

Flattery Should Not Be Believed

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(Clearwisdom.net) In feudal China, after Yanzi had been dead for 17 years, Qijinggong was one day drinking wine with his senior officials. Qijinggong shot an arrow with his bow, but the arrow did not hit the target. Nevertheless, all of the senior officials praised him, with not one dissenting voice in the chorus. Qijinggong sighed loudly and threw the arrow away.

Xianzhang came in. Qijinggong said to him, "Xianzhang, since we lost Yanzi 17 years ago, no one has pointed out my shortcomings and mistakes. My arrow did not hit the target today, but every single one of my senior officials praised me." Xianzhang answered, "Your senior officials do not have the courage to admonish you. I have heard it said that, 'Ministers like to wear what the king wears and eat what the king eats.' Do you like to hear flattering words?"

Qijinggong had to agree that he did. Just then, a fisherman delivered some fish. Qijinggong wanted to send 50 carriages of fish with Xianzhang, but Xianzhang refused.

Listening to compliments and flattery can cloud people's vision, making them unable to distinguish truth from falsehood. It is gratifying and can cause them to be arrogant and believe that they are correct. It can cause people to be unable to distinguish the kind from the wicked. Therefore, the wise monarch does not believe the compliments of others. To glance at history, people who subjugated nations and then lost their lives had no lack of flattering villains around them.

In daily life, many people like to flatter each other when they meet relatives, friends and classmates, whether the compliments are genuine or not. They are used to praise and flattery right from the beginning. Isn't that being obsequious and fawning? People like to hear other's compliments and like to receive flattery. They are so comfortable with others' praise that they forget the ancients' teachings: "A good medicine tastes bitter and benefits the condition," and "Good advice jars the ear and benefits behavior."

Thus it can be seen that we should not take others' compliments seriously. Otherwise we "take the arrow that did not hit the target and regard it as an arrow that hit the target." This is deceiving ourselves as well as others and eventually brings us harm. Perhaps when we refuse to accept flattery or compliments, others will

change their mindsets. Therefore, we should look inside when we run into such contradictions.