

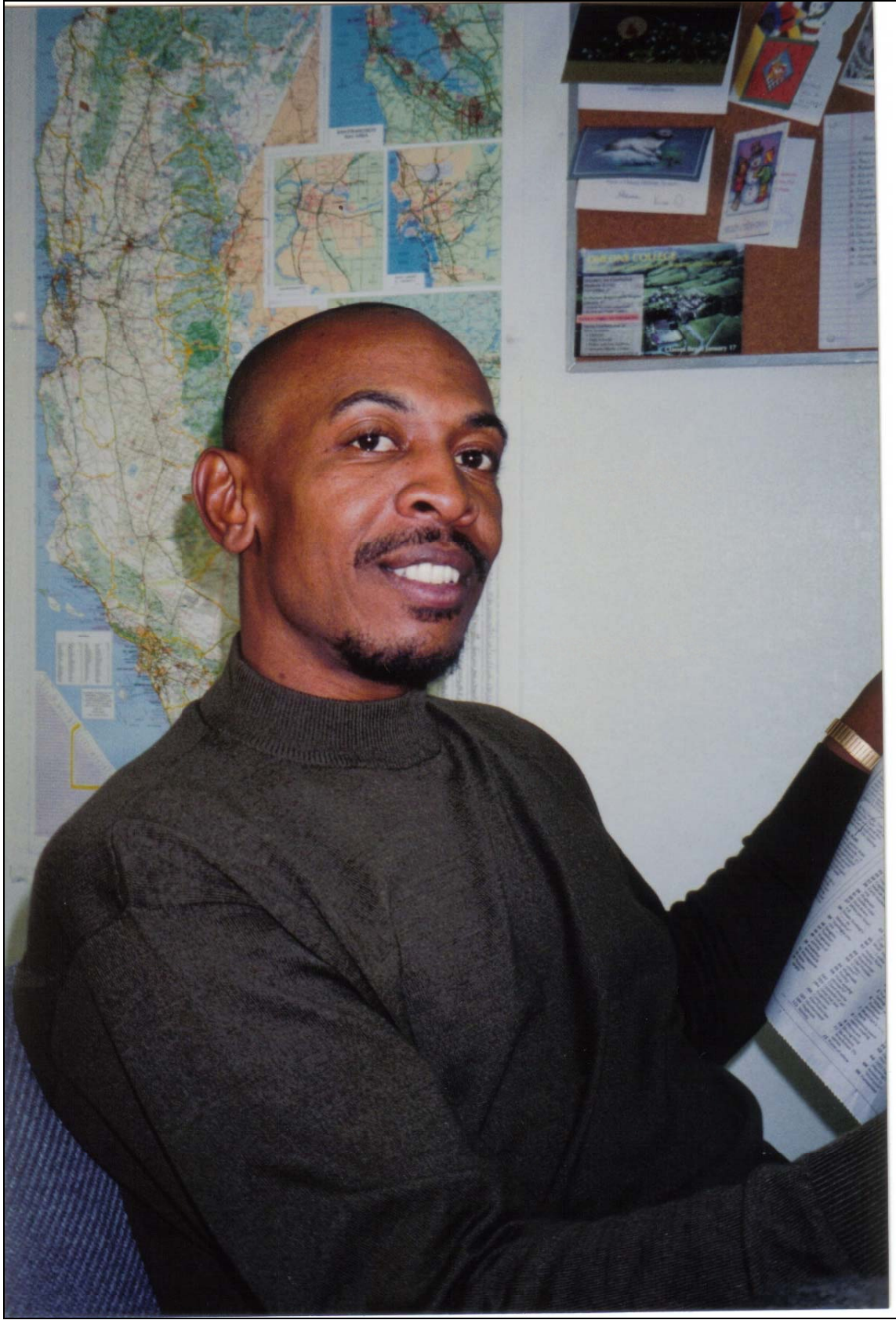
F I R S T  
**唐  
手道**  
TANG SOO DO  
OF FREMONT

HE IS...



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## **...THE MODERN DAY YOGI**

As I entered through the glass tinted door marked with exotic oriental signs and pictorial descriptions of fascinating martial art kicks, I breathed deeply, that one final breath reassuring myself that while I was nervous coming into this new and unknown place of practice, it was still a sense of homecoming. One step through the door and the contrast was shockingly obvious.

The fierce heat of the blazing California sun was trying single mindedly to burn through the asphalt on the road. The sound of the fire truck was cutting through the monotonous sounds of the street. The acrid smell of smoke from neighboring restaurants was burning through the dry air. There were people walking listlessly, tired defeated faces were sitting at the bus stop, grateful for the shelter overhead and angry at the prolonged delay. Faces belonging to people bravely bearing the mark of the overworked and the underpaid in their souls, it was indignant anger. Struggling to carry with some sense of dignity their personal accounts of conflict with agitated employers, irritated bank tellers, rising rentals and seemingly ungrateful children.

One breath of the air outside and the entire outside stood naked exposing its soul. One step inside and I'd found my mystic refuge.

The dark tinted glass concealed the mysteries of a world defined broadly as the Korean Martial Arts of Tang Soo Do. A practice that is over two thousand years old. An art crafted precisely, honed meticulously, practiced daily and handed across the oceans and down the generations. Preserved, unchanged and pure. Conservative to the practice and comforting to the practitioner. Did I get a sense of all that, just coming through the door?

What I did feel was instantly comfortable. It took a few moments coming in to adjust to the relative darkness inside the dojang. The air was cool against my face and the sound of the water trickling gently over what seemed like stones, felt soothing. The surroundings were sparse and clean. There was a faint smell of vanilla or perhaps lavender or just plain soap that seemed to register automatically as light. And from behind a large gray desk and a small revolving chair, a very large man came out to greet me. Skin color – dark, manner – almost Asian, speech – slow, energy – friendly. Six feet tall and then some, this bald headed man, instructor in the martial arts would normally have intimidated me somewhat. And yet it was his kind manner that was strangely reassuring.

What followed is bit of a blur. A series of questions aimed at finding out more about me and my reasons for wanting to study the marital arts. And while I went on some kind of automatic mode in answering his questions I had a curious parallel sense of being back home. There used to be this temple in India that I used to go, to hide out in. The smell of sandalwood incense would fill the air and the floors were cool white marble. The chants in the temple were soft and rhythmic and I would easily spend an hour or two listening to the men and women read from ancient Indian scriptures. I'd spend time at the steps of the

temple, by the foot of the large marble elephant adorning the entrance, stare at the rose and tulsi plants and the abundant fruit trees in the temple garden. It had been two years since I'd been to this temple and yet suddenly in the middle of a question answer session, with a seeming stranger, that's all I could think of.

I heard all these questions, "what does martial arts mean to you", "why Tang Soo Do", "what do you want out of your life", "how do you see martial arts adding to your life"...and as I answered them, little did I know that I was being taken through the 'interview process', the cornerstone of the philosophy of Master David Bell. The interview process is a fact-finding mission, an honest soul-bearing experience that makes the years to follow simpler. It makes clear what you as student are bringing into the school by way of attitude and expectation. It sets the backdrop against which each person understands his or her role – Student and Master. It is the formula that the school runs on. I got through, I was in.

In the months and years to come I was to learn many valuable lessons and they weren't all to do with kicks and punches, blocks and attacks. They were more what I'd call life-lessons. Little trips into who I am, or why I am who I am.

In attempting to capture the formula of the school I would have to capture the formula of the person that makes the school. For as ancient and strong as the art of Tang Soo Do may be, it is only as strong as its interpreter and in this case it's Instructor. To do this I have to rely on the experiences of my own life, my experiences within the school and recount stories narrated to me by other students, about other students and consequently the life experiences of our Instructor. And in these stories, personal accounts, old tales, and lessons learnt, lie the 'Formulas' of the First Tang Soo Do of Fremont, CA.

### **Why record these Formulas?**

One of the most valuable lessons that I have picked up at the school and one of Master Bell's often-repeated philosophies is that 'Life can essentially be as simple or as complicated as we make it.'

And in truth if you ask the common student of martial arts in the United States or anywhere else in the world, any student over the age of 15...he or she will tell you that they want the training to reduce the stress in their lives. This being the case it would make logical sense to conclude that through the physical, mental and spiritual rigors of martial arts training, we seek to weed out the factors that contribute to the composite stress that we are overwhelmed with.

The process of coming to a place of peace begins with an identification of what would be:

- 1) the definition of peace to each individual.
- 2) the road to that peaceful place.
- 3) the stress causing roadblocks on that path to peace.
- 4) the recurring behavior patterns leading to failure.
- 5) an honest acceptance of a need for change.
- 6) a plan to bring about changes in hitherto established patterns of behavior.
- 7) an honest wholehearted willingness to stick to the plan.
- 8) an acceptance of the need to monitor regularly the success along the new plan.
- 9) a humble approach to the healthy criticism and opinions offered along the way.

10) a patient and loving attitude towards oneself on this road to ones own place of peace.

The importance of a simple life cannot be overstressed. While most people want a simpler life we are stumped by our own lives. By the magnitude of our commitments, by how unwieldy and unmanageable our lives have become. With any real desire for change comes the need for Formulas that first expose our weaknesses and then rebuild us from within.

Consider for example:

Why do people buy houses so large and so expensive that they clearly can't afford it?

Why do people care so much for external validation?

Why do we shop when we are depressed?

Why do we want so many thing that we can't use in the first place?

Why do we go on crash diets and then wonder how our children become anorexic?

Why do we throw money at a problem and hope it goes away?

Why do we live a loveless life and expect to teach our children to love?

Why do we struggle with our own discipline and then expect our children to follow a structure?

These are just a few of the makings for a modern day recipe for stress and dissatisfaction. This is what most people come in with, hoping the ancient mystic path of martial arts will help you find a new love for your dead end job or rekindle a lost love for ones own life.

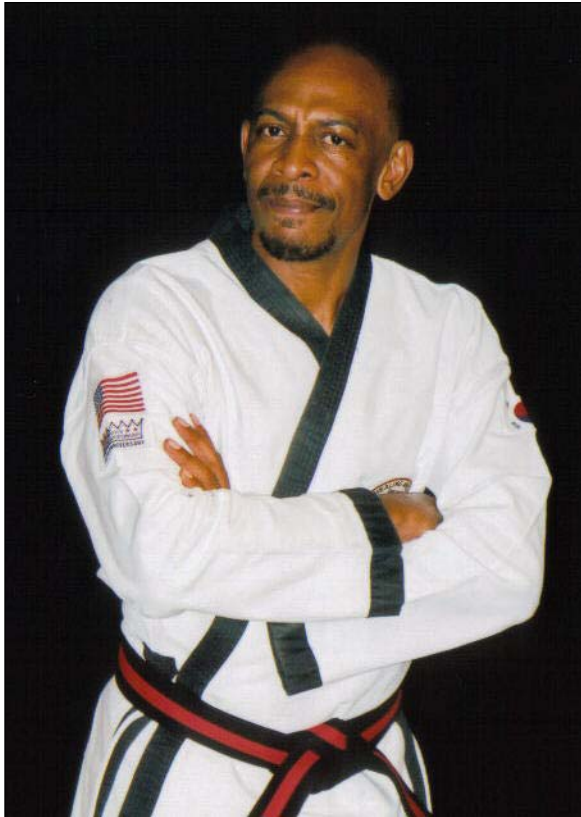
These are the stories I've heard many times over in class over the years and I have brought my own share of confusion to the mix. Thirty years of personal experience in Tang Soo Do and eleven years as an instructor in the martial arts has taken Master Bell from the days of a street fighting style to a more scientific and deadlier fight. He has gone from being a 17 year old novice white belt in South Carolina to a seasoned 50 year old Master instructor in California; from fighting with the sheer luxury of speed and strength that comes with youth to a more technical and yet more spiritual style that comes with maturity. This long and interesting road that Master Bell has traveled has brought an evolution of more than just his skill level in the ring. Along the way he's spent time with excellent masters. His time with Master Leak who was his first instructor introduced him to martial arts and gave to him his single longest sustaining relationship – with Tang Soo Do. With Master Khalid in Phoenix he learned to fine-tune his skill as a technician and undefeated fighter. With Master Waller (under whom he never physically trained) he learned all that he would need as studio owner and as an Instructor. With Master Zhao he learned to channel years of finely disciplined and tuned energy, into pathways for healing and rejuvenation.

Eleven years, 300 families, 16 racial ethnic backgrounds, and 30 something blackbelts later, Master Bell has a level of skill with understanding people that is hard to explain. It is the sum total of this experience that allows for a system of Formulas that makes life simpler as per our own need for it.

We have a culture in our school and this is in keeping with good martial arts schools world over and it is that of Character Development. Just as we move from White Belt

toward the ultimate goal of all martial artists, that of the Masters' Belt, we move with a novice understanding of ourselves to not just complete understanding of ourselves but also a love and understanding of others. The life of a Black Belt is characterized by the following qualities. Discipline of ones own mind, structure to ones day, thought before action, fearlessness, high character and community service.

"How do you see me?" I have, along with every other student in the school, been asked



this question by my instructor, from time to time. I have to admit my responses we always simple and to the point, but I did think for a long time that it was a rather strange question to ask about oneself. What was the message behind the question? Wasn't the answer only too obvious; what was I to learn from this question answer exercise? Eventually it was explained and I had to agree; it was quite clear actually. We'd all take our time and when it was our turn we'd answer; strong and disciplined, controlled and measured, bold and politically incorrect, gets things done, always calm....

The answers were always the same and it was interesting when Master Bell said, that the quality we mentioned was probably the quality we most admired and the quality we're most likely to pick up.

Understanding Master Bell and the formula he teaches and applies to his own

life is an interesting study for any Black Belt student to undertake. To speed things along this black belt understanding of a simpler and higher path to life he asked me to approach this writing exercise with attempting to answer this question:

*How would you categorize me?*

How would you categorize someone who has the experience he does and doesn't want glib answers like Teacher or Instructor? I guess I have to dig deep for this one.

Knowing what I do through my life experiences, this is what I have come to believe. Each of us is given special gifts. And these gifts or special qualities make us different from one another. It's what makes us who we are. These qualities can neither be bought nor sold. They are inherent to each of us at the moment of our conception, or acquired later in life. And sometimes these qualities attain a size and proportion that is so large that we are then, defined by them. We all know of great singers, athletes and performers

and we all wonder “what else could they be, but who they are?” Our lives take on a momentum and direction that is hard to explain and you live out your destiny. And this isn’t to say that we are mere puppets of Fate. Pre-determination is just the most likely direction that our lives could take, based on our obvious talents. If you had to examine this on a spiritual level these could be explained as real gifts. These gifts are not for us or for our personal benefits. They are for our families and communities. Each of us is to develop them to our fullest potential, and to share them productively. Moreover, this could even be seen as a duty, to be conducted with honor and before personal gain. In applying this approach to ourselves and the people around us, I could perhaps answer Master Bell’s question with more sureness. In his case his specialty is his ability to see clearly and teach the life art of seeing clearly. In urban terminology it would be called “being real”. But it is his ability to teach that, that sets him apart.

### **Who is He?**

He is son, father, brother, grandfather and friend. His love of music kept him firmly entrenched in the disco era, club scene of 1970’s America. Born in the deep South, southern Baptist and black, he often says his life could have gone the predetermined path of predictability, whereby he would have married and settled into a system that lets you live life along a straight line not because the road is narrow but because you’d be accustomed to wearing blinkers. It could have been wasted also by way of anger, as did the lives of a few people he knew well - people who felt victimized by a system that is still regarded as racist and a system that struggles for respectability. It could have been average had he stayed in the world of corporate politics that understands only the law of the dollar and he even today deems himself totally unsuitable for that game.



He is the instructor we all know him to be. What else could he be? At age 49 he has two grown daughters and a grand daughter. He is keenly sensitive to helping understand and

empowering minority communities in the city. He trains students in a manner that is both conservative and yet unconventional. He has very little respect for political correctness and even lesser fear of societal dogmas. He is aggressive in his pursuit if he believes it to be true, he is intolerant of challenge if he believes it to be egotistical. He believes in kindness and will reach out to even the most hopeless of causes. He is patient in the face of foolishness and quick to call a lie to the face of a liar. All of these qualities make him a teacher par excellence.

And yet he is not entirely sure if the definition 'Instructor' or the tag 'Teacher' applies correctly in his case. And this comes from a sense of sureness that there must be an appropriate definition out there. Something that can explain the curious transformations in his ability to stretch the limits of what his mind and body are capable of at 50 that were impossible at 20. He looks to find some previous example of a person that followed a similar path and went from 'disco dynamite' to 'master', from a world of excesses in partying, alcohol and women to one of yoga and chi kung and soymilk. He has literally gone from one side of the fence to the other. He sees his role now more as moral protector and advisor to the many that study in his school. He lends himself and his energy to helping heal adults with hurt backs, acid reflux disease and early stages of cancer. He deals with children branded as having ADD and others with asthma and mild cerebral palsy. He is a constant help-line to stressed students reaching out for advice to deal with the rigorous demands of university. Doling out dollops of much needed insights on everything from marriage to motherhood, from intervening in abusive situations to dealing with divorce ...

He keeps his own life very simple and uncomplicated and this is not for lack of complex and complicated situations. His life as he says is like anyone else's; its one part work, one part emotion and big part drama. It is not because he lacks complex life situations, he stays calm in spite of it. And that makes him Master.

### **A Life of Service**

In Master Bell's quest to find a true definition for his life you could look to various spheres of spirituality for answers.

If you looked into the world of martial arts words like Ninja and Samurai translate into English as 'one who serves'. And while to the average reader, words like Ninja and Samurai conjure up images of people fighting each other for money or honor, in truth they were a class of people committed to higher standards of living. Ninja or Samurai as they were called, pledged a life of service to their communities. They recognized that their beings were apportioned into three entities -- their bodies, minds, and spirits. In order to serve to their highest capacity, the Ninja or Samurai spent a lifetime developing each entity.





In training their bodies, they recognized that at least part of their service was for national defense. In training their minds, they learned tactics and strategy. They developed a code of conduct and continuously developed the self-discipline needed for their way of life. They trained their spirits. They developed the indomitable spirit to serve till their very end. Am I saying my Instructor is a Ninja? Am I calling him a Samurai? I would sound facetious at least and fevered at worst. Owing to our current preoccupation with Hollywood, words like

Ninja and Samurai have come to be very one-dimensional and it would be tantamount to social suicide to call anyone a Samurai in today's terms. If your area were religion you would exercise great caution before you called someone a saint or a martyr lest you were willing to draw upon yourself, the onus of providing proof of miracles and other such fantastic requirements. You would also draw the attention of the entire Christian world and the wrath of the Papal seat at the Vatican. Similar to that blasphemy, I would find it hard to justify attributing terms like Samurai to my Master Instructor even though Master Bell seems to have dedicated himself, his time and energy towards his extended community of students and their families and friends. It is my lack of in-depth knowledge of the lifestyle and character requirements of such a group that's banded together as Ninjas and Samurai and the corruption of the meanings of words themselves that nullifies that option. I can therefore not look towards the ancient examples within Martial Arts to explain the life-choices of Master David Bell.

If I looked into the world of Energy Healing and Chi Kung I could describe him as a healer, or Chi Kung practitioner or Chi Kung student and Chi Kung Master. He is all of these things. He was identified by his instructor Master Zhao, as possessing a very powerful and strong Chi aura and this was when he wasn't even his student. Master Bell was visiting along with another master from the martial arts. Since that accidental meeting with Master Zhao who suggested that he begin training, Master Bell hasn't looked back. He is now at a place where he trains every single day and finds that everyday irritations like headaches and muscle cramps don't instantly call for medication. I have had personal experience in this, seeing him treat with his extensive knowledge of

pressure points and meridian lines, injured hamstrings, swollen ligaments, headaches, hives, sudden palpitations, nausea...



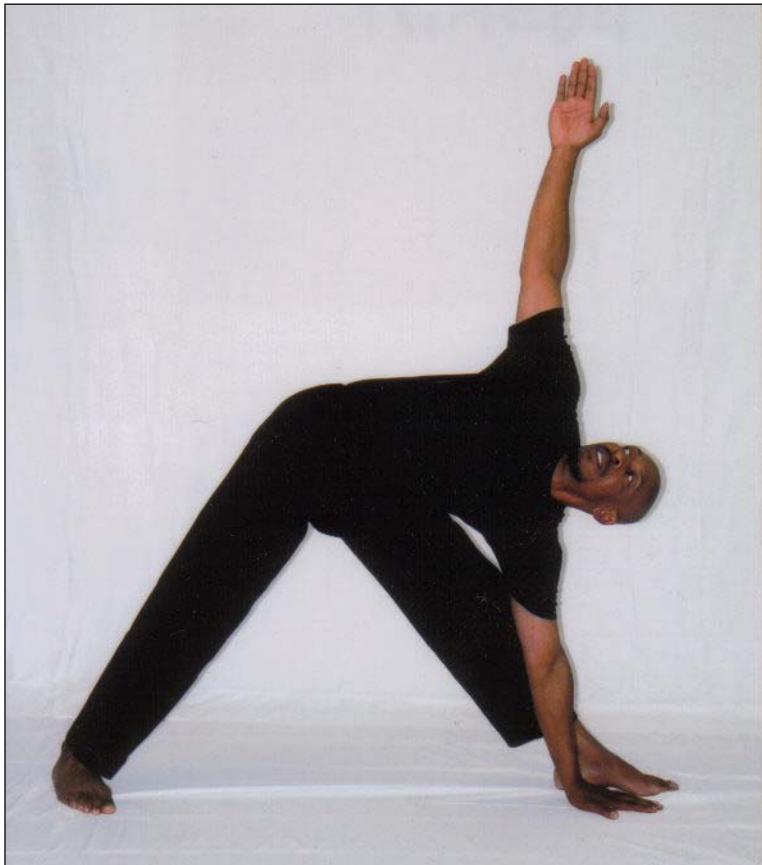
**How would you categorize me?**

I have spent the last few years training in Tang Soo Do and Chi Kung and as all my seniors before me; I am now faced with the black belt assignment of giving meaning to the life of a master instructor. After months of evasive answers and unsure attempts at this definition I feel relatively confident that I can come to some definition of his choices, his lifestyle and his approach. And even though he has more stripes as a black belt, more recognition as a Master and more experience as a Chi Kung healer, I will go on to call him a Yogi. This may come as a relative surprise to those who know him primarily as an exponent of kicks and punches. Yogi? Why Yogi? Could it be that I call him a yogi because I

am Indian and I find it easier to apply an Indian definition to his chosen lifestyle? Perhaps. And I would like to add here that calling him a yogi takes nothing away from his identity from within Tang Soo Do and his relationship with Chi Kung. To be defined a Yogi truly lends room for defining all aspects of his life. His training and teaching of the martial arts, his practice of energy healing, his training in hatha yoga and his meditation practice.

There is much talk of yoga these days. World over there is a rising trend in the practice of Yoga, more studios, more yoga getaways, more variations...And as with everything else

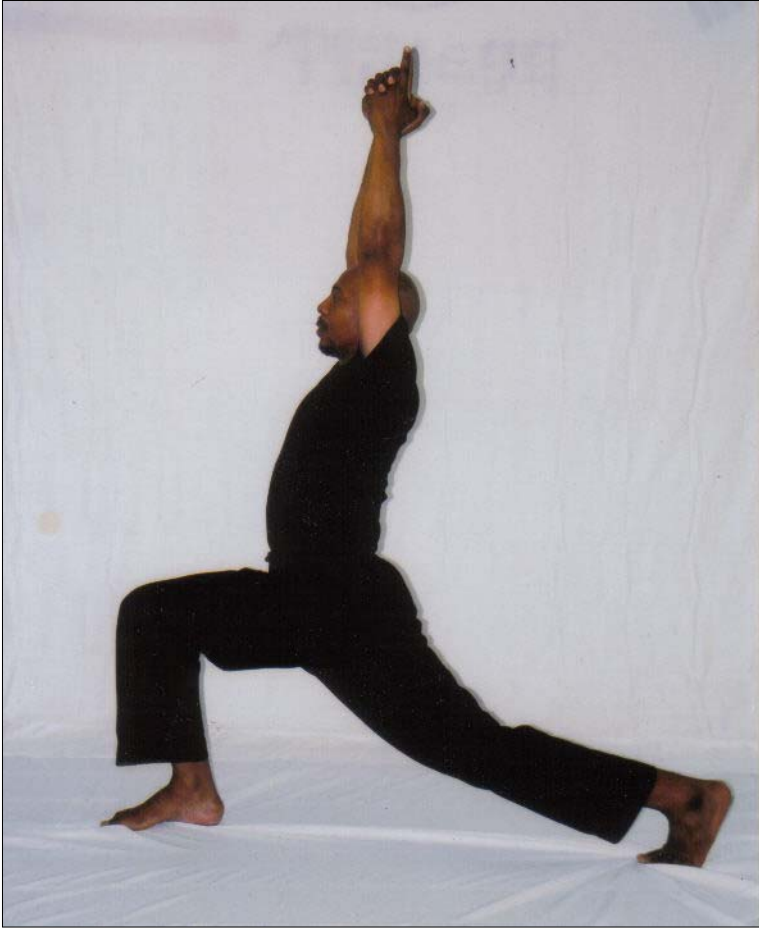
that falls under the onslaught of marketing and consumerism, there is very little left of the true meaning of the essence of the art. Ashtanga Yoga, Vasantha yoga; is BKS Iyengar's yoga the best method? As discussion groups vie over the meaning of Kripalu Yoga and over the advantages and disadvantages of the temperature in the studios of Bikrama Yoga, Power Yoga has muscled its way into the spiritual pathways of yogic training. What most of the world is consumed by and teaches is little more than a series of Yogic postures or asanas. According to true Vedanta, which is the root of all Yoga, the essence of all science and religion is the knowledge of oneself and ones deeper nature as pure consciousness transcending all time, space and material embodiment.



Simply put, the term Yoga means 'union' in Sanskrit. And consequently Yoga provides a spiritual connection between the mind body and spirit.

The actual physiological, medical, emotional and spiritual benefits are infact so comprehensive that any attempt to represent an all-inclusive list of benefits here, would be a serious injustice. What can be said that would be hard to dispute, is that Yoga is the ultimate facility in self-improvement systems. It goes beyond just a technique or a posture or daily exercise routines. It is a way of

living and experiencing life. It isn't a religion but a science that dates back to over 6000 years ago. A science that was expressly crafted to help bring about a state of sublime union between the different elements that make us. Yoga helps us become the best we can be. We can learn to more deeply experience our day-to-day opportunities, to live life more fully and to appreciate beauty inside and out. Whether one pursues Yoga as a physical discipline to a healthier lifestyle or as a spiritual path to personal growth and self-improvement, Yoga is a process through which we can learn to accept who we are, just as we are.



Over the years many different styles of Yoga have emerged. However, the common threads amongst all variations incorporate 4 distinct components:

1. As a physical practice, Yoga aligns the body and increases flexibility
2. As a mental discipline, sitting still and meditating teaches the ability to focus. This ability to focus is necessary while practicing the asanas (postures) since they require attention to detail
3. As an emotional journey, Yoga teaches how to more fully express emotions; to let go and not suppress or bottle up what we feel
4. As a spiritual path, Yoga helps us explore who we are, expands our awareness of the world around us and teaches us to appreciate ourselves - body, mind and soul

All this is significant because these are the same principles along which the school is founded. The tenets and principles of the First Tang Soo Do of Fremont run in sync with the principles of Yoga and more than not, Master Bell lives his life as would a Yogi.

### **What is Yoga and who is a Yogi?**

*“Yoga is not for him who gorges too much, nor for him who starves himself. It is not for him who sleeps too much, nor for him who stays awake. By moderation in eating and in resting, by regulation in working and by concordance in sleeping and waking, Yoga destroys all pain and sorrow.” Bhagvad Gita*

With neither an interest in religious texts nor a passing exposure to the above passage, it is interesting how often I have heard these very same words repeated sometimes as guidance and other times as clear admonishment to students and family members. We have many examples of students that have come to this school needing to control a drinking habit, or perhaps struggling with insomnia, addicted to legal medical drugs for

conditions otherwise controlled through regulating diet, exercise, sleep, work and play. What the above passage talks of is essentially the same as the formula of Balance that we need to bring to the three elements of our life, namely the Mind, Body and Spirit.

Master Bell is a clear proponent and a living example of a life of Moderation. From a well-designed work schedule whereby classes are offered only on alternate days through sessions spaced at regular intervals, he ensures that he along with his students come to practice and train in moderation and with regularity. And Tang Soo Do training is a complete mind-body-spirit martial art. While Master Bell clearly believes in this formula of Moderation and Balance on a personal scale, he takes it a step further to train in the physical form of Yoga on two other days when he offers classes in stretching and yoga postures. He further enhances his own training by practicing Chi Kung patterns and raising his own Chi to levels that allow him to heal himself and others, to detoxify himself from the negative chi he may have accumulated, and to replenish his own stores of energy. He rates Moderation and Balance very highly in his list of Formulas. While balance is not the monopoly of Yoga and is as much a part of common sense and while these could be the result of combined knowledge gained over the years from personal experience and insight, it is uncanny how closely his set of formulas comes to compare with those of a yogic lifestyle. And while these may just be fundamental universal truths, often times the challenge of a basic truth is not in understanding it but in undertaking it.

*The Kathopanishad describes Yoga thus:*

*When the senses are stilled, when the mind is at rest, when the intellect wavers not – then, say the wise, is reached the highest stage. This steady control of the senses and mind has been described as Yoga. He who attains it is free from delusion.*

This is where the other major belief system or formula of our school comes in. The open secret to attaining a sense of balance between the opposing but complimentary forces of the Um Yang is the ability to ‘quiet the mind’ into a submission of it’s own energy which can be strong one moment and soft in another. To ‘quiet the mind’ and not allow the intellect to take control where you are plagued by questions impatiently demanding to be answered. The Korean/Chinese symbol of the Um Yang more popularly recognized as the Yin Yang is a symbol representing the constant struggle between forces that are equal but opposite. Could I be talking about Newton’s Third Law of Motion or am I referring to some spiritual laws governed by the principles of religion, meditative practices and common sense?

Be it in the practice of a Tang Soo Do form, or a chi pattern, in fifteen minutes of meditation or even in holding the warrior pose...we are constantly asked to ‘go deep’ and ‘quiet the mind’. Translated from plain speak to common terminology, to go deep and to quiet the mind would be to focus and concentrate. I remember many days of being frustrated at not being able to learn a form and Master Bell would tell me to get rid of ‘that engineering mindset’ as he’d call it. Mind you I am no engineer but what he says he noted, was a common tendency to map a form before walking through it and thereby not feeling it, not seeing it, not understanding it and entirely ruining it.

To feel, to trust, to navigate through free flowing instinct would be like dancing without rules and it could never be wrong. I also remember many chi kung sessions where the

same formula was repeated to me. When I was first introduced to this ancient practice of channeling energy I heard a lot of ‘quiet your mind’ and ‘go inside’. Inside? Inside what? Where exactly inside? What does this energy feel like? Am I doing this right? Why don’t I feel anything? Should I start all over?

And then I’d hear Master Bell tell us... “Breathe! You have to breathe you know” And my questioning wandering mind would continue asking, ‘did I stop breathing...oh wow, did I feel something? Was that Energy making my palms get warm? Is that a magnetic force I’m feeling...coz I’m feeling something...oh wait where did it go, it’s gone, I just lost my energy’

‘Too much noise, too bouncy.’ That’s what he calls it. Really speaking my mind wasn’t across town, and I was inside, pretty deep inside. But I was also thinking parallel to practicing and merely being. With chi kung, or martial arts or meditation practice, the challenge to get through it at a physical level is the mere beginning. Once you get there, to be able to execute the physical form or pattern or posture without thinking, questioning, validating, chiding is the challenge. ‘Being’ is everything. Just to be. For that moment in time to be still and spiritual and one with oneself and a force higher than oneself that can be called God if you’re religious, ego if you are egotistical and Energy if you are spiritual is the true goal of all Yoga.

I’ve repeated certain phrases several times in the passages above and have called them the Formulas on which are based the life and philosophy of Master David Bell. Here’s a simple listing of some of the basic formulas of the First Tang Soo Do of Fremont.

1. To quiet the mind
2. To go deep
3. To be real
4. To be humble
5. To seek balance
6. To understand your role
7. To understand your role in the lives of other people
8. To recognize people
9. To know what they want from you
10. To recognize in others the willingness and or the unwillingness to change
11. To always be aware of the energy of the other
12. To be sure to give energy where it’s needed
13. To be sure to guard against people who use your energy to strengthen themselves and give nothing in return
14. To be sure to practice and replenish ones own energy
15. To make sure you understand the toxins you expose yourself to (food, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, negative people)
16. To make better choices
17. To be responsible for ones choices
18. To not make things appear to be
19. To only buy what you need
20. To keep only what you can use
21. To understand that money is just money and that it can be made or lost.
22. To recognize that character is everything and that once that is lost, all is lost.

23. There are no half truths, only lies.
24. There can be no acceptance of lies
25. With character there is no gray, just black and white
26. To be sure to lend a hand to pull someone out of their misery and not jump right into the dark hole with them.
27. To accept that you cant change everything and cant help everyone
28. To know when to stop
29. To know that there is much room for improvement in oneself
30. To recognize that learning is an unending process
31. To know that everyone can teach you something
32. To stay humble and watch out for one's own ego
33. To know that once ego sets in all learning is stopped
34. To unconditionally love ones loved ones
35. To accept unconditionally the failures of our loved ones and help them to grow.
36. To go over ones achievements time and again and to appreciate ones own growth or that of others, namely students, children...
37. To be kind when reviewing ones failures
38. To be kind in the face of foolishness
39. To be cautious of yourself in the face of opposition
40. To not tolerate challenges to your strength of character.
41. To be decisive
42. To be fearless
43. To breathe
44. To know yourself
45. To be true to yourself
46. To put yourself first. If you aren't good for yourself, you aren't good for anyone else.
47. To be honest
48. To make peace with yourself
49. To make peace with the injustices of the world
50. To love yourself

All of the above Master Bell will refer to as 'formulas' and all of them have many interesting stories born out of over a decade of experience teaching and another 3 decades of experience training and around five decades of a rich and colorful lifetime. I can think of names and faces of people that go along with those formulas. People that make those formulas come alive with stories waiting to be told. But I would have to save them for a later day. This is the basic philosophy of the First Tang Soo Do of Fremont and that of Master David Bell. Agreeing with those pointers is one thing and living them is another. Most of the time we fail because of our expectations or emotions or ego. Our mind can be both, our best friend and ally or our most reliable shortcoming.

The human mind is a strange beast and as per the tenets of Yoga, can be divided into three active components. And in breaking it down we can better understand how to control this beast.

The Individual Mind – which kicks in with it's power for selection and rejection. It is often the indecisive and oscillating faculty within us.

The Intellect, Intelligence or Reason- the decisive state that effectively determines the difference between things.

Ego – the 'I' maker, the state that ascertains that 'I know'.

Yoga is that method by which the active mind is calmed and the energy is directed into constructive channels. But herein lies the problem and that is that controlling the mind is easier said than done because the mind is restless, inconsistent, impetuous, stubborn, strong, willful and difficult to harness as the wind.

When I suggest that Master Bell's categorization falls clearly into the bracket of a Yogi, it isn't because he has attained mastery over his mind, his emotions, his intellect and his ego. But it is because by some method of accurate and intuitive human knowledge he appears to be in a constant state of awareness of these fluctuating faculties, not just in himself but also in others.

It began with his practice of Tang Soo Do more than thirty years ago. With this chosen path marked by learning and extensive discipline, he has without a seeming plan submitted his life to the rigors of Hatha Yoga. Hatha Yoga is that branch of Yoga that demands extensive physical and mental discipline to be able to hold yogic asanas or postures for continued lengths of time. His martial arts training and his introduction to the Iyengar system of postures have given to him a heightened sensitivity to and understanding of and control over his body. The discipline and structure it takes to go from a fledgling white belt martial artist to fourth degree master black belt bring to him an amazing ability to 'quiet the mind' and surrender the body to the act of a form or the form of a yogic posture.

His years of training in the martial arts, his years as teacher in Tang Soo Do led him to a chance encounter with a reputed Chi Kung instructor and healer. Master Zhao saw in Master Bell a natural disposition if you will, for healing. He found his energy to be strong and suggested training. This encounter has led to years of a discipline of daily practice and healing. One of the logical outcomes of this kind of evolution is the consciousness of ones own breath or breathing. Master Bell teaches Tang Soo Do with a strong and imperative emphasis on breathing designed to both sustain the student through the form by regulating breathing and also adding



power by channeling ones chi through ones breath. As a result of this, his technique is an exercise for the mind that first consciously learns to breathe according to the pattern and then learns to do so unconsciously. Master Bell's brand of martial arts, Chi Kung and Yoga is also an exercise for the body that is strengthened by this breathing pattern that



allows for an increase in the lung capacity. And finally this method of breathing is the basis for spiritual meditation and practice.

The emphasis he places on breathing and the importance Master Bell will give to the Inhale and Exhale patterns that he teaches, is synonymous with the basic definition and principles of Pranayama.

### **What is Pranayama?**

In yogic terms, pranayama is the control over your breath. Breathing is so simple and so obvious we often take it for granted, ignoring the power it has to affect the body, mind and spirit. With each inhale we bring oxygen into the body and spark the transformation of nutrients into fuel. Each exhale purges the body of carbon dioxide, a toxic waste. Breathing also affects our state of mind. It can make us excited or calm, tense or relaxed. It can make our thinking confused or clear. What's more, in the yogic tradition, air is the primary source of prana or life force, a psycho-physio-spiritual force that permeates the universe.

*Pranayama* is loosely translated as prana or breath control. The ancient yogis developed many breathing techniques to maximize the benefits of prana. Pranayama is used in yoga as a separate practice to help clear and cleanse the body and mind. It is also used in preparation for meditation, and in asana, the practice of postures, to help maximize the benefits of the practice, and focus the mind.

Learning to regulate ones life source, ones breath is pranayama and this has been the foundation of the teaching of the First Tang Soo Do of Fremont. One of the first things a student in our school will hear is the instruction to 'breathe'...and this would qualify as a basic tenet in Master Bell's Book of Formulas. You breathe to stay calm, you breathe to be able to do an uninterrupted series of three hundred jumping jacks, you breathe to run a mile, you breathe to regain composure, you breathe to raise your chi, you breathe to both – accelerate and decelerate your mind, body and spirit...you breathe to live.

With no prior knowledge of Patanjali or the Yoga Sutras of this ancient scholar, the tenets of the First Tang Soo Do of Fremont are astonishingly similar to the time tested principles of Yoga. Through an amalgam of experiences from going from student to master, from restless traveler to rooted Chi Kung healer, from the excesses of youth to the spirituality of yoga...Master Bell has absorbed many of the eight clear directives or stages of Yoga that lead to a path of balance and self-realization.

Yama - the universal moral commandments

Niyama – self-purification by discipline

Asana – or physical postures requiring the spirit and the mind

Pranayama – the rhythmic control of breath

Pratyahara – withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses

Dharana – Concentration

Dhyana – Meditation

Samadhi – state of super consciousness brought about by profound meditation in which the individual aspirant becomes one with the object of his meditation.

While these basic eight principles to practice Yoga remain the same, yoga is in fact practiced in many different ways. There are many different paths or margas by which a student can pursue his sense of balance. The Active man finds it through Karma Yoga or the yoga of active work and duty. Karma is defined as duty. The Emotional Man through devotion and love of a higher sense, to a personal faith or God and this is called Bhakti Yoga. 'Bhakti' is defined as love and devotion. The Intellectual man pursues Jnana Yoga where realization comes through knowledge. 'Jnana' is knowledge. The Meditative or Reflective man follows Yoga Marga and realizes his own spiritual divinity through the control of his own mind. 'Marga' means road or pathway. The mind is the king of the senses. One who has conquered his mind, senses, passions, thought and reason is a king among men. And he is thus fit for Raja Yoga, which leads to the royal union between man and the universal spirit. 'Raja' means king. He who has conquered the mind is a Raja Yogi and this is the highest form of yoga as it implies complete mastery of the self. Patanjali's explanations bring Astanga yoga, which elaborate the eight basic principles of yoga to almost mirror the concept of Raja yoga.

The names and terms used above are meant to highlight once again that Yoga is getting short-changed and is today often only synonymous with downward facing dog. It's true spiritual purpose has been somewhat sidestepped with the current global rejection of all things religious and or spiritual. While religion and spirituality are not nearly the same, there are some common goals when religion is practiced without the desire for world domination. I have looked upon Yoga as a pure and spiritual science that originated some six thousand years ago. I see it as a tool that was and can be used to find pathways that allow for greater freedom and lesser sorrow through a more thorough examination, control and understanding of ones Mind, Body and Spirit.

In seeing Master Bell as a modern day Yogi, I do not in anyway say that he has mastered his mind, is above emotion, is untouched by ego and beyond his passions be they happiness, anger or sorrow. Master Bell has never read the Bhagvad Gita and possibly would never care to; he has never crossed paths with either Mandukya or Chandogya. He has never formally been part of the Iyengar family or the Jois clan. Despite these seeming contradictions he is a true modern day yogi that believes in the implicit truths of yoga and lives by them. He structures his days and weeks to accommodate a disciplined lifestyle of training and teaching multiple arts that are Korean, Chinese and Indian. In doing this he has spent a lifetime in training and preparation for a lifetime of teaching and community service. So while it may be closer to the dotted line to be strictly vegetarian in diet or strictly religious in belief it can't be denied that today at age 49 Master Bell is a true Yogi.

*Happy is the man who knows how to distinguish the real from the unreal, the eternal from the transient and the good from the pleasant by his discrimination and wisdom. Twice blessed is he who knows true love and can love all God's creatures. He who works selflessly for the welfare of others, with love in his heart is thrice blessed. But the man who combines within his mortal frame knowledge, love and selflessly service is like the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Saraswati and Jamuna. He is the yogi that has reached his eternal goal and has achieved true self-realization.*

## About the Author

For as long as I can remember I have had a gripping interest in the Martial Arts. What began as an endless stream of watching Kung Fu movies with my dad, developed into my own curiosity with the art. Interestingly, despite this preoccupation with all things Bruce Lee, 26 years went by with me never having signed up, kicked or punched at any of the local Dojangs in Bangalore, India. I played a lot of badminton and swam and tried parasailing even....but never seemed to get around to learning any karate. It still puzzles me when I think about it. But all good things come to those who wait and finally at age 27, six months after the birth of my daughter Aparna I found a small school with a quiet instructor that taught the old Japanese form of Shito Ryu Karate.

From day one I took to it like a fish takes to water. My one-hour class was my one hour of jumping, running, punching, kicking. . .it was hardwood floors, complaining heels, bleeding elbows and yet, it was my one hour of peace. I loved the sense of simplicity it brought all things down to. Every kick and punch and form could essentially be broken down and eventually mastered. This was at a time when my child was barely six months old. For most women, this is a stage that is usually marked by mild to moderate post-natal depression and confusion over a baby that stays up all night crying over seemingly nothing. Friends I knew were going through feelings ranging from anger to lethargy to helplessness and frustration over babies that were always cute and but also always demanding. And yet I felt none of this. Not because Aparna wasn't constantly demanding my attention or because I had super human levels of patience....it was definitely my martial arts.

I learned quickly how great an effect training in martial arts could have on one's life. I felt stronger, had more energy, felt more positive and had greater flexibility at 27 than I'd ever experienced before. I consider myself truly lucky and blessed that I found martial arts when I did because pretty soon I was going to need it again.

A few years later and after big changes of location from India to the US, I found myself at another crossroad. I had just left a very stressful job in the Silicon Valley and was facing the prospect of starting at another job that promised all the old highlights...long hours, working weekends, mad deadlines. Luckily for me, I began evaluating the pros and cons of the situation and saw only too clearly that I was trading away precious and exciting years as the mother of a young child and taking on insomnia and acid reflux instead. Suddenly it was a no-brainer. With the unquestioning support of my husband I decided to quit not just my job but also quit the search for any other job and pursue a more effective role as mother and homemaker.

I began training at the First Tang Soo Do of Fremont in the year 2000 and haven't looked back since. Master Bell teaches the art in a non-commercial and realistic sense that isn't customized to winning competitions but more focused on character development and effectiveness in real life situations. The school has an

impressive history of overall regional winners and world champions and yet the focus is on day-to-day life and not annual meets. I find this dichotomy both interesting and very grounding. The road to martial artist and Black Belt has been exciting and hugely rewarding. I have had my days of being frustrated and then being calm. There have been days marked by tears and days marked by sheer awe over the fact that I broke my first board. I could easily call this the single most exciting journey I have ever undertaken...I would put this right on par with having a baby and raising a child. I have been training under the instruction of Master Bell for almost four years now and couldn't wait to get my daughter started as a white belt.

I find the training and teaching not just valuable in understanding my own character but am amazed every day at how I can use Tang Soo Do as a tool in providing a comforting and structured environment for my family and in raising my child.



**Ms.Vandana Rao**

Today as a Black Belt and wife and mother I am also enjoying the slow but unbelievable rewards of energy training. I have been taking Chi Kung seminars that Master Bell organizes for over two years now. This training has taken the 'whole person' concept to a new place. The awareness it bring to you, about your own mind and body through the channeling of your spirit is hard to explain and has to be experienced to be understood.

The way I see it, my training in Tang Soo Do and turning Black Belt is hardly a final destination or goal. It is an invaluable tool

that makes life and its long and interesting byways easier and simpler and less stressful. I feel like a better person as a wife or as a friend, as an employee or as a teacher someday... because of my training.

As a female and as a mother raising a daughter I feel twice as confident knowing that I train under the instruction of Master Bell at the First Tang Soo Do of Fremont.