

11) Meritorious Presentation In the Cultivation

Merit, or that which purifies, cleanses the heart of evil while strengthening what is beneficial and skilful. Intrinsically it is a 'fountain of happiness' and hence can also be defined as 'that which is profitable'. Heart is the root of all meritorious actions but can be also the root of all demeritorious actions. Demerit can be defined as the possession of resultant fruits from evil unskilful actions: Greed, aversion, delusion and hatred, whether these are expressed by way of the door of the body, the door of speech or the door of the mind. It leads one into entanglement with the world and to the accumulation of sufferings. Merit, on the other hand, is derived from all those intentioned acts whether of body, speech or mind, which leads one towards freedom from the world and away from the bondage of desire and suffering. Many people ignorant of the true ways of gaining happiness only go for sensual pleasures but time will come when they will actually find themselves suffering. Through non-violence and loving-kindness to all sentient beings, man is able to see the extinction of mental defilement and consequently, be less bound by them. In this way, he who has developed and extend a compassionate feeling towards all sentient beings, including the animals, is sure to accumulate a lot of merit there from. Slow and steady accumulation of merit is just like drops of water falling into pot which will sooner be filled; he should find pleasure therein; for the accumulation of merit brings about happiness.

Benevolence and righteousness also are in the nature of man. The accordance with nature is the Way. Men must see the vital importance of benevolence and righteousness, and act accordingly. This means we must cultivate the Way and learn how to establish meaningful relations among ourselves.

The object of taking these roads and keeping them repaired is the love of men. (The Superior man, in learning the Way, loves man; Way is cultivated by cherishing benevolence). Therefore, the focal point of the Way is benevolence. Where there is benevolence, there is the Way; where there is no benevolence, the Way is lost.

The root of benevolence lies in filial piety and fraternal love. When extended beyond love for relatives it becomes benevolence to all people. And when extended still further it takes the form of kindness to all living things. He, who using virtue, practices benevolence is an exponent of the Way of Right. Only the Way of Right is submissive to Heaven and responsive to the people. The practices of this Way is destined to bring about peace and order in the world. From the cultivation of the person to the pacification of the world, all the necessary steps originate in justice. They start with complete sincerity, carry through with the search for benevolence, and are consummated in earnest practice.

The Way is the spiritual high road to the common existence and evolution of mankind. All men who walk this road, conforming to their instinct for existence (accordance with nature), will make it an integral part of their daily life (the Way is not far from man). But the road is frequently in need of repair in order to keep it open and unhindered. That is why cultivation of the Way is required.

A road which was not cultivated is not possible. And so is Tao. If Tao is not cultivated, then the Way back seem forlorn. One needs to perform meritorious deeds in the course of Tao cultivation. The performance of meritorious deeds is the only way to diminish the burden of evil deeds that we have owed others for the past six million years. Without it, Tao cultivation is not complete. There are altogether three types of meritorious presentation. They are as follows:

A successful cultivator must not be arrogant, jealous, hot0tempered and with a desire for rivalry. There should be justice in dealing with others and not biased. One should encourage the feeble, unite the divided, enlighten the ignorant, clarify the mystic, guide the benighted and dignify the noble. Respect must be given to all Gods, elders and senior people alike. Without killing or causing injury to any living creatures, he should be kind and compassionate towards all, even to the tiniest creature that crawls at his feet. Slaughtering of animals for sacrifice purpose is not allowed.

b) Presentation of character

One should possess good and magnetic personality, be courteous, cautious, neat attires, thrifty, modest, condescending and a keen and wholehearted desire of selfless service towards God. Do not underestimate or bully others. Equanimity or adapting to others so as to gain respect and affection there form.

c) Presentation of speech

One should be abstinence from falsehood, slandering harsh words malicious tale-telling and gossips. The bereaved should be comforted. Excessive careless talking may create unintentional harms to others but instead more energy and effort should be put into the spreading of Tao.

Merits can also be accumulated by the followings:

- 1) respecting one's superior.
- 2) helping others or making oneself beneficial to others.
- 3) listening to useful teachings.
- 4) giving useful teachings.
- 5) sharing one's merit with others.
- 6) righting wrong views.
- 7) following moral code of conducts.

8) mind development leading to real wisdom.

One should set a good example and a source of inspiration for others to follow. A minimum degree of right understanding is necessary at the beginning to give the right motivations of cultivation, maturing into perfect intuition.