

Five Kinds of Darkness

September 19, 2002 |

(Clearwisdom.net) Master Kuang, otherwise known as Ziye, was a famous musician from Jin, one of the states so named during the Spring and Autumn Period in China's history, from 770-476 B.C. The highest-ranking musicians during that era were generally given the title of "Shi" (Master). He was active around 572 B.C to 532 B.C., during the reigns of Duke Jindao and Duke Jinping. Documents pre-dating the Han Dynasty referred to him as the representative of those who were especially talented in music. Historically, he has enjoyed the title "Sage of Music."

Although Master Kuang was a musician, known for his prowess in playing a string instrument, he often advised the king on ruling the state. He tried his best to help maintain prosperity in the state of Jin.

Master Kuang was blind. He often called himself a "blind official." It is said that when Master Kuang played music, horses would stop eating grass and lift up their heads to listen; birds would stop flying and listen attentively, with their heads held high, and would drop the food in their mouth in fascination. When he played Qinghui music, using a special fingering technique, 16 heavenly cranes flew gracefully by, singing and dancing. When he played Qingjiao music, which Emperor Huangdi composed for the gathering of deities and ghosts at Mount Tai, the moment the first notes sounded, the sunny sky was suddenly covered with dark clouds. A violent storm arrived when the second set of music sounded. When the third set of notes rang out, the wind ripped off the roof of the palace, tore away the draperies in the rooms, broke the heavy implements of sacrifice, and the roof tiles shattered into pieces and

covered the floor.

Duke Jinping admired Master Kuang very much. He would consult Master Kuang whenever he had difficulties or came across any important matter.

Once upon seeing that Master Kuang was blind, Duke Jinping commented, "Although you are extremely wise, you are blind. Your world must be way too dark."

Master Kuang replied, "Not necessarily. There are five kinds of darkness in the world, yet I'm not afflicted by any one of them."

"What do you mean?" Duke Jinping asked.

"Alright. Let me explain this to you, one by one," Master Kuang said.

"Officials gain fame through bribery and people have no place to complain when they are treated with injustice, and yet the king turns a deaf ear to the situation and ignores it all. This is the first kind of darkness.

The king uses unfaithful officials instead of loyal ones. Foolish people take high positions while bad people suppress the wise and kind, and yet the king doesn't know about this. That is the second kind of darkness.

Crafty people play with duplicity to cover up their true character, yet they are respected, whereas kind people are slandered and driven away. Yet the king is not in the least aware of this. This is the third kind of darkness.

The country is poor and the people are tired, yet the king exhausts all resources to build up his military power, craving grandiose feats. He is wrapped up in flattery and refuses to wake up. This is the fourth kind of

darkness.

One cannot distinguish between right and wrong, the law cannot be enforced, the corrupt officials pervert the law, and the people are unable to live in peace, yet the king doesn't understand all these. This is the fifth kind of darkness.

No state that has fallen into these five kinds of darkness has avoided collapse. In comparison, my darkness is only a tiny darkness, far from endangering the state."

Duke Jinping was very touched when hearing these compassionate words. He was determined to work diligently for the state's welfare and try his best to be a wise king with moral integrity.

Another time, Duke Jinping held a banquet to entertain his officials. Intoxicated by alcohol, he made such a remark, "Ha ha ha! No happiness in life can compare with that of being a king! Only the words of a king no one dares to violate!"

Master Kuang was sitting right next to Duke Jinping. Hearing these words, he picked up his qin, his musical instrument, and thrust it toward Duke Jinping. Duke Jinping was stunned and hurried to avoid being hit. Master Kuang's qin hit the wall.

"Master, what are you doing?" Duke Jinping asked, still in shock.

Master Kuang answered, "Just now a base person was talking nonsense, therefore I wanted to hit him."

Duke Jinping replied angrily: "The one who made that statement was me!"

Master Kuang shook his head and said, "To me, that statement was not at all like what a king would say."

Seeing that Duke Jinping was quite embarrassed in the presence of so many people, the officials tried to curry favor with the king by proposing one after another, "Master Kuang has offended the king. He should be executed."

Master Kuang stood there, with a cold smile on his lips.

Duke Jinping thought for quite some time. In the end, he waved his hands and said, "Master's loyal words sound unpleasant to the ears. Let's just take this as his advice to me. Let's forget it."

Master Kuang saw that the king was willing to take advice, so he often took the opportunity, through presenting his art of music, to offer advice on state affairs and did his very best to help maintain Jin's prosperity.

When Duke Weixian was driven away by his people because of his tyranny, Duke Jindao thought the people had been "a bit over the top." But Master Kuang refuted his view by saying, "If a king is good, people are sure to support him. A tyrannical king makes people desperate. Why can't they drive him away?" Duke Jindao thought this was quite reasonable, so he asked how to properly rule a state. Master Kuang simply said two words: "Benevolence, justice."

Citizens in the neighboring states saw this and said, "Jin is a state that you cannot take lightly, for even a musician can guide the future of a state by playing the strings. We must treat such a state carefully." Qi was a very strong state at the time, and Duke Qijin also consulted Master Kuang on important affairs. Master Kuang suggested, "A king must benefit the people." Master Kuang was well regarded by the various dukes and princes as well as by the masses. In later versions of the legend, he became known as a god of music.

People today believe that Master Kuang's story is just a legend. In fact, Master Kuang was a high level cultivator. Although he was blind, his heart was calm and clear because of this. He was able to enlighten to

profound principles that were beyond the capacity of ordinary people. At the same time, he was able divine one's character from hearing one's music or singing. He also used his music to adjust the "five elements" in Duke Jinping's body, to harmonize his yin and yang and helped him recover his health. (*In Chinese tradition, the five elements are earth, fire, metal, wood and water, which are thought to store the power of creation within a person, and are supposedly relating to the attributes of cold, heat, dryness, moisture and wind, which affect in turn the liver, heart, spleen, lungs and kidneys*).

The present Chinese ruler unfortunately exhibits all five kinds of darkness that Master Kuang explained to Duke Jinping, to a degree of unprecedented proportions. We can often draw wisdom from stories of wise ancients -- let this story be one that helps to open the eyes of those who are following in the footsteps of such an unscrupulous and cruel ruler.

CATEGORY: Traditional Culture