



# **Fighting Buddha: A Story of Martial Arts, Buddhism, Kicking Ass and Saving It**

*Jeff Eisenberg*

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*Fighting Buddha* is a memoir that details a forty year journey in martial arts and meditation training, and 25 years of Buddhist practice. Using autobiographical anecdotes, along with martial art fighting strategies, Buddhist folk stories, and koan and sutra teachings, it explores both the benefits and detriments of each practice, as well as how they complement each other as a singular practice. The general premise of the book proposes that martial arts technique done in the controlled environment of the Dojo, and meditative experiences dependent on the environment of the Zendo will never have an appropriate application unless trained, practiced, and tested under real circumstances. For the martial artist, this prompts the question of whether traditional training in the Dojo can actually be utilized in a real situation, and for the Buddhist practitioner, whether the rituals, scholarly study and meditative experience of the Zendo can translate into skillful action outside of it. These questions are a constant theme throughout a discussion that addresses the struggles of beginning training and practice, the importance of identifying goals and choosing a teacher and training in support of them, and most importantly, how to determine whether the training can be assimilated into real application. While prior books have been written about martial arts and spiritual practice, what makes this work completely different is that those works focus on only the “art” or practice aspect and not the “martial” or realistic application aspect. Due to this, the common belief about martial arts that has become synonymous with spiritual practice is that only the “soft” styles that are trained slowly, with a mandate that they never actually be used, can be considered a meditative practice, and that the “hard” styles that emphasize fighting are not only not conducive to meditative practice, but are nothing more than mindless violence. This assumption is challenged by a discussion of the difference between violence and the use of force as it relates to The Buddha’s teaching of “cause no harm”, exploring the common misunderstanding that meditative moments are exclusive to only select activities, and explaining why the true test of a martial artist’s skill and of a Buddhist’s application of mindfulness is during a situation that is the least conducive for it. Building upon the discussion of these issues, the work continues with a detailing of the authors own practical application in regard to how he “does” Buddhism, and then concludes by defining enlightenment and the black belt, and addressing the most common misconceptions about them, in particular, that they are not the end results of one’s practice, but the beginning.

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