

Filial piety and propriety (禮) are based on respect

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Respected provost and my dear teachers, hello everyone, Today I would like to discuss the topic, 'The relationship between propriety and filial piety'

This is my outline.

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3. Respect is the core of propriety
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introduction

The Chinese Nation is widely known as "a state of ceremonies" and being filial to parents is one of Chinese traditional virtues. More than 3000 years ago, during the Yin and Zhou dynasties, the Duke of Zhou made rites and music, and put forward the program of the rule of rites. After that, it was advocated and perfected by Confucius with his disciple. To a large extent, Chinese culture has been passed down to this day also because filial piety as the core of cultural heritage for thousands of years.

Respect is the core of filial piety

Rites and music, interacts with the filial piety, children's feeling for parents need to be expressed through propriety, of course, saluting parents is filial piety in itself. 出必告，反必面 is a Classic sentence, it means that 'before you leave home, you should tell your parents about your leaving. As soon as you come back home, you must report to them about your returning home'¹. It is included in many Chinese classics,

¹ Li Yuxiu 李毓秀, *Standards for Being a Good Student and Child* 弟子规 (Henan people's Publishing House, 2007), p.2.

which proves its importance. Although this is a small thing, it contains many important truths. *The Book of Filial Piety*² state that ‘among all things in the world, human beings are the most precious. No human behavior is more important than filial piety.’ Parents love their children without any conditions and reasons. In the eyes of parents children are the continuation of their lives and even the family, so children are undoubtedly the most important part in their lives. A mother suffered so much that she gave birth to her child after ten months and father works hard to support a family, providing clothes and foods, however, they did not ask their children must return anything. Parents love their children, and children are filial to parents which seems to be a human instinct and to be unalterable principles. *The Book of Filial Piety* state that ‘If a person does not love his parents but love others, it is against the virtue of life; if he does not respect his parents and elders but respects others, he violates the rules of conduct. In this world, parents are the most grateful to us. If we do not love or respect our parents and respect others, then you must have a plot. This respect is also hypocritical.’³

Master Chin Kung said Filial piety and respect are the most important root of traditional Chinese culture.⁴ Both of two are very close and two inseparable virtues. Ziyou asked Confucius what filial piety is? Confucius replied that filial piety is not just about supporting parents, even dogs and horses, we can keep them. If we are not respectful to our parents, what is the difference between that and raising dogs and parents?⁵ In fact, most children believe that they have a responsibility to help their parents financially, but this behavior lacks emotional respect.

Filial piety should be established on the basis of respect, which is a kind of ethical consciousness and moral emotion, not just on supporting, otherwise, it will not be true filial piety. If he has love for his parents, he will be very respectful to his parents. Emperor Wen of Zhou Dynasty who was a sage in the early stage of Confucianism

² Zeng zi 曾子, *The Book of Filial Piety* 孝经 (Bei Jing The edition published by Zhonghua Book Company, 2017) , p .52.

³ Zeng zi 曾子, *The Book of Filial Piety* 孝经, p .53.

⁴ Master Chin Kung, http://www.dizigui.cn/fx_ljs_140503.asp, [accessed 17 April 2020]

⁵ Gu Hongming 辜鴻銘, trans., *The Discourses and Sayings of Confucius*, in *Gu Hongming Wenji* 辜鴻銘文集 (Hainan: Hainan chubanshe, 2000), p .355.

and made great contributions to Confucian culture is a good example. At that time he was the prince who will inherit the throne, he gave his father greetings three times a day. Before meeting his parents, he will dress up to show respect, waited outside his father's door to ask if his parents were well rested. He would not be bored even after a long time. If his parents are in good health, he will be happy. But if the father was not in good health, his would be sad.

Respect is the core of etiquette

Secondly, Zheng Xuan 郑玄 said that the essence of propriety is respect⁶. Li is the most sincere expression of feelings, people are respectful to people who are very grateful or adored. In addition to this, etiquette is a code of conduct, just like subordinates respect leaders, students respect teachers. At all times and in all over the world, propriety has different forms and different objects, There is no doubt that it plays an important role. The specific behavior of etiquette is various, it can show ones respect. Only respectful etiquette is useful, otherwise it will fall into hypocrisy and lose its real function.

Different countries have different propriety even barbarians have their own system. Professor Li Bingnan extracted some important etiquette from The Book of Rites and The Rites of the Zhou. *Daily Manners: The Essentials of Courtesy* state that If someone older gives you a gift, receive it respectfully with both hands.⁷As long as a family member older than you are called the elderly, even if someone's generation is bigger than yours, you are also called them elder. In order to show respect for the things given by the elderly and prevent things from falling through using both hands. At the same time, we should also use our hands when handing things over to our elders. Being respectful to others is not out of date. It makes people feel comfortable. If the elders give you something, you take it over casually, which will make others despise. A good son or daughter tells his parents when he is going out, and informs

⁶ Zheng Xuan 郑玄, <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=80187&page=74> [accessed 17 April 2020]

⁷ Professor Li Bing-nan 李炳南, *Daily Manners: The Essentials of Courtesy* (Bei Jing Tuanjie Publishing House, 2018) , p.3

them in person when he returns home.⁸ Only when they know about their children can they rest assured. There is an old Chinese saying that Accidents can happen. Fortune is variant. Like weather, one's fortune may change by the evening. Especially in today's high-tech era, transportation is more developed. it also increases the traffic safety factor. If the child is away for a long time and the parents can't get any news from their children, what kind of anxiety will parents have? It is not filial. 'Whenever we injure our body, our parents feel grief and alarm'⁹. All parents worry about is the safety of their children. In a team, order is very important, go anywhere or do anything to let the leader know. In the army, in particular, nothing is more important than obeying command. Report the situation at any time and respect the leader.

Summary

In conclusion, filial piety is the root of all virtues and the source of all good deeds. propriety can express children's love and respect for their parents. Propriety is the principle with concrete practice and foundation. It is an indispensable part of people's getting along with each other. *The Book of Rites* state that 'the filial piety of an exemplary man must show the love in his heart as the respect of attitude and behavior, otherwise it will break the rule and will be chaotic. Trying one's best and being rude, they could be ordinary people.'¹⁰ To salute but not from the heart can not achieve ceremony. Filial piety and propriety are both external and internal, It is the inner feelings, but also the external behavior. The practice of filial piety in society is the etiquette system and the etiquette law, which is the so-called governing the world with filial piety.

The reason why the Confucianists emphasize propriety is that they hope to use etiquette to maintain social stability and unity, and to maintain the relationship of superiority and inferiority, so as to ensure the normal operation of the whole society.

⁸ Professor Li Bing-nan 李炳南, *Daily Manners: The Essentials of Courtesy*, p.3.

⁹ Li Yuxiu 李毓秀, *Standards for Being a Good Student and Child* 弟子规, p.4.

¹⁰ Dai de 戴德, *The Book of Rites* 禮記, <https://www.shicimingju.com/book/dadailiji/10.html>, [accessed 17 April 2020]

The core of his theory is "filial piety", which is based on clan blood relationship and driven by family psychology.

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