【中英文對照賞析】

Cultivating Virtue: Avoiding Disaster and Gaining Blessings by Abandoning Greed

戒貪養德 避禍得福（上）

The Huainanzi , an ancient Chinese text from the Han Dynasty, said in Volume 41, "A sage preserves what he has, and does not pursue what he does not have. If one pursues what one does not have, then what one has will disappear. If one cultivates what one has, then what one wants will naturally appear."

The above statements can be interpreted as: A sage preserves his virtue, and does not desire what does not belong to him. Whoever is greedy will in the end lose what he has, because greed and pursuit do not bring blessings. One who breaks the law and takes bribes will lose his blessings. If one cultivates virtue, however, then what he wants will come naturally, because virtue possesses mighty wisdom and can be transformed into blessings.

Three short stories illustrating ancient Chinese beliefs follow. Each shows the importance of letting go of greed and cultivating virtue, which in the long run will avoid disaster and result in blessings.

Dou Qie Foresees Disaster

Essentials of Governing from the Ancient Texts (Qunshu Zhiyao) , an ancient Chinese book written during the Tang Dynasty, tells a story that happened in the Spring and Autumn Period about Dou Qie's understanding of the dangers of greed.

Dou Qie, an official of the Chu State, had a conversation with Zi Chang, the state's lingyin. Lingyin is the highest rank an official could reach at the time and is equivalent to today's prime minister.

Zi Chang inquired about savings and horses. On returning home, Dou Qie told his younger brother, "The Chu State is going to fall because the lingyin cannot avoid disasters. When I visited the lingyin, he inquired about material things and his expression looked like that of a hungry wolf. I am afraid the Chu State is doomed to fall."

Dou Qie then talked about Zi Wen, one of Zi Chang's ancestors, "Zi Wen gave up the position of lingyin three times and never had any savings because he took people's needs into consideration. Every time King Cheng of the Chu State offered him a salary higher than the usual salary range, he refused to accept it. He would not return until King Cheng stopped talking about an increase in his salary.

Someone asked Zi Wen, 'People pursue treasure and wealth in life, but you stay clear of it. Why?' He replied, 'Government officials should protect ordinary people. Now, most people are poor. If I pursue and gain wealth, then what I gain is actually what was taken from others. If I did that, then I would suffer. Therefore, I am doing this to evade death, not wealth.' That's why the Ruo'ao family line died out during King Zhuang period. Yet Zi Wen's family line persists because they are good officials. Isn't this because he saw the people as his priority and put his own wealth in second place?"

However, the situation changed, as Dou Qie recounted, "Today, Zi Chang's (Zi Wen's descendant and King Chu's assistant) reputation is bad across the Chu State. Walls surround the area. People have no food and many have starved to death. Zi Chang doesn't care about them, but instead, he accumulates wealth and treasure. People have not stopped complaining about him. The more he accumulates wealth, the deeper the hatred and more the complaints! Isn't the Chu State close to its final breath?"

One year later, the Baiju War broke out between the Wu State and Chu State. The Chu State was defeated. Zi Chang escaped to the Zheng State and King Zhao escaped to the Sui State.

Shunning Greed: Emperor Taizong of Tang Dynasty Educates His Men

A book written in the Tang Dynasty, Zhenguan Political Digest, records a story about how Emperor Taizong of Tang explained to his men the importance of not being driven by greed.

He told his men, "If a person has a bright pearl, he would definitely regard it as a treasure. If he uses it to shoot sparrows, it would be a pity. Moreover, a person's life is more precious than a bright pearl.

"If an official forgets about the law and accepts bribes in whatever form, then he doesn't cherish his life. Even the bright pearl, an external thing outside one's body, shouldn't be used for shooting sparrows, not to mention a person's life, which is so precious. How can we use it in exchange for wealth and material things? If you make a great effort to remain loyal and upright, do good deeds for the country and people, then you will soon get promoted. However if you pursue prosperity and accept bribes, then once your behavior is discovered, your life would be in danger."

"This also applies to the emperor. If he indulges in sentiments and comfort, demands that people do arduous labor, believes only petty officials, stays aloof of loyal and righteous officials, and so on. If he engages in anything of the above, how is it possible that the dynasty would survive? Emperor Yang of Sui Dynasty lived in luxury, yet he regarded himself as a venerated person. In the end, he died at the hands of an everyday person."

Emperor Taizong talked to his men about greed further in a subsequent year, "I've said that a greedy person doesn't know how to cherish wealth. Take a ranking official for example, whose annual earnings are quite considerable. If he accepts bribes, and it is discovered, he would not only lose his rank, but also his possessions would be confiscated. Does he cherish wealth, then?"

At another time, Emperor Taizong talked about Gongyixiu, a high-ranking official of the State of Lu, loved fish but never accepted fish from others. If the lord is greedy, he would lose his country. If the servants are greedy, he would die early.

"The Book of Songs, a famous book from Confucianism, has it that if a person is greedy, he would bring damage to many people. This is really true."

Taizong then told his men, "King Hui of the Qin State planned to go to war against the Shu State, but he didn't know the route to the Shu State. Then he constructed five stone oxen and put gold behind the stone oxen. When people from the Shu State saw the gold, they believed that the oxen could produce gold. The King of the Shu State ordered five strong men to pull the stone oxen to the Shu state, thereby revealing the route to the Shu State. Soldiers from the Qin State followed the trail and defeated the Shu State."

Taizong continued his talk by giving another example, "Tian Yannian, the Sinong (name of a high rank, equivalent to today's prime minister) of the Han Dynasty took bribes of 30 million. He eventually died at his own hands."

Emperor Taizong told his officials to watch out for greed. He said, "There are many such stories that spoke of misery because one is greedy. Draw a lesson from the story of the King of the Shu State and Tian Yannian."

(To be continued)

公有領域



《淮南子》卷四十一中記載，「聖人守其所以有，不求其所未得。求其所未得，則所有者亡矣；修其所有，則所欲者至矣。」

其大意是說，聖人安守自己本具的性德，而不貪求自己未獲得的。貪求自己未獲得的，反而已擁有的會喪失掉（因為貪求則無福，更有甚者會貪贓枉法，將福報折盡）；如果修養自己本具的性德，想得到的就會自然得到（因為性德具有無量的智慧，會轉為福報）。

下面我們就從古籍中摘錄幾個小故事，來進一步談談我們的先人是如何認識戒貪養德、避禍得福的。

斗且先知

《群書治要》中記載了這樣一個關於戒貪，斗且先知的故事。

斗且在朝堂見令尹子常，子常和他談話，問到儲蓄財物、聚集馬匹之事。斗且回來後告訴他弟弟說：「楚國將要滅亡了！否則，令尹將不免於災禍吧！我拜見令尹，令尹問起聚積物資情況，（其神色）宛如飢餓的豺狼一樣，恐怕一定要滅亡了。以前，斗子文三次放棄令尹之職，卻沒有一天的積蓄，是因為體恤百姓。成王每次超出定例給子文俸祿，子文一定躲避拒收，等到成王不提此事時他才返回。別人對子文說：『人生追求富有，而你卻逃避，為甚麼呢？』答道：『從政的人是保護百姓的。如今人民多數貧困，而我求取富有，那就是勞民以自肥，離死亡就沒有幾天了。我是逃避死亡，不是逃避富有。』所以莊王統治時期，若敖氏被滅族了，只有子文的後代還在，直到現在還是楚國的良臣。這難道不是首先體恤民眾、然後才考慮自己的富有嗎？現在，子常是先大夫的後人，輔佐楚君，在全國各地都沒有好的聲譽，四面邊境充滿壁壘，路上餓死之人比比皆是，對此不加體恤，卻蓄積資財而不知滿足，招致百姓的怨恨非常之多啊！聚斂的財物越多，積累的怨恨就越深，不是等待滅亡是等待甚麼呢？」過了一年，就發生了柏舉之戰，子常跑到鄭國，昭王跑到隨國去了。

唐太宗對群臣「勿貪」的有關論述

在《貞觀政要》中，記載了唐太宗當時對朝廷群臣「勿貪」的有關論述。

貞觀初，太宗對侍臣說：「人有明珠，沒有不視之寶貴的，如果用來彈擊麻雀，這不是很可惜嗎？況且人的性命比明珠還珍貴，見了金錢財帛連法網也不怕了，就敢直接接受賄賂，這是不珍惜性命。明珠是身外之物，尚且不可用來彈擊麻雀，何況人的性命如此寶貴，哪能用來換取財物呢？你們如果能都努力忠誠正直，益國利人，這樣官爵就會馬上來到。如果不能以這種方法來追求榮華，竟然敢接受財物，等到貪贓納賄的事敗露的時候，其性命也要滅亡了，實在是可笑的事。帝王也是這樣，如果縱情放縱逸樂，勞役無度，信任重用小人，疏遠忠誠正直的人，有此一樣，哪能不滅亡？隋煬帝奢侈反而自認為聖賢，結果死於匹夫之手，也是可笑的。」

貞觀二年，太宗對侍臣說：「朕曾說過貪財的人卻並不懂得愛財。比如朝廷和地方五品以上的官員，俸祿優厚，一年所得的數目很多。如果接受別人的財物賄賂，也不過數萬，一旦事情敗露，官職俸祿都被削奪，這豈是懂得愛財？這是因小而失大。以前的公儀休生性喜愛吃魚，但他從不接受別人送的魚，所以他能長久的吃到魚。並且做君主的貪，必喪其國；為臣的貪，必亡其身。《詩經》云：『大風有隧，貪人敗類。（大風刮得很猛，貪人敗壞族類。是說一人貪會貽害很多人。）』這確實不是妄言。以前的秦惠王要討伐蜀國，但不知道道路，於是刻了五頭石牛，把金子放在石牛後面。蜀人看見後，以為牛能便金，蜀王便派五個大力士把石牛拖入了蜀國，道路出現了，秦軍跟隨其後而攻打了蜀國，蜀國於是就滅亡了。漢朝的大司農田延年貪贓納賄三千萬，事發後自刎而死。類似這樣的事，怎能數得過來！朕今天以蜀王作為借鑒，你們需要以田延年作為前車之鑒。

（未完待續）

（轉自明慧網）

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