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## Chennai pulls up socks, kicks for taekwondo fest

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CHENNAI: Eleven-year-old Sanjeev Mahesh has been working for his taekwondo black belt, but it's not just his feet and fists that will get him the prize. In this marital art Sanjeev is also being evaluated for his character and discipline, by his parents.

"We are required to grade him on behaviour towards siblings, time spent watching TV, time spent doing household chores, manners, and so on," says Padmavathy Mahesh, Sanjeev's mother, not without some satisfaction.

It's a little known fact about this Korean martial art teaches character development as much as physical agility. The InKo Centre, the Indo-Korean cultural agency hopes to make known, this it plans to do by organising the 1st Tae Hon Festival on August 10 at the Students Activity Centre (IIT-Madras). The festival aims to raise awareness on the philosophy and technique of taekwondo. It will also hold a taekwondo tournament, open to all students of this martial art in the city.

Taekwondo was developed by a Korean general, Choi Hong Hi, in the 1940s, and is a combination of taekkyeon and karate. The form derives its philosophy, symbolism and many of its technique names from Korean culture and history.

"The festival will help people tell the difference between taekwondo and karate. Karate is a Japanese martial art while taekwondo is Korean. About 80% of taekwondo is about kicking, while 80% of karate is about the use of hands," says Master Yang, a taekwondo tutor affiliated with Kukkiwon, World Taekwondo Headquarters.

Arjun Raghavan, a 13-year-old black belt who is part of the festival's demo team says he enjoys it because it's fast-paced and fun.

Yang, who has students between the age group of 5 and 60, says there is a growing interest in the Korean form. "When I started teaching I had only five students; I now have 90," says the tutor who also teaches at the Hyundai Welfare Centre and the American International School.