



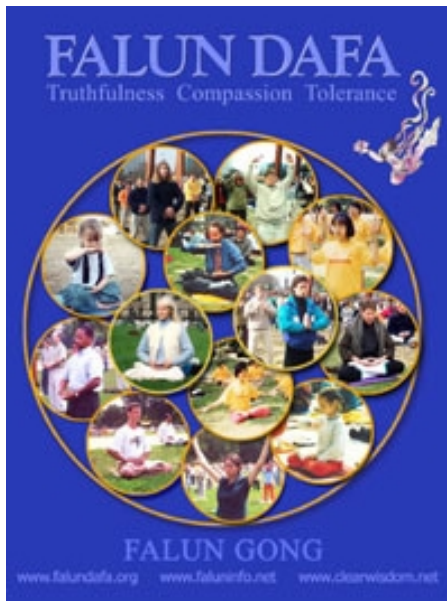
Falun Gong Stories

A Journey to Enlightenment



Chief Editor; Lance K. Culp

A JOURNEY TO ENLIGHTENMENT



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Preface

Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa) is a powerful, holistic practice that cultivates the mind, body, and spirit. It's origins lie in antiquity. As a form of traditional Chinese *qigong*, Falun Gong was for many centuries passed down in lineage fashion from teacher to disciple, unknown to the general public. In 1992 that would change. For in May of that year, Mr. Li Hongzhi, the practice's master, brought Falun Gong to the general public in northeastern China. It was time for the world to enjoy the profound benefits of this practice.

The practice of Falun Gong is based on the principles of the universe: Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance. Falun Gong's effectiveness in improving people's health and morality led the practice to spread—primarily by word of mouth—around the globe to over 40 countries in less than a decade. Since 1992 over one hundred million people have come to practice Falun Gong. They are from all walks of life and every imaginable cultural background. The major Falun Gong book, *Zhuan Falun*, has been translated into over a dozen languages and sold tens of millions of copies. The world has quickly come to know the goodness of Falun Gong.

Falun Gong has five exercises that facilitate deep transformation of mind and body. They are simple, easy to learn, and enjoyable to perform. What's more, they suit most people's busy lifestyles well, for the exercises can be done anywhere, anytime, and for any length of time. The movements help to quickly open the body's energy channels, and enable subtle energy to circulate smoothly throughout the body. Regular performance of the exercises typically results in stress relief, better energy, health improvements, emotional balance, better sleep, improved immune function, and increased fitness. The exercises are always taught by volunteers without charge and are open to anyone interested.

The practice of Falun Gong is much more than five exercises, however: it is about self-improvement. Practitioners cultivate their hearts and minds by eliminating negative "attachments" and striving to embody Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance. As one's heart

and mind become more pure and good, one's body undergoes proportionate changes. Mind and body are here inseparable. The principles taught by Mr. Li in his writings and lectures play a guiding role. Through their study and through performing the five exercises, one gradually assimilates one's nature to that of the universe. Spiritual enlightenment and perfect health become realizable aspirations with Falun Gong practice.

In this book you will find the personal stories of Falun Gong practitioners from many different backgrounds. These touching stories give you insight into why people practice Falun Gong, as well as how this practice has improved the quality of their lives. They even suggest how Falun Gong has enriched their lives with deeper meaning; most students of Falun Gong come to understand their life in a new light. We hope, then, that these stories might nourish your spirit and allow you to have a taste of Falun Gong. We dare say it's the next best thing to trying the practice yourself.

Translations of some key Chinese terms:

- Falun (fah-luhn) = Law Wheel
- Gong (gong) = 1. High-level energy; 2. A practice
- Dafa (dah-fah) = Great Way, the Great Law
- Fa (fah) = Law, Principle, or Way.
- Zhen-Shan-Ren (juhn-shon-ren) = Truthfulness-Compassion-Tolerance.

Editor's note: As this is a working draft put together under time constraints, please excuse any errors that might inconvenience your read. Thank you for your understanding.

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Inside Falun Dafa: Some Personal Views on the Practice

Jonathan Browde, New York, USA

Over the past seven months, Falun Dafa (also known as Falun Gong) has made headlines in the world news time and time again. I have watched story after story unfold as new developments arise. Some of the stories contain factual information, some contain information that was obviously modified or taken out of context and some contain outright fabrications. Additionally, these news stories appear to lack any real in-

depth information about the actual content of Falun Dafa. That is, they don't quite answer the basic question, what exactly is Falun Dafa? Rather than write "letters to the editor" about specific news stories or pursue traditional channels for clarifying the misrepresentation of information or lack of information in the media, I would simply like to give you a view of my personal life as an American and a practitioner of Falun Dafa. Outside of media constraints, I'd like to offer an intimate look, from an individual's perspective, at Falun Dafa.

To begin with, let me introduce myself. My name is Jonathan (Levi) Browde. I was born and raised in the southwestern United States. I am 27 years old. I have three sisters: one older and two younger. My father is a Law Professor at the local State University. Nine years ago, I moved to the East Coast to attend college. Currently, I live in Manhattan. I work in the computer software industry, and I



Falun Dafa
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The Great Way -- Based on the Essential Nature of the Universe

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have a fairly wide circle of friends. I am a New York Yankees fan, have musical interests ranging from Bob Marley to Bach, and I am a sucker for deep pan Pizza. And, of course, I am a Falun Dafa practitioner.

So, why was I attracted to Falun Dafa and what has it done for me?

Let's first start with the basics. Falun Dafa incorporates 5 sets of "exercises" that span from slow-moving standing gestures, stretches and postures to sitting in meditation. OK, so what's the big deal? It sounds just like Taichi, yoga or some form of martial art, right? On the surface, yes, it may look similar to these things, but it is actually much different. First of all, the system of movements is very easy to learn and doesn't involve any breathing techniques, mental exercises, strenuous motion or complex postures. The system has very ancient roots and has been passed down from a very remote age, yet it is simple to do and easy to learn. Secondly, it makes me feel better than anything else I've ever tried. In this day and age, I'm sure most Americans, are familiar with the feeling you get after a "really good work-out." The body feels good, the mind is clear, etc. Well, my experience is that Falun Dafa can do all of that, but to a much greater degree, and at a much more profound level. After practicing the Falun Dafa exercises, the body feels light, healthy and strong. The mind is clear, calm and focused. I was always an active athlete in school. After school I continued a regular workout schedule, combining stair-master exercise, free weights, nautilus machines, etc. However, my physical health and mental clarity never even came close to the level I have achieved from practicing Falun Dafa. How could that be possible if the movements are so relaxed that one doesn't even break a sweat? Isn't it necessary to really get the muscles working and the heart pumping to give the body a "good work-out?" Well, in my experience, no. The exercises of Falun Dafa have made me far more fit than any workout regimen I have ever tried. I cannot really explain to you scientifically why this is. I do know, however, that Falun Dafa has very ancient roots and is based on principles that are quite profound. Consequently, it is not so surprising that it has the power to cleanse and improve one's body to such an extent. Furthermore, this has not only been the effect on me, but also on

many others I have met who practice Falun Dafa.

So, is Falun Dafa primarily a set of exercises?

No, not at all. I view the set of exercises as merely one component of Falun Dafa. Mr. Li Hongzhi (pronounced Lee-Hong-Jer), the man who first brought Falun Dafa to the public, has written a book called *Zhuan Falun*, which is the most complete work of Falun Dafa, laying out the principles and foundations of Falun Dafa. He has also written another book called *China Falun Gong*, which is more of an introduction to the principles and practice of Falun Dafa as well as a demonstration of the exercises. I spend a lot of my free time reading and re-reading these books. To me, they explain the principles of life, science and the human condition more clearly and more in-depth than anything else I have ever read, studied or come across. Additionally, these books have done something quite remarkable – they actually play a guiding role for me on a daily basis, which is something that no other book, be it spiritual, religious, philosophical, self-help, etc. has been able to do for me before. What do I mean by this? I have read many great books before, which I felt changed my life or opened my eyes to new vistas (from Jack Kerouac to Shakespeare and from Stephen King to Lao-Tzu). Yet, after looking back over the period of time in which I read these books, did they really change me? Did they really provide me with a way to become a better, healthier person – to truly rise above the fears, anxieties, self-doubt, selfishness, etc. associated with daily life? No, not really. *Zhuan Falun*, however, has played such a role; by studying the principles it has laid out, it has helped me to rise above these things again and again, constantly moving to higher levels. What is more, the books are free to download over the Internet www.falundafa.org. They can also be found in major bookstores and public libraries if you prefer to have a real book in your hands while reading).

So, that's it? Practicing the exercises and reading from the book?

Well, yes, that is primarily what we do as practitioners. Nothing else is really necessary for the practice. Additionally, you can do these things in your own way and according to your own schedule. Some

practitioners do the exercises and read by themselves in the privacy of their own homes. Others do so in large groups. Some do the exercises in the morning, others in the evening, and still others whenever they have time to fit it into their busy schedule. I know practitioners who are busy pursuing Ph.D. degrees, while others are performance artists; some are wealthy business people and they come from all walks of life and strata of society. In other words, in terms of organization, it is not much different than those who jog or those who work out at a gym. Some people do it by themselves, others do it in groups. Some people jog in Central Park, others go to gyms or have equipment at home. It's really up to you.

Well, if that is it, why is the Chinese Government so upset about Falun Dafa and why has it been banned in China?

One factor is that there are a large number of people practicing Falun Dafa in China: By the Chinese Government's own estimate during a state-sponsored survey a few years back, there were approximately 70 million people in China practicing at that time, including many Communist Party members, as well as high-ranking government and military officials. I think the Chinese Government is nervous about a large number of people engaging in any activity that is not under their direct control and supervision regardless of what that activity may be, especially if many of them also belong to the Communist Party or work for the government. In other words, on one level it is purely the numbers involved that has made the government upset. In fact, when Mr. Li was first teaching Falun Dafa in China back in 1992-93, the Chinese Government actually sponsored his lectures and gave Mr. Li awards for his work in teaching Falun Dafa to the people of China. Neither the content of Falun Dafa nor the form in which the people practice it has changed since then. The only thing that has changed is the number of people. Therefore, I believe this is what has made the Chinese Government so nervous.

The second factor at work here is the policies of the Chinese Gov-



ernment and its attitude toward human rights, freedom of beliefs, etc. Keep in mind, the Chinese Communist Government is officially an atheist state, and unfortunately it has exhibited a consistent record of suppression and intolerance when dealing with the spiritual/religious beliefs of people. In this sense, its treatment of Falun Dafa practitioners is par for the course. And while it should be noted that the methods utilized and the wide sweeping steps currently being enacted by the Chinese Government during the suppression of Falun Dafa are incredibly inhumane and unjustified, I do not wish to elaborate on this issue here in this article. I simply wish to point out that Falun Dafa practitioners are not against the government of China. They do not seek new leadership in China, political reform, or anything like that. It is of no interest to them. All Falun Dafa practitioners ask is that the people of China regain the basic human rights to freedom of assembly and belief, which are in the Chinese Government's own constitution as well as the UN Declaration of Human Rights that China has signed.

Well, the practitioners in China seem pretty adamant about not backing down: They seem pretty dedicated to the practice, right?

Yes, I would say that they are not backing down, but at the same time they are not advancing on the government either. They have made no demands for political reform or change, and they certainly have never gone on the offensive. They merely continue to try to explain to the government what Falun Dafa is all about so that the government will see that Falun Dafa poses no political threat. Previously, practitioners used the regular governmental channels to make these appeals, which were all in accordance with Chinese law. Now, even the regular channels for appealing to the government which ordinary Chinese citizens may utilize have been closed to Falun Dafa practitioners. They simply do what they can to peacefully start a dialogue with the government. The newspapers have taken to calling these peaceful appeals "protests." However, we are not talking about people marching in the streets with signs, yelling out slogans or demands. That, in my mind, is a protest. What practitioners in China have been doing is merely going outside to a local park or a public square (such as Tiananmen Square in Beijing) and quietly practicing the slow-moving exercises just like mil-

lions of Chinese have been doing for years throughout the country. This is not protest. It is a calm, peaceful appeal to the government to please stop the suppression that is driving a wedge into the heart of a nation with an ancient heritage and rich cultural tradition.

In terms of being dedicated to the practice, I would say they are dedicated, but not in a fanatical way or in a way that lacks basic common sense. The practice is quite powerful. In addition to some of the effects on myself that I have related to you, some people who came to Falun Dafa with terrible, life-threatening diseases now enjoy complete health. Also, Falun Dafa's ability to truly uplift your mind and spirit is quite miraculous. We often think of miracles as something shocking to the eye, like something you would only see in a big budget Hollywood movie. However, looking back on who I was before finding Falun Dafa and who I am now, I would say it is not short of a miracle. At any rate, I feel very fortunate to have been handed a Falun Dafa book by a friend at work. It really did change my life. So, yes I can understand why people in China are very saddened by what the government is doing and continually step forward, risking arrest, imprisonment and even violent physical abuse in order to rectify the situation. And, while, at first glance, they may appear a little over-zealous in their allegiance to Falun Dafa, is their behavior really so strange? It wasn't so long ago in this country when people willingly put themselves in harm's way in order to rectify the hatred and alienation brought about by segregation. Didn't people participate in sit-ins or board Greyhound buses in protest of segregation knowing full well that they would probably suffer arrest, imprisonment and even violent physical abuse? Didn't Dr. Martin Luther King himself, write a letter from a Birmingham jail? Was he really a criminal "disturbing social order" as the Chinese Government has accused the Falun Dafa practitioners of doing? I do not mean to draw a comparison between the Civil Rights movement in the United States with what is now happening to Falun Dafa in China. They are not the same thing at all. However, I do wish to point out that it is not so strange to have hard-working, well-grounded citizens who believe in their country to step out and peacefully appeal to their government when they feel an injustice has occurred. In my opinion, that is what is now happening in China.

So, how can I find out more about Falun Dafa?

There are a number of ways:

- Read through the Falun Dafa books: From the web site www.falundafa.org, you can download for free all of the books written by Falun Dafa founder, Mr. Li Hongzhi. You may also order the main books, *China Falun Gong* and *Zhuan Falun* from any major bookstore if you prefer.

- Learn the exercises in your local area: The web site has listings of Falun Dafa practice sites around the world (by the way “practice site” is just a term we use for a group of practitioners who volunteer their time to introduce Falun Dafa to others). There are now practice sites in almost every major city in the United States. Once you find a site relatively close by, just call up the contact person listed for that site and tell them, “Hey, I want to learn the exercises.” They will be able to direct you to a practice site. Also keep in mind, all activities are done on a voluntary basis. There is never any charge for anything – no fees, no dues, no donations, etc. If you do not have access to the Internet, you may call 1-877-FALUN-99 and a volunteer will be able to direct you to a local practice site. Practitioners will not contact or ‘follow up’ anything with you.

- See a 9-Day lecture: When Mr. Li Hongzhi was teaching in China, he often gave a 9-day lecture series: That is, an hour and a half lecture once a day for 9 days. A few of these lecture series were captured on videotape, and practitioners periodically get together and host a 9-day lecture at a practitioner’s home. This is how I was introduced to Falun Dafa. I thought it was excellent.

Falun Dafa – A Science of Body, Mind and Spirit

Jingduan Yang, MD, Pennsylvania

I. Health Benefits: Byproduct of the Practice



In March 1999, Mrs. Song, a 65-year-old Chinese woman, came to the United States to visit her son and daughter-in-law in Minnesota. For the past 10 years, she had hesitated to leave China, where she was under the close care of physicians of both Chinese and modern Western medicine. Mrs. Song had a long standing history of coronary artery disease with angina, which she controlled by taking nitrates every day. She also had severe rheumatoid arthritis for which she took a number of medications and Chinese herbal remedies. Despite such treatments, Mrs. Song had low energy, shortness of breath upon mild exertion, and swollen legs and ankles. She could foretell weather changes according to the severity of pain in her joints. The eye surgery she had 35 years ago had left her with glasses and uneven vision. In addition, she suffered nicotine addiction and smoked a pack of Chinese cigarettes every day. Of course, smoking exacerbated the poor functioning of her heart and lungs. She had unsuccessfully tried every possible way to quit smoking.

With the promise of having a physician knowledgeable about both Chinese and Western medicine traditions, and secure with her three-month supply of medications and herbal formulas, and, believe it or not, 20 cartons of Chinese cigarettes, Mrs. Song made the trip with her husband (who also a smoker!) to Minnesota for a three-month visit. As you can imagine, her son and daughter-in-law's apartment soon filled with the smell of smoke.

Mrs. Song's son and daughter-in-law both practice Falun Gong. Each day, they read a chapter from the book *Zhuan Falun* aloud to their parents. Mrs. Song found the book very interesting and liked the

readings very much. The book reminded her of the traditional moral teachings she had received from her mother when she was young. One morning they read Chapter 7, which contains two paragraphs about how smoking negatively affects the practice of cultivation. Mr. Li wrote, “I advise everyone that if you truly want to practice cultivation you should quit smoking from now on, and it is guaranteed that you can quit...When you smoke a cigarette again, it will not taste right. If you read this lecture in the book, it will also have this effect.”

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Song became excited and really wanted to practice Falun Gong, but she did not expect immediate effects. However, after lunch, she lit a cigarette, totally forgetting what she had earlier heard that morning. Her son and daughter-in-law noticed, but said nothing. After several deep drags, Mrs. Song suddenly dropped the cigarette and rushed to the bathroom. She almost vomited. However, she did not give up her skepticism and continued testing herself by putting an unlit cigarette under her nose and smelling it. Each time she did so, the smell made her sick. She has not smoked ever since then.

After reading the book and watching the video lecture, Mrs. Song began to understand many things she had never known, such as why people have to go through birth, old age, illness, and death. She learned that people should cultivate and practice in order to assimilate themselves into the nature of the universe, to become mentally enlightened to the truth of the universe, and to become physically purified and transformed. She embraced the teaching, learned the five exercises, and practiced them every day.

One day, after a group exercise practice, Mrs. Song suddenly experienced chest pain; this was new to her, and the medication she had been taking should have prevented it. Feeling puzzled, she began to remember the Teacher’s words, “I do not talk about healing illness here, nor will we heal illness. As a genuine practitioner, however, you cannot practice cultivation with an ill body. I will purify your body. The body purification will be done only for those who come to truly learn the practice and the Fa (Law).” She further recalled the Teacher’s words, “We must dig it (the illness) out and eliminate it completely from its root. With this, you may feel that your illnesses have recurred.

This is to remove your karma fundamentally. Thus, you will have reactions.”

She continued her reading and exercising despite episodic chest pains. In about one week, all the symptoms disappeared, together with her joint pain and swollen ankles. Happily, she bought herself a new pair of shoes, the size she had worn 20 years ago. She was amazed at the power of Falun Gong and began striving to live every moment of her life following the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance. One morning in June 1999, she woke up and found her glasses broken under her, a kind of accident that had not happened to her before. She immediately discovered that she did not need them to see clearly anymore. On June 25, Mrs. Song gave a speech at a Falun Gong experience sharing conference held in Chicago. On stage in front of a large audience, she was able to read her paper without the aid of eyeglasses.

Such health benefits are common to practitioners of Falun Gong. In 1997, a group of scientists and physicians from top hospitals and medical research institutions in Beijing surveyed 12,731 practitioners about the health benefits obtained from Falun Gong. According to the survey, out of the 12,731 participants, 93.4% had medical conditions, and 49.8% had suffered from at least three diseases before they began practicing Falun Gong. Through practicing Falun Gong, the total healing effectiveness reached 99.1%, among which the complete recovery rate was 58.5%. The fraction of “very energetic” people increased from 3.5% (before practicing) to 55.3% (after practicing); 96.5% felt mentally healthier. On average, each practitioner saved the state 3,215 yuan (about US \$386) in annual medical expenses.

However, if you ask Falun Gong practitioners if health is the goal of their practice, their answer may surprise you: “No, health benefits are only the byproduct of our practice.” How can they obtain these by-products almost for free? While using the best that modern medicine has to offer, it usually takes someone a lifetime and an enormous amount of dollars and talent to obtain such an effect. Can we make sense of it from the perspective of modern medicine or traditional Chinese medicine?

II. Medical Perspectives: Scratching the Surface of Mind/Body Relationships

What benefits can people obtain from practicing Falun Gong? The following are common:

- Greater feeling of relaxation, mental clarity, and freedom from stress
- Increased quantity and quality of personal energy
- Ability to give up smoking and other undesirable habits
- Improved relationships, especially through learning to handle interpersonal conflicts better
- Improved physical health and physical fitness
- Increased understanding about what constitutes one's "true self"
- Understanding about fundamental natural laws and principles
- Understanding why tribulations enter our lives and how they can be useful
- Insight into the relationship between mind and matter
- Opportunity to work on self-improvement while spending time with a group of compassionate, accepting, and committed people

Modern medicine embraces a biopsychosocial model. After investigating 170 sudden deaths over about six years in 1971, George Engel observed that serious illness or even death might be associated with psychological stress or trauma. Emotional stress can contribute to wide range of health problems, such as coronary artery disease, asthma, ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, flare-ups of viral infections, likelihood of contracting infectious mononucleosis, cancer, AIDS, and even Alzheimer's disease.

Poor life-style habits cause 70-80% of all illnesses. For instance, in the United States, about 10% of women and 20% of men meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse. Alcohol-related diseases (e.g., cancer, heart disease, and hepatic disease) and suicide account for about 200,000 deaths each year. Alcohol abuse reduces life expectancy about 10 years. The direct and indirect social costs are estimated at

more than \$150 billion, about \$600 per capita.

In 1995, the United States had an estimated 61 million smokers; of these, 4.5 million were adolescents. Each year, 170,000 new cases of lung cancer are diagnosed, resulting in some 150,000 deaths; 80-90% of all lung cancers occurs among smokers. In China today, there are 300 million smokers. Poor diet, lack of exercise, and depression also lead to higher risk of heart disease. Despite modern technology and health education, 400,000-500,000 people die from coronary artery disease each year.

While modern medicine looks primarily to mechanical or bio-physical problems as causes of illness, traditional Chinese medicine has never separated mind and body. The organs are considered not only in terms of their anatomical existence, but also in terms of concepts of energetic networking and commanding sites of mental function.

Such emotional stimuli as joy, anger, sadness, fear, or worry affect the energy of the heart, liver, lungs, spleen, and kidneys, respectively. As a result, the physiological function of these organs is affected, and a number of somatic dysfunction may appear. Conversely, if these organs are assaulted by other pathogenic factors, such as infection, vascular events, toxicity, or trauma, they tend to generate corresponding emotional changes.

For example, feelings of anger toward others irritability or toward one's depression will affect the liver. In traditional Chinese medicine, the liver regulates the energy flow, helps digestion, nourishes sinews and ligaments, stores blood and regulates women's menstruation, is in charge of the ethereal soul that relates to dreams, and is responsible for vision and eyes. Its meridian is connected, through its partner, the gallbladder, with the shoulder, neck, and temple area of the head. When the liver energy is disturbed, as during stress, one may simultaneously experience several illnesses, as explained by modern medicine. Such illnesses include chronic pain syndrome, fibromyalgia, migraine, PMS, irritable bowel syndrome, depression, nightmares or sleep disorders, dizziness and vertigo, abnormal menstruation, and breast fibroids. All of these illnesses, according to traditional Chinese medicine, are caused primarily by a single condition called Liver Qi Stagnation. It

may be more than coincidental that, when Prozac was widely used for treating depression, people also found it useful for treating PMS and migraines.

All these interactions are realized through an energetic networking system called meridians. Meridians have their representative points on the surface of the body, which one can stimulate with such tools as needles, pressure, or moxa to modulate energy dysfunction of the internal organs. For thousands of years, traditional physicians have been helping people with their qi by using acupuncture, herbal formulas, Dao Ying (like Qigong today) and, in particular, by advising people to stay emotionally peaceful.

However, the secret to optimal health is to have a “clean heart and few desires.” In the *Yellow Emperor’s Internal Classics of Medicine* it is said that, “Heart is the organ of the Emperor; when the Emperor is not wise, the other twelve organs will be in danger.” But how can one come to have a clean heart and few desires?

III. Cultivation Practice: Spiritual Renewal

When you first see people practicing Falun Gong, you may find the movements graceful and soothing. However, you may not find the practice particularly different from other forms of Qigong, Yoga, or Taichi. Why has Falun Gong attracted such a large population within such a short time? Why do its practitioners claim such wonderful, sometimes miraculous, healing effects?

The term *qi*, life force or energy, is becoming increasingly popular in the United States. Falun Gong practitioners try to replace this ordinary qi with what is termed *gong*. Described in Li Hongzhi’s book, *Zhuan Falun*, *gong* is a higher energy from the universe. While qi is subject to all kinds of dysfunction (what Traditional Chinese Medicine describes as qi deficiency, rebellious qi, sinking qi, stagnant qi, collapsed qi, etc.), *gong* is a higher level of energy from the universe that is pathogen resistant. However, Falun Gong holds that the only way to obtain this higher form of energy is to cultivate one’s spirit and mind to assimilate into the nature of universe—Truth, Compassion and Tol-

erance. Practicing the five sets of Falun Gong exercises is said to enhance and accelerate the process of gong development, but only if one accompanies the exercises with cultivation of one's heart and mind in his daily life.

So, is this belief true? And what exactly happens if gong is, in fact, developed? Professor Lili Feng and her assistants at the Scripps Research Institute in California have been studying 17 Falun Gong practitioners' lymphocyte efficacy against HIV virus in vitro, and the preliminary results are impressive. Some of these cells have been proven to be HIV resistant. One scientist in the group, a molecular biologist, found that the practitioners' neutrophils (white blood cells that play a key role in fighting bacterial infection) live 30 times longer than average cells, and also remain in high function during their extended lifespan. Currently, this scientist is expanding her study samples to include more practitioners' data. She could not explain her findings using science's current understanding of such things. She told me that "it can only be explained by the teachings in *Zhuan Falun*."

According to the Buddha school, bad karma accumulates from wrongdoing in ones this and past lifetimes, causing suffering. Falun Gong holds that the suffering from illness results from karma, and that, through self-cultivation, this karma may be eliminated, bringing one to an illness-free and ultimately enlightened state. In *Zhuan Falun*, Mr. Li Hongzhi states, however, that "cultivation depends on one's self, and cultivation energy depends on one's Master." So it is understood that, through obtaining the right teachings and through self-cultivation, one may not only become illness-free, but may reach enlightenment.

To my understanding of Falun Gong, when a practitioner follows the right teachings, miracles can happen. Practitioners begin to become fully aware of their personal and ethical shortcomings, and make improvements. They begin to understand how to live a truly meaningful life, and for this they are rewarded. It becomes clear to them that, without the health of one's spirit, one's mind and body can never be healthy.

Starting in 1949, when the Communists took power in China, any belief in enlightened or divine beings was regarded as backward and superstitious. In fact, every aspect of traditional Chinese culture was

viewed this way. The people who dared to hold onto their beliefs were severely punished; many were even executed. Since then, the Communist Party has controlled the educational system and media. Because the party exalts science and suppresses traditional beliefs, very few Chinese of recent generations believe in anything beyond what exists in this material world. A quote from Chinese President Jiang Zemin of China represents this view well. He asked, “Why do many Americans, living in such a scientifically and technologically advanced society, believe in God?”

Over the last seven years, more than 100 million people in China and abroad have become spiritually renewed through practicing Falun Gong. For them, though, it hasn't been simply faith that has led them in this direction, but incredible personal experiences, including healing of chronic and sometimes “incurable” illnesses and enlightenment to the truth of the universe. Because of the power of such experiences, upon facing severe punishment and even threats of death by the Chinese Government, Falun Gong practitioners have not given up, but instead have become more persistent in the practice. They return the Chinese government's fabrications with stories of truth; they return the persecution with compassion and tolerance.



A Wellspring of Self Improvement, Knowledge, and Understanding

John Nania, Minnesota, USA

In January 1999, I went to my usual clinic to see a new health care professional, who I hoped would be able to help me with my recovery from several car accidents I had been in, as well as with some other chronic health problems. This doctor was a licensed acupuncturist from China. As we were going over my history, he asked me, “Why do you think you have been in so many car accidents?”

In reply, I told him a little joke I had thought of a few days before: “I don’t know, maybe I was an insurance company lawyer in a past life!”

But instead of smiling or laughing, as most people would, he just calmly looked at me and asked, “Do you believe in the past life?”

At his question, I looked down and thought for a few seconds. “I don’t disbelieve in it,” I answered. We went on to other subjects, but he had planted a seed in January that would sprout in the spring.

SEARCHING

My doctor touched on an issue of truths beyond the observable physical realm. All my life, I have avidly sought truths, knowledge and understanding. I have followed numerous paths and learned from numerous teachers, many of whom came to me through books. I searched for answers and ways to improve myself.

I ran and swam and lifted weights, tried nutritional innovations and traditional Chinese medicine, studied sciences and humanities. I pondered and searched. I looked at various spiritual and metaphysical paths, but somewhere along the line I realized that I had lost my ability to hear the voice of God. Long before I reached my 40th birthday I was adrift spiritually. I had as many questions as ever, and could never fully accept the answers I’d been given, particularly answers to the Big Questions in Life that we all ask at some point: “Where do we come

from? Why are we here? What happens when we die?"

Practicing Falun Dafa has helped me immeasurably to improve myself in three general categories: 1. My personal health and fitness; 2. My knowledge about humanity and the world we live in; and 3. My understanding of the higher meaning and purpose of my life and of life in general.

FINDING

I had only a vague idea about what qigong was in March 1999, and didn't realize that it involves physical exercises. When my acupuncture doctor was treating me two days after I was hit by a car while I was crossing a street. He mentioned that he was practicing an advanced type of qigong. He was very low key, and I was open to the idea. So he wrote down the local Falun Dafa web site on his business card, and I took a look at it a few days later. He had suggested that I might want to try one of the books, and to read some of it every day until I finished.

What I read on the web site seemed different from other things that I had read. It was a powerful and authoritative voice, but a caring voice. It seemed to fill me with a current of electricity as I read, and I decided to get a copy of the book to take on a vacation. Even after I began reading *Zhuan Falun* in earnest, I didn't understand much of what I was reading. But for many things that I could understand, I found myself saying, "Yes. Yes! That's true! No one else says so, but that's the way it really is!" As I continued to read, I would make comments to myself like, "Yes, life on this planet is a maze.... Of course, mind and matter are of one thing ... That's right, studying all these different elementary level textbooks never will get you to the college level of understanding."

I finished *Zhuan Falun* in about 14 days, reading some every day, and before I was done, I was saying to myself, "This is The Truth! This is what I have to do now." Without ever seeing the exercises, or meeting more

than one Falun Dafa practitioner, or knowing any more than what was in that book, I decided I was going to treat myself as a genuine practitioner. I had found my best Teacher in this book, a better teacher than those in the other books I had learned from all my life.

UNDERSTANDING

Our Teacher tells us, “You should be strict with yourself, though we allow you to improve gradually.” (*Zhuan Falun*, 3rd Translation Edition, p. 146) When it came to my health and fitness, I continued to see a chiropractor and other caregivers for a few weeks. At first I didn’t fully grasp the teachings about what physical symptoms really mean, and I didn’t see how I could just stop going to get treatments after seven years and so-called permanent spinal damage. But when my chiropractor told me in May that he was moving out of state, it seemed like the hint that I needed to just stop spending time and energy on external things, like nutritional supplements and health-care treatments. So within a month of beginning cultivation practice, I quit all of that, and haven’t been back to that clinic since.

When people who know about my past health issues ask me about my health these days, I say, “I feel good, I’m very well. I’m not perfect, but my health is fine, and I don’t focus on that any more.” When I get the opportunity to talk about health benefits of practicing Falun Dafa, I tell people, “I honestly believe this is the best thing I could be doing for my health.”

As for human behavior, Dafa contains countless insights. In the US, we can observe so much about humanity and see interpersonal conflicts played out on the roads and highways. Why are people so competitive in their cars? Why do they so often act so inconsiderately and dangerously? One day it came to me: “Why do people do these things? It’s because they are selfish! All of us are selfish, and that’s precisely why we are here on this planet, in this lifetime!”

How many people think of the interests of other’s first when they are behind the wheel? When I understood that competition is the dominant mentality on the roads, it made it easier for me to shift my mind and become less tense, more calm when driving. As a practitioner, I

am not supposed to fight and compete for personal interest, and I try to apply this to my own driving. I try to recall this passage from *Zhuan Falun* when driving, or in any interaction with other people:

“As practitioners, you will suddenly come across conflicts. What should you do? You should always maintain a heart of compassion and kindness. Then, when you run into a problem, you will be able to do well because it gives you room to buffer the confrontation. 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.”

Zhuan Falun gives far simpler and clearer, yet much deeper answers to the age-old Big Questions in Life. Knowing at least part of the answer to “Why am I here?” after reading the book, the question then becomes, “Now that I’m here, what am I supposed to do?” Before, I wondered endlessly about what my purpose in life was. I read books. I wrote and revised lists of goals, projects, priorities, and personal affirmations. I had thousands of philosophies, quotes, and ideas floating around in my head. It was all complex, shifting, uncertain, and confusing.

Falun Dafa has simplified it all. I do my best to apply these values, these principles, at every moment, and become completely in tune with them: Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. This Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance, the fundamental characteristic of the universe and of everything and everybody in it, is the ultimate measuring stick and standard for my life. It’s so easy and simple, but so deep that the end cannot be seen.

SHARING

Not long after I began practicing, I began to say to myself, “This is such a valuable, great thing, but many Americans won’t be able grasp this at first because of cultural and language differences, especially if they aren’t familiar with oriental culture. How can I help other Americans understand this?”

When answering the question, “What is Falun Gong?” I’d like to

share with people the term “cultivation practice” and explain it for them, even though that concept is unfamiliar to Western culture. Falun Gong doesn’t neatly fit into the usual categories, but people will try to put it in a known, familiar category so that it fits with something they already know—that’s just human nature.

Rather than going along with this tendency to categorize and classify, I try to describe what we do. I say something like this now to people: “It’s an integrated system of cultivating and refining our minds and bodies. It’s a holistic program of self-improvement in all ways. It’s a way of purifying and raising our personal energy. We try to put ourselves in harmony with what we believe to be the fundamental principle of the universe, Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance.”

I give the analogy of a garden to describe what we mean by “cultivation.” I say, “You take a plot of land, you want to get all the bad things out, like the weeds, the rocks, the junk. Then you want to put in the good things—the seeds, the water, the fertilizer, the sunshine—so that good things will grow. This is like what we are doing with our own bodies, minds, and hearts through our cultivation practice.”

I also like to say, “Doing the exercises is periodic, but cultivating our hearts and minds is 24 hours a day, every day.”

RECEIVING

I have received some good advice from veteran practitioners, and took to heart the advice I got about continuing to read the book over and over: one lecture a day is ideal, but at least read one or more complete sections of the lectures every day. From my own reading, watching the videotapes, listening to the audio tapes, and reading with a group weekly, my mind is getting steeped in and saturated with this tremendous insight and knowledge in several different modes.

When I read what the Teacher said about this world being a maze, I took it as part of my motivation for practicing: “OK, I’m getting out of this maze!” I said. I was also keen on the idea of not having to come back again into this maze later. I wanted to get away from and escape the pain and confusion of this earthly life. But as I have learned more, I

listened carefully to what the Teacher says, “Everyone knows that our school of practice does not shun ordinary human society in cultivation practice, and neither does it avoid or run away from conflicts.” Lately I think less about escaping the maze, which is running away from something negative and more about moving towards something positive. I realize my purpose here is to return to the origin, to go back to my original, true self, to raise myself upwards.

I have a positive purpose and a clear direction. I was wandering around lost, seeking self-improvement, knowledge, and understanding on back roads, byways, and dead ends, but now I’m on the superhighway. *Zhuan Falun*, the great book of the Great Way, is my road map for the journey back home.



From a Competitive Person to a Compassionate Person

Dan Alfjorden, Sweden

My name is Dan and I come from Sweden. I grew up in a family with four brothers and two parents who worked hard in order to give us food, shelter, protection and knowledge. In school we learned that unchangeable laws govern all nature and that everything developed through a struggle for survival and the fear of dying. The one who is the strongest, smartest and most beautiful wins and survives. We were taught that we were monkeys with a little more intelligence and that we have one life and then we disappear.

I thought that happiness came through competing and struggling with the others to obtain more money and buy things; this kind of happiness was always short and had to be conquered. In school we did tests and were compared that you were good and he was bad. In the school and during my free time I tried to be smart and compete. It was a hard life. The notions I've been taught about girls and sex created big problems for me since I had big requirements on myself and how a girl should be and look like. This is what I learned was important in life because to be beautiful and win is happiness. There were occasions I thought about the meaning of life, but it was just for a brief moment. Before any feeling of anxiety raised, I tried to calm down by doing something or eating something. No one spoke about the meaning of life or the reason for suffering. We were taught that suffering is bad, diseases came out of a bad immune system. Bacteria, viruses, come from other people or nature. Only if you eat right, take medicine and workout, your body will be fine. In the society there exists thieves and strange people. The solution was to be smart and let the others do the hard work. But why shall I live in a society, get knowledge, experience beauty, joy and grief, have the ability to create, play and discover things, get a family and children, become ill, meet with an accident, loose friends, become bitter, angry, worried, afraid, jealous, and die finally? Why all this? No one apart from the Master have told me why

and how to really solve the biggest problem of humankind, the suffering in all its different forms.

One day, about five years ago, I saw a film where Samer, the Swedish Indians living in the north of Sweden, were chased by priests. I felt a tremendous pain in my heart and felt like the heart would blow into pieces. What was it that happened, I felt powerless. Earlier I also had been having trouble to swallow for a long time, I had some pains in my chest and could easily get headaches, but when I went to the doctor, they couldn't find anything wrong with me. The feeling of loneliness that I experienced occasionally now became bigger and I began to seek. I became much interested in philosophy, psychology, Buddhism, theatre and so on and felt as if I had found the way back to the happiness of discovering. Now I realize that it was out of this loneliness that I had received the power and the will to seek the truth, and meaning of life. Thanks for those sufferings and all the problems. They have shown me the way.

One day, thanks to a so-called "coincidence", I got in contact with these fantastic teachings and attended a nine-day seminar. Earlier I had heard about Falun Gong but was then busy with another teaching, and others had told me that Falun Gong was like a religion. But now I was given a second chance. During the two following weeks, I intensively compared Falun Dafa with the other schools I've been to. In Falun Dafa, I felt a greater openness and that the teachings was very profound. I learned the exercises and decided to leave the other schools.

After reading the Masters writings over and over again, I have come to understand and experience that much of what I learned earlier was wrong, if you see it from a higher level. What is happiness and freedom? Why do some suffer while others have a good life? Why do I sometimes feel unhappy? Why does life feel unjust to me? Is everything governed by unchangeable law? Can one alter ones life? What is human development? For these and many other questions I here found the answers. As I understand, the Universe and nature are really most friendly and filled with compassion. This incredible intelligence created all that we can and can not see. It doesn't want to destroy anything; it just wants to help us. Our body and mind also comes from this intelligence. I think that if I just learn to listen inwards it will lead me

all the way back. But I hadn't learned to listen inwards, just to seek outwards.

As I understand it, man lives on the earth because of ignorance, desires and attachments to things, people, sex, feelings, fame and gain. Everything in this world is created for us. It's like a school of life, there is a cause and an effect for what we do and it can teach us something about the universe and ourselves. Each day and night, month after month, year after year, life after life we get new chances to learn new things and see the truth. But if we never learn our lessons and never take away the bad things in our heart we will finally be destroyed.

In my excitement and joy over finding Falun Gong I misinterpreted certain things and made many mistakes. I tried to convince others without really listening to what they wanted. I've stopped doing this bit by bit and understand the Master's words "If you don't want to cultivate, no one is going to make you cultivate, otherwise that would be the same as doing bad deeds. Who can make you change your heart?" I wanted to plan my own cultivation and find some tests. At first my body had a lot of pain. I perspired and froze. My mind often said no, stop practicing, stop reading. At my work, everything seemed to be difficult and everybody was hard to get along with. The desire for tasty food and sweet things grew; my mind swore occasionally and had bad thoughts about the Master, Dafa, other people and myself. I was suspicious of others and myself. Thanks to Dafa I now know that these things weren't really me but could help me learn something.

My determination grew. The more I read Dafa and learned to separate what was good and bad in my mind, the Great Law grew more and more in my mind and body.

Later on my job went easier; everything became easier, and I had more energy, slept better and began to be able to accept others instead of judging them. I understood more and more things, and this heart of mine didn't ache that much any longer.

When I showed Falun Gong to others, I felt that my arms, my heart and my legs were like cotton. My mind was often clear. Most of the times when I practiced at the practice site, all the good and bad in my mind and body appeared to be more visible. Occasionally a strong

feeling of mercy entered my mind and made all pains or bad thoughts just disappear or not bother me. But when I finished practice, a great chill went all over my body. Occasionally when I saw the others practice, I had a feeling of both happiness and sorrow.

When I reflect further back on my life, it seems like a lot of what I have done has prepared me to get this Law and prepared me for helping others to get it. Through striving in my life, I have learned a lot of ordinary people's knowledge and their way of thinking. Thanks to Dafa, (the great law), I now understand these are the obstacles. I hope I can use the rest of my time on earth to cultivate myself and to help people understand Dafa and break through all these obstacles. For me I can't think of anything more important than upgrading my mind/heart nature and helping people to realize the meaning of life and get back to the true self.

Having introduced Dafa to a lot of people, I have realized that it is not easy to learn the practice. There are a lot of disturbing factors in people's lives and minds, but at the same time, we get a lot of help. Occasionally when reading the books my mind is elevated to a higher understanding. I then get a very strong desire to help others get the Law. But unfortunately I haven't done it well because of my being afraid of what others might think about me and because I compared myself with others and my previous way of being.

I can tell the following story. A couple of months ago, when waiting for a train, I saw a person I've been in contact with for a short time. I thought of going up to her and giving her some information about Falun Dafa. But suddenly I hesitated when she looked away and did not say hello. In my mind, I felt doubt and fear. Then, the next second, a 9-year-old girl came up to me, completely unknown to me. She stretched her hand up to me and asked if I wanted some candy. The simplicity and good will in her action and in her eyes made me dissolve inside. Here I was, having received the Great Law, the biggest gift a human being could receive, and still I was hesitating to give it to someone I knew. But without hesitation, this girl gave me, a stranger, the things she could share for the moment. My mind responded with a feeling of repentance and in it there was a force telling me not to hesitate the next time. Thanks for this lesson that I think has taken me one step closer to

freedom.

During my cultivation, each time I have taken it easy, become satisfied with myself or proud of myself, a big test would occur that put me back on track again. From this I have learned that the attachment of complacency can have a negative effect on me in my cultivation. I should study Dafa more and be diligent. I realize that the only thing I should compare myself with is the Great Law and Truth Compassion Tolerance and always look inwards when something goes wrong.

I shall do my best to help others to get the Great Law. I hope that we shall all cultivate diligently and reach perfection.



My Cultivation Experience with Falun Dafa

Joel Chipkar, Canada

My name is Joel. I live in Canada. I started to practice Falun Dafa just over one year ago. I want to share one of the many reasons why Falun Dafa has become such an important part of my life.



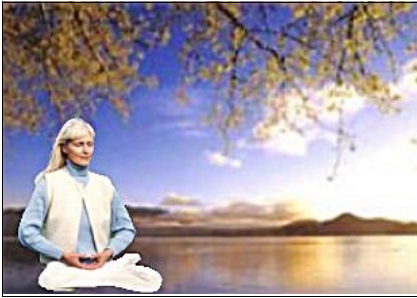
I grew up in a hot blooded, short tempered, angry, southern Italian family. I learned to fight with my brothers at a young age. We yelled and screamed and fought with each other or with any one else who crossed our path over the smallest things. Any excuse to vent the powerful destructive feeling of rage that steamed inside us.

My discontent, unhappy and angry life became progressively worse. I became a victim of my own agitated mind. I blamed society and my family for all my unhappiness. Thoughts of blame, self loathing and negativity stormed in my head in a whirlwind of confusion. I became a slave to my addictions. However, it didn't matter how much marijuana I smoked or how much alcohol I drank or who I slept with or how much money I made or how many trips I took or what books I read or what psychologist I went to see I couldn't stop my dissatisfaction with life or my anger.

I wanted answers but I didn't know where to turn. I decided to call my mom who I knew practiced Falun Dafa for some support. I had witnessed fantastic changes in her attitude towards life since she started practicing Falun Dafa. I told her how I felt. How I was so confused and tired of going around in the same vicious circles of negativity over and over again and that I needed help. My mom smiled and gave me a copy of *Zhuan Falun*. With all her love and compassion she said very simply to me, "Start to read this book. All of your answers are in this book."

I followed my mom's advice. I started to read the book and do the exercises. I vowed I would dedicate myself to read a little of the book each day, and also do the full set of the exercises at least twice a week for the next six months.

Zhuan Falun is the hardest book I ever tried to read. It pushed all of my buttons. As soon as I started to read thoughts of judgement and doubt filled my head. I judged and criticized what I read. I doubted the teaching. I found all kinds of things in the book I didn't agree with. I found all kinds of things that went against my beliefs. I found all kinds of things I didn't understand. The more I tried to figure it out with my intellectual mind the more lost I became. It made no sense to me. However, I was determined to stay true to my six month goal so Whenever



I came across something I didn't understand or didn't agree with I just put those things aside and continued to read with an open mind.

As soon as I began the exercises I got so tired and so lazy. My mind wandered to thousands of thoughts and desires and away from the exercises. I got so restless when I sat for the sitting exercise. The music would start to play. I crossed my legs. I closed my eyes. I felt calm. I sat for a while. Then, I would spring up and walk into the kitchen to check my phone messages.

I finally made up my mind I would sit for the full hour. The music started to play. I crossed my legs. I closed my eyes. I sat for a while. My mind raced full of thoughts and pictures and desires. The pain in my legs became so intense I had to stop. I felt defeated. I then realized I had no self-control.

Three quarters of the way through the book I felt the power of *Zhuan Falun*. I became aware of character traits in myself that I had never seen before. I realized I grew up a very insecure, dissatisfied and selfish person. I was never happy with who I was or what I had. I always wanted more. I judged and criticized everyone I met. I looked at

people as objects for my own needs. What benefit could they possibly give to me? Were they good enough? Were they smart enough? Were they attractive enough? Could they make me any money?

I had mastered the art of controlling and manipulating people for my own emotional needs and selfish desires.

Falun Dafa brought all of all my deep-rooted mental and physical defilement up to the surface and right in my face. It made me aware of who I was and how I lived.

The basic teaching of Falun Dafa is simple; Keep upgrading myself by living in accordance of the universal characteristics of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance, which Falun Dafa teaches are the true characteristics of the entire universe and of every human being. Don't fight with others. View others through the eyes of kindness and compassion. Diminish your attachments. Work hard but don't compete and stress for personal interest. Accept and understand others for who they are and look within to cultivate myself and live a peaceful life. As a practitioner one must follow the characteristics of the universe instead of the standard of ordinary people. If you can follow these characteristics then you are a good person.

When I first heard these words they sounded so peaceful. This was the answer I had looked for all my life! I was going to live by these guidelines! With this new information I felt like a new person, a kind person, a compassionate person, a tolerant person.

The next day I walked into my office with my new attitude. Within 5 minutes my brother said something that pushed my buttons. I flew into a rage and yelled and screamed as loud as I could. I left in a rage and slammed the door behind me. I boiled in negativity all the way home. I walked into my living room. The first thing I saw was *Zhuan Falun* on the coffee table. I sat stunned. "I understand the teachings! I know these teachings are the real truth, the real answer to my peace and happiness! Why can't I do it? Why do I slip back into my old negative and abusive patterns?" And then a story came to me. A story I witnessed some years ago of a young boy who throughout his short life had been badly abused by his mother. He had cigarette burns all over his body along with several fractures in various stages of healing. He also suffered from malnutrition. In this story a police matron is

very gently and very cautiously holding this little boy as the mother is being hand cuffed and arrested for child abuse. As the police matron starts to take the child from the room, the child begins to lean over the police matrons shoulder, and reaches out to his mother. He screams, “mommy, mommy!” He screams out to the torturer, wanting desperately to go back.

I wondered why this child would want to go back to such a hell. Then I realized this negativity was all this boy had ever known. This abuse was his only familiar. He had no concept of what truth was or what kindness was or what compassion was.

I now understood that I, like that little boy, had become so familiar with my patterns of negativity that the simple and pure traits of kindness, compassion, selflessness actually felt foreign to me. All my life I had chosen the wrong paths. I knew if I wanted to build these new traits of kindness, compassion and forbearance into my life I would need support and I would need a guide. Falun Dafa has given me the support and guidance to create new choices in my life.

I thought, it’s easy to look out into this world and want to stop the violence and the hate and the pain that surrounds us every day of our lives. It’s easy to blame our society. It’s easy to blame others. However, how often do I look at myself and take responsibility for how I act and how I treat people in my everyday life? Falun Dafa has taught me the only way I can truly make a difference in this world is to acknowledge my own short comings and choose to learn to cultivate my mind and live my life with higher morals and higher virtues so I can make the right choices.

As I continue to read *Zhuan Falun* over and over I find the teachings incorporate themselves into my everyday life. My old powerful patterns of negativity and fear are slowly decreasing as new patterns of compassion and tolerance become my new familiar. As I continue to read *Zhuan Falun* over and over everyday new lessons appear before my eyes and those things I didn’t understand in the beginning are starting to make sense to me now.

My mom is my inspiration. She inspires me to persevere through my own hard times and build my determination to also succeed. I now find the pain has become my friend. It keeps me focused and alert. I

also find when I persevere through the pain I build strong forbearance, endurance and acceptance in my every day life. Now when my brothers try to fight with me I say nothing. My trials and tribulations seem less intense. My mind is less agitated and more peaceful and my desire to react with anger is gone.

A friend and fellow practitioner once said to me, "It's like Falun Dafa has given me a new skin and now when start to criticize or fight with others I feel like I slip back into my old skin and it feels sticky and gross. "Sometimes I still slip back into my old skin. When I am weak and my demons of greed and lust and selfishness become too strong and devious I feel Master Li looking over me. He tells me this is a test. He reminds me I have a choice. He reminds me how strong and pure I feel when I stay true to the Law and not react to these demons. He also reminds me how defeated and painful I feel when I give in. He tells me to stay on the right path. He also tells me, in the end it is up to me. I am the master of my own salvation. It is my choice whether I give in to these demons and drown in my own negativity or build my strength as a practitioner and persevere through this test. At times it is a huge struggle but I always feel stronger and more pure when I choose to follow the Law.

Everything that happens to me is good. "This is how it feels to release karma. Go through the suffering. Consciously endure it. You are becoming purer." My mom congratulates me and reminds me to read *Zhuan Falun* over and over.

I always find my peace in Master Li's words, "When it is difficult to endure it you try to endure it. When it looks impossible and is said impossible then you give it a try to see if it is possible. If you can really make it, you will find that after passing the shady willows there will be bright flowers and another village ahead."

As I endure through my emotional and physical pain and keep my mind as balanced as I can, I find my pain always passes. I feel stronger and more peaceful as I pass the shady willows and make my way to the next village through the bright flowers.

I am so glad I didn't throw this teaching away in the beginning just because I didn't understand or agree with some of the things I read or because I couldn't put up with a little pain. I'm so glad I put those

things aside and continued to read and do the exercises with an open mind.

I am forever thankful for the awareness and wisdom and peace Falun Dafa has helped me build in my life. In less than two years Falun Dafa has empowered me to break the chains of illusion, ignorance and fear that has controlled my life and dominated my family for many generations.

Falun Dafa has helped me shift my perspective of my relationships with my family, my friends and with my society. For the first time in my life I feel a genuine peace and happiness with everyone I come in contact with. I also feel more content and happy with myself.

As a practitioner my new life goal is to bring the characteristics of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance into every relationship I have. With Falun Dafa as my guide, I feel fantastic strength because I know my life has a great purpose. I also feel fantastic peace because I now know my future children will learn to live in this new realm of peace and happiness and for this I am forever grateful.

My Experience with Falun Dafa

Gail Rachlin, New York, USA

My name is Gail Rachlin, and I live in New York City. I have my own business in Public Relations and Marketing. It is difficult to speak the words to express the depth, feeling and gratitude that I have since I became a cultivator of Falun Dafa.

I am going to take you back to a time in my life that was a pivotal point. When I was 29, I had uterine cancer. During the surgery, there were complications and I was left in a coma for 10 days. During that time I had a 107-degree temperature, and I was also completely paralyzed. Nobody expected me to live. It was during that 10-day period that I had a near-death experience. I encountered a phenomenon that completely changed the course of my life. I could not explain the events that had happened to me until now.

I was traveling through what seemed like a long tunnel and I was traveling faster than I have ever moved in my life. This seemed so unreal! Me, flying without an airplane, the surroundings became so intense and bright. I was astonished as the brightness increased, coming from everywhere. My mind kept telling me that what I was experiencing was impossible, and yet it was happening. It was like a million streetlights blazing all at once. This incredible intensity of light came from this Divine Being. The Divine Being that I encountered during the near death experience told me, “You have a mission and purpose here, and your destiny will show you what that is. You will know when you reach it.”



I know now that I have reached the miracle that I have been searching for. Through Falun Dafa, I have experienced the most dramatic changes in my life. I am making changes within myself that I never knew possible.

Over one year ago, right before I started with Falun Dafa, the 3-year

relationship that I was involved in broke up, and I was left heartbroken. I was studying with a Guru from India; however, he did not like the fact that I was so emotionally upset and decided to leave me. I was also very attached to both of these men. As if that weren't enough, I was also embroiled in a major legal suit. I was devastated, both emotionally and financially.

I am usually a healthy person, but this situation seemed beyond my control. I went to see a doctor who put me on various pills: hormone, thyroid and anti-depressant pills and ones for anxiety and others to get some sleep. This was in January 1998.

In February of 1998, I attended a New Life Expo in New York City where I discovered Falun Dafa. As I walked past a booth located in the back of the large open hall, I felt a strong energy drawing me in. I walked over and met a young man named Sam who was smiling from ear to ear. I asked him, "Where does all of your energy come from?" I also asked him, "How can I get some?" I expected Sam to sell me a new vitamin, an energy drink or a new age product. Instead, he laughed and replied, "It is Falun Dafa and there is no cost required." Naturally, I was shocked. I purchased a book because I felt this was different from anything that I had ever tried.

After searching for the past 25 years, and participating in 75 workshops and seminars that dealt with different degrees of spirituality and transformation, I didn't find that miracle that I was searching for. The best comparison that I can use would be that those workshops gave me euphoric "high", which I had hoped would stay with me. Unfortunately, after a week or so I was back to my old habits and ways.

I started to read *Zhuan Falun* and several days later, I noticed that the more I read, the more I felt positive and focused. I thought I was getting hot flashes as my body was getting warm while I was reading. I continued reading. The loneliness and despair that I



felt in the past two years started to leave me. For the first time in months, I put aside my self-pity, my self-recrimination, my fear of being alone, and of not knowing all thoughts of any kind about myself, and I longed to gain an understanding and learn what a cultivation path Falun Dafa is.

After one month of practicing with the video and reading the book, I was invited to a group practice in my neighborhood. As I practiced the exercises, especially the second exercise where I raised my arms above my head, I kept wondering how much longer the others would hold this position. I had done the exercise with the videotape and it was easy and shorter. I peeked out of one eye to see when everyone would change positions. I could feel tremendous shooting pains and tension in my arms. At moments I thought I wouldn't be able to stay in this position, and I wanted to stop. I then remembered from my readings that the pain feeling was my karma releasing. Even though my mind was supposed to be still, I could hear my mind saying, "Stay with it and think of all the negative karma you are burning!" "Burn karma." I had tears dripping down my face. As I continued holding my arms in different positions, the pain subsided and I could feel sensations of heat move through my body and sensed strong emotional feelings and a very deep physical release that was very peaceful. At other moments, it felt like I was in a state of a powerful purification. I was able to manage to hold my arms in the position with more endurance after the third time.

In March last year, at the convention, when I saw Master Li, I experienced an awesome light radiating from him, even brighter and more intense than I remembered from my near death experience. Everything began to melt into this light. Clouds of light and brightness shone all around me. I just sat there and bathed in this intense light. I felt such an incredible unconditional love that I had never felt before, it was so astonishing and way beyond my wildest imagination. I knew the moment I saw him that this was the miracle that I had been searching for since the near death experience. My search was over. The experience of seeing Master Li enhanced my commitment to Falun Dafa. As each day passes, I become clearer and I am more at peace in my heart and mind. I am always conscious of raising my heart nature and

speaking from my heart, and I know I am protected every moment.

In April, I had tremendous pains in my right breast and within two days that area swelled to the size of a baseball and was extremely painful. I went to a doctor and he told me, “Gail, you have a complex cystic mass with a major infection in it causing you the pain. It must be removed.” Their solution was to inject a 5-inch needle to draw out the infection. It did not sound like something I wanted to do, in fact, it was frightening. I got a great deal of support from my new family of Falun Dafa practitioners and I decided to just keep practicing. After three months, the “baseball” and the pain disappeared.

Reading the book and doing the exercises brought me back to my true self, my true spirit. This was the beginning for me! My life is totally new. For the first time since my near death experience, I felt whole and one with myself. According to the book, “because man has committed wrong deeds in the past, he should suffer the pains. Man is likely to commit wrong deeds in a maze, which is called the karmic principle of reward and retribution in Buddhism.” I also have learned that the only way we can change our lives is through the path of cultivation.

Whatever test or tribulations we encounter, whether or not we can get through them, the cause of all of it is within us. Over the next few months, everything took its course and it all started to change for me. We started a presentation group to introduce Falun Dafa to small groups. We immediately started working together and learning how to communicate in new and different ways. I know that for the first time, it is becoming easier and easier to speak in front of small groups, because I am speaking from my heart. In the past, I have always been uncomfortable speaking in front of groups, even though I have been a top executive with major corporations. I was so self critical, I never thought I could speak right. In early March, a group of us were to do a presentation evening at an acupuncture office in midtown New York. Before going to the office, I had a terrible headache and was really tired. Normally I would call and say, “I am not coming, I don’t feel very good.” However, I was the one leading the presentation so I had to be there. When I got to the office and started to talk and teach Falun Dafa, my headache and pain disappeared. It was truly a miracle.

When I speak about Falun Dafa, the words seem to flow from my heart. It is a great learning experience and is a wonderful opportunity to raise our heart nature. Thank you, Master Li and all the Falun Dafa practitioners around the world and especially my new family from the New York area. I know I am learning a new way of how to be in the world and I am forever grateful.



My Experiences on the Path of Falun Dafa

Chowa Choo, Sweden



My name is Chowa Choo. I am 46 years old. I was born in Malaysia, but I have been residing in Sweden for more than 20 years.

Before coming into contact with Falun Dafa, my idea of a good and successful life was to have a lot of money, to maintain a high standard of living, to have a pres-

tigious profession and enjoy a high social status. This so-called good life was slowly destroying me. I was engaged in an endless struggle for no important purpose. I was always worrying. I slept poorly and never had any piece of mind. In order to feel important I worked long hours, but I worked inefficiently. A lot of the extra hours that I had put in my work were just a way of covering up my inability to manage my work well. Sometimes I would feel good about myself for doing some jobs well or earning some rewards, but these periods of contentment never last long. I was actually very unhappy. I over indulged in food and drink during the weekends in order to convince myself that I was living a good life. In fact, I was feeling inadequate both at work and at home. My health was also deteriorating. I suffered from insomnia, palpitations and pains in the chest.

About half a year ago, my spouse joined a local Falun Gong practice group. I took the opportunity to attend a video course by Master Li. The words of Master Li have made a great impact on me. In the beginning, I did not understand a lot of what he said, but I decided to start my cultivation practice according to the Dafa principle. I had never heard anyone explain in such a way the workings of the universe. He explained what it means to be a good person and how one might become one. Soon changes in my life began to take place. I lost

weight, and pains in my chest disappeared. For many years, I have been troubled by palpitations. Suddenly they subsided so much that I could hardly feel my heartbeat. Because of Falun Dafa, I now feel totally alive.

The attachments of pride, prestige and other pettiness have been causing me a lot of physical and mental pains for many years. After I had understood the relationship between losses and gains, I observed how people at my office pretended to be nice to each other. Actually they were struggling for personal advantages and prestige. What they do not realize is that all these petty gains have to be paid for in one way or another. At first I felt quite lonely with this new understanding of the principle of the universe and human behavior. Later on I learned to take it lightly when conflicts arose. It became clearer and clearer to me that attachments of prestige, pride and other pettiness that I have acquired in the past have been a great burden to me. They were the cause of a lot of my unhappiness. I had to let go of them! When a conflict arose, I tried not fight back although I felt unjustly treated. Later I could take it very easy so that I was emotionally unaffected. Today I am aware of the anxiety and unhappiness that envelopes many people. Sometimes I can feel compassion for those people who are trapped in sufferings caused by fighting for fame and fortune.

For me, learning the Dafa is like going to school again. Only this time I am preparing for my real future. However, the indoctrination that I have acquired in the past has proven to be a hindrance in my path of cultivation. For a period of time, I was obsessed with the attachment of trying to seek knowledge about life beyond our physical world and in other dimensions. I was trying to study Dafa as if I was studying another new subject in school. I even tried to explain Falun Dafa to my friends from a scientific point of view. This became quite a strong attachment and made me careless about what I said concerning my personal level of development-heart nature

I took part in the recent New York Convention and during that period, I came to realize that seeking this kind of knowledge was the wrong way to study Falun Dafa. Master Li once said that the human knowledge and language are very limited. Consequently, I concluded that I cannot study the Dafa by using the ordinary way of learning.

In my heart, I have no doubt that learning and practicing the Dafa is vital to me. The Dafa has given my life meaning. What I have experienced is beyond words. I understand now the limitations of the human language and the limitations of our knowledge compared to the teachings of Master Li. All I need to know is in the book *Zhuan Falun*.



The Most Precious Gift

Alejandro Centurion, Connecticut, USA

I would like to thank everybody for giving me the opportunity to share my experiences with you today. My name is Alejandro Centurion, I am 29 years old, and it was just about a year ago, on April 26, that I first heard about Falun Dafa. That was a day I will never forget. I was then doing my medical internship at Tulane University. I had gone into the library looking for an article before starting my afternoon endocrinology clinic. As I was walking outside, back to the clinic, my eyes were drawn towards the cover of the NY times lying on a table. I sat down and started to read the cover story, which talked about a peaceful gathering of 10,000 practitioners of a Qigong group called Falun Dafa at Zhongnanhai in Beijing. The overall tone of the article was fairly negative, as it referred to this group as a cult. This surprised me because I was familiar with Qigong practices, and knew that these ancient health-promoting exercises were very far away from anything that could justify them being labeled as a cult or sect. Also, having grown up in a half Cuban household, I was familiar with Communist media tactics and knew that if a communist regime was making a big effort to label something as evil, it was probably actually something very good. During the clinic that afternoon, I was intrigued by this large Qigong group with over 70 million practitioners. Something inside told me to look more deeply into it, but I was not quite sure how. Then I remembered that the NY times article mentioned this group used the Internet, so after clinic I went back to look for the newspaper to see if I could find the listing of a web site. Since none was listed, I wrote “Falun Dafa” on a piece of paper, went down to the computer room, and punched this name into the search. I still recall how beautiful the three golden Chinese characters—Truthfulness, Compassion, Tolerance appeared on the first screen I found. I downloaded one of the books, and as I scrolled down the screen through the preface of *Zhuan Falun*, an “indescribable” rush of warmth came upon me. The words seemed somehow familiar; they rang so true, and were so profound. At that moment I knew, at a subconscious level, that I had stumbled upon

something extraordinary. Falun Dafa, however, has turned out to be even more magnificent and wonderful than I could have ever imagined.

As I later realized, the “coincidences” that led to my walking into the library that day had actually started a long time before. At the time, I did believe that many of life’s apparent “coincidences” must have some larger purpose. Nonetheless, I still viewed my life as a string of random events, a puzzle that I could not piece together. With Dafa’s new precious insights, the past events in my life took on new meaning; they clearly had been preparation for learning the Dafa (Law). Without them I would not have accepted the Dafa as readily as I did, or embrace it as truth. The most notable of these events began during my fourth year of medical school, during which I had quite a lot of elective months to explore the wide variety of alternative medicines available. My previous years of medical education had failed to give me an adequate explanation for the etiology of disease, and I was dissatisfied that the medications I had been trained to use could in most cases, only suppress symptoms. In my search to better understand what truly was the root cause of illness, something drew me towards the abilities and phenomenon that in the West are referred to as “energy medicine.” These include Qigong, Psychic healings, Reiki, extrasensory perception, and telepathy among others. At first I was skeptical about many of the phenomenon I read about. However, the wealth of well-documented experiments on extrasensory human abilities (such as reports from declassified American intelligence carried out during the Cold War), and the large number of well-documented cures by these “energy healers,” convinced me that there were indeed people who possessed these unexplainable abilities. Some western healers talked about having awoken from sleep one morning with energy, which I now understand as the “Reverse cultivation” and “Energy Borrowing” as explained by Teacher Li. They possessed the ability to heal others, at times even from a distance by knowing only the patient’s name. I was also intrigued by numerous and reliable accounts of Near Death Experiences (NDE’s), as well as past life regressions attained through hypnosis, all of which pointed towards the existence of an immortal soul. Even though my training in western medicine could not explain and also denied many of these phenomena, I sensed that I was headed

in the right direction.

I continued by studying the basics of traditional Chinese medicine, and started learning Taichi and Qigong from a teacher in New Orleans. I made quick progress with my exercises, but was soon discouraged by the large expense of the classes, and the fact the teacher seemed intent on making a big business out of the practice. After awhile, my gut instinct told me to get out. So I went to the bookstore, bought some Qigong books, and decided to learn on my own. I practiced many different exercises and postures over the course of various months. I soon got bored with all except one, Falun Dafa, which I enjoyed the most and felt a lot of energy while doing. When I first learned Falun Standing Stance exercise many months later, it seemed very familiar. Now as I look back, I do not see it as a coincidence that the exercise I had practiced was virtually identical to the first wheel embracing position of Falun Standing Stance! The only difference was that it included a breathing element.

Having read about many health benefits of meditation, I began to read books on Buddhism, and even visited a Zen Buddhist temple in New Orleans. On my first visit, during the silent meditation the head monk raised his voice and told me to sit still. I realized that I probably was distracting the others, but I was having a very hard time dealing with the leg pain. Shortly after, somebody came around for the stick warning (this is supposed to help enhance one's focus and concentration, and maybe spark a brief episode of enlightenment). I declined, figuring that more pain would not help me keep still and avoid another scolding. My first discouraging visit to the temple was also my last.

Then, during the last months prior to beginning the Dafa, I read Lao Zi's *Tao De Ching*. I read its poems many times, trying to decipher the meaning and wisdom within the clever riddles and paradoxes. Deep in my heart, I wished I could understand more, and truly know how to follow this mystical Tao (Way). Little did I know, somebody had been listening, since only a few weeks later I began to practice Falun Gong.

When I first started reading the Falun Dafa works that had then been translated, I was spellbound. These precious teachings, which had seemingly dropped out of nowhere, contained genuine answers and

explanations to the many questions that religion, philosophy and modern science had been unable to provide. It is also a testament to the truth and power of Dafa that many of my accepted beliefs and preformed notions were quickly overturned. One of the best examples was my firm belief in the theory of evolution. I was so convinced by the “evidence” presented in my college evolution course that afterwards, I would often ridicule and laugh at my mother’s belief in the “creation” story. As I now recall, my evolution text only included a brief paragraph in the introduction that dismissed “creation” as unscientific, never once discussing other interpretations of the fossil record or any of the controversial archeological evidence that I now know exists. After watching a fellow practitioner’s copy of the NBC TV special “The Mysterious Origins of Man,” I better understood why I was oblivious to so many findings that strongly challenge the validity of the theory of evolution. In this television special, many archeologists from around the world presented the data concerning ancient artifacts, fossils and ruins throughout the world, which convincingly show that humankind has existed on this earth much earlier than could ever be explained with the theory of evolution. As Teacher Li states, “*Many bold scientists abroad have already publicly recognized this as prehistoric culture and a civilization prior to this of our humankind.*” Unfortunately, the bold scientists trying to bring to light this controversial evidence are generally not taken seriously by others in their field, and their data does not make it into college textbooks. One of the scientists interviewed in this special discussed part of the reason why this problem occurs while talking about what he referred to as “A knowledge filter.” He added, “This is a feature that is a fundamental part of science, as well as to human nature. People tend to filter out things that do not fit the accepted paradigm or way of thinking. In science, you find that evidence that does not fit the accepted paradigm is eliminated; it is not taught, not discussed, and people who are educated in scientific teachings generally do not even learn about it.” Within my own field of medicine, my short career has shown this statement to be quite true. Many of my colleagues, all with strong backgrounds in science, disbelieve much of the evidence presented in the *Zhuan Falun*. Unfortunately, because of this, they also give up reading after just the first few chapters. One of my friends claimed it was “blind faith” that over-

turned my belief in evolution, when, in reality, what convinced me was simply genuine scientific evidence.

There are no words to describe how amazingly fortunate I felt after practicing Falun Gong. I now understood the purpose of a human life, and knew that the Great Law of the Universe could genuinely guide and enable a person to cultivate towards enlightenment.

It has taken me a long time to enlighten to some of the ways by which Teacher Li gives guidance and offers hints regarding attachments. While talking with some practitioners in my area, they recommended I pay closer attention to events around me and to what people said to me. Once I started doing this, I improved tremendously. Previously, I had not realized the subtle ways Teacher Li spoke to me through others remarks and pointed out my faults. Part of the reason I had not become enlightened to this was because of my stubborn view that I knew better than others did. Let me list a few examples.

Just the other day, I went to the supermarket to buy some groceries for my mom. When I got to the check out line the man behind me only had one item, so I asked him if he wanted to go ahead of me. He said, “No thank you. I am retired now and have time. You know, in my years I’ve come to learn that patience is a virtue.” I smiled in agreement and searched inside for hidden attachments.

I can’t believe the amazing changes that I have made over the past year. In many ways I feel like a new person, and, in my heart, I have a feeling of peace and happiness unlike I’ve ever had before. The progress I have made seems small compared to how far I know I still have to go. I know, however, that as long as I do my part, Master Li will guide me every step of the way.

From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank Master Li for this most precious of all gifts. I wish that everyone benefits from Falun Dafa practice! Strive forward and awaken to your predestined paths, and continue to overcome all obstacles until you return to your original, and true selves!

Leaving the Mountains to Cultivate Maximally in Society

Al Whitted, North Carolina, USA

First and foremost: I am very thankful for this teaching, Falun Dafa. My heart has been deeply moved by this Law. How can I possibly express the totality of my experiences in words? Nevertheless, I am happy to share a few experiences that I have had along the way.

My name is Al and I am 29 years old. I grew up in Durham, N.C . I think my upbringing was fairly normal for a southeastern American: Competition, science, television, materialism, and dogmatic Christian religion were all pressing forces that made their impact throughout the early part of my life.

After being left empty, tired, confused, and isolated by these influences, I now rejoice in the opportunity to brush off the dirt from these teachings, and move towards the pure land of Falun Dafa. Throughout my childhood and teenage years I had a reoccurring dream that we humans were doing something extremely dreadful – something very dark. I always woke up from this dream thanking God that it was not real. After all it was only a dream. As my consciousness grew I was astonished to find my dream was partially true. I realized we are indeed on a very dangerous path of destroying the human heart and the physical earth. In fact, I think my dream was an under estimation of all the human destruction.

In college I was drawn to courses in eastern philosophy and environmental ethics. I began to search deeply for ways we could heal ourselves and heal this planet. For the next 8 years after college I explored these two fields: eastern philosophy and environmental ethics. I went on many journeys, listened to many different teachings, I taught environmental education, and practiced Taichi and meditation. After a while I grew weary and frustrated...I still did not know what teaching was true and pure. I still had very little understanding, and I still did not know how we humans could uplift ourselves. I just knew we humans were doing everything backwards and I did not know what to do

about this wave of destruction.

In May 1998 I was living in the mountains of Topanga California. There I taught nature to children and practiced Taichi. Upon reflection, In general, I found ways to escape society by living in the mountains and country. I just did not like all the pollution, traffic, competition etc. But, to my good fortune, I was bit by a tick and suffered from the sickening Lyme disease. It made me give up my living situation, my job, and I stopped my spiritual practice. Almost everything in my life was cleared away, I was forced to go home. I did not realize this opened me up to the possibility of finding a path that would guide me to my true home.

My last thoughts in California were about Buddha...I thought I would like to know more about Buddha. To my surprise, I found a small glass Buddha on the windowsill in my new apartment in Durham, North Carolina. I was tired of reading from different teachings. I was tired of mixing practices from different systems. I yearned for one cultivation system that was simple, pure and true. I was very ripe and ready to give fully to one path. Where could I find a true path? Did one even exist?

In December 1998 I met a mother and a daughter who taught the movements of a cultivation system called Falun Dafa. They taught for free, and were very dedicated and sincere in what they were doing. I was drawn to them. They told me to read Falun Gong. I read it. They told me to read *Zhuan Falun*. I read it. They told me about the nine-day seminar. I did not miss a class. Something was drawing me to this teaching. It took me a while to gain some understanding of Falun Dafa. Even with my background in Eastern Philosophy, many principles were difficult for me to understand. But I listened to the advice of Master Li and other practitioner's, "keep reading the book" So I kept reading the book and asking questions.

After a couple of months something provoked me to go deeper into this teaching. I had one full week of tribulation upon tribulation. During this week I was charged a sum of money for a driving violation, my girlfriend and I broke up after a sudden situation, I was pulled and charged for speeding, had another confrontation with my ex girlfriend, got a flat tire in the middle of the city, and my chickens were

killed by a opossum. At the end of the week I felt very beat up, but at the same time, I felt a little bit cleansed and awakened. Many different attachments were pushed forward in my consciousness: jealousy, dishonesty, competitive mentality, attachment of death, and attachment to money. Especially during the last few days I felt these tribulations had been arranged for me. I began to react more and more like a practitioner. I told the veteran practitioners about my tribulations and this response was revolutionary to my western thought pattern. They said “these things are good... this means that master is taking care of you. You have been given an opportunity to cultivate”. Realizing that hardships could be a good thing fundamentally changed my relationship with the world. This realization has been a major gift Before I always tried to find freedom by living in the mountains and escaping society. Now this teaching has given me the strength and wisdom to confront society with a righteous heart. By taking hardship as joy I have found a new freedom.

I would like to take a step back and emphasize one more point about the week of tribulations. One of the tribulations pushed me to look at truth like I have never looked at truth before. I felt the pain of my lack of truth and others dishonesty. One night I had an understanding that dishonesty is very damaging to the universe. I realized when we humans deviate from truth we are deviating from our true selves and the laws of the universe. I vowed to be truthful, even with the smallest of issues.

During cultivation I had a few experiences relating to compassion. One day I was at the train station and I observed an African American woman verbally abusing her son. Even threatening to beat him. I did not stop her. But I did not walk away from the situation either. I just wanted to stand by the boy with a silent and compassionate heart. After a while the lady calmed down. This incident struck my heart. Suddenly I felt like crying...I have not cried much since my childhood...But I went behind a building and wept for a very long time... I wept for all the damage we are doing to our children. Our children are precious, I wondered how it was possible that we could be so violent and destructive to them. I was surprised by my intense reaction. I had seen this type of behavior my whole life. What reopened my

heart to compassion now?

One day we were in sitting tranquillity in the park with about 20 practitioners. It was very quiet and still until two young African American boys about 5 and 7 years old appeared. They had sticks and they were walking in between the practitioner's. I thought, "what are these boys up to? What do they want? They should not be bothering us. I should have tuned them out but I was too curious, so I watched them for a little while. Suddenly the older boy exclaims, "we shall sit now" So they immediately dropped their sticks and plopped down on the earth and folded their legs up to full lotus position. My heart felt a deep compassion, I wished this moment could last forever, I wished all children would come to cultivate their young pure hearts. I thought about the passage in *Zhuan Falun*, "when one's Buddha nature comes out it will shake the world in ten directions." In that moment I understood the truth that enlightened beings do help us when our Buddha nature comes out. After the moving practice the young boys wanted to listen to the reading. They climbed a tree and sat on a branch above us. The first few sentences we read were "When one's Buddha nature comes out it will shake the world in ten directions" whoever sees it will come to give a hand and help this person out unconditionally." This synchronicity moved many of us. The person reading this passage began to cry...many of us felt thankful for the compassion and the unconditional help we are receiving.

After 6 months of cultivation I had a series of visual experiences that inspired me. In the state of half awake and half asleep I saw wax coated candle. The wax represented our attachments...little by little I saw our attachments or wax melt away leaving only the cotton wick at the core of the candle. This wick was still an attachment. Then suddenly the wick burst into flames and then there was nothing. Everything was now in a different dimension.

Lastly I would like to share a few understandings pertaining to tolerance. Like some Americans, I was not raised with a lot of discipline. I had the freedom to make my own choices, to get out of situations I didn't want to be in, and to seek comforts in any situation. I was talking to a practitioner who said that if you put a frog in boiling water, it will jump out immediately, but if you put the frog in comfortable

water and gradually increase the heat the frog sometimes gets lazy and just sits there as if everything were fine due to the extreme heat, the frog sometimes dies. In my mind, the problems for the practitioners in China are clear, apparent, and extreme, and many practitioners are able to continue their cultivation at a high level. I think that here in the United States we need to recognize that cultivation is just as vital even if the world around us allows us to be comfortable and complacent. Although everything appears to be fine, I think we are indeed in hot water. I know it to be true when Master talks about the degradation of human morality, so cultivation here in the United States is just as important.

The teachings of discipline and tolerance were difficult for me to apply at the beginning of my practice. Before Falun Dafa, I fell into the trap of constantly seeking exterior means to happiness. If my job was not satisfying, I would simply move on to something better. I also carried a notion that my girlfriend would bring me happiness. In addition, my living environment and daily routine greatly affected my personal satisfaction. A great deal of my life energy went into seeking an ideal situation.

The teachings of Falun Dafa helped me develop an inner strength, which has fundamentally changed my life. Before, I felt that work was something that constricted me and stole my energy and freedom. Now, I see work as an opportunity to cultivate and endure. I can work longer hours with a calmer mind. As a teacher, I had avoided the public schools, fearing the constraints of the system and the wild behavior of the children, but now I feel confident that I could enter these same schools with a kind and gentle heart.

Secondly, Falun Dafa has given me the understanding and the strength to genuinely commit to one person. Before, I never took commitment seriously enough to consider marriage. Because of this newly-found inner strength, I was able to dedicate myself in marriage on June 24th of this year.

Lastly, upon beginning cultivation, it was difficult to be consistent in doing the practice and very painful to sit in the half-lotus position. However, over a period of time, I learned to tolerate the intense pain of the sitting meditation and learned to discipline myself to follow

consistent practice. In the beginning, I thought that it would be impossible for these stiff, Western legs to ever fold into the full lotus position, but to my astonishment, I recently was able to sit in the full lotus position for forty minutes.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude for the ever-deepening understandings I have been given through Falun Dafa. The explanations given on the expansiveness of the cosmos and of the microscopic world have broadened my mind and eradicated my disbelief in Buddhas, Taos, and Gods. Modern day science damaged my belief in God, Falun Dafa healed it. More and more, I no longer care about pursuing verification of Falun Dafa through hearing practitioners' experiences. Little by little, my focus is on applying the principles of Dafa in real-life situations. This gradual shift of focus has strengthened and reinforced my belief in Dafa, because rather than looking to the exterior, I am finding the truth within. Thanks to Falun Dafa, my mind is cleaner than I ever have been and I am kinder and more disciplined. Finally, I am thankful for the opportunity and for the guidance, to genuinely attune myself to truth, compassion, and tolerance.



A Therapist by Profession, a Falun Gong Practitioner at Heart

Glenda McNiece, Australia

I was introduced to Falun Gong almost a year ago, hearing of a class practicing in the suburb of New Farm, in Brisbane. My partner Gerard began going to classes to learn Falun Gong after he was told a group of people were doing the exercises there. After a couple of months, I decided to begin practice myself, putting aside my Yoga exercises of some 15 years.

Twenty-two years ago I was involved in a motorbike accident which left me with a broken collarbone and back injuries including bruising around the vertebrae and a misaligned pelvis. From this, I suffered severe neck and sciatic pain. Over the years, I have managed, and to a degree overcome, these injuries by practicing Yoga, meditation and visualization techniques. Though my mobility improved, I still suffered some neck and shoulder and sciatic pain. I also had numbness and pain in my left foot due to a breakage ten years ago, as well as an ongoing intermittent pain in the abdominal region from menstrual and intestinal spasm.

When I first started practicing Falun Gong almost a year ago I felt immediate relief from the neck and shoulder tension, as if a great weight had been lifted from me! As I continued I found my overall strength greatly improved, especially through the arms and legs. As an alternative health practitioner, I practiced hands-on healing for many years, thinking it was a good thing to do. Whatever had helped me, I wanted to share with others. Although I was often witnessed to many miracles during that time, I found I was frequently taking home the symptoms of my clients' illnesses, and struggling to let go of other people's thoughts and feelings.

Through this painful experience, I eventually learned I was not only interfering with other people's karma. I was taking on their karma as well. From there, I made up my mind to focus on the tools of my profession, rather than use my own energy for healing.

Physically, I have noticed that the Falun Gong has greatly improved the balance and co-ordination between the left and right sides of my body. It has had a regulating effect on my menstrual cycle, eradicating cramps and breast soreness. My intestinal spasms are diminishing. The circulation in my left foot has been restored, as there is not the degree of pain after having walked any distance as it used to be. A great amount of heat is generated in my body whilst doing the exercises, and the physical sensations of energy circulation are very strong whilst practicing.

Beginning the day with Falun Gong has been wonderful for me. I have often woken in the morning worrying with one concern or another on my mind. After completing the exercise, I am always able to feel more positive. I am extremely grateful that Falun Gong has been introduced to us by Master Li.



My Cultivation in Falun Dafa

Sterling Campbell, New York, USA

My name is Sterling Campbell and I am thirty-five years old. I was born and raised in New York City and I am a musician.

My goals from an early age were to achieve fame and fortune through music. When I graduated from high school, I spent all of my energy studying music because I wanted to make music. Most of my time was spent performing in clubs or rehearsing with numerous bands. My musical skills began to develop during this period. I started getting attention on the New York music scene. In 1986 I was asked to audition for a famous entertainer to go on a world tour. I felt confident I could pass the audition, which I did. We began the tour a couple weeks later and traveled extensively around the world. Our concerts were praised by both the public and the media, and I was constantly showered with compliments. Because of this grand exposure, I was able to establish my name in the music industry. After the tour, I was in demand. I began recording on numerous albums and continued to tour with prominent artists. I was enjoying my newly found success, but, unfortunately, I was beginning to fall into traps. My five-year relationship with my girl friend ended, mainly due to my selfishness and infidelities. I was deeply obsessed with my career and social status. I always tried to be a good person, but I found myself using goodness for personal gain. At this time I had no idea that I was doing anything wrong. My career continued to flourish in the 90's. I came into contact with new people, places and temptations.

Up to this point, drugs were taboo in my life. It was the one thing I prided myself for never doing, but I eventually became a victim to that temptation, too. I began taking all kinds of drugs and started drinking alcohol daily. To make matters worse, I developed a two-pack-a-day cigarette habit. This trend continued almost everyday for eight years. After a while, I became very depressed and ashamed of myself. I couldn't believe I let this happen. I was very angry with myself and would constantly put myself down. When I grew tired of blaming myself, I tried to blame my family, my friends or the music business. My

confidence and self-esteem were shattered. I became increasingly paranoid around people and just hid away in my apartment. This was a very dark time. I wanted to change it, but I did not know how. I started taking Yoga, Taichi and seeking therapy but to no avail. I continued my addictions. It felt like imprisonment.

In 1998, I was introduced to Falun Dafa while I was taking an early morning walk in the park. I saw a group of women practicing and a pamphlet was handed to me by one of the practitioners. The next day, I called the contact person and she explained that Falun Dafa was an advanced cultivation practice of mind and body and that it would improve both your health and well-being. She also mentioned that it would not cost me any money. Before Falun Dafa I was quite cynical about a lot of these spiritual things due to the fact that I spent thousands of dollars on people who were putting a price on spirituality and universal matters, so I was surprised that she mentioned it would not cost me any money. The next day, I went to the practice site to learn the exercises. There are five movements to the series and they are very easy to learn. After the practice, I began to ask more questions. The practitioner, seeing that I was interested, offered me the book *Zhuan Falun* by Master Li Hongzhi. She said the book could explain Falun Dafa in more detail. I began reading the book later that day. The more I read the more I was drawn into the book. I felt I was in the presence of something very unique and immense. There are no words to describe the feeling that came over me. I knew that I had found the ultimate truth. I began going to the park every morning to practice the exercise and read Falun Dafa book *Zhuan Falun*. Within a month, my drug, alcohol and cigarette addiction had all disappeared. I couldn't believe this was happening.

In *Zhuan Falun*, Master Li constantly talks about giving up all attachments. In hindsight, my substance addictions seemed like an easy task, not knowing that I was just uncovering the surface of the true source of my attachments. Fears, jealousy, showing off, competition, selfishness, fame—all of these things were attachments in my heart, but I was too blind to see it or didn't want to see it. I figured, "Well, I'll just practice hard to get rid of these attachments like I did the others." I made it sound so easy but it is the hardest task I've ever encoun-

tered. Because of the speedy recovery from drugs & alcohol, I wasn't satisfied with the results of my new task. I began feeling unworthy and depressed. When I practiced with others, I would become competitive and jealous. I was treating it like a racing competition. All the things I was trying to get rid of would not go away. I could not tolerate people making more progress than me, so I began to keep my distance from other practitioners. The depression got deeper, and I felt I was abusing this wonderful gift that I was given.

What was even harder was trying to cultivate while being among my family and friends. Everything changed for me so fast that my friends and family could not understand what was happening. They could not understand my behavior—especially when I began struggling with the practice. I was trying to become a better person and to achieve enlightenment. But my energy, at times, was going in the wrong direction. I started to become self-righteous and critical at times. It was always an after thought when I realized what I was doing. In fact I became more aware all the time of my personality. I found I was able to stop myself from doing something wrong and, at the same time, uncover a new habit that I had been unaware of. This was part of the process.

About a year after I started practicing, my music career began to gain momentum again. Everything felt different. For so long I equated music to drugs, alcohol or being promiscuous. I now reject such notions. I'm still challenged with other obstacles, but I am determined to change them. I can't imagine my life without Falun Dafa, and I hope others can experience what my fellow practitioners and I have. Falun Dafa has set me on the right path.

I would like to thank all of the practitioners for their wonderful support and to Master Li for guiding me to truth.



Falun Dafa Helped Me to Better Understand Christianity

Joe Payne, Illinois, USA

Hi, my name is Joe Payne, and I am from the Chicago area. I am 35 years old, a software consultant, and I have a wife and 3 children. Living in the US, I had little exposure to Qigong or Falun Dafa until I started practicing last July. Here is the continuing story of my experience with Falun Dafa.

At the point in my life when I first came in contact with Falun Dafa, my life can only be described as chaotic. My relationship with my wife had been shaky for years and continued to worsen. My health had deteriorated over a period of a few years. I was afflicted with ailments ranging from stomach and intestinal problems to anxiety and depression. For anxiety and panic attacks, my doctor had recently placed me on a large dosage of Xanax to take every day.

Spiritually, I had come to a low point in my Christian living. And my mind suffered from the many unknowns in this life. I had questions about life, death, and the ultimate purpose of life. With my Christian background, I could not understand the concept of the soul. Did the soul begin at the time when you are born or at the time of conception? Did it grow during your lifetime and continue to live after your death? All of it made no sense to me, and kept me longing for the answers.

At the advice of my doctor, he suggested I look into meditation. I attempted feebly to do this myself, but it did not help much. Then, another consultant brought Falun Dafa to our workplace to show it to fellow co-workers. This is the point in my life where a new person had begun to emerge.

Of the original people that came to check out Falun Dafa, about 5 of us practiced regularly every day at lunch time. Immediately, I began to experience things I couldn't explain. At first, my hands and feet became immensely warm during our practice. Just before lunch time, I would feel sluggish and lazy and doubted whether I could endure the exercises that day. But after doing the exercise, I felt amazingly re-

freshed and revived. At the same time, during the 5th exercise, I began to have visions. It was like a dream, except everything was so clear and vivid. I remember the first vision that appeared to me quite well. I was floating in infinite space, sitting cross-legged and in mediation. Before me was a Chinese man, also cross-legged and in mediation, floating in space. Then, his lips moved and spoke in Chinese. I could not understand the Chinese words, but it did not matter because my mind understood everything. He told me I was currently suffering from a few different ailments, which could easily be remedied. He told me to visit my doctor again and change my medication, as the current one I was taking was harming me. He also told me to go to see my dentist. I know that it sounds like I was starting to have severe mental problems as well. Nevertheless, I did as instructed.

Taking the Xanax had controlled my anxiety, but my circulation was very poor now. My legs constantly ached all the time. So, upon visiting my doctor again, he changed me over to another medicine, Ativan. Immediately, I began to feel better and a lot of the aches went away. I went to my dentist for a checkup. I felt that there way nothing wrong with my teeth, but proceeded anyway. To my surprise, I had a large abscess starting under one of my molars. My dentist was very surprised I wasn't in any pain but he said that sometimes that occurs. I had a root canal done on the tooth and that cured the infection. Again, I started to feel better. OK, I was very interested in Falun Dafa now! You must remember that I had no previous knowledge of Qigong or Falun Dafa before I started, so I never thought that any of these experiences would happen. But they did!

I remember next that the warming of my hands and feet went away, only to be replaced by what I would describe as a type of electrical current flowing through me every time I practiced. Then, the most amazing experience came during the 4th exercise when my hands went over my head and in front of my face. I could see my hands with my eyes closed! Except, not in the fleshy kind of sense, but as white light. It was my hand shape but all white light. I thought I was dreaming, so I shut my eyes very tight, but it did not matter; I could still see them and the outline of my arms, or any other part of my body, in front of my head as a beautiful white light. It was as though my body was all en-

ergy.

During this time, I was exercising and reading the *Zhuan Falun* every day. Suddenly, one day, I had noticed something had happened to me. I was no longer feeling anxious any more. I felt calmer than ever before. Inner peace and wisdom was filling my thoughts. My questions about life were being answered. My daily conflicts and problems were no longer a burden, but a challenge, an experience. I had renewed interest in experiencing life again.

Around January of this year, as I was doing the exercises, I had this sensation of something dark and black on me, dragging me down. I started to sweat excessively. Then, all of a sudden, the sensation let go of my body, like it fell off and dropped to the floor. I immediately felt as light as a feather, as though I could have floated out of the room. I now feel this way every time I exercise—light and relaxed. But since that experience, I have had no need to take my medication. Initially, I just reduced my dosage. After doing so, I felt fine, so I cut back some more and some more until I just stopped taking it.

Spiritually I have changed as well. So people ask me at times about how you can practice Falun Dafa and be a Christian. I tell them that since I've started practicing, I've become more Christian than ever before. When I re-examined the New Testament, the content of the message being taught is exactly the same as what I read in the *Zhuan Falun*. Even though Falun Dafa is a practice and Christianity is a religion, both point you down the same path, so I never find conflict between the two. The only difference is that now I find more meaning in the Christian lifestyle than I did a year ago, because of Falun Dafa.

I sometimes cannot believe I am in the same body I was a year ago. I have no anxiety or stomach problems anymore. I no longer take medication. I feel energetic in my body, and calm and relaxed in my mind. I face life with a different attitude. I'm doing things again I used to like to do years ago and stopped doing for some unknown reason. I have good relationships with my wife, my kids and other people.

I'd like to share this practice with Westerners who, like me, didn't know about Falun Dafa but want to change their life. I hope my story can help a few people change their life for the better.

My Personal Experience Story

Beverly Clark, Utah, USA

I have been studying Falun Dafa for a little over a year now, and am very thankful for it. I had been searching for some missing truths for many years and I believe that at last I have found the books and a Teacher to help me. In Master Li's books and conference speeches, right away I found dozens of answers, which ring true to me, on subjects that I had been searching for, but had not been able to find before that.

I had read about and looked for answers in various Western religions, Eastern religions, ancient religions, and modern religions. I had taken classes in meditation, yoga, Taichi, and acupuncture. I had read books on Qigong, breathing, Feng Shui, NLP and probably hundreds of New Age books. It was beautifully interesting to study so many different spiritual ideas, cultural ideas, and thought systems from so many different parts of the globe. I developed a tremendous respect and admiration for numerous traditions and cultures and their values and incredible insights.

However, I had not found what I was looking for, or the answers to my specific questions that made sense. No matter how long or where I searched, no matter how high my hopes periodically rose and then fell, in the end, I still felt something lacking. My conclusion was that as much truth as I was looking and practically begging for, because of my particular life circumstances, was probably not on the earth at this time. There just seemed to be parts of the truth here and there. I thought that it was unfortunate, but I figured that God must have a reason. It was nothing to resent, rather, it was something that I just had to accept and still try to be as good of a person as I could anyway.

The only possibility I felt left, for the truth being on the earth, was that I had read that there were some genuine masters in the mountains of Asia, but that it was basically impossible for an American or anyone else to contact, let alone study with them even if they traveled over there and searched for years.

I had made an attempt to piece together my own thought system from what seemed to me like the most likely truths from everything that I had studied. Because of my searching I did feel that I had more insights and a broadened way of looking at what I felt was true to me; however, I also had a lot more confusion and questions than I had when I began. Did I feel any closer to my spiritual goals? I felt that I, quite likely, would have been intrinsically better off not searching at all, but instead, using all of that “search” time to simply try to become more Christ-like through sticking with the ideas of my religion of birth, which is Mormonism. To me, the main objective of Mormonism is to help and encourage its members to be more like Jesus Christ. A high percentage of the people I respect most and know personally are Mormons. Should I just go back to Mormonism? I had done my spiritual search for the answers to my questions and admitted defeat.

My friend that had introduced me to her New Age church 12 years ago had become disillusioned with New Age ideas about the same time that I had. She had gone back to the religion of her birth—Catholicism. I didn’t know what to do, so I figured that I would just allow life to come and I would see. I still really wanted answers to my questions.

I saw a newspaper article in May 1999 that I skimmed over, about how if people don’t call yoga, Taichi or aerobics cults, why would they call Falun Dafa a cult? I saw another newspaper article in June 1999 about Falun Dafa and the estimate of 100 million people becoming practitioners since it was first introduced to the public in 1992. To me 100 million people in 7 years is beyond my ability to conceptualize.



After the years of studying I did, I had a profound respect and admiration for the Asian’s rich spiritual heritage, so if that many Chinese citizens were interested in Falun Dafa, that quickly, I would look into it. Yes, I was tired of fruitless searches, and yes, I had finally accepted the

sad likelihood that as much truth as I wanted was simply not on the earth. But if 100 million people from a nation with such a respected spiritual heritage embraced a thought system in a mere seven years, it was my guess that it was something extraordinarily good.

Through the years I had gotten faster at finding “misconceptions” that were not acceptable to me, as I was getting to know myself better from introspection and searching my soul and intellectually questioning the validity of pretty much every belief or concept that I had ever had as far as I could and then walking away to go on to the next book that I felt had hope. I figured that it would not take me very long to figure out if Falun Gong was something that I was interested in or not. I could walk away from it as one more disappointment, too.

The newspaper article mentioned some books. I called the library to ask if they had the books *Zhuan Falun* and *China Falun Gong*. Yes, they did and they would hold them for me. I found that I could hardly bear to put them down. All I wanted to do was read and read. This had happened to me before though. I was tired of getting my hopes dashed to pieces with new thought systems, so I tried not to get my hopes up too high, or even high at all. But I knew that I was very happy with most of what I was reading. I sort of figured out parts of the exercises from *China Falun Gong* and from the Internet.

On July 24, 1999, I had the pleasure to meet a Salt Lake, Falun Dafa practitioner in person, and I feel that my life has been blessed from getting to know this fine person, along with other practitioners.

I feel very lucky to have Falun Gong in my life. With as much disappointing searching for the truth as I had done, I have no problem whatsoever with the statement in *Zhuan Falun*, on page 101, “At the moment, I am the only person in the world, who is teaching orthodox Law in public. I have done something nobody did in the past and opened such a large door in the Dharma-ending time. In fact, it is an opportunity that does not occur in a thousand years or ten thousand years.”

As Master Li states, “these human beings are actually lost in a maze.” I identified with that statement. I had tried to find my way out of the confusion and lack of answers and had not been able to.

I would say that Master Li was referring to people like me on page 1 of *Zhuan Falun*. In particular, many of our practitioners who study one practice today and another tomorrow have already messed up their own bodies. Their cultivation is doomed to fail. While others practice the cultivation way on the main street, these people are on the winding sideways. If they practice the one way, the other will interfere with it. If they practice the other way, this practice will interfere with it. Everything is interfering with them, and they could no longer succeed in cultivation practice.”

It is lucky for me that Master Li then said, “We shall straighten out all these matters and make sure that you are able to practice cultivation later by preserving the good part while removing the bad part. However, you must be here to genuinely study this Dafa, the Great Law.”

And then on page 9, “The more low-level Qigong lessons you have taken and the more you have absorbed from them, the more harm they will do to you. Your bodies will have already been messed up.”

I like the idea of going back to only one cultivation way. I seem to remember a peace from childhood when I only had one “cultivation way.” Of course, when my life reached a point that Mormonism didn’t hold enough of the answers that I felt I needed help with, my expanded searching began.

On page 100 of *Zhuan Falun*, Master Li said, “If you step on two boats at the same time and cultivate both this and that, you cannot attain anything.” Though to me stepping on many boats at the same time was interesting and educational and wonderful in many ways, it also was disappointing and empty in other ways to me, and I didn’t seem to be getting anywhere with it.

By this time Falun Gong is so dear to me. I am truly thankful to have acceptable answers to so many questions. I have no intention of walking away from Falun Dafa, but, instead, look forward to with high hopes for more and more discrepancies in my thinking to be cleared away as I continue to reread *Zhuan Falun*.

My Experiences Practicing Falun Dafa

Steve Gregory, Chicago, USA

I was introduced to Falun Gong at the Whole Life Expo held at the end of October 1998 in Chicago. I went to the Expo looking for a chi gong group I could practice with. I had suffered from chronic health problems, including a large number of food and other allergies, chemical sensitivities, chronic fatigue, chronic myalgias, and chronic sinusitis. My acupuncturist had taught me a form of chi gong, but I did not get very impressive results. If I joined a group that I could practice with, I hoped I would fare better. There were several chi gong type groups at the Expo, and I spoke to all of them. The last group I encountered was Falun Gong. After speaking for just a few minutes with the site assistant, I knew this was the practice I wanted to try, but I could not really say why this one appealed to me over the others.



The next week I went to the practice site. My responses that day revealed immediately, although I didn't really know it at the time, some of the difficulties I would have in practicing and cultivating Falun Gong. Master Li says, "If human beings are able to take a fresh look at themselves as well as the universe and change their rigid mentalities, humankind will make a leap forward." In my case, change in the way I think has come slowly, as a part of me has resisted Falun Gong all along. All of my life I have wanted to be clever, and this has resulted in a skeptical if not cagey way of thinking. I tended not to believe in what I could not see. Although all of my life I had sought what I considered to be wisdom, never in my life had I thought to seek wisdom in what is spiritual. Indeed, most of my life I viewed spiritual things as the crutches used by those too weak to face the truth, or something worse, the means by which cynical men controlled and exploited those less clever than they. I had no desire to be such an exploiter, but very much wanted to avoid being made a fool of. In this habitual frame of mind, I believe I might rather run the risk of

not knowing the truth, than to risk appearing to be silly. Like so many people who love cleverness, at the bottom one finds a great deal of vanity and often a certain kind of timidity. So, when I went to my first Falun Gong practice, I was on my guard.

As we did the exercises, I could feel the energy moving through me, and could feel myself becoming very relaxed and sleepy as I was accustomed to having happened like that after a powerful acupuncture treatment. I thought to myself, “Wow, I have only begun learning the exercises, and I am getting such a strong reaction, this must be a very powerful system.” Then, after being introduced to the exercises, I sat down with others to read *China Falun Gong* together. Even though I had been told this was a spiritual practice, I didn’t feel ready to learn any spiritual teachings, and the group reading struck me as very odd. I thought to myself as we read together, “Aha, I have fallen in with some cult.” Of course, I didn’t really believe this, but I thought it. I knew I had not been charged for the lessons I had been given, and the books offered me were ridiculously cheap. In other words, this group did not act like a cult at all. As I was buying the books, I thought, “This must be a very clever cult. They are not asking me for money now, but later on they will ask me to pay in a big way for membership.” Then when the practice was over and I left the very generous people who had given me so much, I realized they had not even asked for my phone number or address. Now my vanity was wounded. “What, doesn’t this cult think me important enough to find out how to get in touch with me?”

In retrospect, this is all too ridiculous. Even though I thought these offensive things, I knew perfectly well that I had stumbled upon some very good people who had quite freely given me something really amazing. After all, when I went home, I went immediately to bed and slept for several hours, only to get up briefly, and then sleep the rest of the night through. How could a mere demonstration of the exercises, which was not really a full practice, have such a profound effect? I could not account for it. Of course, what I wasn’t ready to accept was that something supernatural was at work, and that Master Li had begun purifying my body from the very beginning.

I immediately began attending practice regularly once a week. At

first, I hardly did any more practice than these once weekly sessions. For the three or four days after attending a group practice, I would sleep 12 hours a day, and be so tired the rest of the time I was good for very little. The latter half of the week I would work very hard to try to catch up at work, and then I would go to another group practice. At the practices, I had difficulty doing the exercises in the correct way. I would only hold the Law Wheel (Falun) for one or two minutes, would sit down between the standing exercises, and would lean against the wall as I sat in meditation. In addition to attending the weekly practice, I also read *China Falun Gong*, and then *Zhuan Falun*, and then Master Li's other books. I would read each book the way I was accustomed to reading works of philosophy. I would try to analyze Master Li's arguments, and end up quarreling with nearly everything he said. Still, I couldn't help but notice an amazing thing. When I was tired, I would have the energy to read if I picked up a book of Master Li's, but not any other books. If I was energetic, and I read his books, I would get sleepy. I had to admit that these books had energy. I could not explain to myself what I also could not deny. How could a book have energy? My mind began to open a little to what Falun Gong might be.

Even though I was much less than a model practitioner, I began noticing changes. A few weeks after beginning Falun Gong, some myalgias that had troubled me for months disappeared. I had tried so many things to eliminate my allergies and sensitivities. I had succeeded in shedding many of them, but not all, not by any means. After a few months of Falun Gong, I found I could eat anything, anything whatsoever, and not have a reaction. Not only that, but I could walk into a room freshly painted with oil based paint, and not feel a thing. Before Falun Gong a mere few seconds of such an exposure would put me in bed for three days, and now I had no reaction at all. The same was true for all my other chemical sensitivities. I was amazed, and overjoyed, by these changes. In March there was an experience sharing conference in New York City, and it was rumored Master Li would be there. I knew I had to go, but I was worried about one small thing. Due to the chronic inflammation of my ears and sinuses I had stopped flying. When I flew, I would have severe pain in my ears, and often have vertigo, so that at the end of the flight, after all of the passengers had gotten off the plane, I would still be lolling in my seat like a drunk too

unsteady on my feet to get up. When the plane for New York climbed out of O'Hare, I noticed a little pain in my ears, but only a little. I thought, "that's funny." I braced myself for the descent into La Guardia, because the descents were always the worst. But on the descent I had no pain at all. This is in spite of not taking any medicine, or doing anything special for my ears.

The experience in New York changed things for me. I now knew somehow that Falun Gong was a true spiritual practice, and I knew I wanted to practice this seriously. At New York, I learned about the importance of reading *Zhuan Falun*, which I had not really understood before. I now understood that one of the keys to cultivation was studying the Law, and I began reading repeatedly the book I used to quarrel with so much. I also began practicing the exercises much more regularly than I had before. Around this time, acquaintances began stopping me on the street and asking me what I had been doing. Over and over again I would hear, "Stephen, I have never seen you look so good."

After New York, I had awakened more deeply to what Falun Gong really was, but then a new kind of thought began troubling me. Now that I had begun to believe in the real power of Falun Gong, I couldn't escape the thought that I could now use it to help me in my daily life. For instance, I had a job interview a few months after I got back from the New York conference. This interview offered what seemed to be a wonderful opportunity, and I was very eager to get the job. The weeks before the interview I found myself thinking, "maybe if I practice really well, those who interview me will feel my energy field and be well disposed to me without their even knowing it." As soon as this ridiculous thought occurred to me, I would think that this was literally blasphemous, and blame myself for thinking this way. Nevertheless, back the thought would come, and others like it, all suggesting ways I could use Falun Dafa to make me a better ordinary person.

I tried to fight off these thoughts, and in some respects I continued to improve as a practitioner. I practiced more frequently. And I continued to study the book regularly. But practicing the exercises and studying the Fa is not enough, not nearly enough. Master Li says that in cultivation practice one will be made to fall, and to understand why.

I don't mean to make a joke, but in my case, I really did fall. In the middle of April, while pruning a tree, I fell from the ladder with the result that I crushed a vertebra in my back. Master Li says there are no accidents. Everything that happens to us has meaning. After I got to the hospital, I asked myself repeatedly why this had happened. In the end, one thought dominated my mind, something Master Li says over and over again, that cultivation is a serious and solemn matter. It is not something to be played with, or taken up like a hobby that adds zest to one's life.

In my case, for months prior to my accident, I had found myself running into conflicts, which I would not handle in the manner of a real Falun Dafa cultivator. I would get angry, and compete for small benefits, and hold grudges. All the while I would hold my actions up to what I understood the Fa to be, would find them wanting, yet over and over again, would make the same mistakes. I seemed not to have let go of a single attachment the entire time I had practiced. Such a situation cannot continue forever.

I can't expect most people to understand what I am about to say, but I am glad I broke that bone in my back. Having this happened has forced me to look honestly at where I really stand. Throughout the time that I have known Falun Gong, I have been like someone with a split personality. I have always known Falun Gong from the very beginning to be wonderful and profound, and at the same time, my mind has always tried to find ways to debunk what I knew in my heart to be so precious. I would often laugh at myself as I looked at how I behaved. If I didn't believe in the truth of Falun Gong, why was I so deeply, profoundly excited the times I saw Master Li, and why did I read *Zhuan Falun* so regularly, and why did I sit for hours after work reading experience sharing articles on the web, and why did my eyes fill with tears when I read of the sufferings of the practitioners in China, when others' sufferings rarely moved me in this way? I would shake my head at how ridiculous I was in thinking I had doubts about Falun Gong, but at the same time I couldn't in the end really devote myself to cultivating Falun Dafa. I had not found in myself the ability to begin giving up the attachments of an everyday person.

In English there is a saying, that one can be too clever by half. If

one tries to outsmart everyone, one simply ends up outsmarting oneself. I had become a cultivator who didn't know how to cultivate. New practitioners always want to know, "how long have you practiced?" The implication is that if you have been doing this for sometime, you must really be good. I have always dreaded this question, because I have always known how far from the standard of a real practitioner I have been. In my heart, I believe I am now beginning to act more like a cultivator, but time is the true test of that. With the help of my friends here in Chicago, I hope my understanding may deepen, and my actions begin to assimilate more completely to the Fa. I hope that in the future when I am asked when I began, the correct answer to this question will be, "I began to practice in November of 1998, but I began to cultivate in April of 2000."



Experiences with Falun Dafa

Zenon Dolnycky, Canada

I am a Falun Dafa practitioner from Toronto. I would like to share with everyone my life long search for Falun Dafa and how finding it has changed me.

My family treated me very well. My elder brother and sister would always get me out of trouble. My mom taught me to be good and to accomplish anything I put my mind to. My dada taught me not to be like others, but to stand out and shine. Unfortunately I took all those things improperly. I believed I could do whatever I wanted, I was better than others and that I never had to pay for what I did wrong. If others thought I was good, that was good enough. I became a bad person. How bad I became isn't important. It is enough to know that over the next ten years I became a very wicked person.

Because of the blind faith I had in myself, I was very successful in whatever I did. This only reinforced the illusion that I was so great. No matter what I put my hand on I wanted to complete or succeed very quickly, I was very impatient.

When I was 18, I began to study Kung Fu. One day my teacher told me about something called Qigong, and that through the practice of Qigong one could attain everlasting life. From that moment forward I knew I would study Qigong and fulfill my life-long goal of everlasting life. I began to search high and low for Qigong masters and books. I eventually stopped studying anything combative, and focused my studies on Qigong and Taichi. The only problem was that everyone talked about enlightenment and everlasting life, but nobody taught how to attain it. Deciding not to wait any longer, I began to search the Internet. This is how I found Falun Dafa. At first I did not want to look at the web site. Then something brought me back to it. Once I saw that all books could be downloaded for free, I became very excited. Once I read some of *China Falun Gong* I knew that this was what I had been looking for. I called the phone number to verify that the nine-day seminar was actually free. I ended up inviting friends and then took the nine-day seminar.

When I look back to any instance in my life, I see how I was being prepared for the Law of Falun Dafa. If I had learned of Falun Dafa two months earlier, I would have been one of those who laughed loudly when hearing the Tao. I was lifted out of the realm of selfishness, drugs, alcohol and lust. This way I could be at a point to accept this Law so I could return to my true original self. For the past two years I had learned how to help others and myself. I now know the best way to continue to do that was to cultivate and propagate Falun Dafa.

I do not believe in luck, but feel truly the luckiest. To go so far away into such filthy things and to be guided back to what is right.

After the nine-day lectures I had made progress but I still believed myself to be great. For two months I didn't see any other practitioners and I cultivated by myself. Because I believed myself to be so great, I thought other practitioners would only slow me down. I slowly began to lose interest in my hobbies and watching movies, so I would read *Zhuan Falun*. I would read and do my exercises daily, but I was becoming very lonely, and bored. After two months of cultivating by myself, I thought, "I understand Falun Dafa so well, I should go meet other practitioners, it will really benefit them." I still thought of myself to be very good.

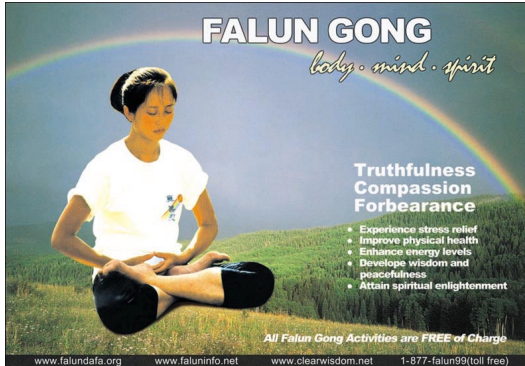
Now I see that most of what I learned in my first two months' cultivation was wrong. I am the one who benefited from my fellow practitioners. All of you have helped me in my understanding of the Law, and to show me my attachments. I feel I have not only decided to cultivate the Law, but I have also joined a very great family. I am not only speaking to those practitioners I have met. I say this to all practitioners. Master says that the Law is perfecting and harmonizing us while we are perfecting and harmonizing the Law. From my understanding, if a practitioner in Sydney or Beijing passes a mind/heart nature test, that will help to harmonize the Law. Which will in turn help to harmonize all practitioners. This is just too precious and I am just too lucky. Our family is so large and truly wonderful.

Through cultivating this Great Law, my heart has grown so immense that the love my heart hold could not be confined to one person. I feel a deep love to all people, all life and our universe. I know that the love I felt before was an attachment and that cultivation of the Law

can rectify all fallacies, just as it is stated in *On Buddha Law*. This kind, compassionate, benevolent love, has become so immense and all encompassing that this word can never hope to touch it. I know that none of these would be possible without cultivating this Great Law of Truth Compassion and Tolerance. Without conforming to Truth Compassion and Tolerance, I am sure the deepest love that could have ever felt would have been confined so just or a couple of people. That would have been just too sad. Through my cultivation in Falun Dafa, my heart has grown larger than I ever imagine and know. I am still very small. This helps me to understand Master Li, when he says this Great Law is boundless. Gradually realizing how rich the Law is and how rich the Chinese language is. I know there were a lot of things lost in translation. I decided to learn Chinese. I had still believed myself to be better than others. I thought if I learn Chinese, I can grasp the language would be better than the Chinese people. I could have deep conversation with Chinese practitioners, listen to Master Li without translator and if I ever had the chance, I would speak with Master Li in Chinese. I thought Master Li would be so impressed. I even thought I could go to China and do business and make lots of money. I thought I could be even greater than I am now. There were just some of the attachments I had developed. I had gone very wrong and hindered my cultivation greatly. A fellow practitioner took me aside and asked me why I studied Chinese. Like a good practitioner, I answered “to better understanding the Law”. This practitioner asked me to look deeper inside, and I saw many dirty and ugly things some of which I have just mentioned. After that day, I decided to stop my Chinese study temporarily. If I can not do it properly, then I am not going to do it. For days after, I went through my life seeing what a mess I had created of my life and putting things back in line with the Law. Most important is I put my mind back in line with the Law. Over these days I was constantly looking deep inside to see where I fundamentally went wrong. A few days later, when I was driving by myself, I suddenly realized that I was studying Chinese not the Law. At that moment a small but very powerful, peaceful explosion took place very deep inside my heart and mind. This peaceful explosion opened me up to an unimaginably vast and extensive feeling and understanding of the Law. I wept knowing all my attachments were very wrong. I felt as though I had

insulted the Law. In the past, I would try to embrace the Law it would feel as though my arms were stretching out to hug the Law. I no longer try to hug it, but just stand humbled by it incomparably immense, rich and extensive benevolence. Even though I expressed all these, I know it can't ever explain my understanding of the Law. And it is too far away from the Law that is because I am so small and the Law is truly great.

When I first encountered Falun Dafa, I cultivated for the purpose of becoming enlightened and returning to my original true self. I no longer cultivate with any purpose, I just know that the Law is great and I will never stop.



Three Little Veteran Practitioners' Story

Cathy He, Australia

My name is Cathy. I am 8 and half years old. Today, on behalf of my sister Cherry who is 6 and half years old and my brother Calvin who is 4 and half years old, I would like to share our cultivation experiences with you. Although we are very young, we are already veteran practitioners, who have practiced for more than one year.



The first time we contacted Falun Dafa was when we saw mummy's Falun badge. We liked it very much. So my sister and I asked for one each and put them in our school bags. When we came back home after school, my sister said to mum: "I have a light in my bag, it was shining." Mum said that was the Falun badge. No electricity, no bulb, and yet it could shine, we thought that was interesting. Later, when we watched mum practice the exercises, we thought it was fun, so we copied her. One day my sister said: "Mum, if you do well, you will have flowers growing on your head". Mum asked: "Who told you that?" She said: "I just know it. You will have 3 flowers." Later mum recorded a 30-minute music tape, including 5 sets of exercises, and she practiced together with us along with the music. Mum also tells us a lot about Truth, Compassion and Tolerance. I remember when we watched Master's exercise tape for the first time, I didn't know why my tears couldn't stop running. After watching the tape, I immediately started the sitting meditation. Although my brother was running around me, I was not affected and sat there quietly for an hour. Since then, there have been two more things in our life: one is practicing the exercises, another is listening to mum talk about Falun Dafa. Mum asks us to do everything according to Truth, Compassion and

Tolerance.

Mum has been training us to do things by ourselves since we were small. Once brother was naughty and didn't want to have a shower by himself. He insisted that mum help him. Mum said: "You have to do your own things by yourself. What if mum isn't at home?" Brother said: "Mum I know you are going to see Master Li." Both sister and I laughed at him. But a few days later, mum did go to Singapore for the conference. I asked mum why she told brother before hand, not us. Mum said that she didn't tell anybody, and that it was brother's super-normal capability.

One day when brother came home from the child care center, he held out his little arm to show us the bruise on it and said: "I fell over today. And I endured it." Mum said that he is a genuine practitioner. Sometimes brother also complained about other kids who pushed him or threw rocks at him. But after mum explained to us, we all understood that good will be rewarded with good and evil with evil. It's because we do wrong things. Now when brother falls over again, mum would ask: "Why did you fall over?" He would say: "Sorry, I did the wrong thing. This is punishment. I won't do it again". But not long afterward, he would do the same thing again. Mum said that happens because he is too young.

My sister loves helping others. When I had my body purification, she put the blanket on me, offered me water, brought me things to eat and my favorite toys, and looked after me carefully. She also helps brother to study like she is a little teacher. Brother is very naughty, but she is very patient with him. Whenever brother tells lies or fights with



other kids, she would remind him of Truth, Compassion and Tolerance.

Once in school, a naughty boy grabbed brother's lunch box and threw it into the garbage bin. He also took brother's coins for an ice block. When sister found out, she said to her upset brother: "Ignore him. He has given you virtues". Then she gave half of her lunch and ice block

to brother. Young as she is, she is tolerant and does not get angry. What's more, she always thinks of others. Brother, other kids and I all like playing with her. Mum says she is a genuine practitioner, because she does not practice verbally, but puts Truth, Compassion and Tolerance into action.

Next I am going to talk about myself. When we began to do the exercises, we did them for half an hour after school. Later we increased to 45 minutes, then to one hour. Among the 5 sets of exercises, I like doing the sitting meditation very much. Because when I enter the tranquil state, I feel my body disappeared. It's very comfortable. But when I seek after this sensation, it disappears. As Master says the more you seek, the more unlikely you'll get it. Sometimes in sitting meditation, I feel as if I am a balloon floating. It's a lot of fun. Sometimes I feel I am flying in the air and see children playing – doing somersaults in the air and on swings. I also see them reading *Zhuan Falun* on clouds – the words are shining golden rays. One day while I was watching the children, they even gave me some food, which I had never eaten before and it was really delicious. I told Mum about this. She said her mouth was watering and asked me to bring some for her next time.

I remember once my schoolteacher asked us to write down some fair and unfair things. Then I wrote: I share my things with others, but others don't share their things with me. This is unfair. Now when I read the chapter "Loss and Gain", I feel that I was being ridiculous before.

Since I have stated practicing Falun Dafa, I am gradually taking things more lightly. I used to like listening to praises. Now I only think how to do my best. During two dancing competitions last year, both my sister and I won awards. I wasn't so excited as before and when I went home, I put my awards under the table. I feel that I have changed a lot. My parents say that I have become less selfish and my character has become more cheerful.

Living a True Life with Falun Dafa

Robert Nappi, Virginia, USA

Once upon a time in 1998, I was reintroduced to a reason, for life. It seems, I've "awakened" within this little universe or form of animation I reflect on when I look into a mirror. I call this my Self. Let me begin my story with the explanation that I died in a car accident in 1991. I've been told that I would not be alive today if the accident had not been witnessed by a doctor, as he was backing out of his driveway at that moment, on his way to work. He managed to help me breathe again and acquired a helicopter to take me to the hospital, where I lived for a year. I had a left hemisphere brain injury which has taken much of my memory of the last 30 years of my life away. It took me about 7 months to learn to walk again. I could not read or write for over 6 years. What a boring, useless, and lonely life this turned out to be, as I would spend my days drinking alcohol, smoking pot and taking drugs just to tolerate my lonely, wasteful and useless existence. Then along comes destiny trying to catch my attention and lead me through and out of this maze of confusion I called reality. I was turned onto *Zhuan Falun*. It's a wonderfully powerful and majestically enlightening book. Anyone who reads it will tell you that it explains and guides one towards and down the path of Life's Cultivation, to find Our Individual Beings—True Self.

This book helps guide our understanding, with truths and reasons for the purposeful existence of our being, within and as a part of life. It is written and shared with us by the Master Teacher Li Hongzhi. He has this compassionate understanding of our need for help with the guidance through this maze of misunderstandings that we find ourselves lost in and trapped by. I will try to explain this adjustment my being's awareness has realized since I have awakened to the reality of my life and why I felt the need to purposefully cultivate such a gift. I think one would have to live in my shoes to experience my short-term memory loss I've suffered and lived with. Wondering what was I just doing or thinking? I got started and already forgot. And I could not read well enough to tolerate the challenge of trying to learn again.

Now call this a coincidence, but I prefer to see it as a miracle involved with my cultivation. When I opened the book *Zhuan Falun*, I could read all of a sudden. I felt as if I'd just woken up. Also I forgot all about smoking and drinking, plus had no desire to do so anymore. Now to those who would say that these first two miracles are just all in my mind, I would say that we all have been given a free will and chose what we settle for, as we mold our belief systems.

However, this third event dealing with my awakening, through the cultivation of my True-Being was nothing less than a miracle (the type you'd have to see to believe). One morning when I was working in my garden, I accidentally dropped a big log on my finger, broke and cut it badly. At that time, my wife was ready to start her daily Falun Dafa exercises, so she suggested that I do the movements along with her, that it would help. She had been involved in this already for a few months. I still hadn't taken this seriously yet. I was told these movements change our bodies on a subatomic level by cleansing the bad karma from our bodies that we have accumulated throughout our lives. Not that I necessarily had a lot of blind faith, or expectations in the event about to take place, I was just looking to try and calm down. I was told to just do the movements and remain tranquil with no mind intent. Ten minutes after we started my finger felt a little better, ten more minutes, much better, after ten more minutes went by there was no sign of any damage to my finger anymore. It was no longer black and blue, and no longer felt broke. Also the inch long cut was miraculously healed. It's hard to believe, but absolutely true. That experience turned out to be truly a magical event. I still find it hard to accept as reality but I have a witness in case I forget.

These days I find myself more diligently practicing the movements, plus reading the book. Now keep in mind that for the last 6 years I've had no feeling in my right arm due to the operation done on my brain that caused me to have a stroke. But one Saturday, I was at the Mall in D.C. and while practicing a Wheel Embracing movement of Falun Gong, my back began hurting real bad, then all of a sudden, a loud pop sound came from the middle of my back. Seconds later, another loud pop sound came from my wrist. Suddenly I had feeling in my arm once again. I was told that my energy channels must have been

opened. Of course, some would simply call that a physical alignment, but I call it another miraculous event.

I could go on and on about these miraculous events happening to me. Instead, I would like to try and explain some realizations I have been awakening to. As there is this great foundation of truth, blossoming within my being. Many truth seekers are aware that master teachers have periodically appeared for us throughout the ages and have tried to guide us out of this maze of misunderstandings. We must realize we're part of the universe and the only way for us to gain the ultimate health is by assimilating within the true nature of this universe with Truth, Compassion and Tolerance. But with the confusion brought on by ourselves, we, as man have lived with an obscured view of reality. Most of mankind has built life on belief systems with untrue or shaky foundations. The book *Zhuan Falun* can and will give those of us with the desire and destiny for a life filled with enlightenment, a chance to cultivate our true nature. Loads of addictions and attachments like gravity pull us down into that maze of misunderstandings. And these, we should not hold on to.

So what makes Falun Dafa so appealing to those seeking after the truth about life is simply obvious to anyone who will look with an open mind and a heart of understanding. While observing these Falun Dafa practitioners, you will notice the truthfulness that flows in a natural way from within their being. They seem to project a certain compassionate tolerance, and great endurance towards disharmonic situations. These coincidentally and by no accident just happen to be the foundation underlying the teachings of Falun Dafa—Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. I have never felt more at home and comfortable since I have taken part in this cultivation. This book of truth is waking me up from this maze and has completely changed my outlook on life. But if we continue to surround ourselves with all kinds of attachments camouflaging our awareness, and continue to find unbalanced and unjust ways of dealing with life as if it were some kind of accident, we will continue sleepwalking through this maze of misunderstandings. One of the most beneficial lessons I have learned from our Master Teacher Li Hongzhi is, when reacting to incidents or dealing with people and circumstances, we should always check within

ourselves, as if we are being educated for a higher purpose. Think why this is happening to me and what I can learn from this. Don't jump to conclusions for things only happen to teach us some sort of life-lesson. It is our own free will that will manifest our reactions. Hopefully we can always remember Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance, and try to reach out to our true beings.

Guiru Zhang tells me not to worry. "At the very beginning it may not be enjoyable, it may be painful," he says. "But it's normal."

Good. Because as I sit cross-legged on the grass and try to pull my left foot into the crook of my right knee — the lotus position — I'm sure I'm going to break something.

Otherwise, it's a pleasant morning.

We're sitting on squares of carpet a few yards from a group of 21 people silently practicing the Chinese art of meditative exercise called Falun Dafa.

Zhang, a 26-year-old chemistry grad student, teaches newcomers to the group, which meets from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. every Sunday at Duke Gardens, as well as Saturday mornings in Pullen Park in Raleigh.

Many people have heard of Tai Chi. Millions perform its slow, graceful poses daily. Falun Dafa is a simpler relative in the family of Chinese healing arts called qigong. It has only five movements: four done standing and one, seated. Regular practitioners say Falun Dafa enriches mind and body. And mind comes first as they seek to cultivate the guiding qualities of Zhen, Shen and Ren — truthfulness, benevolence and forbearance — on the path to enlightenment.

Dan Hodgdon used to practice martial arts, including Jang fu, and started attending the Falun Dafa sessions in Raleigh three months ago. He was wary of some of the spiritual language at first.

"That's one of the things I was a little concerned about, but it's nothing like (religion)," the 35-year-old says. "I enjoy it. It releases you. It invigorates you out."

Cultivation, to Hodgdon, "is a way of lifting your spirit, understanding yourself as a spiritual being," he says. "But not in a religious way, more philosophical."

I certainly feel philosophical as I follow Zhang's simple, elegant hand movements. He sits and hops on the green hillside overlooking the lily pond pool. Even a DAVA bus that noisily rumbles by barely interrupts the tranquil mood.

The movement we are doing is called Shengzong, Jiachi Fa, or Strengthening Supernatural Powers. It's a mouthful for a simple routine where we raise and lower our hands.

But Zhang quickly explains that many people have such supernatural powers, whether one calls them *deja vu* or experiences them as dreams that later come true.

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MEDITATION/G2



STRETCHING MIND AND BODY: Chen, center, teaches a meditation class at Duke Gardens. Xin Qin, below, meditates.



MARK SCHULTZ

The X-File



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