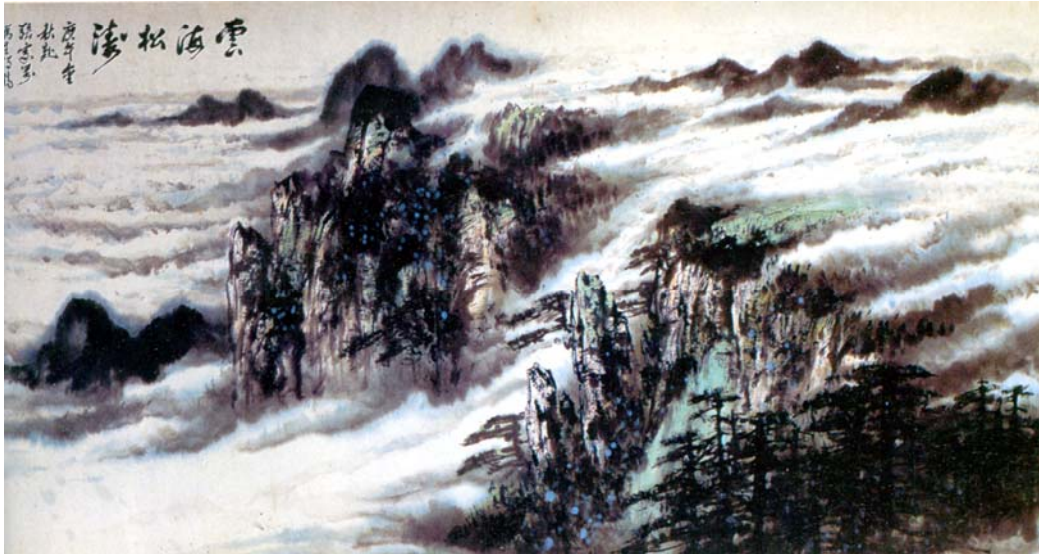


Shame Makes Us Brave

By Michael Tse



Today if you look at the younger generation, they often look tired and many of them lack courtesy, the ability to communicate and concentrate on what they are doing. I feel sad when I see this as this is due to the way they are educated today.

We live in a period of freedom and democracy and this is a good thing, but it also means that no one dares to stand up and tell people what they should do because it is not free and democratic. This means that even a good community leader will be criticised if they have a good idea and share it with the community. They are criticised for limiting people's freedom and in some extreme cases called a dictator. This is the best way to pull someone down even if they are a good leader who in the long term might help a lot of people.

The young generation definitely need education and discipline because they are the most important people for the future. We are the older generation and we were educated through discipline and strictness. This meant we understood that if we did not do well we would be criticised and if we did the wrong things we would be punished. This taught us that next time we should not do that and that we should work hard and behave well. I do not understand why we cannot keep such a good system of education.

Today children have absolute power. Parents are scared to punish them and so in public they run around screaming, disturbing other people and some even swear at other people. Because they are children no one can touch them and punish them in case they are accused of child abuse, which is a serious offence. Schoolteachers are also not allowed to touch them as they can be accused of sexual contact and this can ruin someone's whole life, career and

relationships. So how can teachers maintain discipline when they are scared it might jeopardise everything they have?

Some bad children even say to their teachers, "You can't touch me!" swear and verbally abuse their teachers. Some even throw food and drink on their teacher's clothes. Even if the police are called they cannot do much as the children even verbally abuse them and all they can do is warn them. The sad thing is the children know all the tricks and know what they can get away with and so they can make their teachers suffer even more. Of course these children grow up into teenagers and bring that attitude with them, but this attitude will not hold for very long in any job they do, and so, in the end they do not like to work and they just take the benefits from society without making any positive contribution. Then they have children and the next generation follows their way.

This is all about education and I think that if these people had been educated well in the beginning, with teachers and schools being able to instil discipline with reasonable punishments, not necessarily physical, for example the child having to apologise in front of the whole class or even the whole school to explain their story, then they might grow into more positive members of society. Shame is very powerful and can change people and make them good.

There is a story about a good government official that looked after society very well, but one of his colleagues was jealous of him. One day the colleague was very drunk and he went to the official's home. He stood outside the house and shouted out criticisms and insulted him. Even though his door was closed he said it so loudly that everyone would be able to hear. The official's family wanted to go out and talk to him and try to appease him but the official who was well educated said they should all be patient because he did not want to cause any more trouble. So he controlled his family and did not let any of them go outside. After a long time the drunk colleague grew tired and went home. About two months later the government official heard that this colleague had been arrested for murder and was due to be executed. The official was sad and told his family that he should have called the police as they would have arrested his colleague and then he would not have committed such a serious crime.

This is very true, the earlier we can educate someone before they can cause problems the better because we might actually save them. There is another story about a man called Zhou Chun 周處(242-297) who lived in Yi Xing City 宜興市, Yang Xian County 陽羨縣. When he was eight he lost his parents. When he grew into a young man he had very strong arms, however, he did not like to work like everybody else but instead acted like a gangster and took advantage of other people. Everyone was afraid of him and disliked him. To the South there was a mountain on which a tiger 猛虎 lived. When people passed through many were attacked by it and some were killed. As a result people were scared to go past the Southern mountain 南山. In the area there



was also a Long Bridge 長橋, which people used to cross the river, but there was a big snake living there. Some people called the snake Tricky Dragon 惡蛟 and it attacked and bit people who tried to cross. So, people in the area always talked about the “three evils 三害”, one was the tiger, the second was the big snake and the third was Zhou Chun.

Zhou Chun eventually heard that he was one of the “evils” and this made him upset and ashamed. He knew he was strong and also knew some Kung Fu, so he went to the Southern mountain to find the tiger and kill it. Eventually he found the tiger and fought him using his sword. After a long fight he eventually killed the tiger. Then he went to the long bridge to find the big snake. It took him three days but eventually he eliminated the snake

as well. Word got back to the city and all the people were proud of him. They said, “Zhou Chun eliminated the three evils 周處除三害,” that was the tiger, the snake and of course himself. He was welcomed back by the people who treated him with respect. From then he studied with the famous scholars Lu Ji 陸機 and Lu Yun 陸雲 and in the end became a famous general.

Today, when you go to his hometown there is a temple dedicated to him and his story is written on the long bridge. Confucius (Kong Zi 孔子) said, “knowing shame is close to being brave 知恥近乎勇”. Today people do not feel a sense of shame, and do not acknowledge their mistakes. They only think about freedom and believe that anybody can do whatever they want. True freedom must be based on not disturbing and affecting other people’s freedom. When we make comments to others they should not be personal but only talk about the situation then we can all learn from it.

If a teacher or leader of a group is not allowed to discipline or hand out punishment there is no deterrent for the minority of bad people and so the group will not work. When we find we have made a mistake it is good if someone can point it out to us earlier as this can save us in the future. Educating children and the young to respect adults is very important. Do not turn things upside down and make the adults obey the children, then the roots are on top and the fruits and the flowers are underground. If this happens society will have no future.