

A Discussion of the Chinese Character "De" (Virtue)

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The meaning of the Chinese character "De," commonly translated as Virtue," was explained in the *Kangxi Dictionary* as: "it means good, beautiful, righteous, bright, pure and exemplary." In fact, in the Shang Dynasty Oracle Inscriptions and the documents from the earlier Qin Dynasty, "De" was interchangeable with another Chinese character "De," that meant to "obtain" or "gain," and it has the same pronunciation today. Thus, the word "De (Virtue)" has the meaning of to "obtain or gain." In the book *Shuowenjiezi*, "De (Virtue)" was explained as: "De means gain. The inner gain is up to oneself, while the outer gain is up to others."

"De (Virtue)" was viewed as the quality that differentiates humans from beasts. A human being is worthy of being called a human being only when he/she conforms to the moral standard of a human being. For one who aspires to "harmonize the family, manage state affairs and bring peace to the world", one must first "cultivate one's body". What does "cultivating one's body" involve? It involves the cultivation of one's moral character. According to the different levels of one's moral character, among human beings, there exist the states of being a sage, a man of virtue,

a man of noble character, or a man of vile character. Thus, the emperor, who used to be called the Son of Heaven, was required to "cultivate De to be qualified for his noble destiny", and "respect De to protect his people". For ordinary citizens, "there are hundreds of different ways to do things, but one must take De as the top priority", and one must "cultivate one's moral character and preserve De."

Why is "De (Virtue)" so important? In the community of cultivators who transcend the level of ordinary people's "cultivating the body" (to cultivate one's moral character as a human being), this issue is viewed even more clearly. The founder of Falun Dafa, Mr. Li Hongzhi, has taught us the following:

"Virtue is accumulated in past lives. Becoming a king, an official, wealthy, or nobility all come from virtue. No virtue, no gain; the loss of virtue means the loss of everything. Thus, those who seek power and wealth must first accumulate virtue. By suffering hardships and doing good deeds one can accumulate virtue among the masses." (*"Wealth With Virtue"* in *Falun Dafa Essentials for Further Advancement*.)

"Everyone has a specified body in each of many other dimensions. In a specified dimension there is a field that surrounds the human body. What kind of field is it? This field is the de that we have mentioned. De is a white substance and not, as we believed in the past, something spiritual or ideological--it absolutely has a kind of material

existence. Thus, in the past, elders talked about accumulating or losing de, and they spoke very sensibly."(*Zhuan Falun*, third translation edition).

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