



Shri Lao-Tse and Shri Confucius

INTRODUCTION



Shri Lao-Tse and Shri Confucius are two primordial masters who incarnated in present day China, around 500 BC. Shri Mataji explains “the Primordial Master is always placed in looking after our Void, in sustaining us, and giving us a model of an ideal master.”

“Confucius has taught the humanity how we can improve our relations with other human beings. But Lao-Tse in China has very beautifully described Tao, meaning the Kundalini. And I have had a voyage through the Yangtze River through which Lao-Tse had gone many times. I know he was trying to show that this river, which is the Kundalini, is flowing towards the sea and one should not be tempted by the nature that is

around. The nature around the Yangtze River is very, very beautiful, no doubt, but one has to go through the river. Also there are lots of currents, which flow and can

be quite dangerous and we need a good navigator who should take his ship across to the point where it is nearer the sea. At that stage it becomes very silent and extremely simple in its flow. China has been endowed with great philosophers; I would say the greatest was Lao-Tse, because humanism was for the preparation of human beings for their ascent about which Lao-Tse had spoken."

It is said that Shri Lao-tse served as a historian in charge of the archives of the Chou¹ court. It is said that once Shri Confucius visited the Chou capital where he questioned Shri Lao-tse concerning matters of ritual. From this it has been assumed that Shri Lao-tse was a contemporary of Shri Confucius. On seeing the decline of the Chou royal house, Shri Lao-tse eventually quit the capital and journeyed to the Pass. There the keeper of the Pass, surmising that the old sage was about to withdraw from the world, asked if he would write a book on his teachings. Shri Lao-tse thereupon wrote a work in two parts, expounding the meaning of *tao* and *te* in some five thousand characters (Tao Te Ching), and then departed. What became of him afterwards, no one knows.

¹A large state in the lower Yangtze valley.

The teachings of Shri Confucius relate to the duties of a citizen towards the state and also each other. In his teachings, of which the analects are considered to be the most authentic², the Way refers to the path of evolution that leads to the awakening of the innate pure Dharma within all. In the analects, a selection of which is presented here, a yogi is referred to as a gentleman, a realized soul, a person who is full of benevolence and whose actions are in line with the rites. The personality of a realized soul is thus reflected in the gentleman in Shri Confucius's teachings and when these qualities are developed in a society, peace and prosperity will follow. It also interesting how the Master (as Shri Confucius is referred to in the analects) describes instances where he chooses to follow the majority on some issues, even if they aren't prescribed in the rites, but goes against the majority on issues that are against the basic protocol of the Divine. This flexibility in a saint is an important message from his teachings and the quality of Divine discrimination is illustrated many times in the analects.

² Confucius The Analects (Penguin Classics), ISBN-13 978-0143106852.

Quotes from the "TAO TE CHING"³

Tao called Tao is not Tao.
Names can name no lasting name.

Nameless: the origin of heaven and earth.
Naming: the mother of ten thousand things.

Empty of desire, perceive mystery.
Filled with desire, perceive manifestations.

These have the same source, but different names.
Call them both deep-deep and again deep.

The gateway to all mystery.

³ TAO TE CHING LAO TZU, Stephen Addis et. al., ISBN-13 978-1590305461

Hard depends on easy,
Long is tested by short,
High is determined by low,
Sound is harmonized by voice,
After is followed by before.

Therefore the Sage is devoted to non-action,
Moves without teaching,
Creates ten thousand things without instruction,
Lives but does not own,
Acts but does not presume,
Accomplishes without taking credit.

When no credit is taken,
Accomplishment endures.

Tao is empty- its use never exhausted.
Bottomless- The origin of all things.

It blunts sharp edges,
Unties knots,
Softens glare,
Becomes one with the dusty world.

Deeply subsistent-
I don't know whose child it is.

It is older than the Ancestor.

Heaven and Earth are not kind:
The ten thousand things are straw dogs to them.
Sages are not kind:
People are straw dogs to them.

Yet Heaven and Earth
All the space between
Are like a bellows:
Empty but inexhaustible,
Always producing more.

Longwinded speech is exhausting.
Better to stay centered.

Heaven is long, Earth enduring.
Long and enduring,
Because they do not exist for themselves.

Therefore the sage
Steps back, but is always in front,
Stays outside, but is always within.

No self-interest?
Self is fulfilled.

According to Tao,
Excessive food,
Extraneous activity,
Inspire disgust.

Therefore, the follower of Tao
Moves on.

Thirty spokes join one hub.
The wheel's use comes from emptiness.

Clay is fired to make a pot.
The pot's use comes from emptiness.

Windows and doors are cut to make a room.
The room's use comes from emptiness.

Therefore,
Having leads to profit,
Not having leads to use.

Live in the ancient Tao,
Master the existing present,
Understand the source of all things,
This is called the record of Tao.

Humans follow Earth,
Earth follows Heaven,
Heaven follows Tao.

Tao follows its own nature.

Knowing others is intelligent.
Knowing yourself is enlightened.

Conquering others takes force.
Conquering yourself is true strength.

Knowing what is enough is wealth.
Forging ahead shows inner resolve.

Hold your ground and you will last long.
Die without perishing and your life will endure.

Tao endures without a name,
Yet nothing is left undone.
If kings and lords could possess it,
All beings would transform themselves.

Transformed, they desire to create;
I quiet them through nameless simplicity.
Then there is no desire.

No desire is serenity,
And the world settles of itself.

Reversal is Tao's movement.
Yielding is Tao's practice.

All things originate from being.
Being originates from non-being.

Know what is enough, abuse nothing.
Know when to stop, harm nothing.
This is how to last a long time.

Without going out the door,
Know that world.
Without peeping through the window,
See heavens Tao.

The further you travel,
The less you know.

This is why the Sage,
Knows without budging,
Identifies without looking,
Does without trying.

Not doing and nothing not done.

The Sage has
Self-knowledge without self-display,
Self-love without personal pride,
Rejects one, accepts the other.

Heaven hates what it hates - who knows why?
Even the Sage finds it difficult.

Heavens Tao does not contend,
But prevails,
Does not speak,
But responds,
It is not summoned,
But arrives,
Is utterly still,
But plans all actions.

Heaven's net is wide,
But nothing slips through.

Quotes from "THE ANALECTS"⁴

The Master said, is it not a pleasure, having learnt something, to try it out at due intervals? Is it not a joy to have friends come from a far? Is it not gentlemanly not to take offense when others fail to appreciate your abilities?

Yu Tzu said, the gentleman devotes his efforts to the roots, for once the roots are established, the Way will grow therefrom. Being good as a son and obedient as a young man is perhaps the root of a man's character.

The Master said, it is rare indeed for a man with cunning words and an ingratiating face to be benevolent. A young man should be a good son at home and an obedient man abroad, sparing of speech but trustworthy in

⁴ Confucius The Analects (Penguin Classics), ISBN-13 978-0143106852

what he says, and should love the multitude at large but cultivate the friendship of this fellow men.

The Master said, a gentleman who lacks gravity does not inspire awe. A gentleman who studies is unlikely to be inflexible. Make it your guiding principle to do your best for others and be trustworthy in what you say. Do not accept as friend anyone who is not as good as you. When you make a mistake, do not be afraid of mending your ways.

The gentleman seeks neither a full belly nor a comfortable home. He is quick in action but cautious in speech. He goes to the men possessed of the Way to be put right. Such a man can be described to be eager to learn.

Poor yet delighting in the Way, wealthy yet observant of the rites...It is not the failure of others to appreciate your abilities that should trouble you, but rather your failure to appreciate theirs.

The Master said, the rule of virtue could be compared to the Pole Star, which commands the homage of the multitude of stars without leaving its place. The Odes are three hundred in number and they can be summed up in one phrase: Swerving not from the right path.

A man is worthy of being a teacher who gets to know what is new by keeping fresh in his mind what he is already familiar with. The gentleman puts his words into action before allowing his words to follow his action. The gentleman enters into associations but not groups; the small man enters into groups but not associations.”

Should I tell you what it is to know? To say you know when you know, and to say you do not know when you do not, that is knowledge.

The Master said, what can I find worthy of note in a man who is lacking in tolerance when in high position, in reverence when performing the rites and in sorrow when in mourning?

Of neighbors benevolence is the most beautiful. How can a man be considered wise who, when he has the choice, does not settle in benevolence? One who is not benevolent cannot remain long in strained circumstances, nor can he remain in easy circumstances. The benevolent man is attracted to benevolence because he feels at home in it. The wise man is attracted to benevolence because he finds it to his advantage.

If a man sets his heart on benevolence, he will be free from evil. A man who finds benevolence attractive cannot be surpassed. A man who finds benevolence repulsive can, perhaps, be counted as benevolent for he would not allow what is not benevolent to contaminate his person.

The Master said, he has not lived in vain who dies the day he is told about the way.

There is no point in seeking the views of a gentleman who, though he sets his heart on the Way, is ashamed of poor food and poor clothes. In his dealings with the world the gentleman is not invariably for or against anything. He is on the side of what is moral. If one is guided by profit in one's actions, one will incur much ill will. The gentleman understands what is moral; the small man understands what is profitable.

The Master said, when you meet someone better than yourself, turn your thoughts to becoming his equal. When you meet someone not as good as you are, look within and examine yourself.

The Master said, in serving your mother and father you ought to dissuade them from doing wrong in the gentlest way. If you see your advice being ignored, you should not become disobedient but remain reverent. You should not complain even if in so doing you wear yourself out.

In antiquity men were loath to speak. This was because they counted it shameful if their person failed to keep up with their words. It is rare for a man to miss the mark through holding on to essentials. The gentleman desires to be halting in speech but quick in action. Virtue never stands alone. It is bound to have neighbors.

The Master said, I suppose I should give up hope. I have yet to meet the man who, on seeing his own errors, is able to take himself to task inwardly.

To be fond of something is better than merely to know it, and to find joy in it is better than merely to be fond of it. The benevolent man reaps the benefit only after overcoming difficulties. That can be called benevolence.

The Master said, the gentleman widely versed in culture but brought back to essentials by the rites can, I suppose, be relied upon not to turn against what he stood for.

I transmit but do not innovate; I am truthful in what I say and devoted to antiquity. Quietly to store up knowledge in my mind, to learn without flagging, to teach without growing weary, these present me with no difficulties. It is these things that cause me concern: failure to cultivate virtue, failure to go more deeply into what I have learned, inability, when I am told what is right, to move to where it is, and inability to reform myself when I have defects.

The Master said, I set my heart on the Way, base myself on virtue, lean upon benevolence for support and take my recreation in the arts.

The Master said to Yen Yuan, Only you and I have the ability to go forward when employed and to stay out of sight when set aside.

Even when walking in the company of two other men, I am bound to be able to learn from them. The good points of the one I copy and the bad points of the other I correct in myself.

The Master said, unless a man has the spirit of the rites, in being respectful he will wear himself out, in being careful he will become timid, in having courage he will become unruly, and in being forthright he will become intolerant.

Have the firm faith to devote yourself to learning, and abide to the death in the good way. Enter not a state that is in peril, stay not in a state that is in danger. Show yourself when the Way prevails in the Empire, but hide yourself when it does not. It is a shameful matter to be poor and humble when the Way prevails in the state. Equally, it is a shameful matter to be rich and noble when the Way falls into disuse in the state.

The Master said, a ceremonial cap of linen is what the rites prescribe. Today black silk is used instead. This is more frugal and I follow the majority. To prostrate oneself before ascending the steps is what is prescribed by the rites. Today one does so after having ascended them. This is casual and, thought going against the majority, I follow the practice of doing so before ascending.

I have yet to find a man who is as fond of virtue as he is of beauty in women.

The man of wisdom is never in two minds, the man of benevolence never worries, the man of courage is never afraid.

The Master said, the gentleman helps others to realize what is good in them, he does not help them realize what is bad in them. The small man does the opposite. The gentleman agrees with others without being an echo. The small man echoes without being in agreement. The gentleman is at ease without being arrogant. The small man is arrogant without being at ease.

A gentleman who is attached to a settled home is not worthy of being a Gentleman. The gentleman is ashamed of his word outstripping his deed.

The Master said, it is not the failure of others to appreciate your abilities that should trouble you, but rather your own lack of them. A good horse is praised for its virtue, not for its strength. The gentleman is troubled by his own lack of ability, not by the failure of others to appreciate him.

To fail to speak to a man who is capable of benefiting is to let a man go to waste. To speak to a man who is incapable of benefiting is to let one's words go to waste. A wise man lets neither men nor words go to waste.

The Master said, "The gentleman stands in awe of three things. He is in awe of the Decree of Heaven. He is in awe of great men. He is in awe of the words of sages. The small man, being ignorant of the Decree of Heaven, does not stand in awe of it. He treats great men with insolence and the words of sages with derision.