

Read the following passage about martial arts and then answer the questions on the following page.

## MARTIAL ARTS

Human body is infinitely capable! However, as a general law, we tend to neglect what is given to us and most of us are not aware of what all wonderful things we can do with our body. Where people started to explore the possibilities of body, those searches have yielded unbelievable results. Martial arts – diverse range of activities of human body, comprising techniques of fighting, mental and physical exercises and knowledge of vital parts of human body – make one such useful output.



Even though the phrase 'martial arts' is suggestive of Mars - the god of war in Roman mythology, Asia, especially Japan, India and China are the lands where those body skills and combating power which we call "martial arts" began and flourished. Some scholars disapprove of the very name 'martial arts' as unsuitable to these systems of fights and exercises. Except some few varieties such as 'Kalarippayatt' in Kerala, a part of India, most of these arts were not historically developed for war or practised by professional warriors. So, alternative names like 'combat arts' are suggested.

Controversy about name being kept apart, martial arts refer to hundreds of systems. All of them, in whichever variety of form, use 'body instrumentation'. It means, they use body and body parts as instruments. With this purpose, training and practice are given for fitness, power and movements.

'Karate', 'kung Fu' and 'Kalari' are three major generic types of these combat systems. All martial arts fall into sub-groups developed and perfected by different instructors. So we get diverse styles and strategies under each head.

The word 'Karate' means 'empty handed' in Japanese language. The name impresses with both practical and philosophical overtones of emptiness. It signifies adequacy of skill and power without any weapon and also the experience of emptiness or ultimate freedom. Karate teaches swift and mighty blows and kicks, but keeps away from grappling and hand locks. As part of this system, there are various exercises, all meant to strengthen body and muscles. Karate trains both soft and hard techniques.

The meaning of 'kung Fu' is skill. The term embraces a whole variety of Chinese martial art forms. All these systems practice both offensive and defensive blows, kicks and locks. In some styles, Kung Fu also involves internal practices of breathing techniques to enrich what is called 'life energy'. However, as all martial practices do, Kung Fu also emphasises primarily on flexibility and speed of movements.

'Kalarippayatt' or 'kalari' in short, is trained predominantly in the southern parts of India. Drawing forms of postures and steps from powerful animals is a common characteristic of all systems of fight. In kalari also, the different stances and movements are copied from animals and then perfected. It teaches fight with not only bare hand, but sticks and bladed weapons also. Kalari has developed a system of human biology of which the idea of 'marma' (vital spot) is the base. As a result, associated with Kalari, an indigenous system of treatment also has emerged.



- a. Why do many of us fail to see the capabilities of our own body?  
.....[1]
- b. What are the contents of 'martial arts'? Give two details.  
.....  
.....[1]
- c. How did the term 'martial arts' originate?  
.....[1]
- d. Why do some experts refuse to accept the name 'martial arts'?  
.....[1]
- e. Which are the ideas suggested by the phrase 'karate' ('empty handed')? Give two details.  
.....  
.....[2]
- f. What does Karate avoids training?  
.....[1]
- g. What is the purpose of breathing exercises in Kung Fu?  
.....[1]
- h. Which form of martial arts trains sword fight?  
.....[1]
- i. Give four features that all types of martial arts have in common.  
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.....  
.....  
.....[4]



## ANSWER KEY

a. given to us

b. techniques of fighting/mental and physical exercises /knowledge of vital parts of human body

c. From Mars - the god of war in Roman mythology

d. not developed for war/ not practised by professional warriors

e. adequacy of skill and power (without any weapon)

the experience of emptiness / ultimate freedom / overtones of emptiness

f. grappling / hand locks

g. to enrich 'life energy'

h. 'Kalarippayatt' / 'kalari'

i: body instrumentation'

fall into sub-groups developed

perfected by different instructors

emphasises (primarily) on flexibility and speed of movements

Drawing forms of postures and steps from powerful animals