

# The Martial Arts

(from *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, Harvest House, 1996)

## Info At a Glance:

**Description:** The martial arts are systems of physical discipline stressing the control of mind and body for self-defense, health, physical conditioning and enlightenment.

**Founder:** Different practices have different founders. For example, Tai Chi Chuan originated with Chang San-Fen, in fourteenth century China. China is often considered the dominant wellspring for the ideas and practices that have shaped martial arts practices. India and Japan have also contributed to their development.

**How do they claim to work?** The martial arts claim to work by unifying mind, spirit, and body chiefly through meditation and physical discipline. In Eastern forms this allegedly helps to regulate the flow of mystical energy throughout the body (*ki* in Japanese; *chi* in Chinese) and to enable one to attain the state of mind-body oneness. Both of these qualities are said to be important to effective performance of self-defense techniques or spiritual enlightenment. Nonreligious forms of the martial arts can be found when the basic stress is strictly upon physical development. Although, even when they are considered as regimens of physical development only, they can be adapted to any religion.

**Examples of occult potential.** Occult meditation, development of psychic powers, spiritism.

**Major problem.** People who practice a martial arts program primarily for physical purposes can still be converted to its underlying religious philosophy. Because most methods incorporate Eastern teachings and techniques, the martial arts are easy doorways into Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other non-Christian religions.

**Biblical/Christian evaluation.** Any programs having Eastern or occult beliefs or methods should be avoided; however, the truly non-religious martial arts program may, in some cases, prove profitable. This is not to endorse all martial arts, nor is it to say non-religious forms can be developed in every system. Even among Christian practitioners it is easy to become sidetracked into Eastern mysticism and to compromise or hinder spiritual growth in Christ. And we do not wish to ignore the issues involved when a person is converted to Christian faith. Such a person may find it essential to forsake association with the martial arts as a requirement of spiritual growth.

**Potential dangers.** Occult influences and physical hazards resulting from martial arts techniques.

