

Falun Gong

WHO IS GOD?

In accordance with its links to Buddhism and Taoism, Falun Gong recognizes no being as deity or creator. Li Hongzhi is not considered a god. He is, however, the only one who can properly teach the path of Falun Gong. Zhen-Shan-Ren, or truthfulness, benevolence, forbearance, are the fundamental characteristics of the universe. Everything is held up to Zhen-Shan-Ren in order to determine its worth. The universe is cyclic, and eternal, with no beginning or end. Fa (Tao) is thought to be the sustainer, and all things came from Fa, so, Fa can be considered the creator. Fa is not a being however, and should not have properties of being ascribed to it. It is simply the force undermining and empowering the universe.

WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

We live in a cyclic universe that is constantly rebuilding itself. The more lives we live before we reunify with the Fa, the further we are from Fa. Fa is the source behind all nature and the universe. It is not a being, but is seen as an empowering presence in the life of those who have achieved rectification.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

We are here to rectify our lives to Fa (this process is called cultivation). This is accomplished through spiritual and mental enlightenment and physical exercise. There are five sets of exercises in Falun Gong to aid this rectification process. Three are physical exercises that enhance the body's circulation and improve physical health. Two of the five exercises are mental, with an eye toward enlightenment (evolution of the xinxing, or mind-nature). The goal is to free oneself from the bondage of karma. In life, humans accumulate karma or de, depending on the nature of one's actions. The more karma in one's life, the more difficult enlightenment becomes. The more de one has, the easier one will find the process of enlightenment. De is directly assimilated into Zhen-Shan-Ren, the universal characteristic; karma, however, must be transformed into de, which is then assimilated into Zhen-Shan-Ren. The transformation of karma into de is often a long and painful process, both for the mind and the body, but the resultant enlightenment (becoming a Buddha) is of such value that the process is willingly taken up. Each trial, each instance of physical or mental anguish, should be seen as an opportunity to advance one's xinxing.

HOW DO WE KNOW?

We know and understand Falun Gong from two major texts written by Li Hongzhi, called Falun Gong (Law Wheel Qigong), and Zhuan Falun (Turning the Law Wheel). Falun Gong offers a description of qigong, information on the relationship between Falun Gong, qigong and Buddhism, the origins, meaning and elimination of illness, and descriptions of the exercises necessary to achieve rectification (including commentary on why the exercises are unique). It is considered the introduction to Falun Gong (as a religion), and is used in conjunction with Zhuan Falun. Zhuan Falun is the comprehensive commentary of Falun Gong, and the authoritative guide to Falun Dafa, or the way of Falun Gong. In the words of Li Hongzhi, everything published about Falun Gong is "merely complementary to Zhuan

Falun," and that "only Zhuan Falun can truly guide a person's cultivation". There are other works by Li Hongzhi available, but Zhuan Falun retains its primary status.

WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO?

We must cultivate ourselves, rectifying ourselves to Fa. This is done by understanding and practicing the five exercises of Falun Gong, in addition to understanding and practicing the principles of Falun Gong as set forth in Zhuan Falun and Falun Gong. In doing this, people can transform their accumulated karma into de, which is assimilated into Zhen-Shan-Ren, the universal characteristic. Once this takes place, it will be manifested by actions in accordance with Zhen-Shan-Ren (truthfulness, benevolence, forbearance). Benevolence and kindness are the marks of Falun Gong practitioners, which are in marked contrast to the violence and greed endemic in human society. Each trial in life should be seen as an opportunity to persevere in cultivation, allowing one's xinxing to advance, and one's karma to decrease.

WHAT'S GOING ON TODAY?

Today, there are practitioners of Falun Gong all around the world. Falun Gong estimates the number of adherents at 100 million, worldwide, with some 70 million adherents in China alone. It should be noted, however, that the Chinese government puts the number of adherents at 2 or 3 million. Both figures are thought to be somewhat exaggerated, and the actual number is likely found in the middle of both estimates. Either way, Falun Gong would rank among the top ten religions, if generally classified a religion.

HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE IT?

Falun Gong is recognized by the Falun emblem, which is thought to be a miniature representation of the universe. In the center is a swastika (traditionally, the wan symbol, which denotes good fortune). Surrounding this is a circle containing four smaller swastikas, and four yin-yang symbols (two red and blue, two red and black). Red and black are thought to be the colors of the Yin and Yang at their highest level (black and white represent Yin and Yang at a lower level of manifestation). The red and blue yin-yang symbols are part of the School of the Great Primordial Tao.

The 411 on the founding of Falun Gong

Who: Falun Dafa, or Falun Gong, as most people know it, was made public by Li Hongzhi in 1992. It is considered an ancient form of qigong (energy working), a Chinese practice of refining the physical and intellectual natures through special exercises and meditation.

What: Falun Gong is a method to refine one's mind and body through exercises and meditation. Falun Gong means the practice of the wheel of dharma. It is based on the ancient Chinese principle of qigong, which is similar to Tai Chi and Taoism. The physical and intellectual natures are of equal importance. The teachings of Li Hongzhi are thought to bring enlightenment to the mind, as the physical exercises bring health to the body. There are five sets of exercises which improve the circulation in the body, thus improving health.

When: Falun Gong was introduced in 1992, but its principles and methods trace back thousands of

years. It has strong ties to both Buddhism and Taoism, which are seen as the only two major religious systems (other religions fall under the categories of Buddhism or Taoism). As such, it is an older tradition, but it did not appear as it is until it was introduced by Li Hongzhi

Where: Falun Gong began in China, where it is now (as of 2001) considered a dangerous cult. It was outlawed by the Chinese government as a possible subversive group in 1999. There are people who follow Falun Gong around the world.

WHAT IF I WANT TO KNOW MORE?

To find out more information, check out the following sites:

- * www.falundafa.org
- * <http://religioustolerance.org/falungong.htm>
- * <http://faluninfo.net/>

Books for learning about Falun Gong:

- * *Zhuan Falun*, by Li Hongzhi
- * *Falun Gong*, by Li Hongzhi

Sources:

- * www.falundafa.org
- * www.britannica.com Falun Gong section
- * www.mindspring.com/~falun/

Hongzhi, Li. (2000). *Zhuan Falon (English Version)*. New York: The Universal Publishing Co.