

The Source of Life is Calling

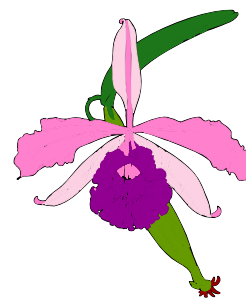
『生命故鄉的呼喚』

Follow your Heart to where your Home is

Let Your Heart Be *Alive*

The Profound Beauty in the Garden of Life

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Chapter Six

Rediscovering Our Humanity

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How do we do that? Let us first talk about the lack of core values. Even though it may not be perfect, all societies have a set of generally accepted values. These core values tend to restrict and limit those on the margin of society who do not accept these values. Now, with these core values disintegrating, those on the margin become more numerous and they can do whatever they please. This creates instability and danger. There is no longer a social standard, nothing to guide what is generally acceptable to society.

Generally speaking, there are two groups of marginalized people. The first group is unable to abide by the rules and. They oppose whatever is generally accepted e.g. good schools and popular trends. The other group is very understanding, submissive, and dutiful. They know what it takes to survive and are willing to mould themselves in order to fit. Superficially, all is well. But underneath, pressure is mounting because they are suppressing their own needs and desires.

Throughout history, there have been many stories about high society women eloping with someone from a lower social class. This can be a sign of rebellion to show the freedom of choice that she has suppressed all her life. Just like the actress in “Titanic”, her rebellion against her social class allowed us to see the explosive power of suppression acting out in life. From one perspective, it is very touching, but this rebellious act may have

hurt many people around her because she challenged the social order that many are willing to submit to. If we understand this, we should reserve any harsh judgment of the situation.

Understandably, people become fretful if the entire value system is destroyed. There will be no standard for making decisions. In our society, it seems that the squeaky wheel always get the grease. Is “First come, first served” always right? Then, there is “do as you please”. There is no standard to govern how things should be done, or how to determine what is acceptable and what is not. If this is allowed to continue, we will end up with a lawless society. If this is not what we want, then whose responsibility is it to re-establish the social order?

Nowadays, many drivers’ behaviors are affected by the presence of police instead of compliance to the traffic regulations. Everyone is trying to cut corners and take advantage of the situation wherever possible! If we go on like this, it will be like sailing a ship with no compass. When everyone in society is living a life with no values and no purpose, the downfall of humanity will be a sure thing.

Therefore, I must share my recommendations for your consideration. We need to unite to rebuild the core values in our society and to re-establish the social order. It is not up to me alone to determine how this should be done. Each of us must share that responsibility and to do so, we need certain common qualities.

The first quality is gratitude. We need to be grateful and to appreciate our ancestors’ efforts in building our society. Regardless of their successes or failures,

their decisions were influenced by their environment of their day. Our achievements are built upon the accumulation of their successes and failures. Therefore we must be grateful to all of them.

If we want our descendants to recognize the efforts we have put in, we must acknowledge our forefathers for clearing our way and respect the lessons of history. This is not condoning everything they have done. Like us, they made many mistakes, and endured many failures, but these do not negate their life's contributions. To this, we owe them our gratitude. We have a very ungrateful and unappreciative society nowadays. Recognition may sometimes be given for political reasons, but regardless of motives, we need to appreciate those who have made significant contributions to our society -- those who came before us their accomplishments.

Through our gratitude, we can hope to unite in common wisdom to rebuild our value system and re-establish the core values of our society. In doing so, some of the existing problems will be rectified.

The second quality is to have a "healthy human character". From the law and order perspective, a person's maturity is judged by his chronological age. This age comes from the accumulation of time. However, many people's emotional and social maturity do not develop correspondingly with time. So on the outside, a person may be 30 – 40 years old, but may only behave at an eleven or twelve year old level. What do you do if someone is physically mature enough to become a parent, but psychologically functioning as a 7 or 8 year old?

There was a father who took his three children out for dinner. The owner saw the children hovering on the floor as they ate, so he jokingly said, "Children, you should be sitting upright, and pick up your bowls when you eat." The father became very angry and said, "I eat the same way as well, so what is the problem!" Right! Dogs eat like that too.

The act of eating while hovering on the floor is an act of choice but it is not illegal. It is, however, a socially unacceptable behavior in public. There needs to be basic respect when you are with others. No one would care if he ate like a dog at home. But to eat like that publicly, the parent is not being a good role model for the children.

It is not a crime to be emotionally immature. But these people can be very impulsive and irresponsible. Very often, they are unable to understand that obligations come with privileges. This can lead to abuses and it is very difficult for those involved to deal with immature people.

Emotional age is different from physiological age. Generally, it takes quite a while of getting to know the person before the problem is identified. By then, there may be significant consequences. A company who hired a 40—year-old employee would expect a mature person. By the time the employer finds out this person is emotionally immature, to let him go will cost the company dearly.

This is not to say that people who are emotionally immature should be isolated or not be given a chance. But we need to look at this as flawed character development. The psychologically immature person would best be cared for by their parents, but, if they are of legal age this is not possible and the deficit in his or her character may result in a negative impact on society. Therefore it is very important to have proper character development.

There are four components to healthy character development:

The first component is the ability to live within the limits defined by the law and social order with our behavior being deemed generally acceptable to others. If this development is only about 60 to 70 per cent, then this character is flawed. Just like what many people say, "All businessmen are crooked, all officials take bribes." So, we all know how these types of character affect our society!

The second component is to have "a healthy psyche". People who are psychologically imbalanced often have emotional problems and vice-versa. Most of the time, these people blend well into the general public. Other than the mentally ill and homeless people, it is hard to differentiate them from the normal population. Potentially, they are the walking time bombs. Whoever encounters them may be the next victim!

The third component is to be allowed freedom of choice, and freedom of expression. When a child is taught to be submissive and to repress his own wishes and desires all the time, the child will learn

to be dutiful and obedient, always doing what others and society expect of him. But very often, he will then grow up to have problems adjusting to work. Even if he can get a job, usually it is just enough to support a basic living. He lacks the confidence to be independent, to be free from all the restraints placed on him so that he can just pursue his passion for living.

This is why high academic achievers often find it hard to do well in society. Women may fare worse than men. They tend to be more “docile” and willing to be more “obedient” to their parents, teachers and society. They suppress what they really want. Overbearing parents often raise dependent children. In order to survive, these children have to listen and do as they are told. Therefore, they become “subservient” instead of becoming independent. But if these children finally rebel, society pays a high price.

It seems that the earlier the child rebels to assert his independence, the lower the cost. The later the child rebels, the higher the cost. Just like a general’s wife who rebels and elopes at age 60 will extract a high toll on her family, and those around her. It does not matter whether her action is condoned. Rather, it is an issue that we must analyze and understand. If we cannot see through this issue clearly, then we will not be able to affirm the value of our existence, nor can we survive in this world independently. If we realize this only when we are in a similar situation, it will be too late.

So we should respect a child who is independent. We must allow him to develop a healthy and complete character so he can establish himself in society. Otherwise he will be pressured into becoming another one of the silent majority. The silent majority can live well if they have a supportive environment, otherwise, the pressures can very well distort their life paths.

The fourth component is to have a healthy perspective on life. This is very important because any deviations will erode our moral standards. Look at the official who takes bribes, the merchant who compromises on quality to save costs. Think about the consequences of their actions! If your motto is “compete to win”, then think about the impact it has on you enjoying a contented life.

“Serve other people” is a good aspiration. But such an altruistic goal may be done for other than altruistic reasons for personal gains. In such cases, this may be creating a dual personality. A person’s perception of functioning at a higher level to serve others may separate him from others. This may cause relational problems or problems at work. A person’s interpersonal skills and sense of responsibility contribute to the overall assessment of his character. His character development is inadequate if his overall rating is below 60%. His behavior can be unpredictable and may have a negative impact to society.

There are many people in this society whose character development is incomplete. When this population expands, the problems within our society will become more serious. Generally speaking, road rage, reckless driving, fighting for parking spots, etc. are already common sights. These behaviors directly affect everyone involved. Disregard for rules and regulations may be the result of not having a set of generally acceptable social ethics. But if we want social progress, we must share the common goal to search for harmony and accept our fundamental obligations towards society.

If everyone wants to buy a car, where will all the cars be parked? Do we have a healthier alternative? How do we manage the traffic? This is no longer an issue of an individual wanting to buy a car. This involves the officials in the ministry of transportation to seriously evaluate and make public transit accessible to every corner of the city. If public transit is accessible, many people will reconsider their need for a car. Therefore, the simple notion of whether we have a long term mass transit plan will impact on many individual’s decisions which, in turn, will affect society as a whole. Think about the energy that will be wasted if each car carries only one person, and the serious pollution problems this will bring. What seems like a harmless individual decision to get a car can have a big impact on society.

Taking public transit can be relaxing and enjoyable, but many people choose to drive their own car. Yet, instead of enjoying the ride in the car, which they spend so much money to purchase, they are impatient and always rushing. Our society as a whole has changed from putting resources into “enjoyment” to resources that will speed things up

with rage. Just by talking to another person, you can tell whether he drives or takes the transit. This is a negative change of values in our society. If we want to turn it around, we will need to work on the individual as well as the population as a whole in redeeming our lost humanity.

The government should be responsible for the overall plan. But we cannot demand them to act the way we think they should. So it is most important to take the responsibility ourselves to complete the development of our own character, to build a healthy psyche and develop a good perspective on life. This is easier said than done since we tend to cover up our own weaknesses.

A good practitioner has a strong ability to reflect, and to learn to overcome his own weaknesses. Most people these only other people's flaws and react with criticism. However, we tend to be less critical and more forgiving of ourselves. No matter what mistakes we have made, we can always find excuses to justify our own behavior. We need to realize this tendency before we can be objective in self-evaluation.

We need the ability to objectively reflect on the purpose of our existence. If we have no purpose in living, or our existence offers no value to others, then we have no foundation to correct our flaws and rebuild our character. We are like pawns controlled by the greater forces of society; there is no value in our existence. The rights to privacy, self-determination, and the freedom to decide and take control of our own destiny are all essential qualities to build a healthy human character. It is only with these qualities that we can proceed with our own re-engineering education prove the value of our lives.

People with autism live within their own worlds but they have no self-determination. They are unable to reach out and others cannot reach into their world. Their functioning will always be limited and childlike. Childhood is a beautiful stage in life. But if children are permitted to engage in only one activity all of the time, this will result in unbalanced development. They may become reclusive and unable to learn the important skills needed to get along with others.

You do not establish your self-worth through your imagination, but in how you get along with others. It is often through other people's lives that we see

the value of our own. Enjoying the comfort of our home or the great outdoors by ourselves is great, but it is even better if we have someone to share these with. Communicating and validating ideas with others will help us better understand the meaning of life, and the value of living.

But very often, gossip is generated when people get together. This is undesirable. Of course, there are many issues in society that cause our indignation, but if we only talk about annoying and negative matters with our good friends, it will only drain and waste our energy. We must learn to appreciate and talk about the good in others.

To re-engineer our life, we must first be confident of our own value in life. Then we can modify our extreme attitudes, slowly nurturing a more flexible ability to appreciate others. When we can do this, our character will naturally regulate itself. When the extreme views on life become rectified, the unhealthy state of mind will be turned around. We will become more accommodating, more insightful into the remedies to our natural weaknesses. Then, we will discover how beautiful life can be and how beautiful this world is.

It is a very restrictive existence if we confine ourselves to working and meeting our basic needs. We need to liberate ourselves to others' ideas, even though they may be different than our own. Life will be more meaningful if we are able to communicate our differences among family, friends and others.

To be physically, emotionally and mentally healthy is the key to the rebuilding of our social value system. If any of these is lacking, character development will be incomplete which in turn will people negatively. The cumulative effects of such people will undoubtedly cause deterioration of our social values. When people are healthy, families will function well and the social values will be positive. So, if we focus on improving the values of the individuals, and their families, the ripple effect will reach the broader society to change the current weaknesses in our social values.

We look forward to the arrival of such a day. Blessing to all, and may our society be blessed to progress on a healthy path.



... to be continued in next issue