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

Episode 4: Taking up the Path

This is a picture of Mr. Yu in 1998 at National Square, Washington, D.C., during the first snowfall of winter. He had been practicing Falun Gong for just three months.

(JOHN YU, Computer Engineer) “One day, while we were exercising, someone took some photos. One photo shows me pressing my legs. I was not able to sit in the lotus position, so I had to relax and press on my legs for a long time.

At the time, I knew Falun Gong was indeed very good and a righteous way. My first impression of Falun Gong was that it was very positive. That was my initial impression.”

After people get to know Falun Gong teachings and exercises, many are inspired to begin the practice. But, what was their state of health? A study of 12,000 Falun Gong practitioners by medical specialists in 1998 showed us the following data: 52% were over 50years old and 83% had had a chronic disease.

On average, each person had spent 1,760 Yuan annually on medical expenses, many with illnesses, which couldn’t be cured by doctors. This is what brought them to Falun Gong.

(Falun Gong practitioner from Changchun city. “Health ABC” program in Jilin Education Channel) “At that time I had seven kinds of illnesses: coronary heart disease, a brain tumor causing insufficient blood supply, cataracts, Meniere’s syndrome and bulging disk from second to fourth cervical vertebra. My neck and my body had to turn like one straight line. My life was miserable. I felt like committing suicide.”

(Reporter) “What do you think the most benefit you got from practicing Falun Gong?”

“The most benefit is that my body experienced the fundamental changes from inside to outside. Before I practiced Falun Gong, I had health problems in all my internal organs including heart failure. I was dying.”

Stories of miracle cures from long-term illnesses and pain after practicing Falun Gong are common among Falun Gong practitioners. They engender deep thought for many people.

(Experience sharing in 1998 Falun Dafa Experience Sharing Conference in GuangDong) “Why should I take medication and be hospitalized for long periods when modern medicine is not able to cure my illness, and I can became healthy again after practicing Falun Gong for three months? Where is the magic for my cure? I, as a Falun Dafa practitioner, from learning and practicing the teachings of Master Li, I began to understand the fundamental cause of illness the fundamental cause of illness and how to completely get rid of it.

Master Li explains the principles thoroughly. They are supernatural principles. Then regarding these supernatural principles, whether you believe it or not it’s up to you. If you do believe and follow the teachings you can be rid of your illness. That’s the miracle.”

In the ’90s, it was common to see Falun Gong practitioners exercising outdoors, in public places, in spite of extreme heat, or cold, rain or shine. These morning exercises groups formed unique scenery in many places.

(Liaoning Cable TV, 1998) “If you didn’t see it for yourself, you wouldn’t believe it. So many people were doing exercises at 5:30 a.m. on August 26…”

Though the visuals have become worn and blurry, history won’t be forgotten. Falun Gong spread by word of mouth to every county due to its miraculous health benefits. The number of people learning Falun Gong increased dramatically. At that time, most of the beginners had little knowledge of what cultivation was about; however, they kept doing the exercises diligently.

(Ms. Yang, Editor) “Every day I did the exercises even though I could only sit in single lotus for 5 minutes. Then I continued doing it day by day I could sit for 15 minutes. Then for 30 minutes. Later for as long as more than 40 minutes. Since I read the book for the first time, I did not read again. But I did the exercises.”

Regarding this situation, in December 1995 Mr. Li Hongzhi wrote “Seeking Discipleship with Teacher” instructing disciples to “Follow the Fa”.

The article said: “A person who truly cultivates will gain things naturally without pursuing them. All of the Gong and Fa lie in the book and one will naturally obtain them by reading Dafa. Those who learn it will change automatically and they will already be in the Dao when they read the book over and over again…"

The book Mr. Li Hongzhi asked his disciples to read repeatedly is this book called “Zhuan Falun”.

Today, people overseas can buy Falun Gong books at bookstores or by phone or download from the Internet free of charge. They have no idea how difficult it was for people in mainland China to own a copy of a Falun Gong book.

The city of Wu Han on the banks of the lower Yangtze River is known as “The Place of the Graceful Crane and Fluffy Cloud”. It was also once the main place for printing Falun Dafa book. A limited edition of Zhuan Falun was first published in early 1995. There were not enough books to go round so people had to share. The book was not available in remote area.

Here we heard many moving stories of practitioners how they experienced hardship in order to obtain Dafa books sooner.

(MS. ZHANG, Falun Dafa Practitioner from Wuhan) “I remember one day when I was in Jiujiang, there was a practitioner from a village in Jiangxi Province who had walked dozens of miles to the wharf in Jiujiang to wait for the boat bringing the book Zhuan Falun. Also, in February 1995 in Nanjing, it was snowing heavily, and the boat bringing the book was delayed. Practitioners waited at the wharf for four hours and no one left. They kept looking at the river longing for the ship carrying the books to appear sooner. When the boat came into view they jumped and shouted, ‘Here comes the boat! Here comes our book!’”

At that time people longed to return to their true selves and simply wanted to bring Truth, Compassion and Tolerance back into their lives. So they did the exercises and read Zhuan Falun every day. In this book, Mr. Li Hongzhi tells how people can improve. And what are the keys for genuine improvement.

(Zhuan Falun) “The above are the two reasons for not being able to increase gong. Without knowing the Fa at high levels, one cannot cultivate. Without cultivating one’s inner self and one’s xinxing, one cannot increase gong. These are the two reasons.”

To become a genuine Falun Dafa practitioner, one must improve one’s xinxing or mindset according to the criteria of Truth, Compassion, and Tolerance. To be lifted to higher levels, one must let go of ordinary human notions and attachments.

Life is filled with happiness and sweet moments, as well as anger and sorrow. People are all different, yet their fate is similar. People know that some habits and addictions are harmful, yet they aren’t able to get rid of them.

We all know that smoking is harmful to health. In January 1996, China launched a campaign against smoking. Tobacco advertising was prohibited on TV. Twenty-six cities, including Beijing, passed a law to prohibit smoking in public areas. This achieved little result. Tobacco consumption in China still tops the world at over 350 million smokers with a 2% increase each year.

(MR. YANG, M.D.) “I had smoked for 10 years, one to two packs a day. In addition, I developed a very bad habit. Once I lit a cigarette, I would smoke one after another and couldn’t stop. Later after I read the book I began to understand. I thought life was unpredictable, short, and full of bitterness. Later I thought I should just enjoy the moment since I didn’t know when my life would end. It actually showed a sense of helplessness. Life was just like that, without any hope.

But now I have come across this cultivation way. To me something impossible becomes possible. Is a person doomed to be old, sick and unhappy? In the past I thought so. But now I think maybe it isn’t like that. Suddenly there is hope in my life. I could easily give up smoking because I saw hope.”

Cultivators see the world, the cosmos and life from a different perspective. That makes it easier for them to let go of bad habits and addictions. And they no longer experience the previous pain and relapses. Their quality of life underwent fundamental changes. Those who were once disappointed with life tend to benefit the most.

(MR. GAO, Falun Dafa Practitioner from Guangzhou) “A young teacher from the Maoming area was a drug addict. He gambled in order to buy drugs and borrowed money from his relatives and friends and spent it all. Everyone was afraid of the sight of him. He was thin and in such poor health that he didn’t want to live.

Then he came across Dafa and stopped the drugs and gambling. He was a changed person. A few months later he wrote an experience sharing. He said that drugs made him a ghost while Dafa let him become human again. We were so touched by his story.”

As they start to clean up their mental and physical problems, practitioners will come across unexpected hardships in the early stage of cultivation. Many people have tried all sorts of Qigong in their search for the true meaning of life. And when they come across Falun Gong, they are excited to find the answers for the questions that they wanted to find but couldn't find. You can imagine how excited they are.

How to balance cultivation and family life is a big issue that many practitioners can encounter in the early stages of their cultivation. Mr. Li Hongzhi talked about this in detail in his lectures.

(Zhuan Falun) “Cultivation must take place through tribulations so as to test whether you can part with and care less about different kinds of human qing and desires. If you are attached to these things, you will not succeed in cultivation. Everything has its karmic relationship. Why can human beings be human? It is because human beings have qing. They live just for this qing. Affection among family members, love between a man and a woman, love for parents, feelings, friendship, doing things for the sake of friendship, and everything else all relate to this qing. Whether a person likes to do something or not, is happy or unhappy, loves or hates something, and everything in the entire human society comes from this qing. If this qing is not relinquished, you will be unable to cultivate. If you break free from this qing, nobody can affect you. An everyday person’s mind will be unable to sway you. What comes and replaces it is benevolence, which is a nobler thing. Of course, it is not easy to cut off this qing right away. Cultivation is a long process and a process of gradually giving up your attachments. Nonetheless, you must be strict with yourself.

As practitioners, you will suddenly come across conflicts. What should you do? You should always maintain a compassionate and calm heart. Then, when you run into a problem, you will be able to do well because it gives you some room as a buffer. You should always be benevolent and kind to others and consider others when doing anything. Whenever you encounter a problem, you should first consider whether others can put up with this matter or if it will hurt anyone. In doing so, there will not be any problems. Therefore, in cultivation you should follow a higher and higher standard for yourself.”

(Falun Dafa practitioner) “Teacher says to look within when there is conflict in the family. I can find my own attachments every time (I look within). My family life is happier now and my husband helps to do Dafa work as well.”

Practitioners feel positive changes in their mental states during the process of looking within when confronting a conflict and continuously try to be a good and do better in everyday life. Practitioners felt they are changing in their heart. What they used to think and do are no long held true for them. By experiencing personal inner changes they come to understand the profound meaning of Dafa cultivation. Their environment is getting more and more peaceful and healthy.

In 1997, China had been open to the outside world for 20 years. While the country has had economic progress, the spiritual and moral standard has declined rapidly. Corruption, prostitution and underworld gangs are widespread. People became used to these changes. They are even drifting downward with this trend.

In the spring of 1997, in the northeastern city of Dalian, Falun Dafa practitioners held a grand experience sharing conference.

(A young Falun Dafa practitioner read ZHUAN FALUN in Falun Dafa Experience Sharing Conference in Dalian, 1997) “In the community of cultivators, the relationship between loss and gain is frequently brought up. Among everyday people, it is also discussed. How should our practitioners treat losses and gains? It is different from ordinary people. What everyday people want is personal gain and how to live well and comfortably. Our practitioners are not this way,…”

The principles of gain and loss this little four-year-old read out are being practiced daily by Falun Gong practitioners.

(MS. LI, Falun Dafa Practitioner from Beijing) “We went by bus every day to Tianjing to attend Teacher’s lectures. Whoever got on the bus first got the best seats. Those who came later would have to go the back and the back seats are more bumpy. In the beginning, people ran to the bus in order o get a better seat. But as we attended more of the lectures, people stopped doing it. Some sat on the seats that were added in between the isle seats. Sitting there was very uncomfortable for a ride of more than 2 hours long. Everyone would like to sit in the normal seating. But they all wanted to let others sit there and they wanted to sit in the seats in between the isles.”

*“Cultivating Amidst the Delusion*

*Ordinary people do not understand the pain of cultivation*

*Happiness to them is vying and competing;*

*Cultivate, my disciples, ‘till no single omission is found,*

*And with the passing of all adversity,*

*Will come the sweetness of true joy.”*

Li Hongzhi

September 15, 1994

Falun Gong practitioners cultivate and improve their xinxing in the most complicated environment. In the most complicated environment.

Luwu village near Zijin County, Guangdong Province, is well-known for theft. The natural environment around there is very good. Officials developed 600 Mu (99 acres) of fruit fields near the village.

Unexpectedly, the villagers took the fruit field to be a source of easy money. Almost every family came out to steal fruit during the harvest season; selling their spoils in the market. This issue made the local authorities' headache. Guards were even sent to protect the field, catch the thieves and display them in public. Even so, the villagers still wouldn't stop stealing.

In early 1998, Falun Gong spread to this little village. Out of the 300 villagers, 80 attended the group exercises everyday, and they haven't stolen again since then. After the changes in these villagers, the entire village’s stealing habit completely stopped.

In the winter of that year, some practitioners representing the village joined the Guangzhou Falun Dafa Cultivation Experience Sharing Conference. They shared their stories. “Previously, I didn't know this principle and thought taking the public property was justified if I don’t steal from it, others will. Now I understand the principle of no loss, no gain, to gain one must lose. But now I know the principle that people who do bad deeds will gain bad karma and in return lose their precious things.

An official from Linjiang County government said: ‘Your Falun Gong is so good and played the role that even the law couldn’t enforce. I want to buy one of your books to read.’”

The change that occurred in Luwu Village showed how Falun Dafa was making a good impact in society. Cultivators do everything according to the xinxing requirements of Dafa. If they are government officials, they must be hard-working and upright officials. If they are workers, they must be disciplined workers. If they are ordinary citizens, they must be the persons that are good to others.

Mr. Li has explained the profound meaning of this when he first came out to teach the practice.

(Zhuan Falun) “The director at a city’s Dafa instruction center went to a factory to see how Falun Dafa students were doing with their practice. The factory manager came out to greet him in person, “Since studying Falun Dafa, these workers have been coming to work early and going home late. They work very diligently and will do any assignment their supervisor gives. They also no longer compete for personal gain. By doing so, they’ve made the whole factory take on a new look, and the factory’s financial returns have also improved. Your practice is so powerful. When is your teacher coming? I’d also like to attend his lectures.” The main purpose of our Falun Dafa cultivation is to guide people to high levels. While it does not intend to do such a thing, it can nonetheless assume a great constructive role by promoting spiritual civilization in society. If everyone searches internally and considers how to conduct himself or herself well, I would say that society will stabilize and the human moral standard will move up to where it once was.”

(“Health ABC” program in Jilin Education Channel) “After reading the book, I was moved. Why? Because it teaches people to consider others first and not be selfish and have a heart for others. It sets up the strict moral criteria of Truth-Compassion-Tolerance. You have to cultivate your heart, have a big heart and be able to let go of anything. For example, it’s common for intellectuals to be attached to fame and self-interest. They often compete and fight for promotion. They are all like that. After I began practicing Falun Gong, I became very relaxed and could let go of anything. It was said you gain weight when you are relaxed. I gained more than 20 pounds.”

Many people are on the path to return to their original true selves, from an ordinary person to a cultivator. It’s unprecedented.

In 1998, Falun Gong practitioners were seen everywhere in the northeast, in the south and in the northwest, from the city to the countryside. They helped to stabilize society and raise the moral standard.

In November that year, Mr. Li Hongzhi wrote the poem “I Smile”:

*I smile— sentient beings have awakened*

*I smile— Dafa now spreads*

*I smile— the ferryboat has set sail*

*I smile— for sentient beings there is hope*

Please watch episode 5 - Before the Storm.