

The Land of Courtesy and Integrity

禮義之邦

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(Simplified Chinese Script 繁體版)

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Who says Chinese people are not capable of returning to being The Land of Courtesy and Integrity? Hong Kong is proof that Chinese people can.

誰說華人不可以再構成禮義之邦？香港就證明華人可以。

Twenty-four years ago, in 1984, when I went back to Hong Kong for the first time in twenty years, it was truly shocking. The place was completely unlike what I remember as a child.

二十四年前，1984年我二十年第一次回到香港，令我非常驚訝：跟我童年記憶中的香港完全不同了。

Back then, in the late fifties and early sixties, the Hong Kong of my childhood was a place of at least courtesy, if not integrity. My mother would take me to market with her and would teach me that one must address the vendors on the street politely as Lao Ban (“boss”) and the workers in the shops as Shi Fu (“master”). In turn they would always address her politely as Shi Nai (“respected madam”) or Xiao Jie (“miss”). In the shops people were always polite and friendly. In school we were taught *li rang*: to be courteous, considerate, and to let others go first. When the teacher entered the classroom we stood up as a class, bowed and said in unison, “Good afternoon, teacher.” When we met a teacher on the street we bowed and said the same thing. It was considered shameful beyond imagination for siblings to argue, let alone fight, in front of anyone other than the immediate family. We were taught by our elders and by the popular culture surrounding us to be polite and respectful, to be kind to others, and to never speak ill of others. The movies we saw extolled courtesy, integrity, loyalty to country, and of course, being good to parents (xiao).

那時，五十年代尾、六十年代頭，我童年時代的香港就算不是禮義之邦也是禮貌之邦。媽媽帶我去市場時就教我，街上的小販們就要有禮貌地稱呼做“老闆”，商店裡面的工人們就稱呼做“師傅”。他們也有禮貌地稱呼媽媽做“師奶”或“小姐”。商店裡的人們都有禮貌和

友善。學校教我們要“禮讓”：對人禮貌，為他人著想，讓人家先行。老師進入課室時我們整班起立、鞠躬，然後同聲說，“老師午安”。街上遇到老師時我們也鞠躬問好。如果兄弟們在人家面前有一點爭執，那是再羞恥不過的了，在公眾場所兄弟們互相打罵就沒人敢想像了。長輩們和周圍的大眾文化教育我們要尊敬有禮，對人善良，不要說人家壞話。看的電影都歌頌禮、義、忠、孝。

In 1984, however, when I walked into a store the staff just stared at me and didn't say a word when I said good morning. When I couldn't find what I wanted the staff yelled at me as I walked out the door, "If you are not going to buy why did you come in?" When I tried to flag down a taxicab I had to flag down five cabs before I could get in: all the four others I flagged down someone appeared out of nowhere and jumped into the very cab in front of me! The only way I could get a cab was to jump in as soon as the cab stopped, before the previous passenger had gotten out, and to sit right next to him as he paid his fare. By the way, I had been warned about this before my trip, that Hong Kong people were so bad they barged into cabs flagged down by returning overseas Chinese, but I had dismissed it as anti-Hong Kong fabrication – no people in the world, I had reasoned, could be that barbaric, let alone Chinese people! And the children, why, the children! The ones I had contact with were very cute and energetic, but when they opened their mouths filth came out! Little five year olds were spouting words of contempt, cynicism and outright insult to strangers, and then looking to their parents for applause! And the parents proudly smiled and said, "So smart, this cunning little kid!" The children fought with their siblings loudly in public, with the parents approvingly looking on! When I turned on the TV, I could see where it all came from. The people on TV lightly and constantly yelled at, insulted, and lashed out at each other; what was in fashion was cynicism and contempt. Quite the opposite of the Land of Courtesy and Integrity. I left Hong Kong saddened and angry.

但是1984年我走進商店，說一聲“早晨”時，售貨員們只睜大眼睛盯著我，一聲也不出。當我找不到要買的東西轉身出門的時候，售貨員高聲罵，“不是買東西的，進來幹甚麼？”當我在街上招計程車的時候，我招停了五架車才上到車，因為頭四架都突然有人跑出來，搶在我面前跳進了我招的車子。最後我唯有學他們那樣，車子裡面的客人還沒出來就跳進車子，他還在付錢我就坐在他身旁。其實，去香港前已經有人警告我，說香港人風氣很壞，回去的海外華人招計程車會被他們搶坐，但當時我就不信，認為這是歧視香港的謠言，因為這世界沒人會這樣野蠻的，何況是華人！另外，香港的孩子們，唉！我所接觸的孩子都外形活潑可愛，但是張開口時出來的竟然是污垢！小小的五歲小孩子，對陌生人說出藐視、譏諷和侮辱的說話來，就回頭望望父母，等待賞勵。父母們竟然驕傲地笑著說，“很聰明的，這個蠢惑

崽”！孩子們跟兄弟姐妹們在公眾場所大聲吵罵，父母們卻贊同地觀看。我打開電視，便知道這些行為從那裡來的。電視中的人們輕易地、經常地罵人、侮辱他人、突然攻擊他人，流行的是譏諷和鄙視。跟禮義之邦完全相反。我帶著悲憤的心情離開了香港。

In 2007, however, when I returned to Hong Kong after twenty-three years, the place had again changed completely. When I walked into a store, the staff were friendly and actually smiled and nodded. When I asked for directions the store people actually spent time to tell me two different ways to get there. When a taxicab stopped and my wife mistakenly thought that it had stopped for her, the person for whom it had actually stopped said that it was all right and waved us to go ahead and get into the cab when we started to apologize and defer the cab to him. The children I saw were actually polite and friendly! And on TV, the people spoke politely and were decent to each other. People told me that the famous Korean series “Da Chang Jin”, which I saw in America and which portrayed a very kind, polite, and idealistic Korean woman doctor, had been all the rage in Hong Kong. Good gracious! The wheel has turned; Hong Kong is back in the folds of civilization! Who says there’s no hope for Chinese people? I left Hong Kong elated.

但是，2007年，二十三年後重回香港時，又再完全變了。我走進商店時，售貨員態度友善，又微笑又點頭。問路時，店裡人員化時間來教我兩個不同的路線。至於招計程車，我太太誤以為計程車是為她而停的要進去，而發現了車子是為前頭一個人停的我們開始退出道歉的時候，他卻搖手把車子讓給我們。見到的孩子們居然又友善又有禮貌。電視中的人們說話有禮貌，互相對待也相當好。人們告訴我，描寫一位很善良、有禮貌、追求崇高理想的女醫生的著名韓劇“大長今”（我在美國也看過），風行香港。天啊！輪子轉了，香港重新回到文明了！誰說華人沒有希望？我帶著歡樂的心情離開了香港。

Was it because I was better dressed last year, compared to 1984? No, not at all, I was still in my usual North American overseas Chinese plain garb. Was it because I was older now and so more respectable? No, because my children report the same thing: people, they say, are nice in Hong Kong.

是不是因為去年我比1984年衣著穿得好點？不，完全不是，我還是穿著北美洲華人的樸素裝束。是不是因為我現在老一點了，所以被人尊重多一點？不是，因為我的孩子們也說同樣的話：香港的人們很好。

Of course, these are all things on the surface that I see; deeper down there must be a lot of things not to one's liking. It is undeniable, however, that customs in Hong Kong have improved.

當然，這都是表面看到的東西，深一層的必然還有很多不如意的事情，但是，無可否認，香港風氣確實是進步了。

Yes, Chinese people can improve; it's entirely possible for Chinese people to return to being The Land of Courtesy and Integrity...

是的，華人可以進步，華人完全能夠再構成禮義之邦 ...

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