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A Brief Discussing on the Importance of Non-Greed in Career Success

Abstract

Obtaining career success is the life goal for many people. In one sense, possessing wealth and high position is the standard of career success. The essay aims at discussing the causal relationship between non-greed and obtaining wealth and position, to explain the importance of keeping away from greed in career success.

Keywords: Desire, Riches, Honors, Virtue, Giving

Preface

Liang Shuming said, ‘Young people should distinguish between greed and aspiration’ and ‘The real aspiration is not based on private interests, but on the will of benefiting others with a sincere heart’¹.

Therefore, one who has the real aspiration will not be blinded and controlled by greed. Regardless of what occupation you undertake, the unchanging principle is to follow the standards of morality rather than expanding personal desires. The wealth and position derived from personal virtue are certainly the real and long-lasting. Conversely, if the wealth and position are gained from immoral way, they will cause unexpected disasters.

The real wealth is from Non-greed

The prerequisite of career success is economic independence. The Buddha instructs sentient beings in ‘non-greed’. However, it does not mean that people cannot earn money. The real

¹ Liang Shuming 梁簌溟, *Zhao Hua* 《朝話》 [in Chinese] (Beijing: World Book Press Beijing company 世界圖書出版公司北京公司, 2013), p. 13.

meaning of this teaching is that people should make money in the proper way. It is proved by history and reality that those who obtain wealth in immoral way will meet the same fate of tragic ending. That is like what *Treatise On Response And Retribution* states, ‘eating moldy meat for relieving hunger and drink poisoned wines for quenching thirst.’² Therefore, going against the standards of morality to pursue wealth not only cannot relieve poverty but also can cause disasters. It is not a sensible way to gain career success.

There are many living examples. Yin Qianhui is a merchant who once sold auto parts and accessories. She sold the false and inferior goods to make excessive profits without caring about consumers’ safety. Afterwards, Yin was clouded by series of illnesses, and even felt suicidal. Moreover, she lost over three million yuan in a fire disaster, and was defrauded of more than 7 million yuan³. That is as *The Great Learning* says, ‘wealth gotten by improper way will be taken away by the same’⁴. Hence, people who have long-term sight will not blindly admire those who gain wealth in immoral ways.

The real wealth cannot be brought by greed. It is the result of benefiting others. Kazuo Inamori is regarded as the business saint in Japan. He once said that altruistic motivation is the core spirit of business philosophy. His success in acquiring the American company AVX is an excellent model to explain that career success is based on the spirit of being considerate of others anytime and anywhere, like what is said in *Lao Tzu*, ‘the more that he expends for others, the more does he possess of his owe; the more that he gives to others, the more dose he have himself’⁵.

During the process of company acquisition, despite the fact that AVX asked repeatedly for their own interests and even overdid it , Inamori took account of their profits to the utmost and met their requests.

² Yinyuan Sheng 因緣生, ‘*Treatise On Response And Retribution*’ 《太上感應篇》, in *Sheng Xue Gen Zhi Gen* Vol.VI 《聖學根之根》 第六冊[in Chinese] (Taipei: World Book Company 世界書局股份有限公司, 2016), p.9.

³ Video, ‘ill-gotten gains were burnt by a big fire’ 《大火燒掉兇財》, http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjMyOTgyNDMy.html?debug=flv [accessed 26 November 2017]

⁴ Zisi & Zengzi 子思、曾子, *The Doctrine of The Mean · The Great Learning* 《中庸·大學》, trans. by James Legge, with modification as appropriate, (Zheng Zhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Press 中州古籍出版社, 2016) , p.113.

⁵ Laozi 老子, *Tao Te Ching* 《道德經》, trans. by James Legge, with modification as appropriate, (Zheng Zhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Press 中州古籍出版社, 2016) , p.117.

After that, the rising shares of KYOCERA (Inamori ' company) made AVX's shareholders get numerous benefits. Meanwhile, after a short period of 5 years, AVX was also listed on the New York Stock Exchange, which brought a considerable amount of income to KYOCERA. At the end of 1995, KYOCERA gained real profit of 147 billion 600 million yen⁶. There was almost no such successful case of company acquisition in the period of Japanese bubble economy. The success case should be attributed to Mr. Inamori's sharing and altruistic spirit.

Zeng zi said, 'Beware, beware. What proceeds from you, will return to you again⁷'. Nowadays, scientists have also suggested that different thoughts with their particular rates can attract the circumstances of corresponding frequency. That means that all the situations are just the mirror of our own thoughts. Therefore, the stories of Ms Yin and Mr. Inamori are not the individual cases but reveal the natural law of the universe, 'The thought of hurting others draws the negative circumstances' and 'The thought of benefiting others draws the positive circumstances'.

Personal desires and greed derives from the inner sense of lack, how can this kind of negative thoughts attract the wealth? Therefore, the teaching about altruism and sharing with others from Buddha is to help people build up positive attitude. With the inner state of generosity, material wealth will be attracted naturally. This is the right way to accumulate wealth.

Only without greed, can one achieve real honour

Wealth and honour are pursued and worshiped by many people. Seemingly, the former means having enough money and the latter means having high social status. However, from ancient to modern times, many examples have been indicating a fact. That is whether one is respected does not depend on his social status. No matter how great status one has, as long as he pursues interests for himself and neglects others' pain, not only is he unable to escape others' disdain and

⁶ Cao Xiuyun 曹岫雲, *Kazuo Inamori's equation of success* 《稻盛和夫的成功方程式》 [in Chinese] (Beijing: Oriental Press 東方出版社, 2013), pp.277-280.

⁷ Mencius 孟子, *The Words of Mencius* 《孟子》, trans. by James Legge, (Zheng Zhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Press 中州古籍出版社, 2016), p.75.

condemnation, but also he may offend the law and even become a prisoner. Therefore, if we are still driven by greed, there is no real honour for us.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Zheng Xiaoyu is the first ministerial-level officer to be sentenced to death by the sin of 'dereliction of duty'. As the head of China Food and Drug Administration, he abused his power to make profits for some pharmaceutical companies and took more than 6 million 490 thousand yuan in bribes. He reduced the standards of approval of drug without authorization, indirectly leading to many serious medical accidents. In his will, he said that it never occurred to his mind that he could have been sentenced to death. What surprised him more was the cheers of the public for that⁸.

Obviously, it is impossible for one to escape the censure of the public if he offends his conscience and the law of nature, and certainly impossible to escape the law of cause and effect. It is personal desire and greed that put Zheng to the result of being condemned by whole society, but he was unaware of it until the end of his life. This story illuminates the fact that greed can blind one to the truth.

In contrast to this case, Mr. Wu Xun, an ancient Chinese, was a beggar, but also an educationist in the Qing Dynasty. The poor background made him fail to go to school and he was always bullied because of illiteracy, so he decided to beg for supporting the poor children's education. After accumulating money for about thirty years, Mr. Wu had a considerable amount of fund, but he still led a needy life and he used all the money to build compulsory education schools. People were moved by his selflessness and called him 'a sage in beggars'. That is the saying, 'A person free from selfishness is noble.' If one seeks nothing for his private interests and dedicates himself to society, he will be given honour and respect by the public, even if his status is at the bottom of society.

According to the record of *the Draft of History of Qing Dynasty*, when Mr. Wu was critically ill and even when death was coming, he still opened his eyes and smiled once he listened to the

⁸ Zheng Xiaoyu 鄭筱萸, 'The will with deep regret' 《悔恨的遺書》 (2007-7-9), http://www.360doc.com/content/07/0716/14/142_614216.shtml[accessed 28 November 2017]

clear and loud sound from students' reading⁹. At last he passed away in a smile. His life was finally wonderful and great without any regret. It is a permanent truth that those ordinary who devote themselves for others are the noblemen without high position, while those noblemen who are greedy are the beggars with high position¹⁰.

Therefore, respecting and loving others is the cause and being respected and loved is the result. Only when we keep away from greed and selfishness, can we be clear-eyed enough to understand the need of society and the public and can we really benefit them. The more benefits you give the public, the more respect you will receive from the public. Your social status is then naturally risen even if you do not expect it. If those in their high positions continue to fill the desires by fair means or foul and do not care whether they are harming others or not, not only will they definitely get no honour and esteem, but also their disasters are coming near. Therefore, only without greed, can one achieve real honour.

How to gain wealth and honour

Wealth and honour are what people desire. If one seek them by greed, not only will not he truly achieve the goal, but also he will be faced with the potential risk. However, if one seeks wealth by the right way, it is called 'giving wealth will gain wealth'. If one seeks honor by the proper way, it is called 'one who respects others will be respected', by which one not only can gain wealth and honour, but also be successful in both his personality and career. The right method about gaining wealth and honour is as below.

(1) Building right view

The proper way of thinking is the key to success. Keeping the wrong way of thinking, the harder you work, the farther away you will be from the success. *The Doctrine of the Mean* indicates that 'having such great virtue, it could not but be that he should obtain the throne, that he should

⁹ *The Draft of History of Qing Dynasty* Vol.499 《清史稿》卷四百九十九[in Chinese] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局出版, 1977), p.18318.

¹⁰ *Xiao Chuang You Ji* 《小窗幽記》, http://www.360doc.com/content/17/0508/00/6956316_651970637.shtml[accessed 29 November 2017]

obtain those riches, that he should obtain his fame, that he should attain to his long life¹¹.’ No seeking and less desire will bring him all these naturally without pursuing. In this regard, Great Emperor Shun is a great exemplar. Although his father was immoral, his stepmother was dishonest, his brother was arrogant¹², he still served his parents with filial piety and loved his brother, improving his self-cultivation constantly. Wherever he was, people around him were moved by his great virtue. When he ploughed at Mountain Li, Li’s people, there was none contending for the fields. When he took the fishery at Lei Ze, there was none scrambling for the houses. In other words, where he came, there was an atmosphere of comity. When he was engaged in pottery-making beside the Huanghe River, there was no shoddy pottery produced¹³.

Though Shun had been a so ordinary one, by well cultivation of himself, wherever he went, the local people were moved by his virtue; even Emperor Yao was moved too and asked Shun to take over from him, so it is like what is said in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, the real position and wealth is from virtue. the position and property he received. His devotion, his good karma is greatly valued by people till now, so it is the reputation and honor he received. His high morality and virtue was valued, spread by generation to generation endlessly, though he was dead but never die to the end, so it is his longevity he received. What Shun has done is truly successful model in one’s life and career.

If one does not know the law that ‘Virtue is the root; wealth is the branches and leaves¹⁴’, and is greedy for wealth even goes against morality, what he does is like cutting the root of a tree but hoping the tree having exuberant branches and leaves. Therefore, learning saint’s classics and building correct insight is the most important for one’s success in the career.

(2) Giving alms cultivated

Giving alms is one of Buddhism’s ‘Six Paramitas’, and it is the right way to get wealth. *Liao-*

¹¹ Zisi & Zengzi 子思、曾子, *The Doctrine of The Mean · The Great Learning* 《中庸·大學》, trans. by James Legge, (Zheng Zhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Press 中州古籍出版社, 2016), p.25.

¹² Sima, Qian 司馬遷, ‘The historic Records’ 《史記》, annotated and interpreted by Han Zhaoqi 韓兆琦譯註[in Chinese] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 2010), p.31.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.50.

¹⁴ Zisi & Zengzi 子思、曾子, *The Doctrine of The Mean · The Great Learning* 《中庸·大學》, trans. by James Legge, (Zheng Zhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Press 中州古籍出版社, 2016), p.111.

Fan's Four Lessons indicates that 'giving' can help one cure stinginess and desire while helping others in dire need¹⁵. Actually, it benefits not only oneself but also others..

In history, there is lots of model of giving alms such as Fan Wen Zheng Gong in Song Dynasty. When he was rich, he purchased a lot of lands to feed poor community, make them not only have enough food and cloth, but also support them when they were faced with critical situation such as funerals or marriage. His kindness of giving alms was totally from his honest heart, so he never expect any return and help others devotedly. Though he was in high position possessing plenty of property, when he was dead, he even had no decent cloth for the funeral and his children had no enough money to pay for the funeral¹⁶, what he left to his family was only the ruler and morality 'Giving alms'.

There is a saying, 'the virtue will be certain to return to, nearly it return to you, further it return to your descendants', so since Song dynasty, venerable Fan's descendants have been full of talent and standout. Venerable master Yin Guang gave him high value for his morality, 'The family that can keep high virtue, never retreat in life, is Mr.Fan's family at Su Zhou, which is the number ONE now the first¹⁷. If one is rich without virtue, the wealth of him can not be passed to the third generation, but venerable Fan's family, due to the family's Giving alms, brought to them the prosperous continuing eight hundred year's generations. It is so magic brought by Giving alms.

Conclusion

Most people always value one's career success by his wealth and honour, and think only by greed could they seek wealth and even consolidate his position and power, by which they sink into the slough of affliction so deeply. We should know that the great virtue is the cornerstone for one's career success. The wealth should be attained by one's giving alms to others, and the

¹⁵ Yuan Liaofan 袁了凡, *Liao-Fan's Four Lessons* 《了凡四訓》, trans. by Silent Voices, with modification as appropriate. (Taipei: The Corporation Republic of Hwa Dzan Society 華藏淨宗學會), p.93.

¹⁶ Qian Gongfu 錢公輔, 'Yi Tian Ji' 《義田記》, in *Gu Wen Guan Zhi* 《古文觀止》, ed. by Wu Chucai, Wu Diaohou 吳楚材、吳調侯 [in Chinese] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, 2009), p.626.

¹⁷ Shi Yin-Guang 釋印光, 'A Letter to a lay Buddhist living in Yongjia' <與永嘉某居士書>, *Complete Writings of the Great Master Yinguang* Vol.2 《印光法師文鈔》卷二 [in Chinese] (Taipei: The Corporation Republic Of Hwa Dzan Society 華藏淨宗學會).

respectable nobility and honor comes from compassion and love to others. There is an ancient saying that ‘ If you seek from your heart, not covet by your greed, keep inner peace and virtue, accumulate kindness, wealth and honor will be certain to come to you without praying.

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