaviour, to dance, sport and exercise. All of these are shared by Western and Asian cultures (and mostly by other species) and although it is difficult to find analogues in the West for yoga, qigong and martial arts, it is equally hard to find Western intellectuals who have not tried them.”

(Murdock, 1994: 16)

Martial arts and martial dance forms have been important tools of communication and community building in India since ages. There has been a very close connection between Martial Arts Studies and Martial dance forms like Chhau, Raibenshe, Dandi and Kalari. So the importance of music and dance in this regard can already be traced back to the mention of Indian martial art traditions in works like the *Dhanur Veda* and the *Puranas*. The ways in which prolonged craftsmanship in these fields of performance help in overall construction of the martial artist's identity is not just tied to the local cultures but at the same time, it is also influenced by other cultures in which these practices are popular. So there is a clear reflection of the Zen lifestyle in the karate practised by Indians. Similarly, cross cultural exchanges show that there are visible strains of the *Dhanur Veda* from the *Agni Purana* and Tamil Dravidian traditions in the practice of martial arts like karate, jeet kune do and jujutsu in Japan as well as the UK. These transformations in multiple directions have been made possible only due to the impacts of performance on mass culture of the region concerned.

Martial art studies (in karate, kalarippayattu, jeet kune do and wrestling) have been successful in sustaining the interest of its audience in India for more than 70 years. This would not have been possible if the only mode of knowledge exchange between two different cultures bordered on the spread of theoretical terminology and disciplinary training. Ongoing reception reinstates the fact that the momentary interest sparked by action sequence needs to be sustained by placing this value added endeavour within the broader domain of performance. Performance is the best mode of non verbal communication. Reception and

transmission of martial arts forms in India occur at a greater rate only when more people can be made to realize that they either get to learn something valuable or be entertained. When we are talking about active engagement of the art form with more people, with a view to enhancing the reach of that field of study, we are not just talking about people from the urban areas who have easy access to action based video games, anime, manga, the latest action movies or the recent online resources. Such people form only one part of the entire Indian population. The majority of people in India still belong to the middle class stratum. Most of them do not have access to basic resources. So it will be quite illogical to even expect that a tutorial video on self defence will be able to create an influence on them. They do not even understand the language in which these online materials on karate, judo and other martial arts have been made accessible to the more privileged social strata. At such a critical juncture where more than half of the population either do not have access to online resources, print media and social media or do not understand the language of instruction; it comes really important to think about expanding the scope of cultural transfer through the field of non verbal modes of communication. Thus, performance ethnography becomes important in this regard. In the field of social science research that involves participatory involvement and qualitative analysis in emerging, comparatively newer areas, performance ethnography has gained significance. This is because of an increasing need to find research methodologies that can be practically applicable and helpful in daily life (Alexander, 2005; Finley, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

By conducting research in the everyday realm of human experience, performance ethnography actively challenges the validity and effectiveness of traditional methods of social inquiry that conduct research from the outside looking in and where researchers are far removed from the subjects of inquiry (Denzin, 2003).

Alexander (2005) and Denzin (2003) further emphasize the need for effective research methods based on the idea that social change comes from within society rather than imposed from without. In this capacity performance ethnography acts as a social conscience and tool of liberation gravitating away from the academic notion of research grounded in facts and science and toward research situated in the midst of human experience.

This type of research calls for a shift in skill base from what was previously expected among social researchers including the cultivation of imagination, perception, qualitative interpretation and artistic skill mastery (Finley, 2005). This shift in skill base not only complements established forms of quantitative and qualitative research it acts as an important catalyst to evolving values for diverse research methodologies in our academic institutions. (Oberg, 2008: 3)

“Using the framework of the arts, performance ethnography invites people into dialogue, the essential ingredient for facilitating socio-cultural change. From an academic perspective this method of inquiry brings research alive, translating theory into practice among ordinary people and everyday experience.” (Oberg, 2008: 3)

For instance, the Chhau practitioners of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha have keen interest in learning karate and other martial arts but they do not have the privilege to access basic education. They rely on folk knowledge, oral familial traditions, knowledge passed on to them by their ancestors, who had been performing Chhau for the last few decades. Even as we notice their performance, we find that they know the mythological backgrounds associated with their martial dance presentation. Even in the present times, when we see such folk forms of knowledge being represented on national and international platforms, the mythological elements derived from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are preserved. Literary texts,

performance and martial arts get interweaved into the overall cultural presentation. On the other hand, we also find certain representations that transcend the existing boundaries of knowledge on which Chhau and Raibenshe performances were originally based. The simple reason for this again is to increase the engagement of the audience in a performative experience with which they themselves can relate. For example, the performances of Chhau by Bhramarshi Bharadwaj and his team on international stage are based on productions of Macbeth, the life of Buddha and other pieces with which the international audience can relate. The same team performs Chhau on popular Bollywood songs like Ghungroo and Malhari, when Bharadwaj, under the supervision of Vaibhavi Merchant, choreographs sequences to cater to the entertainment value of the Indian audience. What we can understand from here is that when an art form is flexible enough to culturally blend with existing forms of knowledge, more people from different sections of the socio-cultural strata show an eagerness to know more about it. Raibenshe performers from Murshidabad who could not adapt to changes have not yet been able to gain access to the international platform. Art forms which accept changes in accordance with the changes in the demands of their target audience are well received in society. Others which prevent heterogeneity face the risk of becoming either redundant or not relatable.

However, in the present globalized world, the importance of digital technologies cannot be denied, especially when we are considering the transmission of Indian martial arts from India to other parts of the world. It is not merely enough to consider the disciplinary aspect of martial arts from a linear point of view but the audio visual aspects should be given equal importance, when we try to analyse reception and transmission of any performance (martial arts studies, in this context). Parallel interplay of images, audio and texts can increase reception to a great extent. (For example: In the fields of Cinematography as well as in emerging fields like You Tube storytelling, story boarding, documentaries and video making)

People who might not even have the slightest probability to meet under any situation start sharing a sense of community due to bonds based on certain degrees of shared cultural practices, similar performance based identities. In describing the nation as an imagined material construct, James observes that ‘members of even the smallest nation will never even know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (James, 1996: 6)

Based on Geoff Sharp’s postulations about “extended forms of the social”, in the contextual discussion of the construction methods of cultural identities through assimilation of cultural practices in a globalized era, Paul James (1996, 2006 a) talks about four different levels of social integration:

- i. The face to face: interactions which take place in the tangible domain, focuses on embodiment and addresses cultural identity. Martial art culture and knowledge based on folk practices and tribal culture are examples of face to face level of social integration.
- ii. The object extension: This level of integration tries to draw attention to the ways in which certain objects are capable of bringing people from different regions together. Such objects can be used to denote personal belonging or experience. These can also be markers of the sacred in cultural practices. At times, such objects can also be commodified. The musical instruments accompanying martial art performances form part of this level in which the instruments as objects related to the cultural practice of the martial art bring communities together.
- iii. The agency extension: This is concerned with the extension and final mediation of socio cultural meaning through the role played by institutions. For example, institutions like the dojo bring people together. During online practice sessions, people who do not even know one another are also brought together because of their

institutional commonality. Similarly, the state can also act as an agency in furthering reception and transmission of martial arts. In fact, through the inclusion of self defence in the Indian educational space, the state extended its agency.

- iv. The disembodied level: This form of integration in society refers to the ways in which recent technological developments help people from different backgrounds to be involved with their chosen area of interest in a way that is focused on virtual interaction and is completely opposed to face to face interaction.

All these above mentioned methods of social integration need to be considered when we are attempting to study the reception, transmission and popularity of martial arts as performance and the ways in which martial arts get represented through performance in our contemporary society.

Elements of Music and Dance in Martial Arts

The process of real life combat is actually “more chaotic than either the studied rhythms of training or the neatly written description thereof, so fighters do not often get a chance to think about what they are doing during an altercation.” (Funakoshi, 7) In reality, there is a greater reliance on the different sequences of movement and timing patterns that have been implemented into martial arts, through regular practice and diligence (Spencer 2009; Wacquant 2004). Devising proper strategy, therefore, is an undeniable feature of logic used in practical combat because “A particularly clear example of practical sense as proleptic adjustment to the demands of a field is what is called, in the language of sport, a ‘feel for the game’.” (Bourdieu 1990: 66). Francis and Mary Kozub (2004) have further added that a better understanding of the defense and attack mechanism is possible when an individual devises his or her own strategy, depending on individual pace, movement pattern and speed. In order to effectively understand movement, rhythm and pace, knowledge in music and

dance can be really useful. While researching on the inter-connection between combat sports and rhythmic aspects, found that academic sources and even popular sources did not have much to offer. He opines that this preliminary exploration and inability to find related work in this area does not mean that “nothing has been written about martial arts that have music associated with them, but rather that most of what is out there comes from disciplines other than music and deals with the musical sounds as a mere periphery addendum to the physical, cultural, or social aspects of these practices (e.g., Mukhopadhyay 2002; Pauka 1998; Schissel 2008; Wilson 2002).”

One overlapping domain in both performance (Music and dance, in this particular context) and Martial Arts Studies is their underlying rhythm (taal), expression (bhava) and speed (loy). There may definitely be certain areas of divergence between the two but the modes in which the two domains are connected can be attributed to the marked influences of these three aspects of performance. In *The Art of War*, the highly popular book on warfare, defence and military tactics, the author Sun Tzu talks about the importance of Buddhist gongs and drums in the field of strategizing. These instruments denote the ways in which troops can be united and made to focus on their immediate goal (trans. Cleary 2003:124–127). The signals produced by the musical sound generated by these gongs and drums are used to motivate the army, instil courage and give proper directions with regard to their positioning and further movements. Similarly, in folk martial dance practice of Chhau that has its origins in Bengal, Bihar and Odisha, we find a close connection with the music that is predominantly instrumental. Music produced by musical instruments like *dhol*, *kanshi*, *shehnai*, *dhumsa* is used to convey the exact expressions ingrained in the performance. This vibrant martial form reflects a perfect blend of rhythm, controlled variations in speed and power, synchronised expressions (in the unmasked Mayurbhanj variation of Chhau practised in Odisha), significance of masks (in the Seraikala style of Chhau in Jharkhand and the Bengal style of

this art form in Purulia) and the relation with mythology (direct reflections of parts based on epics, direct reference to Hindu Gods, Goddesses, demons and animals can be noticed). With the variation in music, the performance becomes energetic. These Chhau performers include movements like vaults, jumps, leaps, somersaults (Ulpha) and inspire the audience. The point that I am trying to make here is that, the martial arts performances which have seen extensive reception all over the world bear a deep connection with music, dance and related aspects of performance. The connection with music is not just related to the technicalities of speed and power but is considered to be an inseparable part of the surroundings, locals and their indigenous culture. The unity that Martial Arts Studies brings about among mutually exclusive social strata owes a lot to the music and dance elements of different local cultures that bring people closer. Indians are as much interested in learning the Japanese karate as much as the Japanese get influenced by our very own Chhau, Kalarippayattu and wrestling, to name a few. In the domain of martial art studies, *performance ethnography* has been inextricably linked with Victor Turner's work through Philip Zarrilli's path-breaking studies on kalarippayattu, the Indian martial art. (Farrer and Whalen-Bridge 2011:10–11)

Socrates noted in *The Republic of Plato* that for an ideal state (trans. Cornford 1972:85–88), there are two types of music: one of these types, according to him, instils a great sense of courage during battles or even in dangerous situations. Across cultures, we find the importance accorded to musical and instrumental rhythms, in order to boost the morale of the fighter. Even in the present age, different martial arts styles like kickboxing from Thailand, Capoeira from Brazil, lathi khela from parts of Bengal and Bangladesh, kalinda fight (stick fight) from Trinidad, Chhau and Raibenshe from India often feature the use of musical instruments during performance.

Contemporary sociological ethnographies tend to centre round habitus and embodiment while analysing gender, violence and pain. Meanwhile, in

anthropology, martial arts ethnographies have examined magic, ritual and religion in the native fighting systems across the world. In recent years, ethnographers have taken a more reflexive, first-person approach and have experimented with sensuous scholarship as well as autoethnographic and autophenomenological approaches. Virtual and ‘messy’ ethnographies are now also in development, although there remains scarce information on how to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on martial arts, despite the rich lessons they offer methodologists. (Jennings, 15)

During my field work at the time of Chinese New Year celebrations in 2021 and 2022, I have seen the extensive use of large, barrel drums that accompany masked animal dances. Even karate performances during these events are accompanied by music that creates the mood of the kata. Different kata have different connotations associated with it. So the music that is used during the performance of Bassai dai Kata will be quite different from the one that is used during Tekki Shodan, Gankaku or Jion. Bassai dai is based on storming a fortress or castle whereas Tekki Shodan, Tekki Nidan and Tekki Sandan are based on different stages of horse riding. Gankaku is another advanced Shotokan Kata that refers to crane on the rock. The crane of rock motif has been made popular in action films like *The Karate Kid*. Jion kata, on the other hand, is about love, mercy, generosity and innate goodness. It derives its name from the Jion temple in China. One can clearly understand that the moods of each of these kata greatly differ from one another. Therefore, the kind of background music used with each of the kata will be different as well. This further helps in ensuring better understanding of the performance among common people or the non-performers, the ones who are not well versed at the theoretical and practical backgrounds of karate but are equally instrumental in the transmission and reception of the same. Another interesting part about these kata is also the clear resemblance to the Japanese culture and mythology. The ethics

and morality ingrained in their culture get reflected through the movements, pause, bunkai or meaning behind each of the steps performed and this binds people together into a commonality that they cannot deny. One of the most important reasons behind the popularity and greater reception of karate in urban areas of India is that the urban population relate themselves with the cultural practices of other South Asian countries like Japan, China, Tibet and Thailand. Inhabitants of North Bengal, Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh pay obeisance to animals during their rituals. The same is noticed even in Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan and Thai cultures. Reverence towards nature is an overlapping common part that concerns people from these different cultures.

Overall stamina, balance and coordination can be attained only when the performance point of view is considered. Classical dance styles like Kathakali and Manipuri and folk martial dance styles like Chhau and Raibenshe developed as a result of the overbearing influence of respective martial traditions of these regions. In the *Natya Shastra*, an all encompassing Indian text on aesthetics and dramaturgy, there are direct references to the close interconnection between dance and martial arts.

Representation of Martial Arts across Mass Media: The Staging of Martial Art

In the previous section, we have seen how reception and transmission of martial arts in mass culture get impacted upon, in contrasting ways, due to the impacts of music and dance. In a similar vein, the aspects of performance inherent in the representation of martial arts in mass media (film, television, and social media like Instagram, Twitter and You tube) also play a major role in elevating the status and popularity of this particular area of studies among common people. In the present era of globalization, human activities have been commercialized in most sectors of life. With the increase in commercialization, the popularity

of art forms started getting more importance, depending on their digital footprint and varied representations across mass media.

The martial arts film that developed as an extremely popular genre during the late 1970s catered to the demands of diverse target audience by interweaving elements of popular culture within the corpus of films. Popular culture is open to interpretation and response by a wider section of people because it can be easily understood and is constituted by entertainment elements that can influence or inspire a large audience. Action, rather the representation of action on screen, is important in this very regard. Coordinated set of movements that lead to entertaining action sequences on screen may not always be realistic but this out of the world magnanimity is something that creates a notable impact on most people. In his book, *Fight Choreography: The Art of Non Verbal Dialogue*, John Kreng blurred the line of division between Martial Arts films and Sports films. An example in this context can be 'Rocky' (1976). In her book, *The Martial Arts Film*, Marilyn Mintz also mixed the martial arts film with cloak and dagger films like 'Zorro'. The martial arts film genre, in the Indian context, is highly influenced by the Wuxia, Budo and Samurai cultures on one hand and combines the ethos, values, cultural strains present in indigenous martial cultures of India, on the other hand. Such deft combinations of elements by film creators ensure better performance of these films at the box office. For example, the film 'Baahubali' and its sequel recreates a larger than life portrayal of the male and female heroes and although the audience knows that most of the fight sequences portrayed on screen are unrealistic, they get entertained by such portrayals and finally help in furthering the popularity of martial arts in India. There is 'a willing suspension of disbelief' on the part of the audience. Films that can create and re-create fight scenes often showcase only the aesthetically pleasing combination of martial techniques. Directors know that at a certain section of the audience will not be minutely analysing the technical details but will rather focus on the emotive quality of the film. This is the reason

that in order to make martial arts films perform well at the box office, techniques like high kicks, round house kicks, jarring moves, high throws, action showcasing one person who is single handed yet fighting against many people are more focused on. This further helps us to understand how indigenous martial arts created in India have been presented and popularized on the world's stage till now. One of the main reasons why the Indian Chhau has been able to gain prominence in the international stage through its portrayal in films like *Barfi* in the recent days is because of the incorporation of such stylish somersaults, high kicks, leaps, turns and colourful attire that look good on screen as well as create interest among masses. The underlying point in this regard is therefore, the use of dramatic spectacle. Even in a Kalari or Karate performance that is staged for common people, this dramatic aspect of performance is retained; it becomes really significant. Audio visual representations of kata performance and kumite (sparring) are meant to serve the purpose in films. For example, when we see the Karate kid practising kata against a visually pleasing backdrop like the sea or the caves, we know that the combination of technical details with that of visual representation has been done in order to attract the audience.

The heroic display ethos of a culture or subculture is that collective set of behaviors, expected actions, and principles or codes of conduct that ideally guide and are displayed by a hero, and are the subject of many traditional ballads or epics where seemingly superhuman heroes display bravery, courage, and valor in the face of death. (Zarrilli, 2001: 419)

Films try to portray this display ethos of culture (Zarrilli 2001: 421). A certain section of the audience who do not know much about the cultural history and background of the kata origins will not critically analyse the action sequence portrayed on screen. For instance, only the practitioners and martial art enthusiasts will be able to study the performance of the karate kid from the technical point of view. Others would rather focus more on the audio visual quality,

display of endurance and courage which in fact lend to the development of dramatic aspects showcased on screen. When the karate kid is found practising in the field of reflex mechanism, the film shows the kid mirroring the movements of a snake. Such practice is definitely not realistic, at least in the practice of karate. Karate practitioners hardly indulge in such mirror techniques with snakes, during real life training sessions. Reflex training takes place normally among partners. But of course, merely showcasing partner work will not be able to add the kind of dramatic dimension to the scene that the snake's presence automatically adds. More people get interested in scenes bordering on the unreal. Thus we find that the reception of martial arts not only in India but all over the world gets heightened due to the skilful representation of the dramatic elements of performance. In the recent times, with the gain in popularity of You tube, a certain part of the young population have also started expressing more interest in learning raw techniques and real forms that be applied in real life combat scenario. Previously, the fantasy corpus of action was the single major element that retained viewership among millions. So the reception of martial arts started off with dramatic implementations of stylistics and out of the world representations of martial ways of life by cultural icons like Bruce Lee, IP Man, Jackie Chang, Jean Claude Van Damme, Tony Jaa, Vidyut Jamwal and Chuck Norris, to name a few. They not only grabbed the attention of practitioners and non practitioners from the Indian market but also gained worldwide acclaim. Such waves of appreciation further led to a greater transmission of studies in this field on a global scale. Expressions of such art forms on the stage require higher levels of understanding of exactly how the juxtaposition of light, sound, action can create sustained interest among the audience. In the last two decades, equal importance is given to channels that showcase application based knowledge dissemination. With the revolution in social media over the last few years, the new generation of martial art

enthusiasts from India and all over the world are found subscribing to You Tube channels that analyse the real life applications of complex techniques.

Martial Art Strains in the Culinary Space

The scope of this chapter allows us to take a look at the ways in which reception and transmission of martial arts as a field of study in India can be made more extensive only when we consider the nuances of performance attached with martial arts. Till now, we have already seen how music and dance are significant in increasing the reach of this art form. We have also analysed how dramatic elements are often interwoven into martial arts films so as to increase the popularity by catering to the demands of the target audience. Let us now take a look at how the attachment of culinary skills and martial arts has been represented in popular media. Let us also try understanding whether or not there is any direct or indirect cultural practice that associates the martial space with the kitchen and dining space. In the segment named ‘Martial Arts Cookery’ of *Ranma ½*, there are direct implications that in this world of anime, the art of cooking is related to excellence in martial arts. In one of the episodes, Ukyo Kuonji, one of the leading characters is seen fighting against another character who practises Martial Arts Crepe Cookery. Terms like Martial Arts Sushi/ Sashimi Cookery get repeated time and again in this episode. Martial Arts Dining is yet another term that has been introduced in *Ranma ½*. This refers to a play trope within the broader field of dining. It obliquely suggests a kind of food fight in which the one who can clear all the food plates within the shortest time span is considered to be the winner. Ranma is not able to compete due to her lack of speed, so she tries to apply the strategy of stuffing her food into the other person’s mouth (in this case, her opponent). As a consequence of this illogical set of rules, there was a necessity to create such a world in which the characters are portrayed in ways that suit the criteria: most of them can warp and stretch at their own will and their grappling, striking as well as other hand movements are extremely speedy. Features spanning across

Multimedia and Animation come in useful, when the distortions like warping need to be implemented. Even in films like *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, a well defined relationship between martial skills and skills at the kitchen has been portrayed. The main character suffers memory loss after a car crash and at the same, her newly found interest in the kitchen makes her feel that her skill at using knives so proficiently means that she used to be a chef or a martial artist. In the popular film *God of Cookery* by Stephen Crow, we can yet again find a connection between the Shaolin style of cooking and the martial arts combat. Other related examples include the film, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* which is popular among children all over the world. In the course of this film, Leo is shown distributing pizza slices on plates after using swords to slice the pizza. In the field of games, *Ninja Burger* showcases a parody in which the characters are seen implementing their ninja techniques to ensure high speed delivery of fast food, failing which they lose their honour. “Guaranteed delivery in 30 minutes or less or we commit seppuku” is their slogan. In the video game, *Fruit Ninja*, the gamers is expected to use the katana for chopping fruits. In the domain of web comics, we find yet another example that relates skills at kitchen with super powers. In *Freefall*, the ninjas of Le Restaurant des Ninjas run their service while being invisible at all times. Delivering food, drinks, refilling, bringing in the bill, directly people to respectively tables, all these are carried out without being seen. Being invisible while keeping a check on others is their hidden talent. Even in *Sponge Bob Square Pants*, we find a repetition of this trope. These examples are popular in all parts of the world, including India. During the course of my fieldwork, I came across a group of school children in Kolkata who went on talking at length about Sponge Bob’s karate techniques which helps him to produce burgers on a large scale during his tenure as a cook for his boss, Krabs. His obsession with karate and the link with higher production of fast food that kids prefer increased the entertainment value for children. (Drinking games motif in literature and films) A direct reflection of similar portrayals can

also be seen in Bollywood movies like *From Chandni Chowk to China* in which one of the protagonists named Sidesh Sharma chops vegetables at a roadside stall in the Chandni Chowk area of Delhi. When two strangers from China take him to China because they mistakenly think that he is the reincarnation of their martial hero, Liu Sheng; he travels to China along with his chopstick, gets involved in an unfortunate sequence of accidents and starts getting trained in Kung fu, wins the final fight against opponents by inventing a new form of vegetable chopping ninja technique. Eventually, he sets up his own vegetable stall in China. So there is a clear indication that the memory associated with his skills at cutting and cooking can be utilized in modified ways during combat. Even in the Hindi film *Akira*, there are associations between the main character's martial training background and the violent use of kitchen equipments at home, when she is forcefully injected because people around her assume that she has lost her mental balance. There are close links between martial skills and culinary skills even in ancient Indian culture where the kings and queens who are well versed at martial arts are equally good at the art of cooking. Cinematic representations of the same can be seen in films like *Jodha Akbar*. Jodhaa not only knows how to establish her own identity in a completely different cultural setup but is also quick to understand the politics related to the kitchen. She defies rules not just in the area of cooking but also in the sword training (Ashi charcha) session. When Akbar challenges her to fight with him, she readily participates in the fight.

Interestingly, there is an actual connection between martial arts space and the dining space. The Japanese tea ceremony is directly linked with martial art traditions. The seiza practice that is performed during the start and end of a karate class has its roots in the 'sado', the way of tea, practised through the ritualistic tea ceremony. This is associated with the practice of Zen meditation in which the martial artist seeks peace of mind, follows 'moksho' and thereby

enters into a realm of calm, trains the mind and body together, so as to attain martial success. 'Bushido' or the Way of the warrior is directly connected to 'Sado'.

The practice of Zen involves long sessions of zazen, or seated meditation, to clear the mind of distractions and to gain penetrating insight. Zen's assimilation into Japanese culture was accompanied by the introduction of green tea, which was used to ward off drowsiness during the lengthy zazen sessions. One Daruma legend says that Daruma brought green tea plants with him when he travelled to China; another says that Daruma plucked off his eyelids in a rage after dozing off during meditation -- the eyelids fell to the ground and sprouted as China's first green tea plants! To this day an early form of the tea ceremony is carried out in some Zen monasteries in Japan in honour of Daruma. (Messersmith, 52)

Green tea eventually became popular among martial art practitioners, monks and common people. Even in the lush green tea estates of North Bengal (Makaibari tea estate in Kurseong, Happy Valley tea estate in Darjeeling) and Sikkim (Temi tea garden in Ravangla and at monasteries in Borong, Pelling and Gangtok), the tea ceremony is still a very important cultural practice. This shows that cultural elements tied to martial arts travelled across nations, influenced the people and furthered their interest in cross cultural exchanges. As a result, reception of karate, kung fu, jeet kune do and other martial arts is much more in areas where the cultural elements are imbibed. Yet another connection between martial arts and food and the impact of food practices on the reception of martial arts in different cultures can be understood with regard to the dietary requirements that often get associated with the practice of certain martial forms. For example, communities that cannot survive on vegetarian food do not get involved in combat wrestling. The Indian wrestlers from Kolkata and Varanasi follow a strict Sattvic diet consisting of protein rich food, dairy products, fresh vegetables, fruits and dry fruits. According to the Akhada gurus, vegetarian diet should be

strictly followed in order to build strong sense of ethics and morality and also to lead a simple lifestyle. Adhering to such strict codes of eating is not practically possible in all other regions. Thus people from other communities who are interested in learning *kushti* do not voluntarily get engaged in these practices but promote the martial art as part of the audience. They try incorporating certain training features into their practice of other forms but do not personally get involved in akhada practice.

Martial Arts in the Field of Medicine: The Art of Healing

In the previous sections of this chapter, we have talked about reception of martial arts from the intersectional areas of martial arts and performance; with regard to elements pertaining to the fields of music, drama, and dance, non verbal modes of communication, mass media, social media and even skills nurtured from the kitchen space. In this particular section, let us now take a look at how the field of medicine is also influenced by the reception of martial arts and also how the secret healing practices like acupuncture and acupressure are performative rituals in their own right which enhance reception in fields beyond Sports and Arts. Reception of knowledge that ensures instant healing, healthy lifestyle, peace of mind is always on a positive rising curve, more so after the Covid 19 pandemic hit millions over the world. So in an attempt to form an understanding of how the performance method of healing and indigenous knowledge about medicine are linked with the Indian and Japanese cultures, this part of the chapter will foray into the domain of Medical Humanities. Martial arts studies have its origins not only in Humanities and Social Sciences but also in Science, Medicine and Physics. So the overlap of such mutually exclusive fields of study will help us in reaching a proper, informed conclusion about its reception and transmission, especially in our country, India. During field work, I came across a lot of people who are from Science background, so we cannot deny the contribution of martial arts towards medicine, a stream of science, when we try analysing the viewpoints of those participants. When most of the respondents are

found mentioning yoga to be one of the most highly sought after alternative fitness styles from 2020 – 2021; we can obviously make better sense of their opinion only when we understand the health benefits of particular martial art styles.

‘Qi’, in traditional Chinese healing and martial arts, has had a history of philosophical, religious, medical, and martial study for thousands of years. It is believed to be the primary or vital energy of all life, and understanding it continues to be the goal of many Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners and martial artists. For instance, according to The Qi Journal’s findings on ‘The Interactive Acupuncture Model’, if a person’s 9th lung meridian point is treated with the use of acupressure or acupuncture (Tai Yuan, located on the palmar surface, at the tip of the transverse crease of the wrist, in the depression on the radial side of the radial artery), it is believed that problems like chest pain, breathing difficulties, asthma and back and shoulder pain can be effectively prevented. The performing of healing techniques in martial arts revolves around the concept of vital life energy, which is the source of life on earth. Reference to life energy can be found in all cultures; martial or non martial. Massage techniques form an integral part of Kalarippayattu and Kushti. Identification and study of pressure points is important in this regard. Besides learning martial arts, the practitioners also learn how to heal and perform the techniques of healing on people who are injured, during or beyond performance. Methods to resuscitate and apply knowledge derived from natural medicine are also part and parcel of the martial training process.

According to the ancient Hindu treatise on yoga and medicine, the concept of ‘prana’ (vital life force) has been invariably linked with the medical field of study as well as martial arts. In Maurice Bloomfield’s translation of Sacred Texts, there is a section on the Hymns of the Atharva-Veda. According to this, “Reverence to Prâna, to whom all this (universe) is subject, who has become the lord of the all, on whom the all is supported!” In a similar vein, extracts from the *Yoga Kundalini Upanishad* state that the concept of ‘kundalini’ or English

equivalent of 'corporeal energy', is located at the base of the spine and holds significance in yoga, meditation, Kalari and all other forms of Indian martial arts. The parallel concept in Japanese and Chinese traditions is the 'Qi'. According to the philosopher Lao Tzu, "When one gives undivided attention to the (vital) breath, and brings it to the utmost degree of pliancy, he can become as a (tender) babe." So we can see that the belief in vital life force or self-sustaining energy is prevalent in cultures all over the world.

In *The Tao of Jeet Kune Do*, Bruce Lee clearly stated, "The 'Immoveable' is the concentration of energy at a given focus, as at the axis of a wheel, instead of dispersal in scattered activities." So in all martial cultures, the martial artists try to focus more on bringing about an efficient convergence of energy at a point through which Qi and Kundalini can be properly manifest. The Taoist concepts of yin and yang (fundamental sources of natural energy) are also directly related to Qi.

Zhuangzi, a renowned philosopher from the 4th century BC, observes in *The Old Fisherman*, "Want of harmony between the Yin and Yang... [affects] all things injuriously." Moreover, the ancient 2,000-year old text 'The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon of Internal Medicine' (known as the *Huangdi Neijing*), these two interdependent parts, yin and yang are the main source of life in all beings. In its first book "Suwen" or "Basic Questions," the Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon states, "Yellow Emperor said: yin and yang, which are also of Heaven and Earth, the discipline of all things [are] the beginning of life and death." In accordance with the concept of vital energy, a popular article in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* explains at length the positive effects of 'Tai Chi' on cancer, osteoarthritis, heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It shows how these four chronic conditions can be cured through preventive techniques. Preserving mental peace, physical harmony, maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle, self-controlling of emotions, improving focus or

concentration, prevention of negativity, fear and violence are lessons learnt during martial art practice. These in turn help in the process of healing oneself.

In Roman Sieler's book, *Lethal Spots, Vital Secrets: Medicine and Martial Arts in South Asia*, we get direct references to the connection between these two fields of study. He talks about the martial and medical practices ingrained in Kalarippayattu training.

In the sixth chapter of his book, *Embodying Secrecy*, Sieler mentions that his knowledge in this field "draws on my personal experiences of learning varmam.... [knowledge] that transcends verbalized and verbalizable thought: it is of a tacit nature, experientially learned and embodied" (Sieler, 207) The mode of learning that he focuses on is definitely the embodiment of martial arts.

In D.S Farrer's review of Sieler's book, Farrer notes:

This book engages an important topic and makes a valuable contribution to medical anthropology. However, perhaps the crucial vital secret of lethal spots regards their origin. Sieler does note the use of vital points in controlling elephants, in rendering unconscious and reviving chickens, goats, horses, oxen, lizards, and snakes (Farrer, 196 - 200).

It is interesting to note that the author does not address whether human vital points were initially located through brutal experiments upon slaves, social inferiors, and captured prisoners of war.

How many people had to die to confirm an esoteric s/kill point? Thus we rediscover an old anthropological chestnut, that medicine is rooted in violence, which gave birth to culture. With secrecy, it's not what you know, but what you don't show that counts. (Farrer, 214)

The connection between martial arts and the medical field is not just important because of the performance of healing rituals but also because a person who has possesses the secret knowledge about the vital spots and techniques should not use it in destructive ways. This is specifically the reason why the Sensei in karate training or the guru in the Indian martial tradition impart knowledge about these secret techniques only when the student acquires a certain level of maturity, skill set, understanding and the teacher is convinced that the techniques will not be put to harmful application. Popular culture deals with the connection between martial arts and medicine and it is reflected through films like *Kung Fu Hustle*, *The Karate Kid*, *High Kick Girl*, *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon*, *Baahubali*, in which we often find instant healing techniques applied on fighters who had their bones broken, muscles sprained or suffered greatly during duels and are instantly reenergized and restored to good health.

In the Kalarippayattu tradition, we come across the Tamil term ‘varmakalai’, which focuses on construction and destruction; healing and harming. A detailed study of the vital spots in the human body forms a major part of theoretical training in any martial art discipline. The reference to ‘marman chikitsa’ that is practised by Indian martial artists dates back to the ancient medical traditions in India.

Methodology used:

In this chapter, an approach towards understanding the ways in which martial arts have been received and transmitted in the Indian society has been based on a critical study of texts, media and practices which reflect the direct as well as engagement of participants within the space of the art and artist which correlates with the realm of performance and performer. It is also based on the surveys and fieldwork conducted during the four years of my research. Accounts of performers as well as viewpoints of non performers have been considered, in

order to reach proper conclusion. It is also based on observations in the performance space of the public and private. In the context of my research fieldwork, the background information is based on stories, oral narratives, mythological elements, ritualistic practices and the cultural backdrop of people and places studied.

The multi-faceted ways in which martial art can be analysed as performance in different fields of study has allowed me to implement a mixed methodology of research. Implementation of tools ranging from sociology of sport to performance ethnography has allowed me to examine the main argument of this chapter through various lenses which are inter-connected. Practice as performance and theory derived from such practice have been used. While conducting fieldwork, I have been able to understand how the process of transmission gives birth to belief systems and new ideas, while establishing the importance of values derived from martial knowledge and cultural ethics.

After twenty two years of engagement with the theory and practice of martial arts, I have been able to understand the reasons as to why a particular martial art form like karate or an alternative fitness method like yoga is widely received in India, Japan, Nepal, Thailand, the UK and other countries of the world which attach importance to physical cultures, sports and performance. I have also been able to understand the limitations of forms like wrestling, silambam, mal khamb and the reasons why these did not receive as much popularity or acclaim all over the world, compared to Kalarippayattu and Chhau. The point here is that any form of knowledge that seeks cross-cultural transmission should necessarily have at least certain connections with the culture in which it attempts to be ingrained. Also, it needs to be relatable to people of those cultures at least in some way. Only value based knowledge is not adequate for reception in the present times. The cultural ethos and entertainment quotient also need to be addressed. While conducting fieldwork in culturally and geographically different regions, I also realized that to ensure reception of martial art in different communities, the

practical implementation of these forms in their socio cultural and geographical settings, along with its limitations, also need to be considered.

For example, if we talk about the limited reception of 'pari khanda' that originated in Bihar and was stylized by the Rajputs, we need to understand the area of imitation. The fact that this combat method mandates the use of sword and shield is the reason why it cannot be practised in all cultures. Communities that do not prefer armed combat will naturally not get interested in knowing more about this martial art. On the other hand, cultures that are open to reception of martial training, whether armed or unarmed, will undoubtedly incorporate techniques from 'pari khanda'. Chhau style of Bihar and Odisha combines stylistic traits used in 'pari khanda'. The 'Gatka' martial style created by the Sikhs of Punjab also faces similar limitations because it mandates the use of weapons: Talwar, katar and kirpan. Yet another ancient Indian martial art based on staff fencing is 'Silambam'. It has been created by people of Tamil Nadu and finds mention in the Tamil literature *Silapaddigaram*. Reception of this style has not been that great in the Western countries but it has received immense appreciation from the residents of Malaysia. It has been adapted in its own way and finally accorded the status of a popular sport in Malaysia. Now the question is why did it not perform well in the west but become highly influential in Malaysia? It is because of the inter-cultural ties that exist between two different cultural spheres. Mythological elements connected with the practice of Silambam find its repercussions in the culture of Malaysia. According to the South Indian myth, Agasthya Muni and Muruga Dev are considered to be the creators of this martial art. Similar mythological representations in the Malaya culture made Silambam popular in Malaysia. This is the extent to which cultural similarities are efficient in furthering the influence of martial arts.

In Indian states like Manipur and Himachal Pradesh, local people have combined the stylistic traits of karate, wing chun, aikido, yoga with their very own ancient martial traditions like

Thang ta, Sarit Sarak and Thoda. Thang (sword) Ta (spear) also known as Huyen Lallong, is an armed combat style originally created by the Meitei people whereas Sarit Sarak is unarmed and makes use of hand to hand combat techniques which are also found in the parallel practice of wing chung and karate. Thoda from Himachal Pradesh is a representation of martial art as sport and cultural signifier. It is based on archery and finds mention in the *Mahabharata*. Kuttu Varisai (empty hand/ unarmed combat), based on grip, grapple and strike methods, is another popular martial art widely practised in South India, Sri Lanka and Malayasia. This martial tradition finds its mention in the Indian Sangam literature of the first century B.C. The sets and stances have innate mythological connections with animals like elephants, tigers, monkeys and other creatures like snake and eagle. The same holds true for Japanese and Chinese martial art traditions. Oral narratives have played a huge role in sustaining the mythological importance of martial arts. These narratives are mainly based on knowledge passed on from one generation to the next. Written texts do not exist in most of these communities. People rely on the importance of seeing performances and on remembering variations in practice modes.

During the last few years of fieldwork, I also realized the reason why Indian martial traditions which are becoming popular in Japan, Thailand, and the UK are gradually declining in India. There is a need to preserve these arts in our country. When I find myself situated as an observer, practitioner and analyst in the entire web of transmission and reception of martial arts, I can analyse the reasons for increase or decrease in social interest of an Indian art form in India. As a practitioner and performer, my knowledge was restricted to certain martial art forms like Karate, Taekwondo, Lathi khela and Kalarippayattu in the last twenty three years but my position as a researcher in the last five years enabled me to critically evaluate the intersectional areas of culture in related martial styles that affect overall reception and influence. I have been able to acquire much more informed perception of this emerging field

of study. During my visits to the age old Kushti (Wrestling) Akhadas (training place) in Kolkata and Varanasi, I met kushtigirs/ pehelwans (wrestlers) who expressed regret and hopelessness, while talking about the future of their tradition. Lakhan Rao, a 22 year old practitioner in the Tulsi Ghat Akhada of Varanasi, said that three of his friends had to give up on kushti training in 2020 due to lack of funding and lack of recognition of this martial art in their own area. The diet that they need to follow costs approximately INR 10,000 on a monthly basis. The local practitioners from middle class backgrounds cannot sustain the cost throughout the year. There is absolutely no initiative taken by the government at local and state levels, to extend necessary support to the wrestlers. Their only source of earning is from the wrestling matches organized in public space, where the winners earn only a nominal amount that is not enough for a decent lifestyle. So by the time these wrestlers reach 25, they start leaving practice and choose other career options. Eventually, kushti suffers a major decline in regions where it originated. In contrast, stunning performances of Indian wrestlers like Yogeshwar Dutt, Sushil Kumar, Ritu Phogat in the Olympics made this martial art an extremely popular sport in the international forum. Even Muay Thai and Mixed Martial Art practitioners incorporate Kushti mechanisms in their training. Notable in this regard is the impact of mythology on ensuring the continual spread of martial art yet again. Kushti has its origins in ancient Indian epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. There are interesting descriptions of wrestling between Ravana and Bali. According to the *Mahabharata*, Lord Krishna, his friend Balarama and another character named Jarasandha were skilled kushti practitioners as well. We can understand that this was a major combat technique in India since the ancient ages. Even now, the wrestlers practise Brahmacharya or abstinence from worldly desires and worship Hanuman as their main source of endurance, power and energy. Gurus from the Siyaram Akhada and Cotton Street Akhada of Kolkata mentioned the efficient use of heavy clubs or mugdars and the gada. Pehelwans use these weapons to tone their

shoulder and arm muscles during warm up sessions. These weapons, according to the epics, are used by Hanuman. In Thailand, the *Ramayana* is equally popular among the mass. In fact, they have their own original renditions of these Indian epics in their own cultural context. As a result of such cultural resemblance based on literary traditions and commonality in mythological elements, the reception of kushti as a major combat sport has been popular in Thailand and Sri Lanka. Just as karate is a way of life in Japan, kushti is also a way of life connected to the cultural backdrop of India, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The embodiment of the socio-cultural as well as ritual and myth based elements across martial cultures constitute the overall habitus (Bourdieu, 17) of Martial Art Studies in India, Japan and other countries that actively engage in the discourse of martial arts. Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977) provided me with the theoretical framework in understanding the modes in which practicalities of application get implemented in similar ways to related fields of martial arts as well as performance. The ongoing transmission of martial arts in Bengal and other Indian states therefore gets associated with the exchange of knowledge among practitioners and non practitioners, whom we referred to as performers and non performers respectively, in this chapter.

In his essay "Reflections on Exile", Edward Said stated that most people from different cultural backgrounds are fundamentally aware of one culture, one particular setting and the idea of one home. According to Said, the multiple dimensions of perception arise among "exiled communities and individuals" (Said, 186) whose plurality in voice then gets recognized among common people. This chapter proposes a certain degree of opposition to Said's viewpoint. It rather seeks to modify the second part of his observation in the context of reception of martial arts among communities based in India and Japan, mainly. Although the first part of his statement holds well, the second part of it is slightly different. It is not just the experience of exile that adds to pluralist perception focused on martial performance. It is

rather attuned to the sense of rediscovering a sense of belonging through the process of imbibing elements of different cultures which contain similar mythical, cultural, ritual strains or performance based aspects. James Clifford had talked about the importance of “multiple nostalgic desires for the homeland, youth and the past”. This motif is used in most martial art films in Bollywood where the protagonist who is trained in martial art or a related skill since childhood often revisits those days and win combats in completely different spatio temporal reality, years later. Examples include *Krrish*, *Akira*, *Commando*, *From Chandni Chowk to China*, where memory play a very important role. So it is not just about exile in the literal sense of the term but Said’s ‘exile’ can be reconceptualised as a long distance between the past and the present, in which the person at present who cannot relive the past is therefore exiled from his previous lived experiences. Similarly, it can also be a rendition with regard to changes in place that was previously inhabited with that of the present place. At this juncture where this particular contextualization becomes clear, Cultural Studies and Reception Studies attain due importance. The heterogeneity of performance based culture is the lens through which the reception and transmission of martial arts in India can be studied. The emergence and development of multiculturalism in the Indian cultural scenario is evident through a close study of intercultural transmission of karate, kalarippayattu, yoga and other forms which have been mentioned in this chapter. Through the medium of martial training, the convergence of cultural identities can be observed.

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, kalarippayatu, yoga, lathi khela and others witnessed greater reach and 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, we have also analysed the influence of martial art on related fields like music, dance, drama, mass media and apparently unrelated fields like cooking and medicine. The aim of this chapter has been 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, 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 charted out and initiated 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. There is no specific categorization of separate realms like the 'elite' or the 'ordinary', in martial arts. When we talk about the influence of wuxia films, Hollywood action films and commercial Bollywood films in the same line so as to understand the variations in reception and transmission, the boundary between high brow art and low brow art, at times, gets dissolved. We cannot think of extensive reception of an art form if we do not consider the underlying importance of folk traditions and ritualistic practices which are already present in the practice of such arts. There are manifold layers associated with these folk cultures. Similarly, if we merely choose to

focus on the carefully curated, instructional videos available on martial art websites, we may not really be able to understand the actual demands of the majority of people. Martial arts reception is not just meant to be bound to one section of the audience who appreciate good quality action movies by Bruce Lee, Jackie Chang and Vidyut Jamwal; but it also seeks to understand those particular elements in commercial mass media which create a major influence through direct engagement on the part of martial art enthusiasts.

While this chapter attempts to form an understanding of how transmission and reception vary with variations in cultural productions, it also seeks to uphold the binaries between play and sport, connections between the culture of the mass and what is considered to be popular, the ingrained systems of belief in folk knowledge, the shift from pure to hybrid. These are distinctly helpful in conveying the true essence of reception in the field of martial studies. Constant engagement with everyday culture and lived experiences of people definitely become important markers, in this regard. Research that has been conducted in this chapter will provide the scope of further study in the process of assimilation of martial art studies in the Indian academia, development of pedagogy for Liberal Studies departments, further analysis of inter-cultural transfers and related modifications in future.

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Chapter 2

Identity and Subject Formation: Cultural Transmission of Karate in India

In the last fifty years, karate as a martial art form, which specifically started off as a hobby or an acquired skill set in the Indian society, has rapidly gained prominence and has become an important part of the cultural set-up in West Bengal. It has been incorporated as a major field of study in educational institutions. Its significance has eventually shifted from the margins to the centre as more and more people have started subjecting themselves to the disciplinary modes of martial arts training in order to learn basic as well as advanced techniques of self defence. It has gained popularity mainly in the urban areas. During the course of my fieldwork, I realized that most of the people in rural Bengal who were initially interested in learning karate and other forms of self defence even thirty to forty years back, either could not fulfil their desire to learn such an art form in their hometowns or had to travel all the way from their place to the city. Many of the martial art enthusiasts from the JKA organization in Bengal mentioned that there is still a lack of proper martial art infrastructure at places which are not near the main city. If the conditions at present are still not as good as the conditions available in the city, we can understand how the situation might have been thirty years back. As a result, rural Bengal was not able to provide practitioners with the platform where their martial skills would be duly recognized by contemporary society. Other reasons would definitely include the lack of public initiative coupled with the lack of awareness regarding power and knowledge acquisition through disciplinary methods of karate training and also, the unavailability of specific props which are used during these training sessions. History has brought to light the fact that societies

regardless of their cultural impetus or economic factors have never been able to accommodate new things, without initial resistance from the majority or without a kind of friction. According to the opening declaration of “The Communist Manifesto”, ‘The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles’. (Engels and Marx, 1888)

That in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; That the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolutions in which, nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class — the proletariat — cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class — the bourgeoisie — without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction, and class struggles. (Engels and Marx, 1888: Preface)

Depending on this observation put forth by Marx, a study of the class struggle in the Indian social scenario shows that such struggle has been perpetual. This was more so in the last fifty years, the time span during which karate was gradually gaining popularity among educated circles of the society that had access to action movies and cultural elements, which were instrumental in the spread of karate as a highly sought after sporting activity.

According to Mr. Shigeru Egami, the Chief Instructor of Shotokan Dojo, "the majority of followers of karate in overseas countries pursue karate only for its

fighting techniques... Movies and television... depict karate as a mysterious way of fighting capable of causing death or injury with a single blow...the mass media presents a pseudo art far from the real thing." (Egami, "History of Okinawa Karate", Japan Karate Do Hakua kai Matsubushi Dojo) According to Shoshin Nagamine's observations, as seen in the official website of the Japan Karate Do Hakua-Kai Matsubushi Dojo, "Karate may be considered as the conflict within oneself or as a life-long marathon which can be won only through self-discipline, hard training and one's own creative efforts." (Nagamine, "History of Okinawa Karate", <http://karatedo.hakuakai-matsubushidojo.com/history.html>)

With the rapid process of urbanization, migration, cultural transfers with regard to martial arts practice and globalization, there has been the birth of a completely new and accommodating kind of sensibility. More and more people now have access to learning karate, even in the rural areas. Urban areas have also become more accommodating in their perspectives and have started incorporating the practice of indigenous martial arts forms like Chhau, Kalari, Silambam and wrestling alongside karate practice.

According to the research conducted by M. Syed Ali in the recent past (from 2016 to 2018) from the Centre of Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT, New Delhi), under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, the gradual development of interest in Silambam and Kalaripayattu as cultural martial art forms in urban areas has been talked about. In his research project titled "Influence of martial arts Silambam and Kalari training on selected motor fitness variables for school boys", he traces the origin and development of these two martial arts in India and based on John W.Bunn's analysis of techniques in the practice of javelin, Robert Gensemer's analysis of the forehand and back hand swings in tennis, Philip Zarrilli's in depth analysis of Kalari and silambam training, he further goes on to show how the speed, agility, flexibility, shoulder, grip and leg strength can be

improved through the martial training of such indigenous Indian martial arts. (Ali, M. Syed, *Influence of Martial Arts Silambam and Kalari Training on Selected Motor Fitness Variables for School Boys*, 15 Jan. 2019, Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, <https://indianculture.gov.in/research-papers/influence-martialarts-silambam-and-kalari-training-selected-motor-fitness>)

According to an article titled “Four native martial arts are now part of Khelo India Youth Games” published in *The Hindu* on 22nd January, 2021, “In a recent move, the Sports Ministry inducted four indigenous martial art forms — Kalaripayattu of Kerala, Mallakhamb of Central India, Gatka of Punjab and Thang-ta of Manipur — into the Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG)”. (S. Priyadarshini, *The Hindu*, 22 Jan. 2021) This newspaper article also brings to the forefront the opinion of Mr. Narayanan, the Secretary of Kalaripayattu Association in Kerala:

It is a moment of great joy and pride for all of us who are continuing this 3,000-year-old tradition. Despite the British banning it, we have nurtured this native form of battle and defence. There are roughly 1,000 to 1,500 *kalaris* in Kerala. This recognition is as gratifying as much as it is a challenge, for teachers and practitioners. (Narayanan, qtd. in *The Hindu*, 22 Jan. 2021)

In this article, further comments and opinions of other Indian martial art instructors have also been emphasized upon, with regard to the importance accorded to such martial arts in the recent past. Kalari and yoga guru Sharath S Achari states, “This is the mother of all martial arts. Judo, Kung Fu, Karate are its children. These are world famous but Kalaripayattu has remained inside Kerala. Why?” (Achari, qtd. in *The Hindu*, 22 Jan. 2021) The article talks about his explanation of the several grades of Kalarippayattu like *meythari* , which is the practice of body flexibility and leg movements, followed by *kolthari* or fight

using short and long sticks and an advanced state of sword play with shield. Mr. Achari added, “As of now, we are not clear what will be included in the Khelo India competitions, and how will it be marked and graded.” (Achari, qtd. in *The Hindu*, 22 Jan. 2021) “Look at how far the T20 version took cricket. Similarly, the sports version of Thang-ta will rejuvenate it,” says Vinod Sharma, secretary-general, Thang Ta Federation of India. “It is a moment of great pride that Thang Ta has been made a part of the Youth Games. It would have passed into oblivion in the recent decades had the national recognition not come,” he says, adding that it can be compared to the Chinese Wushu, the Japanese Ninjutsu and the martial arts of the Filipinos. Thang Ta, which has eight to 10 types of punching and 12 types of kick techniques, is “the best form of self-defence,” says Mr. Vinod. On the other hand, Mr. Harjeet Singh Grewal, the president of the Chandigarh-based National Gatka Federation of India, is equally excited at the opportunity given to spread and develop the practice of Gatka (stick fight). In this news article, he has been quoted saying, “It is in our hands how much we keep and how much we forfeit. We have to change with the times.” (Sharma, qtd. in *The Hindu*, 22 Jan. 2021)

This has further led to the growing popularity of mixed martial arts in urban spaces of experiential learning. An article titled “All India Mixed Martial Arts Association: Giving an Identity to MMA in a Country Obsessed with Cricket” was published on 10th May, 2022 in the Outlook magazine.

About two decades ago, mixed martial art was an alien concept in India. The country that knows its national sport as hockey and regards cricket as a religion, always associated fighting with WWE. Add to it the taboo associated with combat sports and you’d know why no one knew about mixed martial arts. Parents hesitated to enrol their children in such a sport and enthusiasts saw just a bleak future.

Today, MMA has gained significant popularity in India. An increasing number of MMA events are being held in the country. Indian fighters are representing the country in international events and an increasing number of fighters are now moving towards their MMA dream. Thanks to the efforts of a few people, combat sports aren't a taboo subject anymore.

(“All India Mixed Martial Arts Association: Giving an Identity to MMA in a Country”, *Outlook magazine*, 10 May, 2022, <https://www.outlookindia.com/>)

In yet another article “A growing popularity of mixed martial arts in India” published in the *Financial Express* on 25th December, 2016, Nitin Sreedhar wrote, “In this cricket-crazy country, it's suddenly the less popular sports like wrestling, mixed martial arts and badminton that are in focus, thanks to Olympic victories and cinematic endeavours”. In this article, he also mentioned:

A franchisee-based competition, the Super Fight League (SFL) will feature eight teams and has been sanctioned by the All India Mixed Martial Arts Association, the governing body for MMA in India. The league is slated to start on January 20, 2017 and will feature women fighters as well. A total of 96 fighters—from India and abroad—will fight in the league and represent teams from New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Mumbai, Haryana, Bengaluru, Punjab, Pune and Goa. Each team will have nine Indian fighters and three international ones.

(Sreedhar, “A growing popularity of mixed martial arts in India”, *Financial Express*, 25 December, 2016, <https://www.financialexpress.com/sports/game-set-match/485569/>)

This article also tells us what the founder of the SFL, Dosanjh thinks about the development of martial arts in India. He has been quoted saying: “There are almost 10 million martial

artists in our country today...all of them from different arts. So we have an amazing pool of talent. A professional league will provide the ecosystem for these fighters to grow.”

(Dosanjh, qtd. in *Financial Express*, 25 December, 2016)

In an article, “MMA in India: All eyes on the cage”, Pratyay Ghosh attests to the massive increase in popularity of mixed martial arts in the last few years.

With Ritu Phogat joining the sport, interest is bound to ramp up even more. All eyes are on how well she transitions from wrestling to MMA. But she has others who have successfully done this, to look up to, including Indian-origin Canadian UFC fighter Arjan Bhullar, who competed as a freestyler wrestler at the 2012 Olympic Games. (Ghosh, *The Hindu*, 15 March, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/mma-in-india-all-eyes-on-the-cage/article61572397.ece>)

“It is not uncommon for new clients to ask me to incorporate MMA-based techniques into their fitness regimens. The rising popularity of UFC in the country and a general fitness trend that favours metabolic workouts has helped MMA rise in status,” says Avinash Bali, a Mumbai-based personal trainer specialising in Animal Flow and bodyweight training. “What makes MMA-based workouts so great is that they incorporate techniques from a range of combat sports, like boxing, Taekwondo, Brazilian jiu-jitsu and Muay Thai, to name a few. Most gyms offer an introductory class, and dynamic full body movements like sprawls, explosive lunges and burpees are great exercises to combine with weights training. And should you really take to it, you can also head to famous MMA gyms like Tiger Muay Thai or Phuket Top Team in Thailand for your next vacation.” (*The Hindu*, 15 March, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/mma-in-india-all-eyes-on-the-cage/article61572397.ece>)

According to entrepreneur Ajit Sigamani, they've sent scouts and put out feelers. "I'd give it another year or two. Five years ago, hardly anybody knew what MMA was in India. Now you have a 40-50% awareness penetration, which will only grow," he says, adding that when UFC does come, "we will have solid coaches accredited by the world body and UFC referees, because of MMA India (the national body), and fighters who have matured over the last few years". (*The Hindu*, 15 March, 2019, updated 28 November, 2021)

While discussing the urban and rural spaces of performance and practice, it is equally important to form a brief understanding of the public space and the counter public space in society. The most recent analysis of the 'public space' was conducted by the German sociologist, Habermas in his book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. He states, "The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people coming together as a public." (Habermas, 1991: 176) Therefore, the importance is not merely on the individual identity but also on the development of community along with an identity formation of the entire community on a local as well as global platform (community of martial arts practitioners, patrons and audience, in this context). The 'public space' as defined by Habermas is mainly characterised by virtue of its inclusivity. However, if his viewpoint is studied from the perspective of a subaltern, there will be certain questions based on the inclusivity that public spaces are supposed to offer. From this particular context, there arises the requirement for the creation of counter public spaces where issues pertaining to the originality, consciousness, lived experiences, resistance mechanism, disciplinary methods and aesthetics of martial arts (in this case, karate) can be analysed from varying perspectives. Nancy Fraser defines counter public spaces as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their own identities

and needs.” (Fraser, 1992: 123) According to her, public spaces are characterised by hegemonic dominance which refuses to include all voices of the society. The differentiation between the public and the counter public space is important in order to understand subject formation and identity politics through the assimilation of karate in the Indian society. While interviewing female martial artists and those from marginalized sections of the society, I noticed an inherent lack of interest or opposition from their family members. There are very few female karate practitioners in our society. In order to substantiate this, let me talk about my experience during interactions with students and their parents from particular communities in 2019. Parents of girls who were from the Islamic community expressed their interest in allowing their children to karate classes but with a specific prior request that I would have to teach them in a class where only female practitioners would be present and that they did not want a male Sensei to teach karate to their children. Now the point is, since there are only a few female karate teachers in India, these children (the female aspirants from minority communities who are required to be taught exclusively by female instructors) do not always get the opportunity to learn karate. There are cities in which the karate clubs are headed by male instructors. It is obvious that parents who often come up with such requests would not even approach the male instructors, no matter what the situation is. Such problems are responsible for the less participation of women in martial arts in the Indian society. Karate as a form of self defence obviously can cater to the needs of one and all. Although the educational institutions in cities have made it a compulsory part in the curriculum, yet it will take a few more years to make the society realise the need to create self confident, powerful and healthy individuals. In spite of the upsurge in interest regarding karate and other forms of martial arts among elite sections of the society, it is unfortunate to see that the scope to learn self defence is still limited; it has not yet reached all sections of our society. It is interesting to note that Okinawan karate that

started as a major form of resistance against the colonial powers was founded by the common people, not by the elite section of society. It emerged in the midst of socio-economic conditions revolving around crisis and narratives of survival. Karate (the way of the empty hand) gained prominence among common people because there was absolutely no need to invest in weapons or other props that might not be accessible to everyone. An art form that has its roots in resistance and has a common expression of defiance underwent certain changes during its transmission from Japan to India and consequently gained more popularity among privileged social strata. These changes occurred post Independence. During the freedom struggle, revolutionary leaders who had access to education and martial training, spread the knowledge of karate, judo and other martial forms among common people who had the courage to participate actively in the fight for freedom. (Ray and Bhattacharya, 2015)

Martial arts performances in Japan started off not merely as core areas of contest, protest and resistance but also as the site where the identity of the subject (the martial artist) and the identity of their community are automatically constructed. It is good to know that with an increase in the number of scholars and academicians in the field of martial arts, there is gradually a revival of interest concerning martial arts studies, not just in India and Japan but all over the world. The Ministry of Culture in India and the Japanese Consulate have been making conscious efforts not only to develop indigenous martial arts like Chhau, Kalariyapattu, Thangta but also to incorporate the tradition of karate and the Japanese culture in the Indian society. The outpouring of cultural activities is the result of initiatives taken by individuals at local and regional levels and the effort of communities eager to learn karate, at a national level. Such cross-cultural exchanges can be seen in celebrations like the Japan Utsav at the Japanese Consulate in Kolkata. It was wonderful to note the blend of Bengali and Japanese overtones in such performances.

The interviews conducted during the field work in 2019, also revealed the fact that parents these days are completely aware of the importance of imparting knowledge about the martial way of life to their children because they know that this will help them in becoming more disciplined, optimistic and hard working. Most of the teenagers who were interviewed agreed to the fact that learning karate at schools, colleges, universities or in stadiums and clubs helped them to master their instincts like anger, anxiety, and depression by allowing them to internalize this significant trajectory of self-discipline and by imparting to them the knowledge of how to control the mind and body. Karate that originated in Okinawa as a major form of resistance, taught the Japanese people the modes of demarcating territories and fighting for equal rights of the natives. It also emerged as an inseparable way of life. These crucial aspects connected with the regular training of karate have definitely been transferred and widely spread in the karate clubs existing in India, specifically in West Bengal. The overall progress of the martial arts practitioners therefore got linked with the core meta-narratives of liberal expansion and reception of karate in India: the mission and vision to empower and enforce discipline, social upliftment, and the march towards development. Herbert Spencer once claimed that “the sports of boys, chasing one another, wrestling, making prisoners, obviously gratify in a partial way the predatory instincts. . . . No matter what the game, the satisfaction is in achieving victory, in getting the better of an antagonist”. (Spencer, 1880: 631) In contrast, in the context of karate training, an individual precisely learns how to transcend as well as control the so called predatory instincts. There is no first attack in karate. It is meant to be used only when someone else attacks a person. Karate is not merely a sport; it is a performative art form that brings about mental wellness, peace of mind and focus. Therefore, victory over others is not the main aim. Rather, the practitioners learn to attain victory over the self and try to improve themselves on a regular basis.

Ever since the functioning of the *Anushilan Samiti* and revolutionary groups like the *Jugantar*, West Bengal has valorised the learning of martial arts as a rigorous activity valued for its own power play and aesthetics. Karate practitioners since then have never been subservient to external imperatives of the authorities. They get moulded into self motivated, optimistic individuals who hardly compromise with unethical practices in society. Just as within the fighting arena, a martial artist must be constantly aware of the opponent as well as keep in mind the keen, critical gaze of the audience, the karate practitioner must also willingly submit himself or herself to the scrutiny of others practising alongside him or her, in order to acquire visibly better results. Strong will power and a good base of technical knowledge go a long way in creating a successful warrior who stands for justice and peace. Ambition without proper knowledge is completely futile because it will take us nowhere in life. A martial artist learning karate should seek to obtain knowledge while assessing one's own strengths and weaknesses with respect to other practitioners and trainers. At the end of each practice session, the practitioners recite the Dojo Kun, which emphasizes the importance of karate training even beyond the dojo.

The purpose of the Dojo Kun is to remind all of the students in the dojo, regardless of their rank, that the physical, mental, and spiritual growth that they enjoy as a by-product of their karate training, must also extend beyond the dojo's walls.

<http://web.iyte.edu.tr/~gokhankiper/Karate/TheDojoKun.htm>

The Principles (or Precepts) of Karate as mentioned by Master Gichin Funakoshi are as follows:

1. Karate begins and ends with rei (respect). Bowing symbolizes this respect.
2. There is no first strike in karate.
3. Karate stands on the side of justice.

4. First know yourself, and then know others.
5. Mentality over technique.
6. The heart must be set free.
7. Calamity springs from carelessness.
8. Karate goes beyond the dojo.
9. Karate is a lifelong pursuit.
10. Apply the way of karate to all things. Therein lies the beauty.
11. Karate is like boiling water; without heat, it returns to its tepid state.
12. Do not think of winning. Think, rather, of not losing.
13. Make adjustments according to your opponent.
14. The outcome of a battle depends on how one handles emptiness and fullness (weakness and strength).
15. Think of hands and feet as swords.
16. When you step beyond your own gate, you face a million enemies.
17. Formal stances are for beginners; later, one stands naturally.
18. Perform prescribed sets of techniques exactly; actual combat is another matter.
19. Do not forget the employment of withdrawal of power, the extension or contraction of the body, the swift or leisurely application of technique.
20. Be constantly mindful, diligent, and resourceful, in your pursuit of the Way.

An opponent is not to be feared because he or she is the partner in training. The opponent helps us in the process of analysing ourselves in relation to the other. Overcoming the very concept of fear of the unknown is part and parcel of karate training. It is related to the Zen Buddhist philosophy. In *The Tao of Jeet Kune Do*, Bruce Lee observed, “To know oneself is to study oneself in action with another person. Relationship is a process of self-revelation. Relationship is the mirror in which you discover yourself. To be is to be related.” (Lee, 1994: 25) In similar veins, Michel Foucault observed, “Human beings came to be interpreted as knowing subjects and at the same time as objects of their own knowledge”. (Foucault, 1982: 777 – 780) The ‘ki’ in karate practice represents the spirit, mental agility, energy and vital life force. It cannot be directly translated into written language. The awakening of the life force of an individual (‘ki’ in Japanese and ‘kundalini’ in Bengali) results in the elimination of baseless fear, doubts, scepticism and enable the release of extremely efficient energy. ‘Kiai’ is the shout or exhaling of breath after the completion of a technique. It helps in emphasizing on the sum total of all forces. The Indianized karate techniques are easily reconcilable within a culturally hybrid sphere that has been successful in overcoming the restrictive principles of its orthodox predecessors, specifically the ones who believed in the authenticity of an art form. Paul Bowman rightly observes, “This is because martial arts are themselves scenes in which logic of disciplinarity, or disciplinary logic, are always in play. Martial arts are disciplines and contested scenes of disciplinarity... Like martial arts themselves, then, martial arts studies must be at once theoretical and practical.” (Bowman, 2015: 7)

All approaches to martial arts rely on a theory – of what to do, and how to do it, and why. Similarly, martial arts studies cannot but be fundamentally theoretical, even if avowedly interested in matters deemed to be practical. Equally, just as all martial arts – no matter how avowedly ‘pure’ or ‘unique’ they may be – are

always surely hybrid, so martial arts studies must navigate the fact of its own unique kind of impurity. As I have already suggested, if it ever wants to be more than the sum of the bits and pieces of different disciplines that go into work on martial arts, then it needs to take seriously the question of how its many and varied 'ingredients' could genuinely produce something new and distinct. (Bowman, 2015)

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 on others. Moreover, the practitioners get to understand the subtle differences between domination and counter-play as well as redirection of power and energy. While the play ethics of karate 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). Rather, the key contrast follows from different attitudes with which those activities are valued. The play ethic prizes the ostensibly natural impulses of martial arts practitioners and seeks to preserve them, rather than force them to submit to the external order of moral maturity or orthodox social conditioning. It is concerned with questions of fairness that might guide the players in a game, but is generally uninterested in questions of a universal justice that might guide us all. Secondly, it is situational: each individual or group encounter is considered to be a new game that has undergone local changes and is played by locally generated rules rather than

by deference to universal moral strictures. Thirdly, it is self-consciously performative: playing or sparring requires great attention to one's own skill sets and also one's presentation with regard to other players—friend and foe alike— emphasizing role-playing and conduct over interiority, and the forms of competition over its transcendent meaning. Lastly, and correlatively, fighting ethics in the dojo get regulated primarily by self respect and honour: in its emphasis on external opinions, such ethics depend less on the inward sanctions of guilt but more on the significance of honour or dishonour that is attached with one's performance; this is finally analysed through a proper mode of constructive feedback from others. The Dojo Kun taken from Twenty Precepts formulated by Master Gichin Funakoshi stresses on the following: Seek perfection of character (*Hitotsu! Jinkaku kansei ni tsutomuru koto*), be faithful and defend the path of truth (*Hitotsu! Makato no michi o mamoru koto*), focus on endeavouring to excel in whatever you do (*Hitotsu! Doryoku no seishin o yashinau koto*), respect others and to honour the rules of etiquette at all times (*Hitotsu! Reigi o omonsuru koto*) and refrain from violent behaviour (*Hitotsu! Kekki no yu o imashimuru koto*). Gichin Funakoshi, the founder of Karate in Japan, repeated over and over again that karate begins and ends with respect; self respect and respect for others. He also stated that without proper etiquette, dojo is meaningless.

A trained fighter is a person with a fierce competitive spirit and great strength so it is unfair to use it against an untrained person. The karate-ka spirit is unbeatable and the knowledge must be used only for the sake of justice. A person of character can walk away from a fight because he is in control of his emotions and is at peace with himself. He does not have to test his abilities on the street. He wins without fighting and he will have no regrets because no one will be injured. Refraining from violent behavior is hard to explain to many Westerners because of their environment, or the attitude of winning tournaments and they want to do it as quickly as possible which is against the principles of karate-do and dojo

kun. It is therefore necessary for instructors to constantly remind the students of the importance of the dojo kun. (<http://web.iyte.edu.tr/~gokhankiper/Karate/TheDojoKun.htm>)

These ethical realms are always present in martial performances, casting the main artist or fighter and their opponents or adversaries as two completely different teams, competing for the same prize. The fights during underground tournaments at times get escalated to the degree of horror and brutality, and in such a do-or-die situation; the overall score is maintained by evaluating the resourcefulness of the remaining players in each team. The playground offers intense feelings of freedom from the restrictions of convention, of a rule-based orderliness that renders actions perfectly intelligible. But the playground is also a space of recognition, of the ostentatious performance of one's own power, skill and knowledge before other people. It is a theatre of character in which each performer is both actor and witness at the same time. The performers do not get much affected by guilt or conscience while delivering techniques in a fair play. His or her identity gets constructed through the action he delivers for witnesses. For instance, if a signature step or a related punch leads to the possible construction of one's identity as a martial artist or for any performer, for that matter, he or she focuses on improving that particular technique, not by making amends with the general opinion about the delivery of techniques but by repeatedly performing it on a regular basis, until and unless it gets mentioned in the same breath with the artist's name.

Moreover, there is an apparently rough demarcation between guilt and shame that a fighter may undergo, the former represents the sanction of conscience according to internalized laws of right and wrong and the latter stands for the external sanction of a group concerned primarily with behaviour rather than motive. Admittedly, there is no ideological structuring that is completely reliant on either acceptance or rejection of a cultural practice like karate,

but the distinction can obviously underscore an increasing focus on different kinds of modulations or changes constructed to suit the needs of martial artists in the Indian society.

The interviews conducted during field work also helped me to analyse the spread and transmission of karate in West Bengal as a major field of study in discipline, dynamics and discovery of the self, in correlation with one's immediate social surroundings. In martial arts training, as Shreyan, Monoshwita and two other karate practitioners have spoken about; there is undoubtedly an inter-relationship between discipline, training and self-actualisation. Resting on Michel Foucault's explanation on 'the means of correct training', this chapter seeks to work on 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 can be properly understood. Sensei Amir Adukattil, the founder of the Japanese Karate Association in Dubai, opined during the interview that as karate practitioners, one should learn techniques not merely to win tournaments, but to acquire knowledge about newer modes of training and should definitely incorporate this in one's daily life. Martial arts practices reflect life and society at large. Basic movements in life were used as karate techniques and became stylized later on, to gain significance in the global sporting arena. The rhythmic movements of women in rural Bengal got stylized in different innovative ways that led to the origin of certain steps in the field of folk dance. Even in the Philippines, there is a reflection of the same socio-cultural practice. The movements of women carrying pots filled with water got incorporated in

dance and theatrical practices. For instance, the Banga dance of the Kalinga tribe was named after the banga pots.

“This performance originated in the province of Kalinga of the Mountain Province. As many as seven or eight pots are balanced on the heads of maidens as they move to the beat of the gangsá, a type of gong, while they go about their daily routine of fetching water while balancing the banga.” (Wikipedia entry on banga dance)

The “Banga” (ba-nga), is a round or spherical jar made of clay, used for fetching water and mostly adopted by the northern region of the Philippines. Kalinga women place a woven and coiled piece “jikon” that is made from a straw plant “ligis,” or they use a rolled cloth on their heads for support while carrying the banga. The Kalinga use local sources for the clay to make their pots. The known potters are the women from the villages of Puapo and Dalupa in Pasil, and in the village of Dognak in Lubuagan. These clay pots are made for fetching and storing water, cooking, storing of food, and for bartering....

One of the interpretive dances created during the KAYAW days was the “BANGA” dance. This dance is performed with Kalinga women showing their agility in balancing the bangas on top of their heads while toddling through rice paddies and mountain paths; a daily routine to fetch water from the mountain springs. (Juliet Omli Cawas Cheatle and Jenny Bawer Young, ‘The Kalinga Banga’: *Origin and History of the Banga Dance* accessed from Web: G Phillipine festival)

Similarly, the ways in which food was made, threshing, cleaning and other basic household chores were carefully executed served as the raw material for the development of stylized forms like Karate. The ‘naan chaku’ (danger sticks), introduced in the training of original

Okinawan karate, is a training weapon that allows the practitioners to learn quicker hand movements and also helps in improving reflex. It is believed to have originated from a short South-east Asian flail, used to thresh corn. Another such daily life example that created an impact in the martial arts studies includes the ways of eating. The Japanese people believe that a person who can catch a fly with chopsticks can accomplish anything! This is also another reflection of myth used as a marketing tool in the spread and global transmission of karate. Chopsticks serve as important props that usually help in the practice of expansion and contraction techniques in martial arts.

Post independence Indian society underwent a significant change during the fifties and sixties, with the popularity of action movies across the globe and moreover, with an increased awareness on defence and strategic studies, there was a gradual re-evaluation of the status of the martial arts training along with other forms of fitness regime, among India's urban population. In 1965, the University of Allahabad started teaching Defence studies in its Department of Defence and Strategic Studies. During the Seventh Plan, the U.G.C. review committee had decided to consider upgrading the department as the Center of Excellence in Strategic Studies. Similar departments were established in the Savitribai Phule Pune University in 1984 (originally, it was established in 1963 as the Department of Military Studies) and also in the University of Madras in 1977.

In an article titled, 'DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES: ACADEMIC CHALLENGES AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES', published in The Kashmir Times on 2nd September, 2013, Dr. Shaheen Sowkat Dar stated:

Defence and strategic studies has been introduced in various universities of India in late 1950's and early 1960's but it is still considered as a new and naive subject.

The underlying principle of being still improvised or unprepared is because of the

academic preconceived notion and wishful-thinking of some scholars that it encourages the military culture. This is a sheer black propaganda against the competence of defence and strategic studies. It is an experienced fact that defence and strategic studies works on dynamic challenges of traditional and non traditional security issues as compared to other social sciences. Being cross-disciplinary field of study it incorporates various subjects and connexion them with the objectives of national security. It links sciences to the to the science of security which includes international relations, strategic thought, geopolitics, nuclear issues, defence and development, science and technology, history, international law, psychology, sociology, economics, peace and conflict and anything else as a field of inquiry to contribute the national security and educate the citizens about peace and war. Therefore in the contemporary context, the changing role of nation state and paradigm shift in international system has made defence and strategic studies an area of great significance.

In South Asia, India was the first country that initiated the programme of defence and strategic studies in various universities and colleges across the county in 1950 and 1960. In 1978 after year of its independence Bangladesh has started the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS). Pakistan has opened the department of defence and strategic studies Quaid-i-Azam University in 1980. The Indian Universities including, Pune University, North Maharashtra University Jalgaon, University of Allahabad, DDU Gorakhpur University, Lucknow University, Banaras Hindu University, Kashi Vidyapaeth, MD University Rohtak, Punjab University, and recently Central and State University of Jammu. Goa, Thiruvananthapuram, and Hyderabad University. Besides this, defence and strategic

studies is also taught at graduate level in colleges across the country. (Dar, *The Kashmir Times*, <http://kashmirtimes.com/newsdet.aspx?q=25843>)

Firstly, during these times, martial art training including karate training was not viewed as a foreign element in our society and culture; rather, it was treated as an indigenous form of disciplinary training and knowledge acquisition in this field. In fact, for a certain section of the society, it was clearly equated with upward social mobility as well as an elevated status. Secondly, educated middle-class parents started realizing the fact that modern India, which includes diverse cultural and performance traditions, could not possibly operate as a single cultural and political unit without the common bond of training in self defence. Hence middle-class parents tried to put in much effort while providing their children with rigorous education in martial arts, these children became familiar with this way of life that stresses on attaining enlightenment through detachment and developed an identity through the medium of karate training. Since they had been born after Independence, these young Indians escaped the indignities that their parents associated with chhau, lathi khela, wrestling, thangta, karate and its practitioners. Although middle-class children were sent to such dojo where the initial mode of training was karate, they often practised other related martial arts forms in order to create new, original, practically applicable methods through permutation and combination that would suit the individual's style. Bruce Lee, for example, was initially trained by one of the great masters IP Man in wing chung and karate but he finally combined technical aspects from different forms which would suit his speed, pace force and physique. Eventually, he invented the highly celebrated style of Jeet Kune Do. Consequentially, these Indian martial arts practitioners who learnt karate in dojo and combined Indian martial forms during their reflex training and warm up sessions, developed a characteristic Indo-Japanese style of martial training which absorbed numerous cultural conventions from regional Indian martial and dance styles, with 'chhau' and stick fighting (madari ka khel) probably exerting the greatest

influence. What one sees today in national and international karate championships among students of karate is this mixture of Indian and Japanese styles. This form of disciplinary training and subject formation also gradually permeated the army and the DRDO has gone to a great extent in order to implement krav maga and karate training in this training schedule.

So far, this flexible, all encompassing and hybrid nature of karate training happened to be the most important factor that brought about its popularity all over the world. In this context, we can draw a parallel between karate training and the English language. H. Y. Sharda Prasad, the press spokesman for India's former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, once described English as "a language written or spoken by Indians in the belief that it is English": "the spelling may be English," he noted, "but the tone and spirit are more akin to Hindi" (Weisman 6). Hindi's influence on English is tied in a rather curious way to the governmental policy of making Hindi the national language. Despite political opposition from non-Hindi-speaking regions to the language policy, the Bombay film industry has quite successfully spread Hindi to the farthest reaches of the subcontinent. Resistance to Hindi nonetheless remains strong in many parts of the country. The anti-Hindi-imposition agitations of Tamil Nadu were a series of agitations that happened in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu (formerly Madras State and part of Madras Presidency) during both pre- and post-independence periods. The agitations involved several mass protests, riots, student and political movements in Tamil Nadu concerning the official status of Hindi in the state. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Hindi_agitations_of_Tamil_Nadu)

The following excerpts are from Ramachandra Guha's article 'Hindi against India' which was published in the Hindu on 16th January, 2005.

You can speak Tamil or English and yet be a good Indian, argued Anna. No, answered New Delhi, the only good patriots are those who speak (and write)

Hindi. Shastri and his Government stood by the decision to make Hindi official on 26 January. And, in consequence, all hell broke loose.

There are some good books on the 'official language' controversy, such as Robert D. King's *Nehru and the Language Politics of India* and Mohan Ram's *Hindi Against India*. However, the events of January-February 1965, when the debates came to a head, are best recalled by excerpts from this newspaper itself. Naturally, *The Hindu* followed these events very closely indeed.

On January 27, there was no issue of *The Hindu*; but over the following week the paper devoted hundreds of column-inches to the anti-Hindi protests. In towns and cities all over Madras — as the state was still called — students boycotted classes. In numerous villages bonfires were made of effigies of the Hindi demoness. In railway stations and post offices, Hindi signs were removed or blackened over.

The headlines in *The Hindu* tell part of the story:

Total hartal in Coimbatore

Advocates abstain from work

Students fast in batches

Peaceful strike in Madurai

Lathi-charge in Villupuram

Tear-gas used in Uthamapalyam

The bulk of the protests were collective: strikes, *bandhs*, processions, boycotts and *dharnas*. But there was one form of protest that was individual and disturbingly so: the taking of one's life. On Republic Day itself, two men set themselves on fire in

Madras. One left a letter saying he wanted to sacrifice himself at the altar of Tamil. Three days later, a 20-year-old man in Tiruchi killed himself by consuming insecticide. He too left a note saying his suicide was in the cause of Tamil. These 'martyrdoms', in turn, sparked dozens of more strikes, processions, boycotts and dharnas. (Guha, *The Hindu*, 16 January, 2005. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070828182942/http://www.hindu.com/mag/2005/01/16/stories/2005011600260300.htm>)

The 2006 controversy on the national song, *Vandemataram*, is illustrative here. There is no doubt that this song was appreciated by the freedom fighters for its powerful potential for mobilization, as its stirring words and imagery impelled thousands of Indians to participate in the nationalist struggle despite adverse consequences. But it also provoked controversies even during the nationalist phase because of the predominant religious imagery and 'anthropomorphic depiction' of the Indian nation, which left many uneasy with its adoption as a national song.

In his thesis, 'Reconciling Linguistic Diversity: The History and the Future of Language Policy in India', Jason Baldrige talked about the language tension that still exists in India.

Tensions may still rise when one uses the wrong language in some places. It is often recommended that one should not speak Hindi in south India, as N.G. reiterates, "If you try to communicate in Hindi, the people won't answer back, they'll be rude, or they'll say something. That's a common experience" (T13.E2). P.C. (unfortunately this was not taped) once had a problem on a bus in Tamil Nadu. He was unable to communicate with the bus driver in Tamil, so he tried Telugu. This failed, so he tried English. Again this did not work, so at last he tried Hindi, which angered the driver.

He threatened to kick P.C. off the bus, but fortunately some people who knew both Tamil and Telugu were able to talk to the driver and P.C. was able to remain on the bus.

However, the language need not be Hindi for problems to occur, as B.C. discovered in Tirupathi:

Like it happened once with me; I am not very familiar with my mother tongue (Telugu). So I'd been to this holy place of Tirupathi. I went there, and this was the time I went alone. And I didn't know how to converse with him properly. Basically, the thing out there is between Tamil and Telugu-it's a bit mixed up, you know, the dialect. So I was trying to converse with him and I wasn't successful, so I thought I'd do it in English. I started talking to him in English, and that fellow got really pissed. He was telling-like he was real mad. 'If you don't know, just get out,' or something like that. It was all for booking of a silly room. (T13.E3)

Subramaniam ran into a similar problem in Bangalore (T13.E1). One should take care not to over generalize from these isolated incidents, but they do demonstrate that language conflict on a personal level is very real for Indians who are away from their own regions. It is also important not to assume that such occurrences only happen in the south, as Kota's reply, "Same thing in the north also," (T13.E2) to N.G.'s comment reminds us.

<https://www.ling.upenn.edu/~jason2/papers/natlang.htm#today>

Quite interestingly, karate training has undergone a similar kind of regional tension and confusion based on four different styles, ever since it started gaining popularity in India. The techniques are based on authentic Okinawan karate but during its reception and widespread cultural transmission in India, the essence, stylistic traits, methods of warm up training, partner practise exercise, slight modifications in dress (gi), exhaling procedure of

'kiai' got influenced by the regional martial arts and martial dance regimes which have already been popular in our country. At present, the KIO (Karate India Organization) is the national widespread organisation with the strength of 28 affiliated state associations and more than 200 approved Karate styles/clubs representing different styles like Shotokan, Shito Ryu, Goju Ryu, Wado Ryu, Shorin Ryu and Budokan. (retrieved from the official website of Indian Olympic Association).

As a result of the heightened position of karate in our socio-cultural sphere, certain typically South Asian strains of martial practice were gradually developed in Thailand. Such distributaries and convex modes of practice were highly Indianized in incorporating their cultural patterns from not only wrestling but also other Indian forms of martial arts like the kalaripayattu and silambam (popular in South India). In other words, martial arts training indeed started gaining currency in India during the sixties and seventies. Although common people, at times, analyse karate as a field of martial training that systematically trains practitioners to gain physical and mental prowess, for almost all karate practitioners, it is not merely a sequence of bodily activity or disciplinary practice set but it also, "exists within a framework of ideas, knowledge, beliefs, and practices drawn from the cultures in which it appears" (Krug 2001: 395; see also, Donohue 1993; Friman 1996; and Ashkenazi 2002). Most of the karate practitioners consider the practice of karate not merely from the perspective of immediate gain with regard to an acquisition of physical skill or ability. Rather, they value karate as a way of life; a path towards improvement of the self and that which leads to an informed identification of karate as a socio-cultural and symbolic practice. This also gets interwoven as a component of the practitioner's self-identity (Donohue, 1993).

One of the major aims of conducting the interviews was to try and find out the importance of myth as a marketing tool and to understand how it has enabled the spread of karate in

West Bengal. In this context, it can be noted that comparative methodology helped me in interrogating the very assumptions upon which the critical paradigms of karate as a sport and way of life, encapsulating oral narratives and practices of survival were founded. It allows the containment or situating of the here-ness and there-ness analysed through the aspects of time and space. The very dialectic between the Japanese and the Indians (specially the cultural transmission of karate among the people of West Bengal) along with their respective cultures are explored within the framework of conducting interviews. It helps in the reworking and rewriting of varied cultural practices into national literatures. The essence of karate as one of the foundational touchstones of self defence and resistance mechanism is sustained and simultaneously the significance of literatures of national importance like *Anandamath*, *Debi Choudhurani* and regional literatures like the popularity of the Bnatul and Chacha Chaudhury series was also gradually established. Through the reception and spread of karate, the master-slave binary has been challenged time and again and transgressed in the process. It has been substituted by a new socio-cultural order in which a cordial relationship, rather a soulful connection exists between the master and the disciples. The central and peripheral positions of languages, cultures and literatures, which were enforced before fifty years by martial arts practitioners and its paradigms, are given more importance and the very concept of hierarchical positioning is studied through the reception of karate in India. Comparative Cultural Studies provided me the methodology to blend matters concerning purity, impurity, continuity and change, with regard to karate practice. The interviews conducted as an essential part of the learning curve about the reception, spread and transmission of karate in our society also provided me with the wonderful scope to evaluate between the match and mismatch in perspectives of individuals across different age groups, communities of practitioners and instructors. The process of delving deeper into particular areas of reception, spread and transmission of

karate training in West Bengal invariably reveals complexity, divergence, continuity and even discontinuity between the now and then, the here and there. Global consciousness about the spread and impact of karate gets awakened during the process.

Although the references in performative texts based on karate and their renditions vary across societies and cultures, there is an underlying commonality that binds them together. The interviews conducted as a part of the methodology helped a lot in enriching the mode of simulation that further opened up a dialogic space between the local and the global proponents of karate, the internal and the external factors related to differences in stylistic traits and thematic transmissions of 'kata', the sacred and the profane contained in the ideologies followed while sparring/ direct contact combat ('kumite'), the licit and the illicit as mentioned in the rules governing proper methods of technical application, reason and reflex, discipline and transgression, speech and silence, natural, supernatural and the preternatural. It eventually helps in the encapsulation of negotiations between apparently opposing elements. There has been a wonderful blend of the spirit of Japanese karate and the structure of the indigenous Indian martial arts forms into one whole. The gradual yet steady production, promotion and reception of karate ought to be considered in terms of perceived resonances across cultures.

The negotiation between quest for knowledge and received knowledge in order to help in the formation of an ideal subject (the martial art practitioner, in this case, a karate practitioner) is also embodied because an in-depth understanding of the historical, socio-cultural and geo-political backgrounds of the birth of karate in Japan, interests, and methodologies used to further its propagation are significant in understanding the relationship between the local and the global; the local gains knowledge and implements it to acquire the global standard. It will always owe a debt to other disciplines with which it is intertwined and discourses from which it has emerged. For instance, while analyzing the

spread of karate within the field of Comparative Cultural Studies, there is an inherent interconnection between historiography, socio-economic discourses and thematology, genology and performance theories. An issue can be approached thematically, generically or historiographically. Thematology is the study and comparative analysis of themes in different texts, be it literary, oral or performative. It is one of the most important methodological tools in Comparative Literature. It implements the globaleclectical reading of any particular text (written/oral/performative text), where national and world literatures are considered in relation to each other.

“Comparative Literature is explicitly comparative. It tries to be systematic without being eclectic and this single-mindedness implies a method... International contextualism in literary history and comparative criticism are the laws which determine the overall plan or method for the proper understanding of the field.” (I.N. Choudhary, p.3) Van Tieghem defined Comparative Literature thus: “The object of comparative literature is essentially the study of diverse literatures in their relation with one another”. (Qtd in Rene Wellek, p. 15). He further confines Comparative Literature to binary relations: “A comparatist is hardly in a position to exercise any aesthetic judgment in choosing the best works in all languages of the world. He is concerned mainly with the relationships, the resemblances and differences between national literatures; with their convergences and divergences. He has to work within a rigorous frame work to avoid subjective predilections and personal preferences. But at the same time he wants to arrive at a certain general understanding of literary activities of man and to help create a universal poetics. Goethe wanted the common reader to come out of the narrow confines of his languages and geography and to enjoy the finest achievements of man. The comparatist also wants to come out of the confines of language and geography, but not so much to identify the best in all literatures as to understand the relationships between literatures in their totality”. (Sisir Kumar Das, p. 96)

As Wellek observes, Comparative Literature is a genre of research without boundaries of language, ethics and politics. It aims at studying all genres of literature, culture, other arts and performances from an international angle because all creative forms of expression, like the performance of 'kata', 'kihon', 'kumite' in karate and experiences based on real life situations where one has to defend oneself almost always have an aspect of unity. There exists the distant ideal of anticipating from the international angle the establishment of a global history of karate and global studies or positioning of karate in different cultures. The scope of its research covers historically unrelated phenomena in language and style, as well as origins and influence in history.

Comparative Cultural Studies and its methodology increasingly stress the hybridized quality of post-colonial discourse in an attempt to deviate from the Eurocentric formulation of the so-called 'Others'. Hybridity, according to Homi Bhaba, is the 'third space' which has the ability to displace the constituting elements and histories and also has the power to give rise to newer structures with new meanings. Cultural hybridity has the ability to set up new connotations, new ways of representation of things which are different from familiar ones. The inter-semiotic mode of translation, for instance, can represent this cultural hybridity beautifully on screen. India and Japan have good international relations and are coming closer to each other, forgetting their differences and trying to imbibe the best of each culture through the practice of karate.

Karate is a creole of practices that were combined together on the island of Okinawa. Originally referred to as *te*, karate combined indigenous fighting techniques with knowledge and practices from China, Japan and possibly from Thailand, the Philippines and other countries in the area. However, the major influence was Chinese. (Krug 2001: 396)

Ever since its inception, karate was never the sole belonging of any one particular nation or culture. It was rather a product of the resultant trade, travel, cultural exchange and other interactions among people from different countries in East Asia.

Caught in the middle of the turbulent history of Sino-Japanese relationships, invaded during the Japanese civil wars and in 1945 by the Allied Forces, Okinawa has been constantly transformed and its cultural practices threatened by the waves of different cultures that washed over the island. Thus, from its inception, karate was never a single thing but an evolving set of practices linked to local knowledge as well as prevailing cultural beliefs. It was, as well, actively evolving in many directions and idiolects or styles (Krug 2001: 396).

Following this track of give-and-take among cultures, Japan has accepted the new stylistic renditions and Indianization of karate to a certain extent. These are quite evident in the stylistic traits developed by the Japan Karate Association (JKA) and the World Karate Federation (WKF). It is evident from an examination of the major Japanese karate styles that their present state is due to an evolution, rather than a simple transmission, of martial ideas and methodologies... The “traditional” method is one of adaptation, innovation, and progression” (Mottern 2001: 239).

The domain dealing with the reception and cultural transmission of martial arts practice across societies is identified with stasis, change and safety. Leaving the initial realm where foreign elements are not yet introduced is identified with danger or risk taking and return to the modified realm that readily utilizes the study of karate is an acceptance of the rules, constrictions as well as freedom of both the realms. The creation of newer meanings in karate practice through the third space allows one to accept cultural hybridity as a progressive method in the present day. Return to varied ways of representation and meaning

takes place when the karate practitioner realizes the fact that such hybridity in a way promotes regional culture (Indian aesthetics, in this case) on a global scale. In accordance with the polysystem theory in translation, it has become extremely significant to explore varied texts along with their contexts and cultures in which they originate. Oral narratives and documentation of performances are equally important as instruction manuals, rulebooks or other forms of written texts.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said has defined 'culture' as:

All those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure. Included, of course, are both the popular stock of lore about distant parts of the world and specialized knowledge available in such learned disciplines" and as "a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought. (Said, 1990: 25)

The Indians have realized the significance of the cultural practices concerned with the martial way of life – today's reader/performer/audience is much more knowledgeable about the literatures and cultures of various nations than those in the preceding centuries. The translations of Japanese literary texts based on martial arts, productions of original texts and instruction manuals in English have created a silent revolution in the last fifty years. These created the ground for ready reception and fast transmission of karate in India.

Now as we try to understand the inter-relationship between power acquisition and correct training of karate, let us also take a quick look at the differences between 'the author function' and 'the founders of discursivity' with suitable examples. The construction of the author function (in the present context, we will draw a parallel between the author function

and the performer function where the performer refers to the martial artist in particular) is a process that continues as long as every text (in this case, a performance or choreography based on fighting skills) occupies a position in a discourse. The author function provides the starting point to the historical analysis of texts and introduces us to the significance of re-examining the position of the subject. Similarly, the performer function will then provide the initial point to the metaphorical and cultural analysis of fights that are staged or games that are played during tournaments. The position of the practitioner (that is to say, the subject) is definitely examined. Foucault deliberately does not acknowledge Barthes as his immediate precursor. Barthes is both present in Foucault's essay as an inter-textual reference and as an antagonist against whom Foucault argues.

According to Michel Foucault, the author function which happens to be the most determining aspect of discourse formation is actually characterized by four significant traits:

- i. It shows how all discourses are objects of appropriation. Foucault refers to a paradox appearing in legal propositions regarding the figure of the author. Authors are under the jurisdiction of law for violating certain forms of decorum with respect to their works. The copyright laws, on the one hand, assign the rights of ownership to the authors. On the other hand, censorship laws determine whether an author has transgressed or not. In medieval times, there was a clear division between the sacred and the profane, the licit and the illicit and this division has now become institutionalized in the form of strict codes of decency that the authors and performers were expected to follow. In the same vein, martial artists and karate performers also need to abide by certain rules and regulations, specific to the dojo and in general, with the ideology of Martial Art Studies. These martial artists definitely enjoy the liberty to explore their creative potential while experimenting

with form and stylistic traits, thereby getting inspired to invent a new, hybrid form. But obviously, they are not allowed to transgress from the basic roots of the art form.

- ii. The author function does not have a universal and constant impact on all discourses. Just as the relationship between the text and the surrounding context must be identified in order to rediscover the author; similarly, the connection between a karateka's performance and the socio-cultural context in which the performance is delivered, must be clearly understood in order to understand the identity and subject formation of the martial artist. Oscar Wilde's letters, for example, were neither literary production nor judged by censorship but these letters became vital in the prosecution of this literary figure. The practice of identifying a literary text by the author's name is quite common. When we read a novel or a drama, we inevitably try to know the name of the author. Literary texts have been made indissociable from the name of the author because the author function is considered in relation to the author's surroundings and the present surroundings in which the reader reads the work. But in the case of scientific discourses, the name of a single author is never seen as indispensable for the proliferation of science.
- iii. It does not develop spontaneously as the "attribution of a discourse to its producer"; rather it is affected by the institutional practices. (Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse') For example, the school, as an educational institution is considered with respect to the discourse of discipline whereas the discourse of madness centres on the institution of the asylum.
- iv. It does not merely represent an individual in reality because it can trigger the idea of a multiplicity of selves at the same time.

It would be just as wrong to equate the author with the real writer as to equate him with the fictitious speaker; the author function is carried out and operates in the scission itself, in this division and this distance. (Foucault, 'What is an Author?')

It needs to be conceived in a way that it will be able to encapsulate those who are authors of theories or newer disciplines because they do not fit into particular identifiable discourses in a systematic fashion. Foucault terms the position occupied by these authors as "trans-discursive". These authors do not merely produce works, but disciplines. They have successfully engendered theories in which other authors have also participated. Foucault goes on to explain the fact that there exists a different kind of author and those who belong to this unique category are called the founders of discursivity.

"They are unique in that they are not just authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts." (Foucault, 'What is an Author?', pp. 10 - 11)

The basic difference between the author function and the founders of discursivity is that the author function is a set of beliefs and ideas with the help of which one identifies the discourse inherent in the author's text and culture but the founders of discursivity refer to individuals who have allowed the proliferation of new ideas, traditions and disciplines. Secondly, the difference between the two is in the scope offered by each of these. The complexities inherently contained in the attempt to define and characterise the author function prevent it from taking into account a larger spectrum of disciplines, entire groups of works and traditions. The author function is limited to the works and the authors of literary works and religious or social treatises. The founders of discursivity take into consideration a wide spectrum of perspectives and their concepts offer a better scope and are applicable to a wide range of disciplines. Artemidorus did not predict the future through

an analysis of dreams. He was more interested in symbols rather than concepts and classified dreams on a scientific basis. The symbols integrated alternate ways of tackling the future. He is not considered to be a founder of discursivity. His ideas remain confined to his works. On the other hand, Sigmund Freud is considered to be one of the founders of discursivity because he dealt with the discourse of desire hidden in the symbols and paved the way for further interpretations and psychoanalytic theories. The author function deals with the economy of signs and structures whereas the founders of discursivity delve deep into the discourse contained in the signs. The founders of discursivity have produced doctrines which created two contradictory impacts:

- i. The followers who wish to deviate from the theories, ideas and opinions established by the founders and also wish to deny codified tenets have the freedom to deviate.
- ii. Those who wish to differ and diverge from the foundational principles will also have to refer to the organizational texts in order to establish their radical departures from the ideas of the founders. New concepts need to be based on the foundational concepts.

Certain discourses are non-literary, they are more scientific in nature and the speaker can be identified with the narrator. In such discourses, the voice of the author is the same as that of the first person narrator, but in literary discourses, the role of the speaker is ambiguous. Instead of looking at these two different discourses, the author function will be much more enriched if it looks for the gap between the speaker and the first person narrator in both literary and scientific discourses. Foucault observes that there is no evidence that 'discursive initiation' and 'scientific founding' are "two mutually exclusive procedures". (Foucault, 'What is an Author?') He has distinguished between the two in order to show that the position of the founders of discursivity is not appropriately explained when one

talks about the author function. It is possibly because of the limited scope offered by the author function. An author is attributed to a work (oeuvre) in order to discern the true meaning of the work and also to confront the problem of plurality of the author.

Another significant point regarding the author function and the founders of discursivity is that the author function allows “resemblances and analogies” which are based on the previous texts of certain authors who made possible the emergence and development of new genres, styles and principles but the founders of discursivity allow resemblances as well as divergences from the main concepts and seminal texts. Foucault uses Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud as examples of the founders of discursivity. Their texts and hypotheses contain “characteristic signs, figures, relationships, and structures that could be reused by others.” (Foucault, p. 10) The founders of discursivity are therefore considered to be extremely important. They are followed and interpreted in different ways by subsequent writers of the discipline or tradition. They are not the same as the founders of literary genres. In literary discourse, ‘analogy’ and ‘resemblance’ are considered to be important factors in determining the popularity of the author and the impact of the literary genre or the literary work on writers and readers in different times and different places. In the essay, ‘What is an Author?’ Foucault uses Ann Radcliffe as an example to show how the author function operates. There is absolutely no doubt regarding the fact that her novels paved way for the emergence of a new genre, that of the Gothic horror novel but the fact remains that subsequent authors of the Gothic horror novel followed tropes and themes which were the same as those used by Radcliffe.

On the other hand, if we take into consideration the founders of discursivity, we find that the possibility of differing from the founders themselves is adumbrated in the works of these founders. For example, there are possibilities of reconceptualising the tenets of psychoanalysis by making proper use of the gaps and fissures in the seminal texts.

Freud is not just the author of *The Interpretation of Dreams or Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*; Marx is not just the author of the *Communist manifesto* or *Das Kapital*: they both have established an endless possibility of discourse (Foucault, 'What is an Author?' p.10)

Let us consider some of the observations of Freud and Lacan in order to show how the foundation of discursivity in the field of martial arts training can allow the possibility of similarities as well as differences with respect to the performances and the concepts embedded in their own performative arenas. In his introductory 'Lectures on Psychoanalysis' (1817-1819), Sigmund Freud opined that the unconscious or the submerged agency determines what the conscious mind will think and thoughts can be programmed into the unconscious. In this context, we can think of the protagonists in all the three parts of the movie 'The Karate Kid'. I would like to focus on the nuances of this movie in particular because most of the interviews revealed that this was one of the universal favourites among different groups. This movie and its sequels seem to have instilled a lot of interest among young adults who later got admitted in the karate course. The submerged agency of the karate kid helps the protagonist to translate thoughts into action and achieve success in the long run. Freud's theory of the unconscious was the third great narcissistic blow to mankind. Copernicus had previously deprived humanity of the central place in the cosmos and after him; Darwin had stated that man descended from animals and that the world is a competitive jungle where one must fight and adapt to circumstances for survival. Freud's theory of the unconscious eclipsed all other theories. He felt that the aim of psychoanalysis was to uncover the forgotten memories of childhood and to show how these affect later development. D.H Lawrence tried to assert his own views by describing the true unconscious as the life mystery, "where life bubbles up in us, prior to any mentality," but his theory was subsumed. Freud's focus was on the

unconscious processes in daily life- he implied that our most valued characteristics, for instance free will, sense of self and rationality are all mere illusions as we are products of the unconscious, uncontrollable forces. He felt that an unknown entity dominates and controls us all. This unknown entity can be brought under control through martial arts training. This further leads to the formation of a subject (in this context, it refers to an individual undergoing rigorous karate training) who acquires the power to transcend borders of knowledge and power, while keeping desires under control of the self. On the other hand, the serious implication of such an observation is that, if the sense of self, free will and reason are mere illusions, and then to what extent is it just to punish people for their crimes? If one has no freedom to choose one's action, why should the person be punished? To what extent is a good act good and a bad act bad? Therein are the gaps and fissures in Freud's concept of the unconscious. Subsequent theorists found out the gaps and diverged from his concepts, thereby modifying psychoanalytic theory as a whole. Freud's influence was enormous, even on his detractors. Jacques Lacan argued that the 'unconscious' as a Freudian term is vague and inappropriate although the concept itself is very precise. Lacan gave a different name to the same thing. He termed it as the 'subject' (Lacan, 'Televisio', section 2, published in 1974). It is an empty subject of the signifier and is divided between the locus of the subject and the locus of the Other (Autre). It is a fading subject that appears in its disappearance. The barred subject is the Lacanian term for the Freudian unconscious. The Freudian unconscious is something that is situated inside (in the depth) as opposed to the outside, akin to the mystic writing pad. The Lacanian subject is situated not inside or outside, but both inside and outside at the same time and is akin to a mobius strip. The Freudian unconscious is the product of repression whereas Lacan's subject is the product of the object of alienation. The former belongs to an individual and contains private accounts of his or her thoughts whereas the subject does not belong to an

individual in particular; rather it encapsulates the inter-subjective aspect. It is situated on the other side of speech and action at a given moment. According to Freud, repression occurs first and is then followed by the return of the repressed whereas Jacques Lacan observed that it was the opposite. For him, it is a conscious reconstruction of the subject (in this case, the martial artist) at another time and place. The return of the repressed, according to Lacan, occurs at first and is then followed by a retroactive reconsideration of what may have been repressed. During the subject formation through karate practice, these issues are at play. Therefore, an analysis of the individual or the subject who is willing to undergo subjection and subjugation to disciplinary modes of training requires a brief understanding of the psychoanalytical perspective as well.

With respect to scientific discourses, there were founders like Galileo and Newton, but in this case, there is a certain levelling of the stature of the founding figure and the followers. Similarly, with regard to discourse revolving around the field of martial arts, if the followers wish to make significant intervention in the already established field of training, theoretical development and practice, they are required to show the ways in which they can practically make use of the discourse concerning that particular branch of study itself as well as the theories established by the founders. If the intervention and change is proved to be true, a new outlook will be acquired but the basic tenets of the field remain unaltered. Scientific and technical knowledge will be further produced by the linguistic constructs that shape our ideas of reality concerned with proper training. On the other hand, the disciplines and theories founded by the founders of discursivity get modified as and when necessary and (modifies) the discipline as a whole. Psychoanalysis and such other traditions of knowledge have turned into petrified forms of inter-referential writings that contribute to the development of doctrines. There is a relocation of possible positions into a plurality of viewpoints which construe different points of subjectivity.

According to Foucault, “Re-examination of Galileo’s text may well change our understanding of the history of mechanics, but it will never be able to change mechanics itself. On the other hand, re-examining Freud’s texts modifies psychoanalysis itself; just as a re-examination of Marx’s would modify Marxism.” (Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’ pp. 12- 14)

For Foucault, literature does not merely express the socio-economic and political realities of a particular age. Similarly, martial arts studies and karate training also encapsulate a lot more than that meets the eye. It deals with ruptures, continuities and discontinuities which help in giving shape to a holistic experience of a phenomenon and culture. Literature is neither capable of transcending discourse and nor can it be reduced to discourse. Literary and philosophical discourses can be the general envelope of all other forms of discourse. Literary language and technical language used during the practice of martial arts can definitely point to a strangeness of existence that cannot properly be suggested through discursive language. The discourse of sexuality and that of madness, for example, were produced by the dominant discourse of the times. Discourses permeate the oeuvre and form a web in the field of martial arts studies, specifically when we take into consideration identity and subject formation, in this particular domain. The objective purpose of discourse is to analyse the conditions of experience. Foucault was influenced by Marxism, phenomenology and existentialism but he was dismissive of Sartre’s Marxism. Sartre’s ideas, on the other hand, were subjectivist and liberationist. The dominant line of Marxist criticism is divided into a materialist analysis of literature which develops into neo-historicism and into ideological analysis. Foucault wished to introduce power as a philosophy and linked power with knowledge in a method of archaeology. He tried to do away with the reductionist way of analysing a text, be it literary or performative. A literary

text based on martial arts or a martial art performance gets transformed into a work when appropriated in the process of canon formation.

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Chapter 3

Impact of the Pandemic on Reception of Martial Arts in India

During the Covid 19 pandemic, martial art training, just like any other form of education, was completely shifted to the online mode. Right after the Covid 19 pandemic affected the world, the ways in which any form of knowledge transfer take place definitely underwent certain major changes. From February, 2020 to March, 2022, the shift from offline training to online training sessions led to a significant change in the way martial arts studies have been perceived and practised till date. So during this time span, the main framework of the third chapter of the thesis was formed. This chapter tries 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 this global pandemic. 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 basically led to the transformation and consequent modification of martial arts practice on a large scale. The purpose of the third chapter is to find out how an increase in the digital mode of martial training affected practitioners from different parts of the society. This will also help us to understand what the post pandemic scenario of martial arts training will be.

The recently coined ‘martial arts studies’ (Bowman, 2015) is an example of the disruption between established academic disciplines such as anthropology, cultural geography, cultural studies, history, sociology and their sub-disciplines such as the sociology of sport – all in the aim of understanding the world’s fighting systems along with the people and cultures embedded within them (the

ethnos forming the stem of ethnography). Ethnography is a key research strategy among a range of other qualitative and quantitative studies including interviews, biographical analysis and surveys. Ethnographic fieldwork is a key method for anthropologists and also for ethnographers from other disciplines such as cultural geography (Green, 2011), those writing for specific audiences in Japanese studies (Chapman, 2004) and scholars with cross-disciplinary backgrounds, such as Zarrilli (1998). The field has even extended to ethnographies from sociolinguists (see Madsen's 2015 study of Taekwondo). Besides the widespread publications in longstanding academic journals and publishing houses, there are also numerous international academic journals devoted to the social scientific and scientific study of martial arts, such as *Martial Arts Studies* (UK), *Archives of Budo* (Poland) and the multilingual outlet *Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas* (Spain), although there remains a poor visibility of work in languages other than English (with some exceptions such as Nardini, 2016, in Italian). Besides the written word of the ethnography (the suffix -graphy), there are numerous conferences among a range of social sciences where ethnographic work features alongside other alternatives (such as in a recent gathering on sports coaching, in Jennings, 2017a).

Background:

During the work from home phase, I decided to shift to the mountains and stayed at different monasteries as well as with local communities in Sikkim, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, rural areas of West Bengal and North Bengal from July, 2021 to December, 2021. During this phase, I got the opportunity to study the lifestyles of young monks and locals from different

regions who train in different forms of martial arts. I learnt more about their modes of martial training and practice and how Buddhism and the Zen lifestyle played a major role in the development of martial arts in the Indian landscape. Meanwhile, I started learning video making and editing because I wanted to document my experiences when I was travelling. In December, 2021, I was invited to attend the celebrations in Sikkim, where vibrant cultural traditions were presented. Masked dance forms, martial dance forms, songs in local languages and karate were performed. I got a chance to observe how different traditions were interwoven in the Indian context. I learnt more about reception of martial arts and its impact on other forms like yoga. Yoga originated in India and my stay in the mountains made me understand exactly how yoga has gained prominence as an alternative method of fitness training during the last two years. Due to the restrictions, people were not able to carry on with offline training at gyms and dojo. For obvious reasons, parallel methods had to be developed. Yoga filled in this gap as it could be easily practised within the confines of a room. It helped practitioners all over the world to gain core strength and expertise. With the increase in importance of yoga as a warm up procedure during martial art training, practitioners have become more aware of the other Indian martial traditions like Thang ta, Kalaripayattu and stick fight.

Methodology implemented:

Initially, I had plans to visit different states of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Thailand and Japan in 2020 and 2021 in order to conduct offline surveys related to martial art practice in academia and beyond but due to the pandemic, international travel plans had to be cancelled. So I decided to form a questionnaire and circulated that among 200 participants from different parts of India, Japan, Thailand, Bangladesh, Bhutan, parts of UK and the US. 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 learning. The responses to the question set clearly show the divide that took place. Another important part that came to the forefront was the increase in popularity of action based video games like Mortal Combat, Assassin's Creed, Dead or Alive. At a time when young practitioners were not allowed to go out and practise with teammates, they devised their own strategies of online team play and action based video gaming became an important part of the martial culture. Solo forms of practice became more important. Partner work was not practically possible during the pandemic. So in the third chapter, I have tried to analyse the effects of the pandemic on martial arts culture. 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.

Despite the widespread scholarship in the twenty-first century (and after 2005 more specifically), martial arts ethnography has a shorter history than that of ethnographies of cultures more generally, with its humble beginnings in the 1980s. It could be argued, however, that like ethnography in general (see Atkinson), martial arts ethnographies have evolved through specific stages and 'generations', with and two clear strands existing in sociology and anthropology. The first generation of sociological writing was largely descriptive, but lacked rich data, and was written by a largely absent, disembodied yet authoritarian author who would have actually been heavily engaged in the field. It developed from the sociologies of sport, leisure and also work. The early British studies of Goodger (1982) alongside James and Jones (1982) outlines the evolving institutional cultures of *Judo* and *Karate* respectively, although they lacked data in terms of field notes and interviews, thick description of the settings in question, methodological considerations and an overarching theoretical framework. This was joined with a rare ethno-methodological study of the subtle nuances and practices of Kung Fu practitioners in the United States (Girton, 1986). Later work developed rich description in the third person, but had little reflection upon how the fieldwork was actually conducted. This is seen in Lewis's (1992) writings on *Capoeira* in Brazil along with the sociological analysis of 'race' in urban ghettos (Wyrod, 1999).

Since 2000, interviews and approaches to narrative research have been employed across a range of sociological studies, and several publications have exclusively focused on this particular method within and across ethnographic settings (such

as Brown & Jennings, 2013; Spencer, 2010). More recent work is therefore typically multimodal, reflexive, is often written in the first-person subjective perspective, and is chiefly concerned with embodiment. A new trend is to look at specific trends such as gender, masculinities and sexualities in terms of the transformative nature of combat sports (Paradis, 2012; Spencer, 2012). Meanwhile, authenticity – a concern for both anthropologists and sociologists (for example, see Joseph, 2008) – continues to engage researchers, along with revisiting common assumptions in regards to social class (see Abramson & Modzelweski, 2011). Lone ethnographers now sometimes work with critical colleagues to develop more theoretical accounts of specific themes identified by the foundational studies like that of Goodger (1982) in the journal *Religion*, such as in terms of secular religion in *Wing Chun Kung Fu* (Jennings, Brown & Sparkes, 2010) and have even used mixed methodologies to better understand complex issues such as *Budo* and implicit religion (Molle, 2010).

(Jennings, 25)

Based on these observations put forward by George Jennings, it is clear that fieldwork, survey and embodiment are important while researching in the field of martial arts. Thematology with regard to the analysis of field work and survey results will be one of the significant methodologies used, in order to find out the impact of the pandemic on transfer, reception and transmission of the martial knowledge. 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.

Discussion

Before launching into a detailed discussion of the survey conducted during the pandemic, let us not forget the immense, adverse effects of the pandemic on the whole world, mainly on people working as front-line Covid warriors. People from all professions sacrificed a lot during these two years. People from different sectors and varying social strata were affected terribly (physically, mentally and emotionally) and while the survey was conducted, most of the participants must have been going through really difficult times. I'm immensely grateful to all the participants who responded to the questions during these tough times. Some of them have even mentioned that being introduced to martial arts training helped them to cope up with difficulties during this phase. Some of the karate and yoga instructors mentioned that their art forms were never completely recognized by common people in the pre-pandemic times but the relevance of these practices gained widespread acknowledgment from all sections of the society during the crisis situation; when people tried to combat the deadly virus and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Within the field of Comparative Cultural Studies and Martial Arts Studies, the reception and transmission of martial art culture through the transnational spread of theory and practice of martial arts styles like karate, yoga, stick fight, kalari is the main area of concern in my thesis. This is the reason why I conducted the survey during the pandemic phase. As forms of cultural representation of lived experiences through the mode of martial art performance, training in any of the martial art forms include a multitude of references to films, books,

worldwide tournaments and most importantly, personal experiences of survival. The survey will help us in understanding the extent to which reception of martial arts by people from different social strata and varying age groups can make it an inevitable part of daily life, even after the pandemic subsides.

As martial arts are global phenomena, researchers continue to study them in their native environments as in *Xilam* in Mexico (Jennings, 2016) or in multicultural, transnational communities such as diasporic Capoeira and its relation with Black culture in Canada (Joseph, 2012) using theoretical frameworks on the ethnic groups in question. Nevertheless, despite such expansion into the Americas, there remains a paucity of fieldwork on African, European, Eurasian and Australasian fighting systems to match some of the historical work on these traditions. (Jennings, 43)

This is a pertinent problem in the field of martial arts even in India. Much work has not yet been done in this area. In order to find a solution to this lack of fieldwork, I have endeavoured to conduct surveys which may be of help for practitioners, researchers and educationists in martial arts studies.

In terms of the ethnographic ‘how’ (the methods), martial arts ethnography is a physical and intellectual commitment over time and physical/virtual space involving the key fieldwork and its related participation (such as learning a martial art in class), interaction (chatting to fellow students during social events) and observation (of competitions, for instance). This has often involved a serious apprenticeship as a key methodological strategy to enter and remain in field as trusted and valuable students and collaborators (see the reflections of Downey, Dalidowicz & Mason, 2014 on their respective fieldwork). Martial arts

ethnography has over three decades of history across various social sciences that converge to form ‘martial arts studies’ now recognised in the 21st century. It is multidisciplinary, multimodal, quite frequently ‘messy’ (see Plows, 2018), but also meticulous, like all ethnographies, as discussed elsewhere in this volume (refer to Atkinson, 2018).

Depending on these methods of conducting research in martial arts, I have tried to conduct fieldwork in the last 3 years. At the same time, we must not forget that obstacles faced during such an endeavour are relatively minor issues when compared with the worldwide scenario of terrifying loss, deaths, anxiety and immense tragedies. One of the participants mentioned:

I lost my father in June, 2021 and within a month; I lost one of my close friends. I don't even know how I am going to deal with all this.... My boss is overexploiting me and my colleagues. There is no proper work schedule nowadays. Some people are even getting terminated without any prior intimation. Merely staying alive is becoming so difficult these days.
(Female participant from India)

Another participant notes:

I don't even know whether I'll be able to continue with my passion or not. I have lost my job in August, 2021 because I could not perform my best at office. The IT sector demands you to work even when you are in terrible health condition. After the Covid attack, it was difficult for me to work online long hours. Now I don't know if I'll ever be able to go back to my sparring classes. When you don't have the financial support to meet basic requirements, even your closest people consider your indulgence in passions to be nothing but luxury. When my family members fall asleep, I try to continue with my practice at home because it helps me to stay sane during this period of utter chaos. (Male participant from Bangladesh)

Nevertheless, as a result of the pandemic, there are remarkable changes in the way karate training and other forms of alternative fitness like yoga are now perceived by people all over the world. Transmission of different forms of martial art knowledge helped a lot of people to deal with the crisis in better ways. Hopefully, the ongoing transmission and reception of martial arts will continue in the long run. Remarkably, the two most significant trajectories have to do with the embodiment of martial arts. One of the developments leads us away from bodily interaction, while the other reflects the immense importance of embodiment in martial arts practice.

Survey questions in a tabular format:

	Questions	Options	Mode
1.	Are you a practitioner in the field of any form of martial art? If yes, please mention the form/ forms.	Yes / No / I don't want to respond to this question	Choose any of the options
2.	Do you teach any form of martial art? If yes, please mention the main form that you teach.	Yes / No / I don't want to mention	Choose any of the options
3.	If you are neither an instructor nor a practitioner, what sparked your interest in martial arts?	Feel free to talk about your personal interest or community involvement	Open mode, based on written explanation
4.	For how long have you been involved in the pursuit of knowledge in martial arts training	Mention the total number of years you	You may add relevant

	(theory/practice)?	have been pursuing this	background details as well.
5.	Where do you stay? Please mention the name of the country.	Country of residence at present. Also mention if the country you are residing in is different from the country where you originally belong.	Feel free to talk about issues like dual citizenships or even, no proof of citizenship, if there is any such issue.
6.	Please mention your gender.	Male/ Female/ Trans/ Others	
7.	What is your current profession? If you are working, please mention the sector. If you are a student/ researcher, please mention your stream/ area of specialization. If you are not working, please mention your source of income, if any.	Talk about necessary details with regard to your professional identity.	Detailed, open format.
8.	Are you from the urban area or rural region or suburbs of a big city? If there is any other kind of area, please mention that too.	Urban/ Outskirts of a big city/ rural area/ border/ slum/ farmhouse/ others.	If there is any other option, mention that too. Else select from options mentioned.
9.	What is your main source of information on martial arts?	Talk about martial art based books, films, magazines, sports show or any other thing that	Explanation based format.

		you consider important	
10.	During the pandemic, did the source of your knowledge about martial arts undergo any change?	Yes/ No/ I don't want to answer this question. If yes, please mention the other modes of knowledge acquisition in this domain.	Open format. Explanatory mode.
11.	What, according to you, are the impacts of the pandemic on reception and transmission of martial arts in your area of residence?	Share your viewpoints, if any.	Descriptive mode
12.	Have you started following any particular fitness routine during the pandemic? Do you think it is helpful?	Yes/ No/ No viewpoint as such	Share relevant details, if any.
13.	What are the major forms of fitness and strength training you have been involved in?	Mention the major forms	Share personal experiences, if any
14.	Are you continuing with your martial art teaching/ training/ knowledge acquisition in the same space? (pre pandemic and during the pandemic)	Yes/ No	State the differences, if you want to
15.	If there has been a change in the practice arena, has it affected overall practice in any way?	Yes/ No/ May be	Share lived experience, if any

16.	Before the restrictions related to pandemic were imposed, what was your main mode of acquiring information on martial arts/ on teaching/ training martial arts?	Online/ offline/ hybrid Group/ solo/ one on one partner work	Mention relevant details associated with the concerned mode.
17.	During the pandemic, what is your main mode of teaching/practice?	Online/ offline/ hybrid	Mention specific changes during different phases, if any
18.	Before the pandemic, how much time did you invest in martial arts, on a monthly basis?	Respond with regard to time invested in: Teaching/ Training/ Reading books and watching martial art movies	Explanation based format
19.	During the pandemic, has there been any change in the time invested? Has the time invested changed due to change in practice arena?	Yes/ No? I don't really know Yes/ No? I don't really know	If yes, please specify reasons for such changes.
20.	Has there been any modification in the curriculum of martial art studies during the pandemic? (Individual as well as institutional level changes)	Yes/ No/ Obviously	Share relevant details, if any
21.	What was your initial goal when you started learning martial art? What was/were your	Tell us about your initial goal and	Detailed format: explanation based

	expectation/s from this art form?	expectations	
22.	Do you find any change in your training goals at present? What motivates you to train nowadays?	Mention changes, if any	Logically analyse the changes, if possible
23.	What, according to you, will probably be the effects of this pandemic on martial arts practice and transmission in your country?	Share your viewpoints in this regard	Detailed format: explanation based
24.	Do you find more people enrolled in your institution as practitioners right now?	Yes/ No/ May be/ Not quite sure	Choose one from the options.
25.	During the pandemic, has your participation in martial art webinars/ online workshops increased?	Yes/ No/ May be	Share relevant data, if any
26.	Before the pandemic, on an annual basis, how many workshops, seminars and tournaments did you participate in?	Mention the number	Share relevant data and experience, if any
27.	Has digitisation helped you or did you find it difficult to access knowledge via digital sources?	Yes/ No/ I don't want to answer this question	State the reasons, in support of your answer
28.	During the pandemic, have you started practising alternative fitness methods?	Yes/ No	If yes, mention the alternative methods.

29.	Do you find more people seeking your help in enhancing their core strength and fitness?	Yes/ No/ May be	Share relevant details, if any
30.	Before the pandemic, did educational institutions and corporate sectors ask you to conduct self defence workshops for their stakeholders?	Yes/ No/ Often/ Never/ Very rarely	Choose one from the options mentioned.
31.	During the pandemic, did educational institutions and professional sectors approach you to share your knowledge about self defence, strength training and suggestions related to immunity boost as well as mental wellness?	Yes/ No/ Often/ Never/ Very rarely	Mention the details, if any.
32.	Has there been any drastic change in the age range of practitioners at your organization, during the pandemic?	Yes/ No/ Nothing as such that would create an impact	Mention the change, if any
33.	At present, do you find more people developing interest in the theoretical background of techniques, cultural background of stylistic adaptations and mythological background of martial arts?	Yes/ No/ I don't know/ I don't want to answer this question	Select one of the options. Logically describe the reason why you think so.
34.	What would be the preferred mode of teaching and training post pandemic? Will there be any long term impact on martial arts studies and related curricula?	Share your viewpoints.	Explanatory mode

35.	Anything else that you would like to add: (lived experience, details related to personal or community tales of struggle and survival, opinions about reception and transmission of martial art practices in your area of residence)	Share relevant details.	Open format, explanatory mode.
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Analysis based on demographics:

After conducting the survey, 200 responses have been recorded. 190 were completed in English, 3 in Bengali, 3 in Hindi, 2 in Nepali and 2 in Japanese. There were 140 male respondents and 60 female respondents. 136 participants have stated that they have been involved in martial arts practice. 70 of them described themselves as instructors and 66 participants said that they were practitioners. Out of 64 participants from the non martial art background, 43 of them were directly or indirectly involved in other sport like football, swimming, cycling, weightlifting, body building, cricket, yoga or athletics. The average age of the respondents was 34 years (Minimum age recorded: 10, maximum age recorded: 77). Students in the age group 10 – 20 formed 30% of the total number of participants. Practitioners and instructors in the age group 21 – 40 constituted 50% of the overall number. 20% of the participants belonged to the age group 41 – 80. Since the survey was conducted to find out the impact of the pandemic on the transmission, reception and spread of martial art culture mainly in India, with special focus on Bengal, 70% of the total number of participants (number: 140) were from India or native Indians living in other countries. Another aim of the survey was to understand the changing dynamics of reception and transmission of martial arts with the change in governmental response to the pandemic in a particular country. So the

survey questions were circulated among practitioners as well as non-practitioners from Japan, Thailand, the US, parts of the UK and Bangladesh. There were 10 participants from Dubai as well. More than 40% of the participants mentioned that they were trained in more than one martial art form. Majority of the instructors stated that they had an experience of more than 20 years in their own form of specialization. So the overall experience of participants who are actively involved in training happened to be higher in number. This survey aimed at understanding the main reasons concerned with variations in the degree of interest towards martial art studies in India. So the survey questionnaire was circulated among people from different strata of the society and from different professions, in urban as well as rural areas. 50% of the participants were from big cities, 30% from the suburbs or outskirts of the city and 20% of them were from rural areas.

Restrictions faced during the survey:

One of the major restrictions faced during the survey was that certain responses in native languages (Bengali, Hindi, Nepali and Japanese) might have lost their exact emotive relevance during translation. For instance, when participants answered questions related to their main training goals (and how their goals changed in course of time; during the pandemic) or what sparked their initial interest in martial arts, some of them have added their own personal stories of struggle and some others even talked about how popular media (action films, anime, video games) proved to be a source of inspiration. Field work and survey in the field of Comparative Cultural Studies emphasizes the lived experiences of people. In this regard, the motivating factors that helped in the transmission of martial arts knowledge would definitely be important. While analysing these factors, the expression of emotions is considered to be equally important too. This emotive relevance might not have been exactly represented, after being translated from other languages to English. To overcome this limitation to a certain extent, I have talked to these participants over video calls so as to

observe their expressions and study the exact essence of their lived realities. In three instances, the participants did not have access to smart phones and Internet facilities. One of them is from Borong monastery in Sikkim, another person lives in the Indo-Bangladesh border and the third participant stays in a remote rural area named Jhantipahari. I visited them in person over the last 3 months (February, 2022 – April, 2022) and noted down their statements. Staying with the local communities not only helped me to understand their ways of life but also helped me to look at reception and transmission of martial arts, through their eyes.

The next point of ambiguity that inevitably came up during the analysis of the responses was the mention of one's own country and its inter-relationship with the reception and transmission of martial culture in that country. 2 participants identified themselves as Indians but they have hardly stayed in India for the last 8 - 10 years. They have settled in the US. So their approach to questions like the effects of digitisation on the reception of martial arts in their country will be largely different from responses by Indians who reside in India. There has been yet another instance where the participant resides in the Indo-Bangladesh border but does not own a voter identity card. During daytime, he works in the boating area of the Dawki region of Meghalaya but goes back home (Bangladesh) every evening. The same holds true for 2 other participants who work in the Bhutan Ghat region of North Bengal. They reside in the Indo-Bhutan border and their lives are influenced by the governmental decisions of both the countries. Their responses to alternative fitness regimes will also be based on cultural elements of both regions. Although the point regarding the country affiliation of these participants is dubious, yet their responses reveal interesting facts about how cultural transfers take place. They literally live in two different countries every single day and their responses helped me to form a basic understanding of the importance of socio-cultural transfers at the borders. This will help in studying the complexities related to transmission and reception. A

statistically substantive approach based on different cultures and an accurate representation of the same can also be executed based on this. This will further help in analysis.

Yet another problem that I faced during the course of this research was that I was initially not allowed to observe or participate in the training sessions of the monks at monasteries in Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh. Time constraint was one of the limitations in this regard. Also, due to restrictions imposed on travel in the last 2 years, it took me more time to complete the survey. Authority figures at the monasteries were very strict and did not even allow me to ask questions or observe their practice sessions back when I visited these places in December, 2019 and January, 2020. This was mainly because of 2 reasons. Firstly, they mentioned that women are usually not allowed to a part of these practice sessions. The young monks who stay there are expected to give up their desire for materialistic matters. The presence of a woman during their training sessions might have posed a problem. The second important reason was that they did not want to reveal secret techniques and healing methods that they practise. This was clearly because they considered me to be an outsider. I was later informed that only the ones who take up monkhood are taught these secret techniques. According to them, common people learning deadly techniques may pose a threat to the world. So after the second phase of lockdown when things slowly started getting back to normal, I decided to go and stay at these places for a span of 5 months (June – August, 2021 and again in October, December, 2021) so that I could stay with locals, form proper connections, observe their lifestyle, learn more about their art forms and the relationship with Tibetan studies, participate in volunteering work at schools, organic farms, tea estates, handmade paper factories and finally, I managed to create a network with locals who helped me to get access to the monasteries. Delay in analysis the survey was definitely one of the constraints when I started the fieldwork in 2020 but the good part is that, I could finally overcome the limitations to a certain extent and participate in exploratory studies, at least by the end of 2021. I include “to

a certain extent” in the previous sentence because, in spite of gaining access to secret forms of training and knowledge transfer, there were times when some of the trainers did not really want to discuss the topic in details.

Due to the above mentioned constraints, I would prefer not to consider the results of the survey as definitive scientific conclusions. Rather, it is better to consider the analysis based on these observations and inferences as representations of the effects of pandemic on intercultural transmission, spread and reception (with regard to karate training, yoga and meditative practices and other forms of martial arts).

One might also opine that the analysis and study conducted here depends mainly on the respondents themselves to talk about the changes in training and how such changes are related to reception as well as transmission. Firstly, this is one of the common issues pertaining to all forms of research carried out in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences. (Gosling et. al. 2004) Secondly, some of the readers may also feel whether or not self analysis by participants to the questions related to behavioural changes, cognitive and value based parts of the survey can be considered to be 100% accurate. Well, in this regard, the balanced representation of instructors, practitioners and non practitioners in the research survey suggests that the study conducted here on the basis of their reports can be considered accurate. Finally, it is quite common in the field of social scientific research to depend initially on such samples to obtain preliminary conclusions on a specific topic.

Despite some disciplinary differences, all martial arts studies fieldwork is concerned with first-hand experience of everyday social realities in which identities and roles are fluid and ever changing. An extensive ethnography might involve a researcher starting as a white belt and then end as a black belt, or one instructor of a different martial art joining as beginner in another art (as in

Jennings' 2018 account of his 'messy' study *Xilam*). Martial arts ethnographies have involved the study of both urban and rural groups and communities. They are studies of collectivities, rather than any one individual living among them. (Jennings, 17)

Observations and inference from the responses received via survey:

Changes in reception and transmission due to changes in practice arena

The survey shows that out of 200 participants, 102 of them mentioned that during the pandemic, there has been a considerable decrease in the amount of time they invested in martial art practice. One of the major reasons for such a decrease was due to the change in the practice arena. Schools, colleges, universities, dojos and sports clubs had to be shut down from March, 2020. Most of the government aided educational institutions in Bengal did not even start functioning on a full-fledged offline basis till May, 2022. Private educational organizations in India resorted to the hybrid mode of teaching and learning from March, 2022. The situation was similar in Thailand, Bangladesh and Japan. Due to strict restrictions imposed during the pandemic, most of the instructors and practitioners had to shift their practice arena. There was a shift from the public practice space to the private practice space. While indoor training allowed the flexibility to train at any time, required infrastructure was not available. For beginners, it was difficult to carry on with their training individually because there was no one to pair up with, especially for sparring and group workout sets. Many practitioners also mentioned that they lost interest in long training schedules because of the physical absence of instructors and the community of other martial arts practitioners that they had been previously engaging with. The sudden shift from offline to online mode resulted in beginners losing interest. Some of the senior practitioners have mentioned that due to the time taken to adapt to online modes of teaching, extra working hours at office and an

increase in social responsibilities, they could not devote time to training on a daily basis. Participants from the rural areas and outskirts of the city faced problems in finding a proper indoor space for practice. In India and Bangladesh, this problem is considerably more noticeable. Lack of proper indoor training space was a major concern among many of the practitioners. Some of them could not even access digital platforms like Zoom, Webex, Google meet, Microsoft Teams. Online classes were conducted during the pandemic. Even the webinars and tournaments were arranged online. Those who could not access digital facilities definitely noticed a decrease in the amount of time involved in practice. Some of the participants mentioned that the sustainability of these methods of practice will decide the future of martial art transmission in India. On so many levels, the online format of training was not successful. It can never be an alternative method but hybrid training format can definitely be helpful for common people. Those who cannot access online resources should be given the offline platform, as and when the overall situation gets back to normal.

On the other hand, 34 participants noticed an increase in the overall time involved in training and teaching. Professionals who have mentioned that their main mode of earning is from the domain of martial arts, had to put in extra hours of hard work. They had to design modified versions of the existing curricula. They also had to find out ways to reach out to more people who might be interested in alternative forms of fitness. Some of them already had dojos at home or at least a private, indoor space. Some others turned the rooftop area, garage or any spare room that was available into a practice area.

64 other participants have reported that they are neither instructors nor practitioners, but they have mentioned that they started investing more time in reading books and watching films related to martial arts. They also started devoting more time towards maintaining a healthy lifestyle. 43 of the non-martial art background participants started working out on a regular basis.

The decrease in training time among practitioners is a serious reason for concern. The good part is that they have stated that they will get back to their previous training schedule, as soon as the situation gets back to normal. Some practitioners from the rural areas had to give up training because during the pandemic, they felt that it was luxury that they could not afford. Some of them from the districts of Bengal have said that they had to struggle to get hold of basic resources like food and medicine for their family members. In that kind of a situation, some of them had to stop training altogether. 25 participants from different states of India said that they had either lost their jobs or were not paid properly. So they could not continue with their practice any further. Those who had to give up training under dire circumstances also mentioned that they would continue with their practice as soon as the financial problems got sorted. This shows that reception and transmission of martial arts studies in India was negatively affected up to a certain extent, due to reasons like lack of proper training space, loss of interest among beginners, volatile scenario in the job market, increase in work pressure and responsibilities towards family as well as society. On the other hand, it is a good sign that at least 97 participants out of 200, including martial art practitioners as well as non-practitioners, noticed a steady growth in the amount of time they invested. It suggests that reception and transmission increased on a steady scale, mainly among common people. They felt the need to follow healthy lifestyle so as to stay fit and combat Covid 19. Many participants from the age group 10 – 30 also noted that involvement in martial art studies through books, films, workshops and training helped them to keep their anxiety under control. Most of the people working in the private sectors had to handle extreme work pressure during the work from home phase. They stated that they tried to utilize their break and free time slots in learning something productive. Most of them said that they have tried to incorporate fitness training and core strength training as part of their daily lifestyle. While analysing the impact of the pandemic on the reception and transmission of martial art training in India, the ray of

hope is that many non martial art background people took up martial art studies quite seriously. This will further enable the spread of martial arts in India and also its subsequent transmission to other parts of the world.

Increase in reception due to major modifications in martial training and lifestyle:

In response to questions regarding modifications in the overall training curriculum, 70% of the participants from martial art background responded that with the shift in training from offline to online mode, there have been significant changes in the teaching-learning format. As a result, major modifications in training methods were introduced, with special importance attached to alternative forms of fitness, like yoga, free hand workout, tai chi, meditative practices. Most of them have stated that besides their main form of training, they also used to get themselves trained in power lifting, swimming, football, cycling and morning walk, full body workouts at the gym or dojo, and practice with weapons and reflex sets during group practice sessions, before the pandemic. During the pandemic, their involvement in other sport and outdoor activities had to be stopped. Therefore, the need to bring about necessary changes in training pattern and curriculum emerged. Transnational spread of Indian fitness practices like yoga, kalaripayattu and meditation gained immense popularity all over the world. Participants from Thailand, Japan and the US mentioned that they included yoga in their daily practice. It was viewed the most practised alternative fitness regime taken up even by participants from the non martial art background. Qigong, karate and tai chi also gained popularity in some states of India (Bengal, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Assam and Mizoram) and the US. The reception of martial art forms like karate, qigong and tai chi was widespread in Bengal and the north eastern states of India mainly because of the pre-existing interest in these forms, among people of these regions. The flexibility and minimalistic approach of these forms of practice resulted in widespread transmission. Stretching, yoga and meditation became inevitable parts of the warm up and cool down sessions. With the shutting down of

public training spaces and prohibitions imposed on contact training, shadow training and kalari practices in private space became popular.

70% of the participants mentioned that they made use of the space available at home for practice and at the same time, they also charted out basic fitness routines for their family members. Even non martial artists who participated in the survey said that they tried to engage their family members in practices like yoga, meditation; free hand exercise, kihon part of karate and flexibility training that would help them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Let us take a quick look at some of the responses in this regard:

I used to practise stretching, warm up sets, basics of karate with my younger brother and parents also participated in some of our practice sessions at home. It is good that we could keep ourselves physically and mentally engaged. It helped us in combating workplace anxiety and stress. (Male participant from India)

As a single mother, I was feeling all the more anxious when things just came to a sudden halt. The pandemic had taken a huge toll on my mental health. At this point, my 21 year old daughter introduced me to the genre of martial art studies. I started binge reading inspirational stories of Bruce Lee and I also started exploring the very interesting Indian martial art form, Kalaripayattu. I was amazed at how simple movements can help us connect with nature and help in building up a strong core. I also started working out with my daughter. All thanks to my child for opening up this new world in front of me. It has been really beneficial. Training with my child has helped us in strengthening our bond as well. (Female participant from Thailand)

At our old age home, we were given opportunities to participate in online yoga sessions. Although we could not perform all the asanas because of age related problems, the soothing music and motivational talks by the trainers helped us a lot. We also got to connect with

different people from varying age groups. We particularly appreciate the effort that goes into community building through martial arts studies and fitness programmes like these. (Male participants from India)

My brother introduced me to karate during the first lockdown. I started learning the basics. It has helped me to overcome my insecurities. I was always body shamed by my friends because of my weight. Now I feel confident. I'm happy that I started watching movies based on karate and related martial arts. It is easier for me to accept myself the way I am. Martial art training works wonders, my brother used to tell me. I never quite understood him previously. Now I know why he always talked about the importance of martial arts in daily life. (Female participant from Dubai)

I'm a digital nomad since 2019. I live in a van with my husband and pet dog. The pandemic brought our life to a standstill. I could not work because travel in all parts of the world was restricted. I started investing time in learning new skills, so as to sustain ourselves. During our stay in Sikkim from 2020 to 2021, Peter and I started practising yoga, tai chi, qigong, karate and thang ta with monks from the monasteries. We are grateful that we got to know about a very interesting way of life. Now in 2022, it has become part of our daily routine. As we plan to start with travel content creation after the pandemic, I'm sure the martial way of life will help us a lot. It has made us much more patient. In this hustle culture, we often get dissatisfied. Knowing about martial arts practice has taught us to be content with the present moment. We are content with our own content now, if we may say so! (Participants from Scotland)

Inclusion of martial art training, studies and fitness modules as part of the educational curriculum:

In this particular context, more than half of the total number of participants responded that martial arts training, self defence, yoga, meditation and related fitness modules have been included as important parts of their course curriculum in schools, colleges and universities and even in professional sectors. A participant from the banking sector mentioned:

At the organizational level, we have tried incorporating physical and mental wellness routines for all our employees. We know that everyone is going through tough times. As managers, we felt the need to introduce martial arts and other fitness routines at our workspace. Most of the employees have appreciated the effort. They try attending the online sessions on every Friday.

Employees working in corporate sectors have also stated that they were introduced to similar forms of online training during the pandemic.

Online karate classes, team games and yoga sessions were really interesting. I hope our company continues to provide us with this opportunity to learn new things. My colleagues and I have been able to handle stress effectively, all thanks to these special classes. Moreover, my problem solving abilities and team leadership skills have enhanced a lot. I feel much more confident during office presentations these days!

In Indian educational institutions, martial art classes and fitness regimes were formally made a part of the routine. Local clubs and NGOs also started introducing martial art training at an organisational level. With necessary modifications implemented in disciplinary practice, solo training became the way of online training. In order to make students feel better, classes were organized on interfaces like Webex, Google meet or Zoom where one could see all other participants at the same time. This was a slight respite, mainly for school students. The sense of community practice was preserved in this way. Even during our online practice sessions, we used to do partner work and team work based on reflection method, mainly in sparring.

Even during the practice of *kata*, our Japanese instructors advised us to try the reflection method. This means two people would start the *kata* at the same time. While one performs the normal *kata*, the other person is supposed to start the steps right from the ending. After the performance, both the performers would be expected to return to the initial spot from which they started off.

Participants from Japan who responded to the survey questions mentioned that even in the Departments of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, martial art training was incorporated as a mandatory part of the curricula. In this regard, it is also interesting to note that individual as well community goals related to training underwent massive change. 70% of the practitioners and instructors mentioned that their initial aim when they had started learning years back was mainly to learn martial skills, spread knowledge about martial arts among their communities but in the competitive, fast moving world, they soon found themselves training mainly for tournaments and prestigious championships. One of the karate practitioners from India observes:

In the last 10 years, we had to stay up to date with changing rules of world tournaments. Sports karate was becoming more and more popular among practitioners because one could see instant results, if he or she put in the required hard work during practice. Some of us started participating in state, national and international tournaments and it's needless to say that winning accolades made us much more interested in karate training. One of the drawbacks was that there were tournaments throughout the year and we used to get exhausted at times. There wasn't much time gap between the competitions organized. This probably resulted in certain problems like lack of time to polish basic techniques, lack of meditative practices. We were more focused on speed training and power training sets. At present, we have adequate time to up skill ourselves, especially in those areas in which we could not invest so much time.

More than half of the participants mentioned that they adapted their basic training curriculum due to the pandemic restrictions. Group sets and partner work got substituted by shadow practice and solo training. Before the pandemic, at least 1 hour on a regular basis was spent on paired training and group training. Some of the parents observed that previously, they had not allowed their kids to get enrolled in martial training because they were extra concerned about the safety. They used to think that the children might get hurt during sparring and paired duel sets. During the pandemic, they themselves got the chance to observe the online training sessions and felt more confident about getting their children enrolled. An instructor from Japan stated:

At least for 2 years, the beginners will get time to adjust themselves with the basics of martial art training. Their technical foundation, on the other hand, may not be that well developed. During online training sessions, it becomes difficult to supervise and rectify on one to one basis. This is mainly in case of junior belt karate-kas. Seniors understand the instructions and follow accordingly but beginners may face problems with technical precision, during the online mode.

Another remarkable point is that many instructors extended their online courses with theoretical lectures and discussions, sometimes arranged as therapeutic open talk concerning living and training in the pandemic. Similarly, some individuals used their time at home to delve into martial arts books and media to broaden their general martial arts knowledge or to act as a surrogate to personal training guidance.

Most of the educators and authority figures from banks, IT sectors and other domains also talked about the importance of updating one's skills to survive in the present world. Skill, in the context of a martial art performance or in the narrative of survival, may not always be the most appropriate word. An alternative work or a similar kind of productive work that is not

one's main profession but does have the principle of output based learning has been associated with the word skill. Participants from the domain of Human Resource Management chose to explain skill in this way:

Skill without output may be regarded as talent. Skill is something that can be self taught or acquired but training is more dependent on external factors. At our organization, we value talent but look forward to working with people who are continuously in the process of upskilling themselves. If talent seems lucrative to an individual or to others, it is developed stringently to optimise the expected output from training. Talent, put to use, in most cases, becomes a skill. It also invariably depends on the context in which it is put to use. More inevitably, it becomes labour, in lesser known cases. Skill, you can say, is the paid acknowledgement of talent. So we want our talent pool to learn life skills through martial art training. This made us introduce these online sessions. Besides these, we also have regular mental health wellness events, team games and motivational sessions.

Talent can be therefore used for justifying meritocratic notions, in contexts of productions of martial art performances. 'Training' is actually more important than 'skill'. It reduces the focus on output based orientation and also helps in furthering the skilled labour-unskilled labour binary directly. The base word, in this context, is 'ability'. Untapped ability becomes potential. Tapped ability becomes talent. Tapped ability that is bought by others becomes labour because there is a paid acknowledgment of the talent through the means of fixing a price on it. Furthermore, if a talented person feels compensated by the pay assigned to his or her talent, then he or she feels worthy or talented enough. When a talented person does not feel that he or she is being adequately compensated, then it is as good as labour for them. There is also the notion of hierarchical structuring. Although practitioners are quite critical

about meritocracy, they agree to the fact that so much of tapped ability depends on access. Thought of in a simplistic way, in the nature-nurture debate, nurture is all about accessibility of resources, training, proper guidance, inspiration is of more significance.

Increase in general interest regarding martial arts in India:

One of the most significant points is that interest in martial arts and alternative fitness modules increased during the last two years. At a time when vaccine was still not invented and the global storm of loss and deaths continued affecting common people, there was a surge in interest in this field of study. Most people wanted to learn the ways in which they could boost immunity and lead a healthy way of life. The survey results revealed that people from all over the world started training in karate and yoga as main forms of fitness. This was because of the minimalistic approach of these forms. Training with heavy instruments and weapons did not seem to be practically possible within the confines of home. Participants who were learning judo and aikido shifted to karate training because it allowed them the flexibility to carry on with online training, in free hand format. Basics called kihon and martial choreographies named kata could be effectively practised even if there was shortage of space. Yoga also helped in calming the mind, improving fitness, boosting reflex and flexibility. Recorded online courses were also accessed by most people who could access online resources.

One of the basic problems was that not everyone was able to afford the online facilities. Responses from participants residing in the outskirts of big cities and completely rural areas revealed that people from these areas were not able to carry on with training due to paucity of resources.

Increase in interest about books, films and video games on martial arts:

80% of the participants (number: 160) reported that they used their time during these 2 years (February, 2020 – March, 2022) to know more about the theoretical background of the martial arts that they have either been practising for years or recently developed interest in. It is good to know that practitioners as well as non-practitioners chose to delve deeper into different realms of martial study.

My 15 year old son started watching martial art movies. After a month or two into the first lockdown, all 3 of us started enjoying these action films. Before the pandemic, I never really thought that I would allow my child to spend so much time in watching movies and playing video games. I had a very different idea of all these. Now that even I have started watching, I realize that these movies are more like life lessons. It is not at all a waste of time. I gladly allow my child to watch these movies. He has made a routine for himself where watching such movies is an important part of our weekend activity. I hope he will gain insights into martial ways of life and will learn to put in the hard work required to fulfil his dreams.

There was an increase in interest (mainly in India) about action films set in foreign locations. Indian started watching more martial art based movies not just from India but those practised in Japan, China and the US. Similarly, people from other countries suddenly started gaining more interest in books and movies dealing with yoga, secret healing techniques practised by Tibetan monks. Cultural exchange of knowledge in the field of martial arts and fitness definitely took a positive turn. Some of the participants in the survey (the ones who are native Indians residing abroad) have stated that involvement in these martial art based books, magazines and movies made them nostalgic. It filled in the void that they never knew existed. One of them mentioned that there was “a turn towards the home”. The participants shared the feeling that they felt as if they were travelling in that part of the country that was portrayed on

screen. Movies almost always try to teleport the audience to places and times shown on screen. This happens at a larger scale when the storyline is engrossing and the action sequence is well organized. These impacted young minds as well and they started taking up martial arts lessons seriously. Some participants also talked about how they related the class difference shown in these movies quite relevant in their areas of residence. Another important point is that the books and movies showing the internal journey and struggles of martial artists proved to be sources of inspiration for people during the pandemic phase. Philosophical viewpoints which subtly get embedded in action movies created long lasting impacts on the audience. These motivated them to keep going with the hustle. Also, at times, the fusion of the internal self reflection of different characters is portrayed through flashback techniques or even allusions. These, in turn, enabled people to approach martial art as not just mere sport or performance but as an important journey towards self-recovery, self improvement and being better version of oneself.

In his essay "Word and Image", Sergei Eisenstein observed that through the effective use of montage, equal effects can be achieved both on page and screen:

Before the inner vision, before the perception of the creator, however a given image, emotionally embodying his theme - the task that confronts him is to transform this image into a few basic partial representations which, in their composition and juxtaposition shall evoke in the consciousness and feelings of the spectator, reader or auditor, that same initial general image which originally hovered before the creative artist. (Eisenstein, 1949: 16)

The importance of reception of martial arts in India, mainly through elements presented in page and on stage can never be denied. One of the participants mentioned:

I have often considered travel to be a life altering phenomenon. It is about moving towards 'being' in a journey of self-discovery and self-recovery. The genre of action based films on martial arts reminded me of this journey in particular. There may be a lot of politics that goes into choosing India as one of the locations in the domain of martial art film production. Let us not get into that right now. But the very presence of authentic training locations in our country and people's approach to martial arts add to the overall value. Sometimes, our focus is more on how the characters experience emotions and evolve through the way of life followed by such martial disciplines. (Female participant from India, pursuing Media Science)

Two other participants working in the Indian army mentioned that being introduced to training in different forms of martial arts at an early age helped them to attentive, empathetic and flexible, in their own different ways. They were introduced to such forms only after their initial interest in the forms sparked after being acquainted with books and films on martial arts. They also talked about the awareness that needs to be spread regarding the lack of infrastructure in most of the local clubs and also dwindling resources like lack of funds.

A lot of people found it helpful and relaxing when they started engaging themselves more in the field of martial arts and started broadening their knowledge about this area of study. Instructors found that they could invest more time in learning about the theoretical parts. Many of them appeared for online certifications that can help them to be referee or judge during tournaments. Although on an individual level, a lot of instructors suffered because students who could not access online platforms started dropping out; yet they utilized this time to improve themselves on the professional point of view. Some of them launched online courses on popular websites as well.

This chapter of the thesis has carried out a detailed analytical study based on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the theoretical and practical approaches towards martial arts studies in India. There is also a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in these approaches among different communities over the world. The participants who responded to the questions asked during the survey were mainly from India, Thailand, Japan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and some parts of the US. The survey was conducted on online and offline modes and a total of 200 participants responded. The survey mainly aimed at gaining an in depth understanding of how the discourse on martial arts training and its reception underwent significant modifications in terms of the fundamental methods implemented, the number of practitioners involved during the session, the shift from offline to online and hybrid modes, its pros and cons; the emergence of alternative methods of practice, further development of interest in books and films (related to martial arts training) during the pandemic, the inclusion of fitness training as part of educational and professional curricula in schools, colleges and corporate sectors, an increasing importance attached to core strength, fitness and a massive shift in mindset among common people, with regard to the end goals related to such practice. From the response of participants, it can be concluded that the steps taken to prevent the spread of Covid 19 (lockdown phase, isolation, social distancing, restrictions impose on training in groups) led to major modifications in the field of martial arts studies, its consequent transmission, relevance and reception. An analytical reading of the survey conducted seeks to gain a useful insight into the role played by digital media in the process of knowledge transmission of martial arts, among people who could at least afford and adapt to such changes. At the same time, it also seeks to show the ways in which people from certain social strata had to give up on their training due to the lack of access to digital resources.

Although this survey based on the Indian martial art scenario does not claim to be the only available statistical representation about reception and transmission of martial art in India, yet the results of the survey can be considered valid. The survey ended up providing us with important insights into lived experiences of people who are functional in the spread and transfer of martial knowledge to their immediate communities. The impacts of the pandemic on reception, cultural transfer and transmission of martial art knowledge in India, Japan and neighbouring countries have been immense and profound. The complexities have been studied through the survey. The role of digital media in the spread of knowledge during this phase is undeniable. Present market trends in India and Japan show that future trajectories in the field of cultural transfer of art forms will also be incorporating digital media to the fullest advantage. This holds true only for certain sections of the society. In certain other cases, the impacts are much more problematic. In a country like India where majority of the people cannot even afford basic necessities, access to digital media seems absolutely far-fetched. Moreover, the lens of interpretation of martial arts studies also underwent certain important changes. At the organizational and administrative levels, they felt the need to incorporate such practices into daily life. Parents started understanding the nuances of training and gradually opened up to new modes of learning. Children who were previously not allowed to learn martial arts finally got the time and opportunity to have a proper discussion with their family members. More people started expressing curiosity about this less explored area of study. Yet another factor that came to prominence during the study was the inter-relationship between economic conditions of people from different social strata and the obvious variations in response to martial art practice like karate training. Economic conditions of people play a major role in the reception and transmission of martial arts in any country. For instance, the gradual decline in transmission and spread of martial arts among martial and non-martial communities of Hong Kong was the subject of study in the book, *Hong Kong Martial Artists*,

Sociocultural Change from World War II to 2020. Daniel Amos analysed how stagnation in socio-economic conditions of Hong Kong adversely affected the development and spread of martial arts. (Amos, 2021: 11) The same context holds good for reception of any martial art form in other parts of the world. Depending on the trajectory of socio-economic conditions in India post pandemic, we will be able to analyse further spread, transmission and reception of martial art studies in our country. If governmental response to the pandemic can effectively handle the situation and restore stability in the economic sphere, more people will definitely continue with their training and knowledge acquisition in the field of karate training and martial arts. If employment opportunities increase and people who lost their jobs during the pandemic manage to find a stable source of income, more people will start actively participating in martial art training. Martial art training comes at a cost and people need to be financially stable enough to afford such training.

During the conversation between Dr. Paul Bowman and Martin J. Meyer in 2020 in the Martial Arts Studies Podcast, the main idea to conduct a study on the effects of the pandemic on martial arts in the global West was born. The results of the survey conducted by Dr. Paul Bowman, Martin J. Meyer and Benjamin Judkins in the global west raises important questions:

It is important to remember that the vast majority of martial arts and combat sports practitioners approach their communities as consumers whose access is limited by the constraints of economic logic. Herein lies perhaps the greatest set of unknowns as we contemplate the post-pandemic future of the martial arts: will such people 'come back'? Will parents take their children to martial arts classes in such numbers in the coming months and years? Furthermore, these practices, like all other choices, come at a certain cost. If employment opportunities and the economic recovery more generally, stall in Japan, Europe or North America, the rebuilding of lost schools and

diminished styles will likewise be stalled. Indeed, the long-term damage from such a slowdown could actually outweigh the disruption of the pandemic itself. Alternatively, an economic boom set off by inflationary government policies could create a situation where the opportunity costs of returning to the dojo, gym, class or kwoon is just too high, even among employed individuals. As both wages and prices rise, it is entirely likely that consumers will decide that there are more economically productive ways to spend their weekly leisure hours. (Meyer, Molle, Judkins and Bowman, 2022: 25)

In India, the existing scenario is similar. People living in rural areas, outskirts, border regions may face it really difficult to return back to training. Those who did not have the means to learn but used to attend free sessions at community halls may not be able to adjust with the new hybrid learning mode. Previous research mentioned that these practices come at a certain cost. This is true in most cases even when effects of pandemic on transmission get mapped on the Indian terrain. Even then, at least one good thing is that the institutions that made martial arts studies a part of the curriculum did not charge extra fees. Certain governmental initiatives in government funded institutions also made such classes available at a nominal cost. The socio-economic scenario in India post pandemic will decide the future of martial art transmission in our country. By changing the perception of, and desire for, body to body contact among some martial artists, it is likely that the effects of this period will far outlast the immediate public health crisis. Martial arts remained far from the only social or economic sector attempting to adjust to the contours of this new reality.

Governmental response to the pandemic will play a major role in deciding the future. This pandemic attests to the fact that transmission of any cultural and art form can never continue without continued support from economic, social and cultural domains of the country where it is transferred. Exact prediction of the future of transmission may not be possible right now. It may be said that the direction of future trends will be dependent on socio-economic and

socio-cultural spheres of the country. Hopefully, this may come in useful for practitioners, instructors, scholars and common people who wish to know more about the spread of martial arts training in India. Some people often ask why it is still at such a nascent stage in India. Probably, the third chapter of my thesis will help them to understand the basic aspects related to reception and transmission of martial arts and culture in India and all over the world.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who managed to take time off their busy schedules and willingly participated in the survey. I'm also thankful to all the local communities from different parts of India that keep welcoming me with warmth whenever I visit their place. I'm also grateful to the owners of the Makaibari tea estate, Azing's wine farm, Cochrane Place, Sikkim Himalayan Academy, the Music school in Cherrapunjee, Parijat College in Assam, the Centre for Agricultural Research in Bankura, hostels and home stays in Himachal Pradesh that hosted me and helped me a lot in forming networks with local martial art communities. Special thanks to all my martial art colleagues and seniors from the JKA karate dojo. They shared their valuable insights and also shared the survey questions with their students. Without the help of local communities, the survey and fieldwork would not have been possible. Kind cooperation of martial artists from Japan, Thailand, Bangladesh and Bhutan also helped a lot in giving this chapter the present shape. Last but not the least; I would like to thank my parents and my Ph.D supervisor, Prof. Sayantan Dasgupta, for constantly encouraging me and reminding me of my responsibilities, for having faith in me and for pushing me to do my best.

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Chapter 4

Martial Arts and Gardening: Understanding the Equation in Japan and India

West Bengal has a rich culture of the acknowledgement and acceptance of diverse cultures and performances. However, the strata concerning the cross-cultural exchanges between West Bengal and Japan came to govern the attitudes of the masses, over the last hundred years of popularity of martial arts in Japan and over fifty years of its popularity in the Indian subcontinent. Post-independence, and starting from the mid-twentieth century, the various forms of marginalization, repressions and differentiation against alternative, weaker bodies and genders began to be actively contested through the field of martial arts practices like karate, judo and taekwondo. Activism of such practitioners in the socio-cultural domains also increased, through varying modes of theoretical conceptualizations as well active social involvement, in empowering all sections of the society. Much of the significant work in the global academic arena revolving around martial arts and cultures, in the field of Comparative Cultural Studies, has been driven by the curiosity about secret techniques, healing methods, acquisition of power and knowledge through disciplinary modes of training. Academicians, comparatists and martial arts practitioners have been trying to situate 'karate' within certain epistemological frameworks, ever since the spread and transmission of karate as a major martial art all over the world. Studies have further revealed the diverse definitional and differential conditions that have flourished around negotiations of cross-cultural exchange of martial performances in West Bengal and Japan. In the late nineteenth century, 'karate' became popular in the public sphere of West Bengal. As a consequence, this diverse martial performative tradition, which had previously been restricted in its reach to the hereditary occupational castes and communities of powerful people in Bengal, became a widespread

practice among all strata of the society, especially among the working class section, which further modified the form as an active mode of resistance, as it initially was, in Okinawa. There was also a simultaneous upsurge in the spheres of cultural experimentation and socio-economic domain in Bengal, during these times.

Through the integration of the martial way of life and martial culture within the pan-Indian archetype, varied overtones of the Japanese culture and ethos have been found enmeshed in the socio-cultural and literary landscape, which govern the development of karate as a way of life in West Bengal. Embroidered by the colourful tradition of the martial arts training, the 'chhau' and 'raibneshe' styles of performative traditions have assumed eminence over the years. Being positioned in the cross-currents of the Bengali sentiments, this portrayal of a performative sport as a significant method of resistance as well as a path of life that brings forth focus, determination, strength and the calm of mind has been definitely exalted into a state of purity and reverence. To a certain extent, the performative equation has even been embedded with the mellifluousness of aesthetics related with the field of gardening. Such an equation becomes something which is not made overtly visible but the viewer or the practitioners are made to introspect upon the subtle implications of the equation – a meditation that is forced by humans behind the guise of nature and the divine. This chapter seeks to analyze the academic significance of the commensurability between two practices which may apparently seem to lack a visible connection as such. Gardening and karate had been closely inter-dependent in Japan, just as two apparently different sects in society, the monks and the samurai shared similar viewpoints and had a lot in common. Bodily strength depends mainly on the strength and peace of mind. The serenity and strength can definitely be derived from surroundings which exude a sense of stability and balance between the natural environment and human existence. With regard to elements of karate as performance in the field of Martial Art Studies, this chapter also seeks to chart out the underlying differences

between the non-modern and the modern ways of equating gardening with martial skill and the process of demarcation is based on the knowledge that I have acquired during the workshops that I have attended during my years of practice in Kolkata, Thailand and Japan. The tradition of karate as a martial art performance also remains a signifying system which can delineate conceptual categories about sacred spaces of performance, where human nature and Nature could work in perfect synchronization. Its alliance with discursive formations of Literature as well as Comparative Cultural Studies can also be charted out.

In order to understand the eco-critical strains contained in kata practice and differences in postures or stylistics, it is important to first understand different styles of karate practised in Japan and West Bengal. So during the last three years, I had been travelling extensively in order to gain insights into the varying modes of karate training. One of my major findings include the fact that that parts of the stylistic renditions of karate practised in Japan and West Bengal differ in many ways, sometimes even from quite fundamental standpoints. The JKA (Japan Karate Association), with its headquarters at the famous Takushoku University in Tokyo, takes pride in being the oldest organization that formulated the foundations of major traditions in the practice of karate. It has its branches all over the world. I have been training and teaching karate for the last 22 years at the Japanese Karate Association's World Federation in Kolkata (JKAWFIK) and this organization is affiliated to the regional body, the Karate Association of Bengal (KAB) and the national governing body, the Karate Association of India (KAI) and is also directly affiliated to the JKA in Tokyo. These direct affiliations ensure the fact that regular seminars, workshops and panel discussions based on Martial Arts Studies are organized under the deft supervision of highly skilled martial artists, teachers and world champions. It also seeks to offer a common platform where karate practitioners and enthusiasts across the world get a level playing ground. The underlying differences in the methods of practice, as influenced by natural as well as socio-cultural conditions are also

brought to the forefront. Before I start charting out the ways in which the forms of practice differ in Japan and Kolkata, I would like to mention the fact that 'Shotokan Ryu' is the oldest and the most effective form of karate that is considered to be the foundation and touchstone for all other forms. Undoubtedly, 'Shotokan' and 'JKA' are considered to be synonymous, and indeed there is no reason why these should not be a reflection of each other. Back when Sensei Gichin Funakoshi, the founder of karate, introduced the traditional practice of 'Shotokan' not only in Japan but in other parts of the world, the JKA did not even come into existence. After the formation of this international governing body, the JKA took the main responsibility of introducing Shotokan karate to the entire world, while trying to maintain the overall standard. Like all traditional forms of practice and performative traditions which remain strongly resistant to sudden changes, karate also tried to maintain its authenticity and standardized format but the introduction of karate in India, specifically in Kolkata, definitely brought about a lot of changes. This is mainly because the introduction of this highly popular and effective martial art in West Bengal coincided with the predominance of existing, indigenous forms of martial arts practices, like 'lathi khela', different forms of 'chhau' and 'raibneshe', in which the practitioners had already gained considerable expertise. The concept of authenticity in performance is in itself something that has necessarily been criticized. Transnational exchanges of art forms and knowledge regarding the same definitely implies the fact that there will be certain changes in the original form, depending on the ways in which people receive the art form and the prevailing circumstances under which such exchanges take place. A martial art form like karate that originated as an efficacious method of resistance in Okinawa, later became limited to the reach of the higher sections of society in Japan and underwent a lot of changes during transnational exchange of the arts. As a result, the form regained its original significance as an active mode of resistance against the brutality of invaders, colonial masters as well as the elite sections of the then society. Japan has had

very little direct control on karate that was modified by the working class people, outside of Japan. Karate has developed and progressed not only at the major organizations in Japan, but also at local and regional levels among communities like the Anushilan Kendra in Kolkata. These drastic improvements have not really followed a parallel course across nations. During the final stage of his life, Nakayama Sensei, one of the major proponents of karate in Japan, was really concerned about these factors that caused changes in the original tradition. There is absolutely no doubt about the fact that many practitioners and common people would agree that this divergence has been a healthy modification for karate in general. There are certainly many karate-ka around the world that have never visited or practised in Japan. They have never had the chance to observe the differences between theory and practice. Having trained at the Indian faction of Japanese Karate, I have witnessed heated discussions and arguments regarding modifications, whenever certain changes were introduced to the basics of practice. Although there are many martial arts practitioners and teachers who are definitely more interested in learning the original techniques, most of them learn the traditional methods so that they can improve, improvise and finally combine or create new methods from the existing ones that would cater to their own style. I have come across extremely talented world champions like Sensei Mae Shiina, the daughter of Shiina Shihan, formulating her own ways so as to win in the domain of karate as an international sport. During the summer training workshop in Tokyo (April - May, 2019), I had the opportunity to talk to her about her viewpoints concerning the differences between the modern and the non-modern, the traditional and the contemporary, the licit ways and the changes considered to be illicit. Since her father, the unparalleled Shiina Shihan, the world champion for 7 times in a row, is extremely strict about maintaining the standard of Japanese karate by practising traditional forms, she confessed that she had to formulate new techniques when she had to face competitors from different parts of the world. When karate is considered as an international

sport, it is absolutely important to bring about the required changes because a participant from India may be required to face an opponent from the US, the UK, Korea, Japan or from any other country, for that matter. If an individual cannot devise his or her own strategies of performing the art form, his or her techniques will become extremely predictable. Predictability causes failure, in at least 7 cases out of 10. The very aspect of the mystery revolving round the study and practice of martial arts demands that the practitioners should ameliorate newer methods of experiential learning, while preparing strategically by devising newer methods of application. There is an underlying difference between theory and practice. Artistic, traditional steps which might seem absolutely enthralling in martial arts films may be of no use in real life. Therefore, when we focus on application based learning, certain changes definitely need to be made. Even though we may exalt in seeing the original forms promoted, it goes without saying that a skilled combination of indigenous martial arts forms of Bengal with that of the Japanese forms of karate, can give an extra edge to performers in sport as well as in real life situations. During my field work in Kolkata, I have also come across a lot of college and university students who remain totally biased and partial when it comes to traditional modes of training in karate, but they have clearly made no attempt to justify the reason as to why they automatically resorted to mixing techniques during confrontations with people in real life. They have termed it as their 'instinct' in those real life circumstances, but I'm sure, when one applies a technique as an instinctive move, it clearly reflects that the individual has been consciously or sub-consciously trying to master those techniques for quite a long time or at least have been trying to devise own strategies for survival.

This brings me to my next point. So what exactly is the importance of varying modes of martial arts practice in the field of Comparative Cultural Studies and why are we even concerned with the differences between the traditional and the modern, the initial ways and the hybrid ways of performance? How does the relationship between spatio-temporal and

ecological conditions create an impact in the practice of martial arts? It would be naive to think there are simple answers to these questions. I would try to answer the last question in the latter half of this chapter, through an exploration of interconnection between gardens and martial arts. An eco-critical reading of texts and performances is the need of the hour, so the ecological conditions, coupled with the movements of people across countries will be dealt with, in the later half. Returning to the first set of questions, it is important to emphasize that Karate, and its inherent properties, are not static, just like any other art form. The karate that Sensei Gichin Funakoshi first practised and made popular among people of Tokyo is largely different from the karate that was first introduced at major clubs, dojos and teaching centres in Japan in 1920. The different methods of karate practice by stalwarts like Naka Sensei, Ohara Sensei and Nakayama Sensei are not at all identical. Techniques have been refined and modified. Greater understanding has resulted in the implementation of necessary changes. There are, however, fundamental principles that have remained constant and intact. And it is this, I think, that is the key point. There may well be equally effective yet different strategies and methods of training which at the end of the day reach the same goals. During the performance of a 'kata', the adoption of a zenkutsu dachi stance in preference to a kokutsu dachi stance for example, or the substitution of a side snap kick in place of a thrust kick, are not significant changes. It is true that such developments may place a new interpretation on the meaning or the flow of the kata, but such changes are not in any way contrary to established fundamental principles. Nor are such changes introduced at the whim of senior grades, leaving students with contradictory instructions about how techniques are to be performed. Basic techniques of karate and kata have been standardised for many years at organizations in Japan, so karate affiliated to the Japanese Karate Association, is easily recognized in Japan. It is not by any means the only Shotokan karate in Japan, nor does it automatically follow that only the JKA has, or should have, a monopoly on Shotokan karate.

This standardization does not mean that instructors across the world will agree to teach identical ways of practising karate. Unique stylistic traits are developed on the basis of differences in environmental conditions, body types, individual personalities, exposure to different forms of training in the international arena and countless other influences. What it implies is, of course, is that their standards of teaching and learning will be the same but the ways of performances will differ. No matter how varied their teaching styles and points of emphasis might be, it is the consistency in the teaching of basic principles and fundamentals related to karate that identifies martial artists as proficient in their own areas of specialization. In this sense, karate as a martial art has remained unchanged and it is this that has been the greatest strength of this art form.

Modern-day martial arts practices are even more popular in India and in the Western countries than in Japan. However, to what extent are the new interpretations valid or legitimate? As we have already seen, an art form like karate can never be static, but it is continually improving and evolving, even as I sit to write about it. However, it could be argued that changes based on misinterpretations or lack of sufficient knowledge are not progress but are mere deviations. Much of the Japanese culture is inextricably tied to the traditional martial ways of living in Japan and if sufficient amount of effort is not exerted, the knowledge of karate may remain elusive to the non-Japanese exponents. In the field of Comparative Cultural studies, it is interesting to note how differences in culture exert major influences on the modern day practice of a sporting and artistic activity like karate-do. According the reports and research conducted over the last 5 years by the Defence Research Development Organization (DRDO), differences between the traditional and the modern ways of martial arts training influenced preparations for self defence and combat strategies in the battle field. The Japan Karate Association claims itself to be the preserver of the soul and

spirit of the art of kokufu bunka karate-do: karate based on the ancient Japanese tradition of Bushido.

Critical opinions state that it is largely a myth perpetuated by the Japanese to keep an increasingly fragile dominance on the stylistic aspects of karate, if not the execution, of these ancient Japanese art forms. The basic philosophy underpinning traditional methods of martial arts training remains the same all over the world but the techniques are localized and reinterpreted in the modern world. Amid cultural settings of West Bengal where marked differences from the Japanese society are quite prominent, it is important to develop contrasting pedagogies in the way karate as a martial art is both perceived and practised. When Naka Sensei and Kawasoe Sensei trained us in Japan and Thailand respectively, for a brief span of one month in December 2018, the classes were clearly modelled upon enhancing the basic skills of the martial arts. In Japan, the training programs instituted at colleges and universities focus on an intense practice sessions of 3 hours on a regular basis, with holidays during the weekends when students are expected to spend more time with natural surroundings and bring about a difference, however small it may be. Planting a sapling or helping one's family members by sharing their workload also gets considered as work that brings about changes. A martial arts practitioner follows the norm that to bring about a change in society, one needs to be the change and lead others to do the same. More than fifty students train together in the hall or in the field (depending upon the weather conditions) at least once in a day. They are instructed to share their meals and these basic things primarily help in instilling a strong sense of community building right from a tender age. These formats are also followed in most of the training centres in Kolkata which take pride in propagating the motto 'one for all, all for one'. Although the disciplinary standards are maintained in Bengal, yet the commitment level is definitely not the same as that of Japanese. At the moment, here in my hometown, I have been training at the official dojo at our stadium and at

the local club because my current work schedule during quarantine and the lockdown makes it a bit difficult to travel from one end of the city to the other on a regular basis. Although the club at the stadium is an official club, it is far removed from the likes of traditional methods practised at the headquarters in Japan. The university club, on the other hand, makes no pretence at being traditionally authentic, and in fact, it incorporates newer methods of learning, from ai kido, judo and other forms of martial arts. Twenty years back when karate was introduced at schools and colleges, practitioners were even instructed to remove the logo on their karate-gi, which was considered to demarcate the style followed by the practitioner. Certain fundamental differences in training have been normalized over the years. While I have been seen a large number of mixed martial artists train rigorously in karate to form a better foundation, I would still conclude that any form of disciplined training that suits an individual's body type and personality is the best for the individual. There should be absolutely no compromise when it comes to rigorous training. Although during the first few years of training, I had initially felt more comfortable with the traditional forms and techniques of martial arts, yet I feel that the comfort zone gradually broadens with years of training. As a coach, I try to motivate students and juniors (kohai) to develop their own unique styles for championships but to adhere to the clearly stated rules and traditional methods during the grading examination. Since Dan (belt) grading examinations held in India are almost always conducted and administered by a panel comprising of Indian and Japanese teachers who prefer tradition over modernity, it is better to be thorough with the basic, traditional foundation of karate during tests. On the other hand, representatives from all over the world judge performances in championships and at the end of the day, hybrid techniques, coupled with a smart use of available resources, help participants to achieve success.

The next section of this chapter seeks to examine the inter-relationship between aesthetics and governance, between ecology and body-politics and the extent to which it is allowed, both by the individual practising karate and the authorities governing the usage of land or other resources. Rituals and expressions in the performance will be studied as dialectic movements, as a rite of passage, in a pattern of separation and integration. The conceptualization of the paradox contained in the theory and practice of martial arts, and a brief understanding of the body of the warrior within the performative arena, ritualistic, aesthetic or social will be further studied. Brett L. Walker has exhaustively argued in his book, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590– 1800*, the Yamato people, or the Japanese colonial masters employed the very forms of ecological imperialism. Crosby discusses, particularly diseases, in their campaign to conquer the indigenous Ainu people. But while the Yamato tried to conquer the “nanban” (a term which referred to both the Ainu and the Ryukyuns) or barbarians with the deft application of karate and other forms of martial arts practices, they concurrently colonized their own land through both agriculture and gardening. They stripped away the natural features, the flora and the fauna, of the land itself to either convert it to rice fields as the territory rapidly expanded from the Yamato province or to elaborate landscape gardens of heritage, as cities grew and the capital was repeatedly shifted. To the gardeners, the finest virtue they can achieve in their profession is that of “subtlety”, where the meticulously constructed and planned garden looks untouched by human hands.

“The ideal for a Japanese gardener, architect, artist or craftsman of the past was to be as invisible in their creations as possible, and to create something that looked like it had always been there. This goal was accomplished by understanding materials deeply, and using them in a way that a person’s hand would be least obvious. Once planted, gardens were meticulously maintained to imitate casual, natural growth.” (Mehta et al, 18). This creates the obvious

paradox of the artificial being constructed by the natural for the purpose of telling a narrative that is not overtly visible but begs the viewer to meditate and introspect upon the scene. This kind of meditation, behind the guise of Nature, is also made possible during the practice of martial arts. The continuous histories of mass movement from Japan to West Bengal, via China or Thailand, and vice versa, have had huge impacts on contemporary Bengali societies, the subjectivities of communities and increased their self-reflections. The people of West Bengal were always dependent on agro-based economy. So when they encountered the martial art form, karate along with its inter-dependence on agriculture and gardening, they gladly accepted it. It did not demand a lot of investment on the part of the residents of West Bengal, rather it added to their repositories of learning a new martial art form, while allowing them to tend to their fields and gardens. To be more specific, it can be easily understood that when individuals and communities migrated permanently or travelled temporarily from one nation to the other, they inevitably carried with them a part of the cultural practices, rituals and knowledge of the place from which they travelled. This had a positive impact on their relationships with one another. Their stories and memories of the previous place, (in this context, Japan) the nation from which they moved, clearly created a lot of interest among people of West Bengal. This also led to community building activities, focusing on gardening, working in fields together and reaping benefits of knowledge gained during these activities. The 'naan chaku', mainly used in martial arts training, is one such instrument that was prevalently used in agricultural practices. People of West Bengal got acquainted with the instrument and learnt about its application through cross-cultural exchanges and migration. They learnt the use of 'nanchaku' from people who travelled from Japan to India and brought such skill sets with them. Their stories and re-tellings of the ways in which they resisted majoritarian histories and contested injustice in public spheres also had a huge impact on the revolutionaries of Bengal. Rashbehari Bose was one such efficient leader whose knowledge

about different practices in Japan enabled the formation of local communities, mainly comprising of revolutionary students and youth who left no stone unturned in providing martial arts training to young men and women. Eventually, these local parties and communities organized national uprisings, shaped the polity, restructured the dynamics between the colonizers and the colonized, between the majority and the minorities and paved the path for the Indian independence.

An obvious paradox of the artificial being constructed by the natural and the inter-dependence between gardening and martial arts can be explained on the basis of Crosby's theory. According to this theory, the natural species inhabiting a particular space are wiped away in order to be replaced by those very same native species placed in a different formation or pattern. Therefore, one might say that while the gardener who does this pruning and construction has deep spiritual respect for the rocks¹ and trees – to the point of bestowing on them names and a symbolism. Shintoism as an animist religion believes in the spiritual presence that resides within all things, including stones (Mansfield, 15) – they also then take away the autonomy of these very spiritual presences to thrive in their natural environment by reconstructing that surroundings by planting trees at certain locations so as to extract the best possible view, strategically placing rocks to narrate a certain Buddhist or Shinto myth and by digging ponds where there were none. There is an erasure of the naturally grown asymmetry of Nature to impose on that space a constructed asymmetry that imitates the natural (Mansfield, 49). The Sakuteiki and its rules of aesthetics and placement and composition of gardens is borne out of reverence for Nature essentially, and the reconstruction of the asymmetry and the space itself in this work is justified by the greater purpose of warding off evil spirits and bringing luck and especially the “evok[ing] [of] nature in its primal form” (Mehta et al, 13-14). Why then should a martial arts practitioner have an affinity for a garden

¹ Sacred stones were called “iwakura” and were taken to be the abode of deities. (Nitschke 18 – 19)

that strives to achieve nature's "primal form" by erasing the "primal form" itself? Who decides upon the "primal form": Nature or human beings? The natural pre-existing aesthetics the land grew with is re-written to suit the "natural" aesthetics of the people. It puts forward the question: does respect and admiration for the land negate the blatant colonization of the land that happens in the name of this respect and aesthetics?

It must not of course be forgotten that this paradox is observed within the land of the colonizer itself and indeed, this phenomenon of ecological colonialism at the metropolis is not exclusive to Japan. The great Empire of the West – Great Britain – too exhibits this trait in the landscape gardens of 'Capability' Brown and the imitations of the French formal gardens of Versailles where to gardens are constructed over large areas of land in accordance with the currently fashionable stance on aesthetics while they expand in colonial territory by employing the methods of ecological imperialism overseas or by engaging in trade and annexation or outright war which is something shared by Japan in its frontier expansion to the north and campaigns against the native tribes and eventually China till the formation of the short-lived Empire of Japan. One might argue that the land must be exploited (colonized) for survival because such an exploitation serves the purpose of survival. Primitive tribes who hunt and forage for survival take what is needed and no more. It fulfills the very basic needs of food, water, clothing – the psychological needs of Abraham Maslow's Self Actualization Theory which must be fulfilled before anything else is (Morgan et al, 600-601). By this regard, gardens do not fulfil any primitive need but an aesthetic impulse which is entirely spiritual. This spiritual insight in fact, plays an essential part in making a successful martial artist.

The relationship between gardening and militarism, homebound ecological colonialism and overseas military imperialism – and the Empire of Japan began long before the Emperor Meiji formalised it aggressively – is crucial to the understanding of the paradoxes and complexities Japan embodies. “Since ancient times the Japanese have ranked among the world’s most ferocious warriors, but no other people has given more elaborate attention to courteous conduct or more loving devotion to flowers, poetry and art.” (Leonard, 11) This is precisely the relationship this paper hopes to examine by studying these factors in the Heian age, the Muromachi age, and the Meiji Restoration and after. To this purpose much of the material on Japanese history and gardens I required, was available on Library Genesis and while I tried to secure a copy of Beasley’s Japanese Imperialism, it was in its not available in its entirety. I managed to photocopy a copy of Early Japan from the national library. Having read Murasaki Shikibu’s Genji Monogatari years ago I could not deny its essentiality to my topic and a large part of this chapter deals with it specially since material on the Heian Age is scarce. In conducting my research, I came across an article by Tessa Morris-Suzuki called “Sustainability and ecological colonialism in Edo Period Japan” in which I found that Morris-Suzuki mainly deals with agriculture in the Edo Period – which I will briefly glance at. Japanese colonialism and imperialism has been studied primarily as an event in the Meiji/World War II era and works on earlier instances of colonialism is rare. While Walker does work on the Ainu campaigns, there is even less sustained study on the Ryukyu islands or Okinawa. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney examines in her book *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms and Nationalisms*, the connection between the sakura and war but again her focus is entirely on World War II.

“China was, of course, to remain as a kind of touchstone, but it was geographically and psychologically remote enough to allow the unhampered growth of an indigenous tradition.” (Bowring, xii) This distance often led to an imperfect emulation in a number of cases that in a

roundabout way led to the development of a Japanese identity. The imperfect and incomplete imposition of the Taika reforms because Japan was not as advanced as China in communication and governance led to growing discontent amongst the rural population and local landlords who began assembling private armies which eventually grew into the elite forces of samurai. That women were barred from learning the Chinese script – something Shikibu repeatedly expresses with bitterness in her diary (Bowring, 58) – led to the development of the kana – a written form of the hitherto spoken tongue that was used informally and by women and was wholly Japanese. Women were in fact repeatedly aligned with a culture not Chinese which was a predominantly male realm. Moreover, Women were therefore doubly colonised, as they were colonised by the men who in turn were colonised by ideas of China. Women, such as Shikibu, who from her position of lady-in-waiting to the Empress Shosho, knew Chinese and produced this remarkable work, were extremely rare. The alignment of women and nature, especially a flower representing a then greater power and colonial master in many ways, when connected by Kaoru's sleeve, where his scent refashions both, becomes then a prelude to Japan's own changed attitude towards China in the later centuries culminating in China's decisive loss in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894 – 1895. Japan seeks to colonise China the way it colonises its women. This relation of women and nature is fully exploited in *Genji* by Shikibu. The gardens here embody every characteristic landscape and stroll gardens are famed to be, to the point that given the lack of the actual gardens as Heian-kyo had been burned to the ground several times, much of what is known of these elaborate, opulent gardens is actually derived from *Genji* itself. In a sustained description of seasonal gardens Shikibu paints a stunning picture of the beauty of the natural world while at the same time exposing to the reader the control exercised by men. Gunther Nitschke notes each of the ladies are associated with a season (52) even though the gardens have very obviously been constructed upon the tenets of feng shui

and the Empress Akikonomu is named after her favourite season of autumn, as referring to people by their actual names was considered improper. In several episodes following, she and Murasaki, Genji's second wife, have a running competition about whose favourite season is superior. In another extraordinary passage, Shikibu describes Spring with opulence:

“It was late in the Third Month. Murasaki's spring garden was coming ever more to life with blossoms and singing birds. Elsewhere spring had departed, said the other ladies, and why did it remain here? Genji thought it a pity that the young women should have only distant glimpses of the moss on the island, a deeper green each day. He had carpenters at work on Chinese pleasure boats, and on the day they were launched he summoned palace musicians for water music. Princes and high courtiers came crowding to hear.

Akikonomu was in residence at Rokujō. Now was the time, thought Murasaki, for a proper answer to the poem about the garden that “awaits the spring.” Genji agreed. It would have been good to show these spring blossoms to the empress herself, but casual visits were out of the question for one in her position. Numbers of her young women who were thought likely to enjoy such an outing were therefore rowed out over the south lake, which ran from her southwest quarter to Murasaki's southeast, with a hillock separating the two. The boats left from the hillock. Murasaki's women were stationed in the angling pavilion at the boundary between the two quarters. The dragon and phoenix boats were brilliantly decorated in the Chinese fashion. The little pages and helmsmen, their hair still bound up in the page-boy manner, wore lively Chinese dress, and everything about the arrangements was deliciously exotic, to add to the novelty, for the empress's women, of this southeast quarter. The boats pulled up below a cliff at an island cove, where the smallest of the hanging rocks was like a detail of a painting. The branches caught in mists from either side were like a tapestry, and far

away in Murasaki's private gardens a willow trailed its branches in a deepening green and the cherry blossoms were rich and sensuous. In other places they had fallen, but here they were still at their smiling best, and along the galleries wisteria was beginning to send forth its lavender. Yellow yamabuki reflected on the lake as if about to join its own image. Waterfowl swam past in amiable pairs, and flew in and out with twigs in their bills, and one longed to paint the mandarin ducks as they coursed about on the water. Had that Chinese woodcutter been present, he might well have gazed on until his axe handle rotted away. Presently it was evening." (Seidensticker, 428)

The trend of incorporating the four seasons in one space is commented upon by several critics. Stephen Mansfield writes, "It was during this era that gardeners attempted to both compress natural features of the landscape and to reflect the four seasons in the walled enclosures of their patrons/ In spring, court nobles would descend from viewing platforms and pavilions to attend musical recitals, float on barges over the surfaces of heart-shaped ponds or engage in poetry competitions, a tradition that likely derives from China." (19)

That the court ladies of this extract are surprised by the still flourishing Spring in Murasaki's garden tells one of the sense of "impermanence" possessed by these people and reflected in their gardens. This followed the Buddhist law of "mujo" or the transience of things, signified by the gravel and sand that regularly need raking and trees that regularly need pruning. (Mansfield, 43; Nitschke, 46). The ponds were, Nitschke notes, meant to "mirror the symmetry of temple architecture" (47), a symmetry not available to the garden itself which is representative of the impermanent. Obedience of this law, it would seem, becomes justification of the ecological colonialism practiced. Crafting of a man-made natural garden (Nitschke, 10) seems to be man's way of trying to exercise control over transience and

impose a permanence by digging and pruning. This sense of transience is perhaps best embodied by the cherry blossom (sakura) which only bloom for a short while and in Genji it gains especial poignancy with Murasaki's death. In the Heian age the sakura as a symbol is young yet – the ume or the plum blossom of China is still the dominant flower – but cherry blossom viewing festivals imply that its fragility had already made an impression on these deeply superstitious people, though it reaches its full potential perhaps with World War II. Heian gardens can now only be savoured in relatively faithful recreations, the originals having been lost in fire and war.

Hideyoshi's invasions of Korea happened after a long history of bloody wars within the country. The Onin War of 1467 began over a dispute over the Shogunate (Leonard, 103) and destroyed half of Kyoto, including several Buddhist temples. "...Japan came to be divided into many compact, independent domains with well-defined though sometimes shifting boundaries. At the head of each was a warrior daimyo, who may have inherited his position, or won it or increased it in war." (ibid, 105). In many ways it was a regression back into a feudal past as each clan or warrior tried to emerge strongest. At the same time Japan had its first European contact as Portuguese merchants landed in 1542/1543, and introduced Japan to firearms which not only gave new vigour to the Warring States but also pitted the old elite order of samurai who had made sword-wielding into a matter of discipline and a fine art with warrior upstarts who quickly learnt how to use firearms (Leonard, 138 – 139). Oda Nobunaga, the man who led Japan towards unification by winning with battles with clever tactics and a small army, much approved of these new forms of armament. A ruthless man, if the samurai perfected the sword, Nobunaga perfected warfare. Suspicious of the Buddhist monks, especially those sects who had turned militant during this era, Nobunaga was welcoming towards the Jesuits and supported their agenda of conversion. It was only when news of Spanish colonization and European wars of Reformation reached the ears of

Hideyoshi and the role played by the Jesuits in these endeavours that, regaining the pride shown in the face of Mongol invasion resurfaced, and he ordered the expulsion of foreigners, his edict being carried out by his successor Tokugawa Ieyasu (Leonard, 162). Till this point, both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi in their campaigns against the Buddhist monasteries had been unknowingly furthering the Jesuit agenda of conversion in the heathen land (ibid, 140) for while the Portuguese recognized the Japanese as a civilization, a courtesy colonisers as a rule do not extend to colonies/possible colonies, it was still a heathen land with heathen gods and needed to be converted.

While mainland Japan was tethering on the brink of being colonized, the Japanese pirates (Wako) were furthering Japanese agenda of colonization on South-East Asian islands by making permanent settlements and engaging in trade and political disputes. “At one point, the self-governing Japanese colony in Thailand had grown strong enough to enthrone a Thai king.” (Leonard, 106). In the midst of all this, during the Muromachi period, the Zen monks, practising various martial arts forms including karate, were calmly building the rock gardens that are so characteristic of Zen monasteries and are some of the oldest surviving gardens of Japan. Often drawing inspiration from the Chinese ink-wash paintings with black and white lines and strokes (Mansfield, 34; Varley, 487), these gardens are the greatest examples of karesansui (Nitschke, 89). Meant to provoke contemplation that would lead to the sudden enlightenment of the illusory nature of things (Leonard, 83) and closely associated with the art of the tea ceremony, Zen Buddhism and the essence of martial arts dependent on the Zen, had become attractive to people of all classes, with its emphasis on austerity and notions of attaining salvation - irrespective of class – and the possibilities of rebirth in heaven (Goble, 55-56) which could be attained by foregoing worldly relations and desires. The interest about the Zen way of life, as practised by martial arts practitioners, did not merely attract the natives but also became extremely popular among people in West Bengal. During the course

of my field work, I have found out that the Tibetan monasteries and the Japanese temples established in North Bengal specifically draw inspiration in their practices from the Zen monasteries of Japan. Residents and visitors to these Japanese monasteries invariably learn discipline, meditation, reuse and redirection of internal energy to ward off pessimism. The rock gardens of the Zen monasteries served the function of nudging people to this realization by evoking tranquillity and minimalism and by exhibiting the cohabitation of Man and Nature on a miniature scale. One might argue however, that the degree of perfection exercised in these gardens not only establish them as spaces of ecological colonialism –for instance, the irony of replacing water with sand to represent water cannot be missed – but also, by the use of rocks which can potentially last forever and are therefore not subject to notions of transience, the gardens – ironically enough – betray a strong effort of convincing oneself of worldly permanence. As Mansfield notes, “Much is written about Japan's culture of impermanence, but many stone garden designs have endured for centuries, allowing the original work and intentions of the designer to achieve a more lasting legacy. Conversely, any shortcomings in the design will also endure.” (Mansfield, 61) In a way therefore, the gardens with their inherent connection with martial arts training, are meant to have the last laugh. Meant to evoke contemplations of ‘maya’, the gardens, some of them centuries old, like those of the Ryoan-ji temple, embody a paradox instead. Meant to exude ideas of impermanence to the understandings of common people, they have become permanent because that is exactly what they are meant to be. The concept of ‘maya’ and its connection with ‘moh’ (worldly, mundane pleasures) form an important part of study in the literature and culture of Bengal as well. Martial art training embodies this inherent paradox. A martial artist achieves the highest level when he or she successfully internalizes this very paradox. According to great philosophers, military chieftains and martial artists, a true martial artist should be like water and should be able to adjust successfully in any situation just as water assumes the shape of

the container in which it is poured. This very fluidity connects martial artists and karate-ka to the fluidity that is manifest in the gardens. While practising detachment, one attaches one's whole being to the spiritual. This idea of attaching oneself to the spiritual in order to preserve good things in nature (pertaining to both natural elements and human nature) makes detachment a selfless act. This very act of focusing on how to attain something that lies beyond pushes one to pursue work and not give up easily. A karate-ka is taught to aim beyond the immediate target visible to the human eye, which means, if I want to hit a particular point, I should aim beyond that point. This results in exertion of extra power; power that is generated from within, that can be attained only when the mind, the body and the heart work in perfect coordination. Observing many successful martial arts practitioners in the national and international martial art circuit has helped me in realizing the fact that true strength resides within. The physical structure or bodily strength of a person is only of secondary importance altogether. The inter-connection between gardening and martial arts reflect the tenderness, empathy, detachment from worldly matters and the strength that lies in nature. It is absolutely important to strike a balance between the environment and human existence, in order to ensure sustainable development and survival of all species. For the samurai in Japan, however, these ideas held great currency, as contemplations of the fragility and illusion of things assisted their own resolve and ethics of Bushido. Budo karate still remains extremely important in the field of martial arts training. Budo, in its modern form, has existed in Japan only since the twentieth century. Its origins and influences, however, can be traced back to well before the Meiji Reformation, when Japan undertook a remarkable and rapid programme of modernisation and reform. In those days in Japan, budo was once again being viewed by the government as a possible tool that would help in combating the social woes from which Japan, like every other modern nation, was not immune. So what is it exactly that budo can offer? The inter-dependence between the

transient and the permanent, between the gardens and the martial arts show that it reasonable to believe that the practise and study of budo karate can go a long way in achieving the desired positive result. The concept of budo has changed and developed within Japan, and how significant changes that have taken place.

Zen Buddhism and its gardens were made for development of budo karate, meditation and contemplation. These gardens assisted in forming people's belief that dying in war for honour was praiseworthy. Samurai and cherry blossoms, unlike rocks, are truly fragile and impermanent and are better suited to the postulations of Zen Buddhism. These have become an enduring image not just in the Japanese culture but in the entire paraphernalia of martial arts practice. "During the Heian period, the grounds of Ryoan-ji (Dragon Peace Temple) belonged to the powerful Fujiwara family, though only Kyoyochi pond survives from that time. Katsumoto Hosokawa founded the temple in 1450 but it had to be rebuilt in 1488 after being destroyed in the Onin War (1467–77). Yet another fire ravaged the temple in 1790 but the garden, dating from around 1499, remained undamaged. The designer of the garden remains a mystery though Soami (1472–1523) has been credited." (Mansfield, 90)

The images of the samurai and the sakura were rewritten in the Japan post the Meiji Restoration. While gardening flourished as it had before, it either became imitative of earlier or was made of concrete. The Empire of Japan, including the Ainu of Hokkaido and the people of Okinawa, was now aggressively bent on imperial expansion. Having rapidly modernized along European lines the Japanese oligarchs were eager to take on greater powers. Following the overthrow of the shogunate in 1868 which led to the Restoration to the throne of the young Emperor Meiji, all opposition was eliminated in the following years. It also heralded the extinction of the elite class of warriors – the samurai. The connection

between the warrior and the garden continued, only the garden was diminished, represented in a single flower of the sakura tree, which Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney studies at length in *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms and Nationalism*. Ohnuki-Tierney focuses on the justification of sending young men as sacrificial lambs during World War II – the kamikaze soldiers – that imposes on them the idea of the salvation of the Japanese soul. She writes, “O’nishi Takijirō, a navy vice-admiral, [who] invented the tokkōtai (kamikaze) operations...thought the Japanese soul, which had been built up to possess a unique strength to face death without hesitation, was the only means available for the Japanese to bring about a miracle when the homeland was surrounded by American aircraft carriers...” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 3 – 4). In her analysis, she critiques the ideal of *pro patria mori* that was adopted by the government and the difference of thought – while the soldiers died for country, for the government they die for imperial agenda – the Emperor being equated to father. (ibid, 7). In this, the old code of honour of the samurai was reworked and appropriated for an imperialist purpose. “It was at this time that Nitobe Inazō, a devout Christian who worked for international peace at the League of Nations, refashioned the concept of the “warrior’s way,” or bushido¹. His book, published originally in English in Philadelphia in 1899, opens with this statement: “Chivalry [his translation of bushido¹] is a flower no less indigenous to the soil of Japan than its emblem, the cherry blossom.” With the adoption of universal conscription in 1872, the government extended “the Japanese soul,” which “enabled” them to die, or fall like cherry blossoms, for the emperor, from warriors alone to all Japanese males...The “equal right” to the Japanese soul and, consequently, to death was aestheticized by the symbolism of cherry blossoms, which successive governments used as the master trope to encourage soldiers to fight to the death. Moreover, the “equal right” to death was extended to those who were considered not to be ethnic Japanese. At that time some leaders insisted on ethno-nationalism, while others, usually more liberal, insisted that Japan was a multi-ethnic nation. The latter

notion, unfortunately, was useful for Japan's colonial policy. The now infamous declaration of July 23, 1940 by Konoe Fumimaro, then prime minister, of "One hundred million Japanese as one soul must truly dedicate themselves to the Emperor" included not only the Ainu and Okinawans, both of whom were considered different from the Japanese at the time, but also over thirty million Chinese, Koreans, and others living in Japan proper and in the occupied territories of Taiwan, Korea, and Sakhalin (Ninagawa 1998: 100–1012; Takahashi 1994 g3). In 1938, they became "eligible" to volunteer to be drafted. Mandatory conscription was imposed on Koreans in 1944 and in 1945 on Taiwanese (Ninagawa 1998: 101), with eleven Korean tokkōtai pilots. The state "endowed" them with the Japanese soul (*yamato damashii*) to face death in order to be drafted as Japanese soldiers, an act analogous to the planting of cherry trees in its colonies. The government in Tokyo made quite a fanfare about the heroic act of Ōmasu Matsuichi, who was made "the first Okinawan war deity". It was a strategy to incorporate the minorities into the war effort." (Ibid, 13 -14)

This appropriation of the gardens (specifically cherry blossoms, in the Japanese context) with its symbolism of rebirth, associations with fragility, production and reproduction by virtue of its link with rice harvests (ibid, 29, 32) carries forward the relationship of the warrior or the martial artist and the garden, but unlike the warriors of old, the kamikaze soldiers and karateka were college and university students, most of whom had a sense of religion and death and the symbolism of the garden or that of the cherry blossom had taken a perverse turn: "Simultaneous presence of three meanings, all expressive of nationalism

A. Cultural nationalism: Blooming cherry blossoms as the Japanese soul

²Ohnuki-Tierney's original reference: Ninagawa Jukei. 1998. *Gakuto Shutsujin* (Conscription of student-soldiers). Yoshikawa Kōbunkan.

³Original reference: Takahashi Nobuo. 1994a. *Gunka* (Military songs). In *Taishū Bunka Jiten*, edited by Ishikawa Hiroyoshi et al., 223 –24. Kōbundo
———. 1994g. *Ichoku Isshin* (One million people, one soul). In *Taishū Bunka Jiten*, edited by Ishikawa Hiroyoshi et al., 48. Kōbundō.

B1. Political nationalism: Blooming cherry blossoms as Japanese soldiers

B2. Political nationalism: Falling cherry blossoms as fallen soldiers” (ibid. 103).

The falling cherry blossom became representative of the soul of the falling soldier who was given the false consolation that he or she would be reborn as cherry blossoms and would be respected forever. After the aggression of the Sino –Japanese War of 1894 and Russo – Japanese War of 1905, in which the smaller nation defeated the larger, when ecological colonialism seemed to give way to aggressive imperialism, this close overlap of the two that one finds in the kamikaze concept is disturbing.

In discussing this appropriation of the cherry blossom as a symbol for the Japanese soul, Ohnuki-Tierney goes back to the Heian age when the sakura was pitted against the ume and she notes that this appreciation occurred only when the Japanese recognized the Chinese as they Other (Tierney, 249). Indeed, in its history, every time Japan has recognized a foreign threat to itself, it has closed its ranks – best seen in the isolation of the Edo period during which time it developed the traditions which make it uniquely Japanese. It leads one to think consider that this sense of nationalism that has grown throughout its history is perhaps connected with the gardens which are – for all their Chinese influences – uniquely Japanese. In this, it unifies a distinctive form of ecological colonialism and Crosby’s ecological imperialism. An eco-critical reading of the Japanese texts on gardening, the Zen lifestyle and martial arts establish the fact that the soil and nature of Japan will remain colonized; it will only reach a post-colonial state when the human race is extinct and it has the freedom to grow again.

Murasaki Shikibu, in her *Diary*, relates an incident when another lady-in-waiting brought her some chrysanthemum dew spent specially by Michinaga’s wife “to wipe old age” away. (Bowring, 7). Several entries later, looking out into the garden at the new chrysanthemums,

she ponders “old age might indeed be conquered” (ibid, 22). Bowring comments on the belief of chrysanthemum dew being associated with rejuvenation and longevity (Bowring, 7). It seems therefore that it is not by accident that the Imperial Throne of Japan, the seat of the world’s longest unbroken line of royal male descent, is called the Chrysanthemum throne. The Imperial family always carry the chrysanthemum with them, and one cannot help but wonder: is this too an instance of a more metaphysical kind of ecological colonialism? Perhaps, by imposing the importance of a plant or a flower like ‘nom’, a burden of symbolism, tradition and history, the ecological space in its connection with martial arts training is reclaimed. How we view the world around us, and the judgments we make about our surroundings, are invariably a product of the culture and background within which we live and gain lived experience. Concepts of ethics, sustainable practice and performance and ecological balance may, in fact, have more to do with convention, than with any absolutes which are shared across different cultures and traditions.

The inclusion and study of martial arts in West Bengal during the Indian struggle for freedom was mainly viewed as a popular mode of physical training and sport as well as an art form and essence of life. It brought forth a surge of interest from sports-persons, authors as well as cultural and environmental scholars towards the nature of karate incorporated into art as resistance and performance. It was a reflection of socio-cultural practices. It was a matter of great euphoria upon finding an abundance of Bengali overtones in the Japanese tradition of karate. The analogies in the nomenclature of the different forms used for practice overlapped with the traditional knowledge of skills already acquired in Bengali households. There is also a striking similarity between the philosophy guiding karate in general and the philosophies established in the epics, folk lore and legends of West Bengal. The quest for the uniqueness and nothingness (the void, as martial artists term it) through the practice of karate was

enmeshed in the overall search for an identity of the people in West Bengal. It was a product of the intense interaction between the dominant and peripheral cultures, a sort of long-winded blending of traditional orthodoxies within colonial modernity. Stuart Hall argued while mentioning the prescriptive and descriptive nature of diasporic lives that carries the implication of modern identities actually working, 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 ambivalence has shaped the notions of performativity as seen in the martial arts traditions of Bengal. Through experiments in the martial arts training institutes and martial dance theatres, the vision of the aspirants is signified by the use of the performer's 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 human psyche from traditional orthodoxies and hierarchical values of patriarchy. It aims at some future state of freedom and emancipation, while envisioning respect and preservation of substantive values of identity, environment as well as tradition. The core world of the autochthonous martial art form, karate, was regulated by strong foundations of ethical and environmental values drawn from the beliefs and practices of people. It manifests the torment in a calamity of a cultural being, where their art and sport had been structured, its image framed by the contours of their ancient memories and remembrances, their traditional knowledge systems, their thoughts and ideas in intense relationships with habitat and environment. It had suffered the weight of hegemony, an impoverishment of her inhabitant wealth through imperialism and appropriation of her resources.

With this innate sense of cultural belonging, karate as a fluid martial art form has been ascribed to the status of popular sport and way of life in the Indian 'topos'. More importantly,

it is embellished by the revered theory of sustainable development. Upon delving deeply into the traditions of karate as seen in Bengal and comparing it with that in Japan and Thailand, we see a convergence and a divergence simultaneously. If there had been no integration into the Bengali cultural mainstream, karate would have remained bereft of its present identity, it seems. With the gradual spread of this form of performative martial zeal, 'chhau', 'kusti' and 'lathi khela' which were in full thrust in Bengal at that time gained more popularity among the people. Much of the internal world of West Bengal, in its indigenous and raw state, and the stories of its native martial body has not been historically documented in detail, to help clear the air about its identity. Moreover, there is the concern of experiencing synthesized life in the context of cultural encounters between Bengal and Japan and this can only be further explored through the narrative of the martial arts practices. The type of martial art that existed in the ceremonial milieu gradually stepped out of its initial setting in temples (kusti is still practised in 'akhras' adjacent to places of worship), pavilions and processional events ('chhau' is still performed during processions in order to add public enthusiasm to the vibrant culture), for the advent of new areas of performance which were secular in nature. This opened up a two-dimensional approach. It was observed that in spite of deeply ingrained traditional values, creative performers and martial artists went out of their homes to learn and teach karate for ensuring survival in adverse conditions. Some of them started teaching this art in their newly adopted habitat, but strived to retain the strict principles of their own, indigenous artistic traditions, while others went out to seek secular spaces for entertainment, sport, livelihood and profit. The women, who were, even then fostered in orthodox value of the society, took the initiative and broke social norms to learn and teach martial arts. Women played a vital role in India's struggle for freedom and they were equally capable of using weapons and other methods of self defense. For certain other sections of the society, a new profession similar to the concept of underground fighting was created. The art of balancing of

the body, mind and heart with its immediate surroundings, during performance was encouraged by patrons in Bengal and revolutionary leaders as well. Martial artists drew immense respect from one and all and explored further nuances of karate in exchange for a living, and recognition, not necessarily by an emotionally charged audience, but by human congregation with differing agendas on the notion of the gaze. At present, the fact that makes us happy is that the Bengali culture has been intertwined with karate to such an extent that the identity of karate as a form of martial art remains incomplete without the changes and Indianization incorporated into it by the Bengalis.

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Conclusion

The existing body of work related to Martial Art Studies, till date, has been mainly limited to research surveys conducted in Japan, China and in the Western countries and there are only a few newspaper and magazine articles which talk about the rising popularity of martial arts in India. *Astra Charcha*, published by the Jadavpur University Press in 2015 can be considered as a comprehensive guide on the history of martial training scenario in India. Existing research in the area of martial art studies by Dr. Paul Bowman and Benjamin Judkins established performance based analysis of martial arts and its correlation with hybridity. Dr. Bowman and Judkins introduced the theme, ‘the invention of martial arts’ in 2016 and explored the philosophy, beauty and culture of different martial arts like ai kido, tai chi, kendo and karate, kalaripayattu, based on reviews and reports submitted by academicians, cultural theorists and practitioners like Andrea Molle, Allyson Quinney, D.S. Farrer, Douglas Wile, George Jennings and Thomas Green.

The idea behind the title and theme of this collection – ‘the invention of martial arts’ – first emerged as a question: In an era when academics have an obligation to be familiar with arguments about the ‘invention of tradition’ [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983], ‘imagined communities’ [Anderson 1991], ‘imagined geographies’ [Said 1995; Said 2005], and so on, how are scholars to approach the question of the history, or histories, of martial arts? (Bowman and Judkins, 2016: 1)

A close reading of Dr. Bowman’s studies on martial arts reveals that in a globalized world, any form of art, sport and education can not solely remain rigid in its form. In order to create

a meaningful impact on a larger audience and to add value to the lives of people, martial art, like any other art form, needs to undergo subtle changes in techniques, costume and applications, scoring and grading mechanisms. In order to understand the impacts of such flexibility of martial arts, I looked up the ways in which different martial arts styles all over the world are inter-connected in some way or the other, be it on stylistic similarities or ritualistic backgrounds or similarities in the ways of evolving to produce cultural significance. In 2001, Thomas A. Green produced a very comprehensive guide to martial arts and traditions, *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia*. This book provided me an insight into the different martial arts of the world, their backgrounds, histories and cultural importance.

In this context, even the notion of “art” is problematic. First, the term may be used simply as a means of noting excellence, as a reference to quality rather than attributes. A more serious issue, however, arises from the fact that, in Western European culture, we commonly draw distinctions between art and life, the aesthetic and the utilitarian, work and sport, and art and science. These Eurocentric distinctions break down in the face of Thai ram dab, Indonesian pentjak silat, and Brazilian capoeira, which are at once dance and martial exercise, and have been categorized as both, depending on the interests of commentators who, with a few notable exceptions, have been outsiders to the traditions. In addition, attempts to comprehend the nature of “martial art” have been further obscured by distinctions between self-defense/combat and sport (itself a culture-bound concept). (Green, 2001: Introduction xvi)

Martial arts are considered to be systems that blend the physical components of combat with strategy, philosophy, tradition, or other features that distinguish them from pure physical reaction (in other words, a technique, armed or unarmed, employed randomly or idiosyncratically would not be considered a martial art).

While some martial arts have spawned sports, and some of these sports are considered in this volume, the martial cores of such activities rather than the sports per se are emphasized. Also, entries focus on those martial systems that exist outside contemporary military technology. Thus, topics include Japanese samurai (despite their part in the Japanese armies in earlier centuries), American frontier gunslingers, and nineteenth-century European duellists (despite their use of firearms), as well as the socio-cultural influences that have led to changing fashions in modern military hand-to-hand combat. (Green, 2001: Introduction xvi)

Based on the understanding of martial arts from these books and journals by Green, Dr. Bowman and Judkins, instruction manuals by Sensei Gichin Funakoshi, Bruce Lee, Zarrilli and noted martial art instructors, theories established by Pierre Bourdieu, Foucault, Lacan and Jennings, newspaper and magazine entries on the rising popularity of martial arts in India and the practical knowledge acquired from the practice of martial arts for the last 23 years, I have tried to analyse the ways in which martial arts practice has been received and culturally transmitted from Japan to West Bengal and from different parts of India to Japan and its consequent impacts on the spread of martial arts, impacts on the incorporation of martial arts in the educational curricula of departments like Liberal Studies, Media and Communication Studies, Sports Management, Physical Education, in different parts of the world.

Based on fieldwork and survey, I have tried to form a better understanding of how cross cultural changes of martial arts occurred in India, with special focus on Bengal. During the course of study, I have been trying to analyse the ways in which the styles and techniques of karate and related martial styles 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. The first chapter of the thesis introduces martial arts and the martial artists and tries to establish the inherent correlation that exists between the art and the artiste; the

performance and the performer. This chapter has tried to explore an inter-relationship between martial arts, performance, mythological elements, and cultural elements and tried to address the ways in which martial arts get linked 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. This chapter is tied to the main research question in ways more than one. The main research question was concerned with a reading of the trajectory followed by martial arts studies and training in India, with special focus on Bengal. Yet another related research question of the thesis was to find out the extent to which cultural transmission and reception of martial arts have been taking place in India and Japan. The inter-related areas with which martial arts get tied up have been talked about in the very first chapter. It shows how the art is linked with the artiste, how the performance and performer are situated in spheres like dance and music, medicine, sports, films and other arts. Cynarski talks in details about the contributions of Indian martial arts culture to the field of medicine: acupuncture, acupressure, and homeopathy.

Perhaps the cradle of medical knowledge combined with the practice of martial arts is India. There are still studies conducted on vital places and vital points, to this day. They are used in healing, massage and are the targets of attack in combat. They are about life and death [cf. Kogel 2006, 2008; Sieler 2015: 95–177]. Probably this knowledge came from India to neighbouring countries, carried by Buddhist missionaries, merchants and warriors. (Cynarski, 2019: 327)

The second chapter of this thesis has tried to contextualize and situate the cultural transmission of karate in India, with special focus on Bengal and based on the study of how the transmission of karate has taken place in our society, two main aspects, identity and formation of the subject in a discursive space has also been studied. This particular chapter of the thesis addresses these significant aspects, with regard to the development of martial art

training and studies in West Bengal. In this chapter, the focus was mainly on trying to find out the ways in which subject formation of individuals practising martial arts takes place. 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 this 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 one's own fitness, physique and individual purpose. While analysing all these representations within the scope of the thesis, the research question concerned with the ways of cultural transmission and reception of karate as a major martial art form in West Bengal, has been directly addressed.

First, that diligent historiography is revealing many martial lineages to be less than linear, many histories to be primarily stories, and many traditions to be at best disjointed and more commonly invented. Secondly, the media saturation of daily life has thrust into the spotlight the question of the verification of the efficacy of martial arts. Both of these factors have transformed the discursive context, and hence induced a transformation at the 'genetic' level of martial arts. To clarify what this means, it may help to indulge in some crude periodizing for a moment. So, it might be proposed that the twentieth century saw certain 'traditional Asian martial arts' move first into fields of formalization: on the one hand, universities, schools, the police, the military, etc., and on the other hand, sport. From there they moved into film, and hence deeper into mythology. They also moved into discourses of lifestyles, belief-systems, self improvement and, of course, self-defence. Now, however, the twenty-first century is seeing, on the one hand, the mytho-histories that were invented during these periods come

under academic scrutiny, and on the other hand, the question of their performativity and efficacy are coming under media and cultural scrutiny.

(Bowman, 2016: 926)

When theory and practice converge, reception gets impacted upon, in a positive way and transmission of an art form also gains momentum in the society. Attending 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, the second chapter 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 cultural 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 practitioner who grew up in a semi-urban area and learnt karate for the first ten years of training (2000-2010) in that semi-urban set up, I could easily relate with the main concerns regarding the lack of high end technology and proper infrastructure that some of my students from the Nadia district talked about, when I asked them to share their opinions on factors impacting transmission of martial arts in their immediate surroundings. After 2010, I shifted to Kolkata and carried on with my practice in a much better equipped training arena. In spite of the ready availability of equipments for training, there were still certain issues in the martial training scenario existing in the city, if the broader spectrum of martial art development is taken into consideration. These issues mainly pertain to an increasing rate of performance pressure, extreme competition among certain practitioners who focus more on the competitive aspects of sports in martial arts, difference in stylistics or delivery, variations in selection procedure before tournaments and in a way; these create impacts on the process of subject formation that I have been trying to address in the second chapter. Regular practice sessions with my seniors and teachers helped me to understand their viewpoints regarding these aspects. On the other hand, interactive sessions with my juniors and students have also helped me to get access to their opinions as well. This has allowed me to explore the differences in reception of this particular martial culture in the urban, semi-urban and rural areas. Urban and rural spaces of performance and practice have played a significant role in the eventual development of karate in Bengal.

As a result of observations during practice and teaching, the second chapter could be formulated; and in the course of this chapter, 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. It helps us to learn more about these indigenous art forms and also about the process of transition in an age when karate training, in academic and performative space, has been getting globalized and glocalized, at the same time.

The process of modernization of traditional martial arts appears as newly reconstructed globalization by transcending the internationalization that the exchange between nations expands quantitatively. Globalization means a phenomenon that certain cultural activities of a particular country is practiced and settled in other countries in the world beyond the border lines of the nations. The cultural conflict is an inevitable phenomenon that occurs in the process. The process, meanwhile, certainly entails glocalization in the stand point of a home

country. All the three countries, South Korea, China, and Japan, whether it is their own will or not, experienced cultural conflicts in the process of introducing their own traditional martial arts abroad and the glocalization has been undergone through this process. A newly made culture became gradually refined by transcending the borders and evolved into a culture that has international and universal characteristics. (Green, 34)

As a result of observations based on the theoretical background of study and practice, I have revised the first chapter and I have tried to include relevant details for constructing a basic foundation on which I wish to conduct further research related to the reception and transmission of karate training in India. While talking about the significance of martial arts curriculum in educational institutions, De Sensi observed that the approach can be viewed as “... the ongoing major educational reform initiative aimed toward multiculturalism.” (Sensi, 1995: 34). He also observed that necessary modifications to the overall sports curriculum would lead to appropriation and addition of dance, theatrical practice and international sports as well.

One of the best and most fulfilling aspects of research in the field of Comparative Cultural Studies is probably the experience of being able to interact with people from different backgrounds, to be able to gain insights into the lived everyday realities of communities which are so different from one another. For instance, the vibrant culture of the last surviving head-hunters and other indigenous tribes practising martial arts and martial dance in Nagaland is very different from the colourful, equally vibrant practice of Chhau in Bengal, Odisha and Bihar. The scope of the second chapter of this thesis has allowed me to unlearn, learn and re-learn a lot about martial arts practice and transmission during 2020 and 2021. At one point, there were limitations especially with regard to active field work and survey but the pandemic phase taught me to go beyond apparent limitations, restructure and re-strategize

the ways in which the chapter could be produced. The discursive status of martial arts in society has been observed to be in the state of constant change; it keeps varying according to the context in which it is studied.

While revising the first and second chapters of the thesis, I was trying to prepare the initial draft of the third chapter. I was also trying to get myself acquainted with the online mode of teaching, training and curriculum development, in the field of martial arts and research. I attended an online workshop on martial art training in December, 2020 and after consecutive online training sessions; there were panel discussions, in which the main focus was on the modifications which need to be implemented in the online method of martial art training, at least for the next two years. In 2019, I had participated in championships and offline workshops in Kolkata, Thailand and Japan, during which time I got the opportunity to interact with Dr. Dave Hooper Sensei, Shihan Masao Kawasoe from Japan, Mori Shihan and his team from Thailand, Prof. Jon Keeling and Mrs. Gargi Mitra Keeling from the US and Dr. Ameer Adukattil from Dubai. These interactions definitely helped me to know more about factors affecting transmission, reception and consequent development of martial arts in different parts of the world. So I thought of connecting with them during the lockdown phase. Initially, I was just trying to know how we can conduct technical classes efficiently on online mode. During my conversation with Sensei Ameer Adukattil and Sensei Somanth Palchowdhury, I realized that the trajectory of training had undergone changes, during the online phase. They encouraged me to find out more about the impact of the pandemic on martial arts training. So I started forming the questions which I wanted to circulate and planned to maintain a record of the response of participants. Meanwhile, I got to know three extremely enthusiastic seniors from Nadia district: Mr. Amitava Chatterjee, Mr. Dipak and Ms. Promila Sen. They came up with an idea of starting a sport complex in Krishnanagar, Nadia, where karate, archery, shooting, swimming, weight lifting and tennis would be taught. So I collaborated with them

and we started off with this initiative during the first half of 2020. I got to know some brilliant sportspersons and Chhau performers during this period. It helped me to understand the differences in the urban, semi-urban and rural spaces of performance and practice. I could revise the second chapter of my thesis and add more observations, based on the experience shared by practitioners actively engaged in practice of Indian martial arts, martial dance and related fields. Since the stadium was closed from March, 2020 one of my school friends and fitness entrepreneur named Abhishek decided to start a fitness studio and shared his idea of helping people to stay fit during the pandemic. While conducting online zumba, yoga and self defence classes, I realized the need to incorporate the importance of alternative fitness methods in the third chapter. This new form of teaching and learning experience also helped me to understand how people have started prioritizing fitness in India, and more so from 2020. Most people have become more aware of the needs of fitness training and it is good to see that there is an upsurge in interest regarding fitness, active lifestyle, meditation and martial arts. With an increasing focus on immunity, there has definitely been a positive change in lifestyle. While conducting classes at this fitness studio, I also got to know more about other alternative methods of core strength training that includes power lifting and the importance of yoga.

One thing that I realized was that core strength training regimes at home really proved to be helpful for a lot of practitioners and fitness enthusiasts. Although my work during this phase was not primarily related to chapter formation and development in a literal way, but I think I have been able to learn a lot during active campaigns. It has helped me to restructure my viewpoints on martial way of life in India. Yoga, karate and other forms of disciplinary fitness training proved to be highly significant. Even professionals from the medical field started emphasizing the importance of regular work out. Lived experience during 2020 and 2021 helped me to restructure the third chapter of the thesis. At this point, I was also able to

reassert the importance of community building. It is not just related to community workshops on fitness. It is equally about building a team that supports you and helping them to up skill themselves as well. Networking with people from diverse backgrounds is important, especially when one wishes to conduct research on areas related with practice and impacts of such practice on lifestyle, within the domain of Cultural Studies.

As researchers and working professionals, we often do not get enough time or scope to interact with people from the grass root section. These two years of the critical pandemic period helped me to get a direct insight into their lives. Even though some of the children from these families are really good gymnasts and wrestlers, they consider training to be a form of luxury. Their families cannot really afford to get them trained in affiliated clubs. I think these two years actually helped me to reflect on the importance of research in the field of Comparative Cultural Studies and its related social impacts.

During this phase, martial art training, just like any other form of education, was completely shifted to the online mode. Right after the Covid 19 pandemic affected the world, the ways in which any form of knowledge transfer was taking place definitely underwent certain necessary changes. From March, 2020 to December, 2021, the shift from offline training to online training sessions led to a significant change in the way martial arts have been perceived and practised till date. So during this time span, I tried to develop the main framework of the third chapter of my thesis. The third chapter tries to focus mainly on the ways in which martial arts training and reception have been affected during the global pandemic. 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. One of the main purposes of

the third chapter was therefore, to find out how an increase in digital modes of martial training affected practitioners as well as non-practitioners from different parts of the society. This chapter helped us to understand what the post pandemic scenario of martial arts training will probably be like.

During the work from home phase, I decided to shift to the mountains and stayed at different monasteries and with local communities in Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and North Bengal from June, 2021 to December, 2021. During this phase, I got the opportunity to study the lifestyle of young monks. I learnt more about their modes of martial training and practice and how Buddhism and the Zen lifestyle played a major role in the development of martial arts in the Indian landscape. Meanwhile, I started learning video making and editing because I wanted to document the experience when I was travelling and mainly because some tourism boards wanted me to produce not just written content but audio-visual content for the audience. In December, 2021, I was invited to attend the celebrations in which vibrant cultural traditions were presented. Masked dance forms, martial dance forms and karate were performed. I got a chance to observe how different traditions were interwoven in the Indian context. I learnt more about reception of martial arts and its impact on other forms like yoga. Yoga originated in India and my stay in the mountains made me understand exactly how yoga has gained prominence as an alternative method of fitness training during the last two years. Due to the restrictions, people were not able to carry on with the training at gyms and dojo. For obvious reasons, a parallel method had to be developed. Yoga filled in this gap as it could be easily practised within the confines of a room. It helped practitioners all over the world to gain core strength and expertise. With the increase in importance of yoga as a warm up procedure during martial art training, practitioners have become more aware of the other Indian martial traditions like Thang ta, Kalari and stick fight.

Initially, I had planned to visit Thailand and Japan in 2021 and conduct certain offline surveys related to martial arts practice in academia and beyond but due to the pandemic, international travel plans obviously got cancelled. So I decided to form a questionnaire and circulated the same among 200 participants from different parts of India, Japan, Thailand and Bangladesh. 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, Media Studies, Physical Education and Performing Arts all over the world have been trying to include courses based on healthy modes of living, so as to help individuals boost their immunity, physical and mental well-being. 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. Such knowledge was not just limited to online classrooms of educational institutions but it was made accessible to common people. Digital resources in a way proved to be really efficient for those who can access such resources easily. Another section of society, the one that does 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 learning. The responses to the question set clearly show the divide that took place. Another important part that came to the forefront was the increase in popularity of action based video games like Mortal Combat, Assassin's Creed, Dead or Alive. At a time when young practitioners were not allowed to go out and practise with teammates, they devised their own strategies of online team play and action based video gaming became an important part of the martial culture. Solo forms of practice became more important. Partner work was not practically possible during the pandemic. So in the third chapter, I have tried to study and analyse the effects of the pandemic on martial arts culture, its transmission and factors which can be beneficial in reception in a post-pandemic world. 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 and yoga practice also became more popular among instructors. The third chapter which is completely based on observations related to survey and fieldwork helps us to conclude that there has been an increase in interest in the field of martial art training and alternative forms of fitness in the recent years. 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.

During the preparation of the first draft of the final chapter, I was selected to represent the Indian team in an international championship that was held in Kolkata. Conversations with participants from India, Japan, Thailand, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka 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 sport and art form like karate. 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 can be related to apparently unrelated practices like 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 final chapter of my thesis based on the research 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 ecological realm helped me to find out the connecting links between the first half of this chapter with the second part. The first half of the 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 self defence 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, this chapter has also tried to focus on differences in the modes of training that inevitably took place, due to transnational exchange of knowledge. In order to explain certain parts from this section, I have relied on the field work conducted during training sessions, mainly 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 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 therefore 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 further 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.

Ecological colonialism in this context, as the final chapter has argued, is not entirely the "ecological imperialism" introduced by Alfred Crosby. Crosby's purview in *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900 – 1900* is not only entirely Eurocentric, but also concerned with a very specific form of ecological imperialism where the virgin ecology of a land and its native people are conquered by the introduction of non-native elements – animals, plants, diseases. Crosby, to put it very simply, studies the repercussions of this on the colony itself and the colonised; completely overlooking the fact that a similar process might be at work in the land of the coloniser. To the gardener the finest virtue they can achieve in their profession is of "subtlety", where the meticulously constructed and planned garden looks untouched by human hands – "The ideal for a Japanese gardener, architect, artist or craftsman of the past was to be as invisible in their creations as possible, and to create something that looked like it had always been there. This goal was accomplished by understanding materials deeply, and using them in a way that a person's

hand would be least obvious. Once planted, gardens were meticulously maintained to imitate casual, natural growth.” (Mehta et al, 18). This creates the obvious paradox of the artificial being constructed by the natural for the purpose of telling a narrative that is not overtly visible but begs the viewer to meditate and introspect upon the scene – a meditation that is forced by human hands behind the guise of nature. This paradox takes this form of colonialism even further from Crosby’s theory, because here the natural species inhabiting the space are wiped away to be replaced by those very same native species placed in a different formation or pattern. Therefore one might say that while the gardener who does this pruning and construction has deep spiritual respect for the rocks and trees – to the point of bestowing on them names and a symbolism because Shintoism as an animist religion believes in the spiritual presence that resides within all things, including stones (Mansfield, 15) – they also then take away the autonomy of these very spiritual presences to thrive in their natural environ, by reconstructing that environ, by planting the trees at certain locations, so as to extract the best possible view, strategically placing rocks to narrate a certain Buddhist or Shinto myth, digging ponds at regions where there were none. There is an erasure of the naturally grown asymmetry of Nature to impose on that space a constructed asymmetry that imitates the natural (Mansfield, 49). The *Sakuteiki* and its rules of aesthetics and placement and composition of gardens is borne out of superstition essentially, and the reconstruction of the asymmetry and the space itself in this work is justified by the greater purpose of warding off evil spirits and bringing luck and especially the “evok[ing] [of] nature in its primal form” (Mehta et al, 13-14). Why then have a garden that strives to achieves nature’s “primal form” by erasing the “primal form” itself? Who decides upon the “primal form”: Nature or Man? The natural pre-existing aesthetics the land grew with is re-written to suit the “natural” aesthetics of the people. It begs the question: does respect and admiration for the land negate the blatant colonisation of the land that happens in the name of this respect and aesthetics?

It must not of course be forgotten that this paradox is observed within the land of the coloniser itself and indeed this phenomenon of ecological colonialism at the metropolis is not exclusive to Japan. The great Empire of the West – Great Britain – too exhibits this trait in the landscape gardens of ‘Capability’ Brown and the imitations of the French formal gardens of Versailles where the gardens are constructed over large areas of land in accordance with the currently fashionable stance on aesthetics while they expand in colonial territory by employing the methods of ecological imperialism overseas or by engaging in trade and annexation or outright war which is something shared by Japan in its frontier expansion to the north and campaigns against the native tribes and eventually China till the formation of the short-lived Empire of Japan. The British however do not attribute any spiritual significance to the gardens and its components and the paradox exhibited by Japan is not sustained in this case. One might argue that the land must be exploited (colonised) for survival but such an exploitation serves the purpose of survival. Primitive tribes who hunt and forage for survival take what is needed and no more. It fulfils the very basic needs of food, water, clothing – the psychological needs of Abraham Maslow’s Self Actualization Theory which must be fulfilled before anything else is (Morgan et al, 600-601). In this context, gardens do not fulfil any primitive need but an aesthetic impulse which is entirely spiritual. This paradox is further extended when one realises that these gardens of peace, tranquillity and meditation flourished along with the rise of the samurai and the monastic warriors after the end of the Heian Age. Much of the Zen gardens were part of the monasteries that were the residences of militant monks and that Zen Buddhism was a sect readily accepted by the samurai class who were so essential to territorial expansion of Japan and its unification – especially after the end of the *sengokujidai*. The paradox reaches its height when the *sakura* – so representative of Japan and its gardens – becomes the insignia of the kamikaze soldiers of World War II. Indeed after the

Heian age some of the greatest patrons of landscape gardening and rock gardening have been the warriors – the daimyos who became shogun and their men – especially the three who brought about unification – Oda Nobunaga, Totoyomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. The relationship between gardening and militarism, homebound ecological colonialism and overseas military imperialism – and the Empire of Japan began long before the Emperor Meiji formalised it aggressively – is crucial to the understanding of the paradoxes and complexities Japan embodies. “Since ancient times the Japanese have ranked among the world’s most ferocious warriors, but no other people has given more elaborate attention to courteous conduct or more loving devotion to flowers, poetry and art.” (Leonard, 11)

The trend of incorporating the four seasons in one space is commented upon by several literary critics. Stephen Mansfield writes, “It was during this era that gardeners attempted to both compress natural features of the landscape and to reflect the four seasons in the walled enclosures of their patrons. In spring, court nobles would descend from viewing platforms and pavilions to attend musical recitals, float on barges over the surfaces of heart-shaped ponds or engage in poetry competitions, a tradition that likely derives from China.” (Mansfield, 19) That the court ladies of this extract are surprised by the still flourishing Spring in Murasaki’s garden tells one of the sense of “impermanence” possessed by these people and reflected in their gardens. This followed the Buddhist law of “mujo” or the transience of things, signified by the gravel and sand that regularly need raking and trees that regularly need pruning. (Mansfield, 43; Nitschke, 46). The ponds were, Nitschke notes, meant to “mirror the symmetry of temple architecture” (47), a symmetry not available to the garden itself which is representative of the impermanent. Obedience of this law, it would seem, becomes justification of the ecological colonialism practiced. Crafting of a man-made natural garden (Nitschke, 10) seems to be man’s way of trying to exercise control over transience and impose a permanence by digging and pruning. This sense of transience is perhaps best

embodied by the cherry blossom (*sakura*) which only bloom for a short while and in *Genji* gains especial poignancy with Murasaki's death. In the Heian age the sakura as a symbol is young yet – the ume or the plum blossom of China is still the dominant flower – but cherry blossom viewing festivals imply that its fragility had already made an impression on these deeply superstitious people, though it reaches its full potential perhaps with World War II. The rock gardens of Zen monasteries served the function of nudging people to this realization by evoking tranquillity and minimalism and exhibiting nature in miniature. One might argue however, that the degree of perfection exercised in these gardens not only establish them as spaces of ecological colonialism – the irony of replacing water with sand to represent water cannot be missed – but also, by the use of rocks which can potentially last forever and are therefore not subject to notions of transience, the gardens – ironically enough – betray a strong effort to convince oneself of worldly permanence. As Mansfield notes, “Much is written about Japan's culture of impermanence, but many stone garden designs have endured for centuries, allowing the original work and intentions of the designer to achieve a more lasting legacy. Conversely, any shortcomings in the design will also endure.” (61). In a way therefore, the gardens have the last laugh. Meant to evoke contemplations of “*maya*”, the gardens, some of them centuries old, like those of the Ryoan-ji temple, embody a paradox instead. Meant to exude ideas of impermanence, they have become permanent. For the samurai however, these ideas held great currency, as contemplations of the fragility and illusion of things assisted their own resolve and ethics of *bushido*. Zen Buddhism and its gardens which were made for meditation and contemplation assisted their belief in dying in war for honour all the more. Samurai and cherry blossoms, which, because they, unlike rocks, are truly fragile and impermanent and are better suited to the postulations of Zen Buddhism, have become an enduring image of Japanese culture. In discussing this appropriation of the cherry blossom as a symbol for the Japanese soul, Ohnuki-Tierney goes back to the Heian age

when the *sakurawas* pitted against the *ume* and she notes that this appreciation occurred only when the Japanese recognised the Chinese as they Other (249). Indeed, in its history, everytime Japan has recognised a foreign threat to itself, it has closed its ranks – best seen in the isolation of the Edo period during which time it developed the traditions which make it uniquely Japanese. It leads one to think consider that this sense of nationalism that has grown throughout its history is perhaps connected with the gardens which are – for all their Chinese influences – uniquely Japanese. In this, it unifies a distinctive form of ecological colonialism and Crosby’s ecological imperialism. The soil and nature of Japan will remain colonised; it will only reach a postcolonial state when the human race is extinct and it has freedom to grow again.

MurasakiShikibu in her Diary had related an incident when another lady-in-waiting brought her some chrysanthemum dew spent specially by Michinaga’s wife “to wipe old age” away. (Bowring, 7). Several entries later, looking out into the garden at the new chrysanthemums , she ponders “old age might indeed be conquered” (ibid, 22). Bowring comments on the belief of chrysanthemum dew being associated with rejuvenation and longevity (ibid, 7). It seems therefore that it is not by accident that the Imperial Throne of Japan, the seat of the world’s longest unbroken line of royal male descent, is called the Chrysanthemum throne. The Imperial family always carry the chrysanthemum with them, and one cannot help but wonder: is this too an instance of a more metaphysical kind of ecological colonialism? By imposing on a flower the burden of symbolism, tradition and history?

The connection between the warrior and the garden continued, only the garden was diminished, represented in a single flower of the sakura tree, which Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney studies at length in *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms and Nationalism*. Ohnuki-Tierney focuses on the justification of sending young men as sacrificial lambs during World War II – the *kamikaze* soldiers – that imposes on them the idea of the salvation of the Japanese soul. She

writes, “O’*nishiTakijirō*, a navy vice-admiral, [who] invented the *tokkōtai* (kamikaze) operations...thought the Japanese soul, which had been built up to possess a unique strength to face death without hesitation, was the only means available for the Japanese to bring about a miracle when the homeland was surrounded by American aircraft carriers...” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 3 – 4). In her analysis, she critiques the ideal of *pro patria mori* that was adopted by the government and the difference of thought – while the soldiers died for country, for the government they die for imperial agenda – the Emperor being equated to father. (ibid, 7). In this, the old code of honour of the samurai was reworked and appropriated for an imperialist purpose.

“It was at this time that Nitobe*Inazō*, a devout Christian who worked for international peace at the League of Nations, refashioned the concept of the “warrior’s way,” or *bushidō*. His book, published originally in English in Philadelphia in 1899, opens with this statement: “Chivalry [his translation of *bushidō*] is a flower no less indigenous to the soil of Japan than its emblem, the cherry blossom.” With the adoption of universal conscription in 1872, the government extended “the Japanese soul,” which “enabled” them to die, or fall like cherry blossoms, for the emperor, from warriors alone to all Japanese males...The “equal right” to the Japanese soul and, consequently, to death was aestheticized by the symbolism of cherry blossoms, which successive governments used as the master trope to encourage soldiers to fight to death. An eco-critical study of martial art studies in Japan can help us to understand the ways in which aesthetics and performance are inter-related with martial art studies. Even in India, the cultural transmission of martial art studies has been linked with the aesthetics.

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.

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.

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.

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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.

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.

Comparative methodology introduces the idea of ‘world literature’ and ‘global dynamics’ in the context of ‘globalectics’.

A comparatist is hardly in a position to exercise any aesthetic judgment in choosing the best works in all languages of the world. He is concerned mainly with the relationships, the resemblances and differences between national literatures; with their convergences and divergences. He has to work within a rigorous frame work to avoid subjective predilections and personal preferences. But at the same time he wants to arrive at a certain general understanding of literary activities of man and to help create a universal poetics. Goethe wanted the common reader to come out of the narrow confines of his languages and geography and to enjoy the finest achievements of man.

The comparatist also wants to come out of the confines of language and geography, but not so much to identify the best in all literatures as to understand the relationships between literatures in their totality”. (Das, p.96)

Hybridity, according to Homi Bhaba, is the ‘third space’ which has the ability to displace the constituting elements and histories and also has the power to give rise to newer structures with new meanings. Cultural hybridity has the ability to set up new connotations, new ways of representation of things which are different from familiar ones. The inter-lingual translation, for instance, represents this cultural hybridity. The East and the West are coming closer to each other, forgetting their differences and trying to imbibe the best from all cultures and practices.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said has defined ‘culture’ as:

All those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure. Included, of course, are both the popular stock of lore about distant parts of the world and specialized knowledge available in such learned disciplines” and as “a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought.

The growth of multi-lingual situations, migrations of people from one country to another has created awareness of literatures of other countries.

“In reality, the postcolonial is not simply located in the third world. Literally rooted in the inter textuality of products from all corners of the globe, its Universalist tendency is inherent in the very relationship to historical colonialism...” (Thiong’o, p. 55)

The domain of Martial Art Studies can be identified with stasis, change and safety; leaving the realm is identified with danger and return to the realm is an acceptance of the rules and constrictions of the realm. The creation of new meanings through the third space allows one to accept cultural hybridity as a progressive method in the present day and one return to the varied ways of representation and meaning when one realizes the fact that such hybridity in a way promotes regional culture on a global scale. In accordance with the polysystem theory in translation, it has become extremely significant to explore varied texts along with their contexts and cultures in which they originate.

The world has progressed and the once colonized people have taken over the colonizers at an alarming rate and they want their voices to be heard, they want to be the harbingers of a new order in which their narratives of social formation and cultural roots will attain the same importance as that of the powers which were once considered superior. These powers which had once colonized nations and introduced the process of social stratification also banned the study and practice of martial arts, in order to keep rebel nationalists in check. In the present era of globalization, the popularity of martial arts and alternative forms of physical fitness like yoga has helped us to understand the importance of implementing comparative cultural methodology, to analyse the process of reception, transmission and subject formation. After the process of decolonization, literature and cultural practices have crossed borders and are practised all over the world in the ‘post-colonial’ and ‘neo-colonial’ (Loomba, p.7-8) perspectives.

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