

# Traditional Culture: Not Being Greedy Is Something to be Treasured

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**(Clearwisdom.net)** In the nation of Song, a man obtained a gem and presented it as a gift to the Prime Minister of the nation of Qi, Zihan. Zihan refused to accept it. The man said, "I had the jade cutter examine the stone and he said it was genuine. I would like to present it to you." Zihan replied, "I consider not being greedy as something to be treasured, whereas you treat the gem as a treasure. If you gave me your gem, both of us would lose our treasures. Wouldn't it be better if we both keep our treasures?" With these words, Zihan refused the gem.

The story is found in the book *ZuoZhuan* (or *Tso Chuan*) and it is cause for reflection. I hope that everyone agrees that not being greedy is indeed a virtue. Only when you learn how to be content with what you have can you be happy. The Chinese character for "Greedy" (Tan) is composed of two characters, "Today" (Jin) and "Treasure" (Bei). If you can only see the treasure that's right before your eyes, how can it be of lasting value? The sage who created this character must have thought really deeply to come up with something so profound. The character reminds us about the true meaning of greed.

Through the ages, the decline of countries and individuals is often due to what the character for Greedy (Tan) symbolizes. The desire for wealth, fame and lust is like a black hole that can never be filled. If a person's desires and greed are not controlled, they will enslave and drive him. They will make him live and die for greed, do all kinds of unscrupulous, bad deeds, and give up all human moral standards and dignity. People have even died and betrayed their countries for the sake

of greed.

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