

September 12, 2013

Grandmaster in the Mountains

In the old days, there was a smart, talented, strong man who was a good martial artist. So good that he decided that he was great, but still wanted to learn more. He heard of an Old Grandmaster that lived many miles away high on a mountain, in a temple deep within. He decided to set out to find the Master so he walked many miles to reach the mountain, then climbed the face of the mountain for two days before finally finding the temple and the Grandmaster. He bowed to the Grandmaster and told him he had heard of his good reputation, that he was a great teacher and that he had a great deal of wisdom. He told him how good he is but he would still learn something from him and wanted him to teach him. The Grandmaster knowingly stared at him for a long time, then asked, "You are really ready to learn, you are sure you want to learn?" and of course the man said "Yes, I am ready!"

The Grandmaster decided to allow the man in to the temple and gave him his first assignment. He said, "I will take you in. Go with these disciples. It is winter time and we need you to go out to gather sticks, twigs, leaves and wood for heating the temple and to cook for all the people". The man agreed.

The man did his job diligently for 10 days, 20 days, and then after 30 days the Grandmaster had not yet called to teach him. He became impatient and curious. His mind began to fill with questions, "Is this a crazy old man that knows nothing?", "Will he ever call on me?" His desire to learn led him to resolve to continue doing his duty for another 30 days to wait and see what happened.

Another 30 days passed without the teacher calling on him, all the time he had been gathering wood, making fires to warm the temple and cooking for the disciples. He got up the next morning and was very disappointed, he was angry and felt cheated. Deciding to leave, he packed his things and began his descent down the mountain. In the distance he could hear someone repeatedly calling his name. "Mr. Lee! Mr. Lee!" In his anger he kept descending, not turning back. The calling continued "Mr. Lee! Mr. Lee!" Finally he turned around to see it was the Grandmaster calling his name. He asked "Are you going home?" "Yes I am!" he replied.

The Grandmaster asked "Is this what you are looking for? I have what you are looking for right here". The man could not see it. He asked "Where? I don't see anything". The Grandmaster replied, "I have it here in my hand. I'm going to throw it away, you must catch it! Ready?!" The Grandmaster opened his closed fist and threw in Mr. Lee's direction but he saw nothing, like he threw air. He looked around and saw nothing, then he began to think, to concentrate on the situation. He soon had a realization. He walked back up the mountain to the Grandmaster and bowed. After that time, the Grandmaster took him in and he began to study.

The Grandmaster was checking humbleness, his patience and his attitude. He was checking to see if he would earn his trust. What he threw away was nothing because it was what Mr. Lee already had. Good basic fundamentals. Anyone with good fundamentals is already a high level student. Those who do extremely difficult techniques, breaking, bending bars across their backs and such does not mean you are a good martial artist. Your fundamentals do.

When your teacher knows that you are ready in mind and body, your teacher will teach you your requirements. Don't ask or hurry things along. It may take a short time, it may take a long time or it may not happen at all. Your teacher knows what you need and will teach you accordingly.

Be patient, be humble, work on your fundamentals, work on your focus, be sincere and courteous. You will become a good martial artist.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Soo', written in a cursive style.

Grandmaster Kim Soo
Founder Chayon-Ryu International Martial Arts Association

