

Regard the Interests of the Whole as of Prime Importance; Always Correct an Error When One Becomes Aware of It

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Lian Po was a well-known warrior from the State of Zhao during the period of the Warring States. He was very brave and battle-wise and had many achievements in battle, which won him a great reputation throughout all the States. He was appointed Senior General and was granted the title of Superior Minister.

Lin Xiangru was a minister of Zhao. The State of Qin, taking advantage of the fact that it was big and powerful, attempted to obtain the Heshi Jade, a rare and priceless treasure, by forcing Zhao to establish trade with Qin's fifteen cities. Under orders, Lin Xiangru went to Qin with the Heshi Jade. At risk of losing his life, he argued strongly on just grounds with the king of Qin. In the end he was able to convince the king not to trade with Zhao for the Heshi Jade and brought back what he had taken with

him to Qin, which is known in history as "returning the jade intact to the State of Zhao." Lin Xiangru was granted the title of Superior Senior Official for his achievement. Some time later, at the "Mianchi Gathering," the king of Qin intended to insult the king of Zhao. Lin Xiangru used his wisdom to prevent it from happening, again risking his life. He thus protected the dignity of Zhao. After returning to Zhao, the king granted Lin Xiangru the title of Superior Minister Who As He Wishes, a rank even higher than Senior General Lian Po's.

Lian Po thought of his achievements in battle and compared himself to Lin Xiangru, who was born in a humble family. How could Lin Xiangru be placed higher in rank than he simply because of his ability to talk? Lian Po felt quite distressed and claimed many times that, if he ever met up with Lin Xiangru, he would teach him a lesson and dishonor him to his face. Against his expectations, he never saw Lin Xiangru whenever he went to the court. This made him even more furious.

In fact, Lin Xiangru deliberately tried to avoid meeting Lian Po. Once, both riding in coaches, the two came across one another on the road. Lian Po

was about to get out and insult Lin Xiangru. Unexpectedly, Lin Xiangru turned around and entered a side path. Lin Xiangru's retainers did not understand him and thought that he was too cowardly to meet Lian Po. They were ashamed to be associated with Lin Xiangru and wanted to leave him.

Lin Xiangru, however, persuaded them to stay. He asked them who was stronger, General Lian Po or the king of Qin? The retainers answered that the king of Qin was stronger. Lin said, "Though the king of Qin is so powerful, I dared to denounce him in public and humiliate his ministers and officials. Though I am not capable at battle, isn't it unlikely for me to be afraid of only General Lian? I think that the strong State of Qin dares not to attack Zhao because of both General Lian Po and me. If we fight with each other, it would be like the fight between two tigers. One is bound to be hurt. Why did I avoid meeting Lian Po? I put the safety of the State as top priority and personal conflict after that."

When Lian Po heard about this incident, he was very regretful. He bared his upper body, went to Lin Xiangru's home, proffered a birch, and asked for a

flogging. He said, "I am a rough and humble person. I didn't know that you had such high regard for me."

From that point on, all the personal conflicts between them disappeared and the two became lifelong friends.

Lin Xiangru, considering the interests of the whole as of prime importance, did not care about personal loss and was very broad-minded. Lian Po, frank and straightforward, was able to correct an error when he was aware of it. This story of "Harmony between the General and the Minister" has won universal praise and has been passed on generation after generation.