

## MEH TI ON VIRTUE

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**M**EH TI says: "The ancient emperors, dukes, and great men, governing the kingdom, desired to have the country rich, with multitudes of people and order of administration. But instead of becoming rich, they became poor; instead of gaining multitudes, they got little; and instead of order, they got disorder." Thus, they lost what they desired but gained what they hated. Why? Meh Ti says: "It is because the emperors, dukes, and great men, administering the country, have no preference for the virtuous, nor ability to govern themselves." The more numerous those who are virtuous, the greater the order in the government. The fewer the virtuous, the less order in the government. Therefore, the duty of great men is to increase the number of the virtuous.

What is the way of increasing the virtuous? Meh Ti says: "If you desire to increase those who are able to shoot and to drive chariots, first you must enrich them, ennoble them, respect them and honor them. Then those who are able to shoot and to drive will follow you and be multiplied. This is more true with the talented, virtuous, eloquent and wise. They are the pearls of the country; they are the arm<sup>63</sup> of the nation. You must enrich them, ennoble them, respect them and honor them more. Then the best scholars of the country will follow you and be multiplied."

In administering government, the ancient holy emperors said: "No righteousness, no riches; no righteousness, no honor: no righteousness, no close relations; no righteousness, no intimacy." Hence the rich and noble of the country, on hearing of it, say: "at first, we depended upon our wealth and nobility. But now the superiors honor the righteous without disfavor of the poor and mean. So we can not fail to be righteous."

<sup>63</sup> "The Arm" is a Chinese phrase indicating the importance of a person or persons in the government.

On hearing of this, the close relatives say likewise: "At first, we depended upon our kinship, but now the superior honors the righteous without any distinction between the close and distant relatives. So we can not fail to be righteous."

On hearing of this, the favorites likewise says: "At first, we depended upon our intimacy, but now the superior honors the righteous without favoring the intimate ones. So we can not fail to be righteous."

On hearing of this those distant also say: "At first, we, the distant, had nothing to depend upon. But now the superior honors the righteous without disfavor of the distant. So we can not fail to be righteous."

From the ministers far away on the frontier to the common people near the court, the people everywhere, on hearing of this, all struggle to be righteous. Why? It is said: "The superior, commanding the inferior and the inferior obeying the superior is the one method."

For instance, there is a rich man who has built high walls and a deep palace. In building the walls, he has been very careful. On the top of the walls he chiseled doors. When robbers come to rob him, they know how to get in through the doors but they do not know how to get out. Why? Because he (the rich man) knows the essentials.

The ancient holy emperors, in administering the government, were themselves virtuous and honored the virtuous. Even among the farmers and workmen those who had talents they selected. They put such men into the highest rank; gave them large incomes; and appointed them to important duty.

The justification of my opinion would be, as it is said: "If the rank be not high, the people will not respect him. If the income be not large, the people will not believe him. If the commands be not decisive, the people will not fear." To give these three things to the virtuous was not as a reward but to make them able to accomplish their duties. At that (ancient) time, they were ranked according to their virtue; they did their duties according to their offices; they received rewards in accordance to their ability. Therefore, the officials were not always noble, nor were the people forever mean. The talented were raised up; the inefficient were kept down. Raise up the just and righteous; avoid the selfish and hateful. This is the meaning of the saying.

In the ancient times, Yao selected Shun from the country south of the Fu river and gave him the civil administration. There was peace in the world.

Yu selected I<sup>64</sup> among the people of Yin Feng<sup>65</sup> and gave him the civil administration. Nine prefectures were formed.

T'ang selected I Yin<sup>66</sup> from the kitchen and gave him the civil administration. He obtained what he planned.

Wen Wang selected Hung Yao Tien<sup>67</sup> from among the fishermen and gave him the civil administration. The Western Land was subdued.

At that time all those ministers who possessed high rank and had big incomes did their duties respectfully and in fear. The farmers and workmen dared not fail to struggle for righteousness.

Thus, the scholars want to be helpful to ministers and become their heirs. If scholars are obtained, his (the ruler's project will be carried out and his body will not be fatigued. His reputation will be established; and his merit will be wide spread. Evil will not grow. All this is because the scholars are used. Therefore, Meh Ti says: "Do not fail to honor the virtuous whether you like them or not. Desiring to follow the Tao of Yao, Shun, Yu and T'ang, you can not fail to honor the virtuous. To honor the virtuous is the foundation of the government."

Meh Ti says: "In ancient times when human beings were first born and there was no government, people had all sorts of opinions. Thus, one person had one opinion; two persons had two opinions; and ten persons had ten opinions. The greater the number of men, the more opinions. They all thought that their own opinions were right, while others' were wrong. Hence their relations were wrong. At home fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers separated from one another in hatred and could not possibly make any union.

<sup>64</sup> I was one of the virtuous men in the time of Shun (2317-2208 B. C.). When Yu finally succeeded Shun in 2205 B. C. after a mourning of three years' duration, he selected this widely known and virtuous man to be Minister. It is said that he came to his office in 2204 B. C.

<sup>65</sup> Ying Fend is the name of a place where Yu was selected by Shun. It has not been definitely located.

<sup>66</sup> I Yin, a famous minister under Ch'eng T'ang, the first emperor of the Shang dynasty, lived in the eighteenth century B. C. Ch'eng T'ang summoned him to Court five times before he could persuade I Yin to be his minister. He kept the grandson of the emperor in exile for misconduct, until he promised to reform. I Yin's personal name was A Heng. Tradition says that he ingratiated himself with Ch'eng T'ang by means of his skill in cookery.

<sup>67</sup> Hung Yao T'ien was the minister of Wen Wang who lived 1231-1135 B. C. The story is not recorded in the history.

The people of the world injured one another with water, fire, and poisons. Having extra strength they would not help one another and having extra wealth they would not share. They concealed the good Tao and would not preach it to others. The disorder of the world was like that of birds and animals. Alas! the disorder of the world has its birth in unrighteous elders."

Therefore, we ought to elect the virtuous and able and make him the son of Heaven. The son of Heaven is established. Owing to his deficiency in power and ability, the virtuous and able are chosen to be the three dukes. Hence the son of Heaven and the three dukes are established. As the world is so big, including people afar, and the difference of right and wrong, and of benefit and harm can not be clearly known, ten thousand countries are formed and barons and rulers are appointed. Thus, barons and rulers are established. Because of the deficiency of their power and ability, the virtuous and able of the nation are chosen to be magistrates. Thus, magistrates are established.

The son of Heaven administers to the people of the world saying: "On hearing good and evil, tell the superior. Whatever is right to the superior is right to you all; while whatever is wrong to the superior is wrong to you all." When the superior commits a fault, admonish him. When the inferior has done a good deed, recommend him. This is to be like the superior, and not the inferior. To this the superior gives rewards and the inferior renders praises. On the other hand, suppose that on hearing the good as if it were not good, you do not tell the superior. Whatever is right to the superior is not right to you and whatever is wrong to the superior is not wrong to you. When the superior commits a fault, you will not admonish him. When the inferior has done a good deed, you will not recommend him. This is to be compared with the inferior and not a resemblance to the superior. This the superior punishes and the people defame. Thus, the superior gives rewards and punishments. Clear investigation is to examine truthfulness of the people.

A village elder is a benevolent person in the village. The village elder ministers to the people of the village, saying: "On hearing of the good which is not considered good, I must tell the lord. Whatever is right to the lord is right to you all. Whatever is wrong to the lord is wrong to you all." Get rid of bad words and learn the good words of the lord. Get rid of bad conduct and learn the good conduct of the lord. How can it be said, then, that there is

disorder in the country? Why is it that there is peace in the country? It is only because the lord is able to unify the opinions of the people of the country. So there is order in the country.

The lord is a benevolent person. The lord administers to the people of the country, saying: "On hearing of the good which is not considered good, I must tell the ruler of the nation. Whatever is right to the ruler of the nation is right to you all. Whatever is wrong to the ruler of the nation is wrong to you all." Get rid of bad words and learn the good words of the ruler of the nation. Get rid of bad conduct and learn the good conduct of the ruler of the nation. How can it be said, then, that there is disorder in the nation? Why is it that there is peace in the nation? It is only because the ruler of the nation is able to unify the opinions of the people of the nation. Thus, there is order in the nation.

The ruler of the nation is a benevolent person. The ruler administers to the people of the nation, saying: "On hearing of the good which is not considered good, I must tell the son of Heaven. Whatever is right to the son of Heaven is right to you all; while whatever is wrong to the son of Heaven is wrong to you all." Get rid of bad words and learn the good words of the son of Heaven. Get rid of bad conduct and learn the good conduct of the son of Heaven. How can it be said, then, that there is disorder in the world? Why is it that the world is at peace? It is only because the son of Heaven is able to unify the opinions of the people of the world. Thus, there is order in the world.

The people of the world are all to be like Heaven above. If there be one who is not like Heaven above, the calamities which are like the whirlwind and bitter rain coming in succession, can not be rooted out. So Heaven punishes the people for not resembling Heaven above. Therefore, Meh Ti says: "The ancient holy emperors governed the people with the five kinds of punishments and ropes of fishing nets for the purpose of uniting the people who did not resemble the superior."