

## Some Reflections On Hunger Strikes Outside Of China

*Chun Xin*

About a week ago, several American Dafa disciples went to Washington DC and started a peaceful sit-in in front of the Chinese embassy. What distinguished this activity from other sit-ins occurring throughout the past twenty months in front of the Chinese embassies around the world was that this time the practitioners engaged in hunger strikes. Following continual reporting on this event, Dafa disciples from a growing number of countries and/or regions reacted to this expeditiously, leading to a dramatic increase in both the number and venues of hunger strikes. As Fa-rectification disciples, we need to be clear-minded from the standpoint of the Fa and also about the objective results of our actions, no matter what form of activity in which we are engaged. In this article, we avail ourselves of observations coming out of small-scale discussions from many areas to facilitate communication among more practitioners on the issue of overseas hunger strikes.

### 1. Why the hunger strikes?

Dafa cultivation does not in itself contain the idea of hunger strike. It is a form adopted by some practitioners to stop the persecution and to urgently appeal on behalf of persecuted fellow practitioners in China after a two-year mass petition campaign. In and of itself, a hunger strike is an individual action; however, it is not for individual cultivation, but for the rescuing of more people's lives and for awakening the public's conscience and compassion.

It is well-known that Dafa disciples in China are experiencing a most vicious persecution. Particularly those illegally detained in Public Security departments, labor camps, brain-washing classes, mental hospitals, etc., not only have they been deprived of such basic rights as belief and exercise, but also they have lost their personal freedom. Often, arbitrary brutality from police, guards, and criminals causes great harm to practitioners. It is in such an extreme circumstance that many disciples have resorted to hunger strikes to express their belief in Truth--at the expense of their health or even lives--and to protest the persecution. Amidst their suffering the most outrageous persecution, the hunger strikes are a cry from benevolent beings for human conscience and justice, and a rejection and denial by righteous beings of the evil's arrangement.

Assessing reports on the hunger strikes from all areas, we find that although they were individual actions, the major reasons for the hunger strikes expressed by the practitioners involved were similar: to rescue the practitioners on extended hunger strikes in Masanjia (labor camp) and to condemn the persecution by the Jiang government. The manner in which those reasons were presented, however, were quite different. Upon hearing the stories about the 130 dying practitioners, some wished to appeal with their physical sufferings as they pushed for the unconditional release of those Dafa disciples. Some hoped to awaken the kindness in beings' hearts through their own suffering so that more lives could be saved. One of them, herself a mother, felt the cruelty of the persecution in China from the tragic deaths of Wang Lixuan and her baby son. Some joined the hunger strikes in hopes of rescuing practitioner Dr. Teng Chunyan, an American resident illegally sentenced in China--and so on and so forth. Through their actions they sent a uniform message: We do treasure our lives but for the sake of more people's precious lives, we are willing to sacrifice.

### 2. Should we do hunger strikes?

Since a hunger strike is a personal decision and everyone has his own situation, a clear-cut answer is hard to come by.

Dafa disciples outside of China are contemplating that every step we take should be responsible to Dafa, to beings, and to history. Then, does hunger striking by practitioners outside of China conform to Dafa principles? Should the hunger strikes be extended without limit? Is the decision to join or not join based on the emotion--or human sentiment--evoked by sufferings endured by disciples in Mainland China, or is it based on a selfless choice made after rational thinking? Depending on the answers to these questions, subsequent social effects would be different even though the practitioners took the same form--hunger strike--to express their will.

Given the tepid response from the media (particularly the indistinct messages being reported, such as "SOS! Urgent: Rescue the Falun Gong Practitioners Persecuted in China," "sacrifice for others;" "hoping to attain so and so goals," etc.), practitioners in those discussions voiced their concerns. They pointed out that one-week into the hunger strikes, many people outside of China, including some who have been supportive of us, were still perplexed about them. Why do overseas disciples have to go on hunger strikes when there are many means or forms available outside of China that could achieve the same, or even better, results? While some kind-hearted people went to meet with those practitioners on hunger strikes to show their concerns, they also kindly persuaded them to stop. They said, "It is your health that is most important. The Jiang government in China will not change its stance because of your suffering." This indicates that we should attach more importance to the results that come out of our efforts to communicate with ordinary people.

Right now, hunger strikes have become a reality outside of China. The resolve and pain endured by those practitioners on hunger strikes have moved many ordinary people, who are seeing the truth about Falun Gong from Dafa disciples' sacrifices and the media's response to them. This is precisely what those practitioners had hoped to achieve. Meanwhile, however, we ought to be clear about the limitations manifested in the hunger strikes, which were ultimately induced by an inadequate understanding of Dafa principles and the need for individuals to improve their Xinxing. For instance, some practitioners have yet to go beyond the boundaries of individual cultivation; they are sometimes driven by human attachments and are prone to following group momentum. In terms of Dafa principles, they need to become more mature in their understanding and to make more progress in that sense. In the end, these limitations diminished the effects the hunger strikes could have produced.

Through Fa studies and group discussions, we came to understand that hunger strikes outside of China are individual actions. Everyone has a different cultivation path. Also, the amount of sacrifices and the types of experiences we have to go through are also different. We cannot make judgments against a common benchmark. Hence, there is no such thing in cultivation called "agreed-upon form" recognized and followed by every practitioner. The key, however, is whether we are clear enough about Dafa principles, whether our mindsets and thoughts are pure and selfless, and whether we are sparing no efforts in doing what we are supposed to do. "In other words, one body doesn't necessarily do one thing. But no matter what you do, you need to be worthy of being called a Dafa disciple." ("Lecture on the Fa at the Washington, D.C. International Conference") That the hunger strikes by practitioners outside of China are individual actions validates the fact that Dafa has no organizational structure, demonstrates those practitioners' unwavering resolve in Dafa, and manifests their noble realms in sacrificing willingly for others' well being. If there is anything to be improved, it shows when we examine the results of our actions at the ordinary people's level: we lack the awareness of coordination with the big picture in mind. To every practitioner, the cultivation process of continually purifying his mind and deepening his understanding of Dafa principles is well integrated with whatever Dafa work he engages in and whatever form he takes to carry it out. In sum, Fa-rectification disciples' Fa-rectification must progress both internally deep in their hearts and in the external environment at the same time.

### **3. Turning disadvantages into advantages, and eliminating interference by the evil**

For Dafa practitioners who have let go of the attachment to worldly benefits, fame and even life and death, sacrificing their lives in pursuit of the ultimate truth is not that hard. In comparison, taking a truly righteous path amidst tribulations, tenaciously deterring interference, and steadfastly awakening the compassionate nature of beings to the maximum is really challenging. Whatever Fa-rectification disciples do, they should set their eyes on this goal: "Clarify the truth thoroughly, eliminate the evil with righteous thoughts, save all beings, and safeguard the Fa with determination..." ("Dafa is Indestructible") If we neglect the fundamentals in Dafa principles but only stress the superficial formality, our actions will not likely achieve their intended results; on the contrary, they might invite unexpected interference and predicaments.

Hunger strike is a formality at the ordinary people's level. Like all other things in human society, it contains both positive and negative elements. Once it is adopted, we must address the serious concern of whether we can well handle its positive aspect while completely eliminating its negative aspect (or turning its disadvantages into advantages). This is because we only need to work on things that are necessary from the point of view of Fa-rectification. Actually, every action of Fa-rectification practitioners should validate Dafa wherever and whenever they take place.

We all know hunger strikes endanger human lives. The longer the hunger strike, the more the people have to endure. Therefore, ordinary people on hunger strikes usually become agitated, irrational, and hostile. Sometimes they may even develop during the process a mentality to use their lives as bargaining chips. How, then, can those disciples on hunger strike make the world's people feel-- amidst their physical sufferings-- the power of benevolence and the realms of Dafa which will further enable people to willingly help or support Dafa disciples' just actions? This is what those practitioners on hunger strikes are trying to validate to the world's people. Perhaps these are also questions every Dafa disciple has to be clear about in terms of Dafa principles.

We have come to understand that what scares the evil forces the most is an indestructible body forged by Dafa disciples. Our unified body will be comprised of independent entities that come together voluntarily. Its formation depends on our common understanding of Fa-rectification and our unwavering belief in "Truthfulness, Compassion and Forbearance," but doesn't rely on organizational means at the level of ordinary people. As such, it requires the hunger-striking practitioners to have a very clear understanding in terms of Dafa principles about the reason for their taking that action and the intended results, and to keep up righteous thoughts every second. In the meantime, other practitioners caring about those hunger-striking practitioners cannot have the mentality of waiting or relying on others. In addition to taking good care of those hunger-striking practitioners' daily lives and security, they should also take the initiative to facilitate those practitioners' communication with media in order for their physical sacrifices to produce the strongest social reactions and achieve the effect of eliminating the evil. Besides, we believe it is inappropriate for the hunger strikes to last too long: one or two days is sufficient, with four days being the maximum. Hunger strikes of short duration are more symbolic on the surface, but the calls they send out on humanitarian grounds are forceful--and they don't consume too many limited human resources. Another important point is that if the hunger strikes by practitioners last too long, they can distract public attention from the theme of "SOS! Urgent: Rescue the Falun Gong Practitioners Persecuted in China" to the hunger strikes themselves outside of China. The above is our collective thinking at this stage.

#### **4. Forming a wider and more indestructible unified body among practitioners outside of China**

Before history, the old forces in the cosmos adopted a "splitting and suppressing" strategy outside of China to guarantee their success with the persecution in Mainland China. In the past two years, Dafa disciples outside of China have applied themselves fully to the mission of assisting Master in Fa-rectification, and their concrete actions taken in their local areas to clarify the truth and expose the evil have to a large extent broken through the evil's arrangement. In order to further break through their splitting of the world and their suppressing the consciences of

the world's people, it is necessary that practitioners outside of China form a larger entity with momentum by connecting practitioners on all the continents into a single body. This will make the evil forces now rampant in China isolated and helpless, waiting to be most thoroughly eliminated like vermin or trash.

Following the conflict between goodness and evil over the past two years, the evil forces have mostly seen their doomed failure. Nevertheless, some deviant beings at high levels don't want to give up yet. Almost to the extent of being desperate, they are trying all means to interfere with Dafa disciples. Every Dafa disciple will be interfered with or hindered by those deviant high-level beings in almost any area and at any time. In order to thoroughly break through the arrangements by the old evil forces and to root out the evil, we must quiet our hearts for Fa studies, continually eliminate any bad thoughts in our minds, apply righteous thoughts to everything, and send forth righteous thoughts to eliminate the interference. Only by doing so can we do well in Dafa work at the ordinary people's level with wisdom and reason.

As one single entity, we all take actions in line with the theme of "SOS! Urgent: Rescue the Falun Gong Practitioners Persecuted in China." Hunger strikes are no exception to this. In light of the overall situation, if we can intensely, flexibly, and judiciously highlight the "urgent rescue" theme in various activities, more of the world's people will be moved, will see the truth, and be saved. Otherwise, if there is imbalance and poor coordination in our different activities, the social effects will be diminished, the evil's interference will work as intended, and the Fa-rectification process will be prolonged.

At present, the worldwide "SOS!" walk initiative has already been inaugurated in Seattle, USA and Switzerland. It is urgent and challenging to tell the truth to the Chinese community at tourist attractions and in Chinatowns. Editing work for Dafa websites, newspapers, TV and radio stations, etc. is required to be finished on time--also a daunting task. Meanwhile, Dafa work regarding governments and media needs to be deepened and improved immediately, as it has become a priority for us to clarify the truth to people from all walks of life in western society. It is our wish that all Dafa disciples can make full use of their time, strengthen their righteous thoughts, and fulfill to the maximum their sacred promises made in the prehistoric times.

" Together, we strive forward diligently, Into the brightest future." (from Hong Yin)