

The Influence of a Gentleman on People

Translation of Text

This text from *The analects of Confucius* Chapter IX .

The Master was wishing to go and live among the nine wild tribes of the east. Some one said, "They are rude. How can you do such a thing?" The Master said, "If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?"¹ The above is the translation of James Legge.

Hongming Gu translated this text: On one occasion Confucius said he would go and live among the barbarous tribes in the east: "you will there," remarked somebody, "feel the want of refinement." "where a wise and good man lives,"replied Confucius,"there will be no want of refinement."²

The Explanation of Text

Concerning the explanation of text, Li Bingnan said that the answer about where is Jiuyi is different, but the answer is not important. Confucius aimed to put *Dao* 道 into effect. Although he did not succeed, he did not blame everyone and everything. He failed to put *Dao* into effect so wanted to go to another place. Some people think that the place of Jiuyi is crude so that it do not suitable for living in. What Confucius called *Lou* 陋 do not means the food is poor or the cloth is shabby, it refers to culture, the human beings who live in Jiuyi do not understand the etiquette and righteousness. Confucius said that the gentleman lives there, the place can not be described as *Lou*.

The gentleman is people who can educate others, such as Ji Zi who was from the Shang dynasty and was originally from the central plains but was banished to Korea by the emperor Zhou. At that time, Korea is the place which be called *Lou*. Because Ji Zi educated Koreans, let Korea is no longer called *Lou*. Finally, Li Bingnan said that people who study Confucianism should follow the spirit of Confucius to educate the human beings and saving the world³.

¹ Trans. by James Legge, *The Analects* (Zhong Zhou: Zhong Zhou Guji Press,2016), p.108.

² Trans. by Gu Hongming, *The Discourses and Saying of Confucius* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju Press,2017), p.186.

³ Li Bingnan 李炳南, *The Essence Teachings of the Analects of Confucius* 論語講要(Wuhan: Changjiang Wenyi Press, 2011),p.164.

Professor Zhang said that before saving the world, we should save ourselves. The one step of saving ourselves are being a gentleman. Confucius did not have a clear explanation here, but compared with other Confucian classics, The implication of this text that where a gentleman lives will be no called *Lou* is that residents of one place will be educated by a gentleman living in it. Which means a person can influence the environment and people around he or she. *Wuliang Shoujing* said that people who live in the place of implementation of Buddhist education will be good affected⁴. *Shurangama Sutra* said that if people can influence the environment and people around them, they are the same as Buddha⁵. The greatest function of the Buddha is to change a state. In other words, people who can change the state is Buddha. After Confucius died, during about two thousand and five hundred years, no one did not received Confucius enlightenment. Sometimes people may not know, but actually they are also educated by Confucius.

If people want to achieve a state that they have the influence for people around them, they should have ability of *Ding* 定, which refers to concentration and absorption. It help them prevent from being affected by the outside environment and people. How people have the ability of *Ding*? It is said that because of following precepts, people have the ability of *Ding*. Following the precepts means that people put what is taught from sages in the classics into practice in our life. In the process, people will gain a lot of experience and feeling the wisdom and demeanour of sages, which enable them obtain more confidence to prove that these texts from classics are true. This is the way to study. This ability to affect people of Confucius also obtain from this way. At present, many people are good at learning and know a great deal of theoretical knowledge but they can not benefit from what they learn because they just know but do not practice. For instance, the roots of a tree do not grow well, then, the leaves also do not grow well and will not last for long time. What people learned can not be used and implemented in life is the same as the root of the tree is not well cultivated. This result is not what we want. We should aim to put what we learn into practice so that we can obtain the wisdom of the saint and are more like saints.

⁴ Xia Lianju 夏蓮居, *The Infinite Life Sutra* 無量壽經 (Lasa: Tibet Tibetan Classics Publishing House, 2013), p.111.

⁵ Rushi Wonen, Fojiao Baiken, *Shurangama Sutra* 楞嚴經

<http://www.rushiwonen.org/category-18-01-300024.jsp> 7 April 2021.

Self-Reflection

For this text from *The analects of Confucius*, I consider it can be understood from three aspects.

Firstly, a gentleman do not mind what he or she have in terms of material conditions. For example, whether a person have a luxurious house and car, is it better than others in food and clothing aspects and where he or she stay is good or not? A gentleman do not care all of this but lays emphasis on heart, spirit, moral, virtue and so on. In Tang dynasty, Liu Yuxi was a relatively large official, because something, he was exiled to a small county to be a small official in Anhui province, the environment and material conditions became worse, but he was still very contented every day. After found that, his superiors want to embarrass him so that let him go to worse place again. He also kept positive attitude and wrote a famous article which is called *Lou Shiming*. Thus, it can be seen that as long as people's attitude is good, no matter where, anything people will face, there is no problem.

Secondly, if a place is inhabited by the gentlemen, how this place will be called shabby. The author of *Lou Shi Xuanji* is Wang Yangming who was exiled to Longchang, which was also a very shabby place. Although the local culture and conditions are backward, people are very good and honest. From this point of view, although, the custom in shabby place is bad, all human nature is good.

Finally, as the professor said , *Lou* not only refers to material conditions, but more importantly, no culture. However, the gentleman live in the place there people are not educated, he or she can make it civilized. Where a gentleman comes, it can be changed. *Liaofan's Fou Lessons* said that several thousand years ago, One day, Emperor Shun was watching some fishermen on a Lake, which was called Leize. He found that the younger and stronger fishermen took the spots where the water was deep and the fish were abundant, while those who were older and weaker were left with the rapids and shallow water, where there were very few fish. Shun sympathized with the older people, so decided to join in the fishing and when he saw the younger fishermen grab the good spots, he said nothing. But whenever some yielded to others, he praised them. After one year, the fishermen got into the

habit of yielding the good spots to others⁶. This text is the content said by Yuan Liaofan concerning how to help others. But from another point of view, we can see that the custom of a place where Shun live can be changed better.

The above is the interpretation of the three aspects for the text. Then, how to become a gentleman? As the professor said, first of all, we must have the ability of *Ding*, in order to further influence others around us. In fact, before reaching this state, everyone has more or less influence on the people around him or her. On the contrary, before people achieve this state, they will be easily affected by the others. This is why the mother of Mencius will choose a good living environment for her child, the neighbour will play a role model. In our life, even an expression on the face may make others feel uncomfortable, or it may make others feel warm. Now our target is to become a gentleman who can protect their true nature, further to bring the positive impact for other.

⁶ Cai Lixu 蔡禮旭, *Liaofan Sixun Jiangji* 了凡四訓講記(Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Press ,2014),p.336.

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