

# CHA YON RYU



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Teaching Observations with Grandmaster Kim Soo

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## **Cha Yon Ryu – A lifetime of study**

### Always a Student

Due to recent inclement Houston weather, Grand Master Kim Soo (“GMKS”) taught a Saturday class that was unusually small. Consequently, the five students benefitted from effectively having a private lesson with GMKS.

During this class, GMKS had each black belt individually demonstrate basic form number one. The other students sat next to GMKS and were asked to judge the demonstrator. When it was my turn to demonstrate, GMKS mentioned that he noticed (via a recent video of another class) an issue with my basic form number one and it was the other student’s job to observe and comment on what they saw. While there were several good comments they were not what GMKS noticed. He proceeded to comment that I had developed a bad habit of turning, looking and then executing my block. In other words, it was not the natural way. As a fifth degree black belt, this was humbling and enlightening. Humbling because I was surrounded by other students with a proverbial bright light shining on one of my mistakes. Enlightening because I was given the chance to recognize and correct a fundamental problem. With a few repetitions, I figured out what GMKS had noticed and with a few more repetitions, I was able to correct this issue and improve my foundation.

I find the more I train in Cha Yon Ryu (“CYR”) the more I am at peace with myself and my surroundings. Like many students, I began my martial arts career with a focus on self-defense and physical training. However, the more I study and research the more I appreciate the CYR system and its rich heritage. GMKS is constantly reminding his students about his teachers and the importance they had on his training and teaching. I find that with only a small amount of effort and research, my eyes are opened for a much deeper meaning of the CYR system and its tenets. GMKS has also reminded his students often that we can learn and practice CYR at any age. The system is a lifelong system in that we are always students with more to learn.

This reminds me to focus on the three stages of martial arts training – physical, philosophical and application. GMKS wrote an article on the stages of training in 1995, noting that most students quit training after a few years due to their instructors only understanding and teaching the first stage – physical training. GMKS stated that the second stage, or philosophical, includes breathing and meditation techniques to gain wisdom and strengthen willpower. This is where GMKS has seen the creation of a positive attitude, improved confidence and self-esteem, leadership skills, control and responsibility for one’s actions. The third stage, application, is where the student’s martial arts training is incorporated into every daily life. Mu Do In is an enlightened person who understands the true value of martial arts training. It is through my research, training and reflection that I appreciate GMKS and CYR even more. I suppose that is how life is meant to be, a circle from birth to death, with fulfillment and purpose hopefully found in between. I now understand that GMKS wants each student to find ‘themselves,’ finding his or her personal potential. To apply how to use one’s body, mind and training to improve your life is the true purpose of CYR. Understanding foundational principles and applying them is the core of CYR. Being reminded to observe, correct and improve one’s foundations is also the core of CYR. As GMKS reminds his students, the stripes on one’s black belt only mean patience. The

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student of CYR understands that this is a life-long journey to personal enlightenment. Different and sometimes repetitious struggles are part of this journey.

### Summary

I understand the importance of patience through my martial arts studies. The more I learn, the more I realize there is to learn. Comprehending the importance to question ideas and concepts that I am unfamiliar with and then meditating and working out their true meaning until I am able to figure out a solution is one of the basic tenets of a good student. Grand Master Kim Soo points out that each stripe on his black belt does not reflect how much better he is than others or how much more he knows; rather it exemplifies his trials and tribulations of more than 50 years of learning and teaching. It signifies his In, or patience, which has led to his current level of enlightenment (Nam). GMKS has reminded me recently that Cha Yon Ryu strives to teach based on the following methodology – "do not drink from a hose, rather give just enough to ponder, rethink, watch and learn." I appreciate that GMKS continues to teach and cares so much about his students. His recent input most certainly helped with my In and Nam.