NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE --- The Story of Falun Dafa

Episode 1: Qigong Sets the Stage

On March 11, 1979, journalist Zhang Naiming and his colleagues published an article “Discovery of a Child in Dazu County - Reading Words with Ears” in The Sichuan Daily. In the following month, articles published in the Anhui Technology and the Beijing Technology reported on children who were found to have supernatural powers. The findings caused a sensation and a Chinese traditional exercise – Qigong was soon brought to people’s attention.

Qigong can be traced back to ancient times, be it the Five-Animal Exercise created by Hua Tuo,

Zhang Sanfeng’s Tai Chi exercises, or Ba Gua, Zhou Yi and Huangdi Neijing from time immemorial, as well as various sects and schools in both Buddhism and Taoism. Throughout the 5,000 years of Chinese history and culture, the brilliance of these ancient wisdoms can be found everywhere.

This cultural brilliance that had been taking the lead for thousands of years, gradually faded during modern times. The once powerful empire couldn’t avoid the suffering fate of humiliation. In an attempt to save the country and resist invaders, Chinese adopted Western modern technologies as a priority in order to stay wealthy and gain military might. In the course of time, people understood less and less of the profound, true meaning of Chinese traditional culture; instead, the scientific view of positivism introduced from the west progressively took over to become the mainstream school of thought.

Especially during the ten-year Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, everything related to Chinese culture and traditional values was criticized as “the Four Olds” and “Feudal Superstition”. People consequently didn’t dare to explore these traditions. Much of the essence of traditional culture was successively lost. However, it is not easy to make people completely forget about the traditional culture that had been passed on for thousands of years. When stories about supernatural abilities were reported in China in late 1970s, people showed great interest in it right away.

(Yi Zheng, writer) “In the editorial office back then, all the editors were there. We had all the reporters, around 7 or 8 people, and they can still testify to what we witness that day.” Zheng Yi, a well-known writer, told us about a supernatural case that he witnessed personally. “I told him to perform the restoring name card show. One of the editors took out one name card from a drawer. And I was told to sign the card. I took a fountain pen and signed my name on the card. He asked me to chew the paper. I then chewed the card until it became a ball of paper pulp, and purposely swallowed one small portion of it. Finally, I took it out. He rolled it into a ball in his hands, and then covered it up. All of a sudden, ‘Wow’, the card popped out from his hand. A look at it and I found that my signature was still there. I thought it was fairly hard to do such a magic trick, because first of all, I’m a truthful person; I was not their assistant. Moreover, I personally put the card into my mouth and chewed it into paper pulp. How could it be possible that the card could be restored with my signature on it? I do not think this can be explained by the theory of materialism.”

These supernatural phenomena that could not be explained with the theory of materialism were immediately brought to the attention of the high executives of the Chinese Communist Party, who ruled with the consistent propagandistic ideology of Marxism-Leninism and Atheism. After the report on the child using ears to read was published, in less than two months, the *People’s Daily* published two articles on the 5th and 18th of May, 1979, using an extremely severe manner to criticize “Reading Words with Ears” as absurd. It said that this violated scientific common knowledge, was completely anti-science, and simply a disgrace for the Chinese. While the press exposed and criticized this, one department in the Central Committee issued a document stating that “Reading Words with Ears” was completely anti-science and a sign of the return of Feudal Superstition. After that, The Sichuan Daily as well as the Secretary of Sichuan Province was forced to write self-criticisms.

However, leading science scholars, such as Qian Xuesen, supported the research on the unknown domain of Qigong and supernatural abilities. Qian Xuesen came up with a concept of “human body science” from a scientific point of view. He deemed that “Theories in Qigong, traditional Chinese medicines, and supernatural abilities in the human body contain the basic principles in the human body science”, “It will lead to a revolution in scientific fields and a great leap in understanding the universe objectively for human beings.”

“The first Symposium of Human Supernatural Abilities” was held in Shanghai, organized by the editorial office of The Nature Magazine in February 1980. The symposium invited some individuals with supernatural abilities for on-spot experimental purposes; and Hu Yaobang who was at the time chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, also sent specialists the symposium for the evaluation.

 (Xiaodong Shao, former medical qigong adviser of human science research association) “Hu Yaobang sent down his secretary with a few sealed samples personally written by him, wanting the individuals with supernatural abilities to read them. The motive behind this was roughly that if the words could be read, the symposium then would be allowed to continue; if the words could not be read correctly, or the seal was broken, then it’s possible that the Central Committee would be determined to cancel the symposium. Because many individuals with the strongest supernatural powers worldwide were brought together in the on-the-spot experiment in Shanghai, the results were relatively good. Hu Yaobang’s secretary called and told Hu Yaobang that the individuals with supernatural powers claimed Hu wrote such and such words. As soon as Hu Yaobang heard that they were the exact words he wrote, he let the secretary rush back first to check whether the seals on the samples were broken. It was said that when the secretary brought back the samples to Hu Yaobang in Beijing, he verified that the envelope was indeed sealed personally by him and that no one had opened it. But the individuals with supernatural powers could read those words.”

The specialists unanimously believed that the symposium clarified the debates of the authenticity of the “reading words with ears” in 1979. With this symposium as a sign, China’s research in supernatural abilities entered a new stage.

However, there were still people with opposing views, despite the results of the scientific experiments. Merely from the perspective of philosophy, opposers criticized research on supernatural powers. These skeptics also discussed whether it was science or anti-science, and whether people followed the materialism Marxism philosophy, or the philosophy of idealism that is fundamentally opposed to Marxism. China at that time had just come out of the ten-year Cultural Revolution. Art, technical and scientific fields were all in the state of revival and expansion. After a decade’s suffering from the poisonous extreme leftist ideology, the people of China started to re-examine themselves and the paths they had taken. They were able to treat Qigong and supernatural powers in an objective and realistic light.

(Yi Zheng, writer) “You did not allow these people to show their supernatural abilities. You made excuses that these supernatural abilities were demons and ghosts, and because no one saw them, people naturally believed the rumors, as they had never been exposed to these abilities before. As Qigong grew and developed, Qigong indeed was effective. Especially for those who had illness, they would feel well and comfortable after practicing Qigong, you go to the hospital for an examination, and there would be indicators of positive physical and physiological changes. Qigong’s effects can be checked and verified, therefore skeptics have no choice but to believe that Qigong is effective.”

One Central Committee leader who personally witnessed supernatural powers, wrote Central Committee chairman Hu Yaobang a letter, saying that “In view of the history of scientific development, when Copernicus put forward the heliocentric theory, when Galileo persevered in his rotation of the earth theory, when Einstein proposed the theory of relativity, or when Morgan proposed the theory of genes, they all encountered severe attacks from secular forces. Supporters of the new theories even lost their lives. When some old theories cannot explain certain phenomena, it often signifies the start of a great leap in scientific development.”

Soon after that, Hu Yaobang instructed the Central Committee that Qigong and supernatural abilities would be treated with “no propaganda, no arguments, no criticism,” while permitting few people to conduct research on Qigong. On 20th April 1982, the Central Committee announced this notice, which became widely known as the famous “Three No’s Policy”.

This was a movie that was once very popular during the 1980s. The film’s display of exquisite martial arts and miraculous stories fascinated and opened the minds of an entire generation of teenagers.

 (Jingning Li, Beijing Medical University graduate) “I was very interested in the movie Shao Lin Temple when it first came out during my middle school years. I instantly had an understanding of the deep and historic culture of Chinese martial arts. I remembered that my friends and I used to compare who watched the movie the most. It was not enough to just watch this movie once, so I watched it several times. From then on, if I could find them, I would buy all books and magazines related to martial arts and Qigong.”

 (Bin He, University of Sci. & Tech. of China graduate) “At that time, the school had a Qigong association, and they invited many of the society’s proven and self-proclaimed Qigong masters to do presentations or give talks. They also invited some public figures with supernatural powers to perform or do experience sharing. They mainly spoke from the cultural perspective about Chinese traditional medicine, meridian system, Book of Changes, eight trigrams, fortune telling and a few supernatural phenomena. They discussed a view of the universe, values and life from a different angle than the western scientific approach. After that, I developed an intense interest in Chinese traditional culture.”

For most elder people, Qigong’s appeal was its miraculous healing effects, especially on hard-to-treat diseases that could not be cured by modern medical technology. Qigong’s appearance undoubtedly gave the people tormented from illnesses a last hope for survival.

(Shaohui Zhang, Qigong practitioner) “During the Cultural Revolution, I was tortured physically and mentally. When all had come to an end in 1980s, I became ill and had already given up all hope for myself. Because I worked in the hospital, it was very easy to have access to doctors and medicines in China. But, I was not getting any better after trying different ways. No drug would work for me.”

(Ms. Li, Qigong practitioner) “At that time, Qigong was very popular. It was all people talked about in parks and workplaces.”

(Shaohui Zhang, Qigong practitioner) “Then I heard a commentary on a TV show about Qigong practitioners. One of the practitioners survived from liver cancer because of the practice. Prior to practicing, his doctor said that he could only live for a very short period. However, because he practiced Qigong, his body was better and better. Three years had passed, and he still became healthier and healthier. At that time, I thought to myself his liver cancer could even be cured. It was not certain if my illness was cancer. But, even if mine were cancer, because it wouldn’t be as severe as liver cancer, I would surely recover. Maybe it was pre-destined that I had this thought that there would be no other medicine that could save my life other than Qigong. Thus I made a wish that I wanted to practice Qigong.”

It was this way, at the right time, right place and right social connections that Qigong became a treasure of the Chinese people and quickly grew very popular in the land of China. A “Qigong fever” spread across the country. What exactly is “Qigong”? Why did it have such magical power? No one had done a true analysis on it. Even some qigong masters, do not quite understand the true reasons of Qigong’s power. This again caused a veil of mystery to conceal Qigong.

(Jingning Li, Beijing Medical University graduate) “Later, many phenomena happened, such as Bigu, ‘spontaneously-generated energy,’ and other related somatosensory abilities. I could sense them myself but I was not able to explain them very well.”

(Min Ge, actuary) “I remembered when a Qigong master came, I asked him privately how he cured illnesses, as I was very curious about it. He then told me that for these kinds of diseases, you just have to be bold. You just have to boldly claim that the disease is cured. Then, ask the patient if he feels better, and he will respond positively; if you’re bold and think you have cured him, then he is more or less cured. Thus there was no theory behind it, he himself did not know how he cured diseases.”

 (Youfu Li, former Human Sci. researcher in Chinese Academy of Science) “As it was getting popular among people, we were thinking throughout this process – especially those who were determined and inspired -- what kind of phenomena Qigong was, what was behind all of it and through practicing, besides becoming healthy, what people gained an understanding of. Finally, they realized it was about practicing, publicizing and cultivating. It was also about scientific experiments and proving them. All these could not fully explain it, because scientific methods can only verify Qigong’s process instead of understanding the pattern of its essence. Thus this Qigong fever again prompted people to think critically.”

Some swindlers took advantage of people’s desire to cure diseases using Qigong and desire to pursue supernatural abilities or wealth by using different names to brag and deceive. It made Qigong, already full of doubt and confusion, even more bizarre, with both the good and bad intermixed.

(Bin He, University of Sci. & Tech. of China graduate) “The ‘spontaneously-generated energy’ was quite popular at the time. Basically it is when a person is in a state and, under the guidance of a Qigong master, he would roll around on the ground and ferociously slap the painful part of his body. You would not be surprised to see old ladies dancing madly. It was such a mess.”

(Jingning Li, Beijing Medical University graduate) “They usually taught Qigong in this manner. First they would teach a set of movements and then talk about the theories of Qigong. Later, practitioners would try to catch messages sent from Qigong masters. Sometimes Qigong masters also asked practitioners to bring a cup filled with water. They would emit energy to the water and call it ‘message water’.”

(Bin He, University of Sci. & Tech. of China graduate) “Teaching people how to heal illnesses was popular for a while also. I also attended a Qigong class. The Qigong master taught you how to eliminate, replenish and discharge the energy. The deepest impression I had was a maneuver called ‘Immortal Handgrabbing’. After I learned this, I returned to my hometown in Sichuan, attempting to ‘grab’ away my family’s illnesses, but it did not work at all. In other words, though we were keen to learn about these Qigong methods and understood that they were useful in certain conditions, but did we truly learn how to master them? No, you cannot.”

(Youfu Li, former human sci. researcher in Chinese Academy of Science) “Some people believe that for anything popular, a business can be made out of it. They think they can make profits from the things everybody loves. Some fake and fraudulent Qigong practices took advantage of people’s fanatical emotions. They speculated financially for profits and operated with no real knowledge of Qigong though they claimed it was. What they practiced was not real Qigong. They easily made up some things to deceive people, and of course there were minimal effects, which allowed them to pass off as genuine Qigong practices. Many people said that giving off energy can cure diseases, which was not true even though there were still minimal effects on people. The fake Qigong masters did not even have the skills to cure illnesses, yet they showed off and swindled everywhere they went. There were not just a few of these people, and they created a very negative influence for Qigong. They defamed the genuine Qigong practices.”

It was when people’s opinions differed about Qigong that the Oriental Health Expo was held in Beijing in 1992. People who fortunately participated in the Expo immediately paid attention to a magical Qigong that stood out from the others.

(Yang Li, Health Expo staff) “I saw a very young Qigong master who looked very handsome. Moreover, the attitude he treated people was extraordinarily amiable; therefore, his appearance was very appealing to me. I took a look at the surroundings of his exhibition. Inside his booth was an image of the Qigong master meditating and wearing yellow clothing. There were also photos of him being interviewed by journalists and on TV shows. I learned that this was Falun Gong and later took out a notebook from my pocket. I said, ‘Master, please give me your autograph’. The Master signed: Founder of Falun Gong, Li Hongzhi, December 21st, 1992,”

At the Expo, Mr. Li Hongzhi and his students used their supernatural abilities to cure many people’s diseases. The news “Falun Gong is miraculous” spread quickly among the crowds at the Expo.

The chief manager of the Expo, Mr. Li Rusong, said, “In the Expo, Falun Gong received the most recognition and its healing results were good.” Professor Jiang Xuegui, the general advisor of the Expo, said, “As general advisor of the Expo, I take responsibility as I recommend Falun Gong to everyone. I believe that this practice will truly bring people good health and a new spiritual outlook.”

In April 1993, Mr. Li Hongzhi’s book China Falun Gong was officially published. Throughout this book, Mr. Li explained Qigong’s origin, supernormal capabilities and energy potency, Qigong treatment and hospital treatment, etc. These solved the issues Qigong enthusiasts were perplexed about despite after much thinking. He clearly pointed out that supernormal abilities are not what practitioners should pursue. One’s energy potency is dependent on the cultivation of one’s mind-nature, which is the key in guiding practitioners to elevate. In his preface, he frankly and openly wrote “The main purpose of my leaving the mountain is who have been practicing for years without increasing their energy to move up to higher levels.” These simple words are what people who sought for many years had longed for.

(Ms. Li, Qigong practitioner) “At the moment, I felt like he was the one that I had been looking for so long. That was exactly how I felt at that moment. It was like ‘Oh, I finally found you.’”

In December 1993, Falun Gong was a specially invited Qigong school at the 1993 Oriental Health Expo again. Mr. Li Hongzhi was elected to be a committee member. This time many people came to the Expo because of their admiration for the name “Falun Gong”.

(Ms. Li, Qigong practitioner) “The 1993 Expo was a grand occasion for Falun Gong. There were really few people attending other Qigong booths, but only our Falun Gong booth had a crowd of five to seven hundred people around our Falun Gong booth. As soon as the exhibition center was opened, a lot people ran towards our booth and formed three lines. One line was to register for the morning healing session; another line was for the afternoon session because the numbers were growing fast. The last line was to get Master Li’s autograph signed on the China Falun Gong book, which was the only book published back then.”

(Yang Li, Health Expo staff) “On this day, in the evening, the Expo was quickly concluding, and there were not many people left. I suddenly saw two or three middle-aged men with an old lady rush in from the entrance. The old lady had a hunchback. It wasn’t an ordinary hunchback either. It was about 45 degrees. With her lower back arched, she followed her children to the hall and headed straight to Master Li. Master Li, at a glance, could see this old lady’s condition. Then he lifted her from the back, with her back kept close to his chest. Master lifted her up and stretched her back. The old lady was lifted off the ground. After that, he talked to the old lady, ‘Just relax, relax and walk with me’. It’s a rather big place, and Master circled around it once. The old lady just followed Master. Master turned around and always told her, ‘Relax, relax, follow me.’ ‘Straighten up, straighten up, straighten up.’ I was just on the side and happened to see this scene by chance. I was pretty excited myself. I saw this old lady actually straighten up inch by inch. Master kept smiling and said to her, ‘Just relax and keep walking. Straighten up, straighten up.’ Just like this. At that moment I was very excited when I saw that scene. I thought wouldn’t it be great if a TV station could record this moment? This person was healed within seconds. Then I saw a middle-aged man, probably her son, instantly kneel in front of Master. He was also very excited; after all it was his mother who was healed. Master said to the man, ‘Get up, get up, get up’, as if what he did was nothing. It was just like that. Therefore it’s not sure how many people like her he cured in a day.”

(Ms. Li, Qigong practitioner) “The results in the Expo were really good. Many people with brain tumors, heart disease and hepatitis were all cured after that one visit to our booth. People then knew that it was very magical. There were also a few paralyzed patients who, on the spot, stood up from their wheelchairs, casted off their canes and walked forward. Thus, at that moment, some people knelt down to Master Li, expressing their gratitude. Also, after the event, some beat a gong or drums in praise. Others sent thank-you letters that were taped beside our booth. It was quite lively then."

During Mr. Li Hongzhi’s time at the Expo, because of his large-scale selfless dedication to the public and Falun Gong’s miraculous effects, the Expo committee and the specialists’ committee agreed that the one and only most honorable award – “The Fringe Scientific Progress Award” -- should go to Mr. Li Hongzhi. They also awarded him the title of the “Most Popular Qigong Master”. Falun Gong, like a gleaming star, outshined the other Qigong schools from then on.

Please watch episode 2 - Dafa Begins to Spread.