



**T**raditional  
Virtues of  
China

# 中华传统美德

刘涛◎编著



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中国素有“礼仪之邦”的美誉。重视个人的道德修养，重视社会的道德教化，这种传统美德是中华民族精神的重要特征和组成部分。

中华民族传统美德的形成和发展已

China is known as “a state of ceremonies” reputation. With the importance of personal moral cultivation and paying attention to the moral education, the traditional virtue is important components and characteristics of Chinese national spirit.





经有几千年的历史，从口头传承到文字记载，内容博大精深，并且在不断地发展完善。这种美德是中国人处理人与人之间的关系、处理人与社会的关系和人与自然的关系的实践结晶，自然地体现在每个中国人的言行之中。本书通过中国人的嘉言和懿行来讨论传承数千年的传统美德，选取了许多古人的故事，以此展现中华传统美德。

The formation and development of the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation has a history of thousands of years, from oral tradition to written records. In the continuous development and improvement, the content is broad and profound. This virtue is the crystallization of practice Chinese relations between people, human and social relations and the relationship between man and nature, which is reflected in every Chinese words and deeds naturally. This book discusses the traditional virtues of the Chinese tradition of thousands of years by the good words and exemplary conduct, and selects many tales of the ancients, to show the Chinese traditional virtue.

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# 中华传统美德概述

## The Summary of the Traditional Chinese Virtues

美德即美好的品德，是指那些积极的、向上的、崇高的、引导人向社会向善的品德。而品德则是对人的言行的规范，有的通过书面的法律、法令、著作等方式流传下来，有的通过一代又一代人的言传身教传承下来。法律通过国家的力量从外对人进行制约，品德则是通过个人的力量从内对人进行制约。

中华传统美德是中华民族五千年继承下来的优秀道德遗产，内容可谓博大精深，涉及了社会生活的方方面面。其核心思想是仁、义、礼、智、信，在此基础上又包括修身、齐家、治国、平天下这四个层面。

Virtue is fine moral character, referring to the positive, upward and exalted moral characters guiding people and the society to good. The moral character is the specification to people's words and deeds, some handed down by ways of written laws, decrees and works etc, and some passed down by teaching with precepts and examples from generation to generation. Laws restrict people from outside through the national power, and moral character restricts people from inside through personal power.

Chinese traditional virtues are the excellent moral heritage of the Chinese nation inherited through five thousand years, whose contents are broad and profound, involving all aspects of social life. Their core thought is benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith, on this basis, including four aspects of self-cultivation and regulating the family, country and world.



## > 传统美德的核心思想

仁、义、礼、智、信是中华传统美德的核心观念，也是儒家思想的核心，称为“五常”。这“五常”始终贯穿于中华民族的伦理发展，是古代中国价值体系中最核心的因素。

仁，即人与人之间相处的规范和准则，人们要相亲相爱，互相帮助。中国一直重视伦理关系，尤其强调人与人之间的和谐相处。因此，仁在中国有极为重要的地位，是五常的核心，是一切美德之源。中国伟大的思想家孔子（前551—前479）将“仁”定义为“爱人”，并解释说：“夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人。”意思是：仁德的人，自己若想成功，那么首先要使别人成功；自己若想被

## > The Core Ideas of the Traditional Virtues

Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith are the core concept of Chinese traditional virtues, and also the core thought of Confucian thoughts, known as *Wuchang* (cardinal virtues). This *Wuchang* runs through the ethical development of the ancient Chinese nation, which was the first core factor in the value system of ancient China.

*Ren* (benevolence) is namely the coexistence norm and standard between human beings. People need to be deeply attached to each other and help each other. China has always attached importance to ethical relationship, with particular emphasis on the harmonious coexistence between human beings. Therefore, benevolence in China has the extremely important status, which is the core of *Wuchang* and the source of all virtues. The great Chinese



#### • 颐和园仁寿殿

中国古代许多建筑都以“仁”字命名，如颐和园的仁寿殿。

#### *Renshou Temple of the Summer Palace*

Many ancient Chinese buildings are named *Ren*, such as the *Renshou Temple of the Summer Palace*.

人理解，那么首先要理解他人。孔子还说：“能行五者于天下，为仁矣。”意思是能做到恭敬、宽容、守信、才智敏捷、怀有恩惠之心这五方面，那么就能称其为“仁”了。“仁”的品德体现在中国社会的方方面面，如人际交往上讲究仁爱、仁至义尽，政治上讲究仁政、仁治。现在中国的睦邻友好、和平共处等外交政策也可以从这里找到哲学依据。

thinker Confucius (551 B.C.- 479 B.C.) defined benevolence as giving love, and explained: he who themselves are to be successful should first make other people successful; he who themselves are to be understood should first understand others. Confucius also said if you can be respectful, tolerant, honest, intelligent and having the heart of grace, you had all these five aspects and then could be called benevolence. Moral character of benevolence reflected in all aspects of China, such as interpersonal stress on kindheartedness, being most perfectly fulfilled both in love and duty, political stress on the policy of benevolence and kernel governing. Now China's good-neighborly and friendly, peaceful coexistence and other foreign policy could also find philosophical basis from here.

*Yi* (righteousness) means fair and reasonable. Confucius said a gentleman





- 杭州岳庙里的“忠义常昭”匾额

Horizontal Inscribed Board of "Often Showing Loyalty" in Yue Temple, Hangzhou

义，指公正、合理。孔子曰：“君子寓于义”，意思是君子处事应当公正、公平，中国非常重视义这一美德。古代伟大的思想家孟子（约前372—前289）曰：“生亦我所欲也，义亦我所欲也，二者不可得兼，舍生而取义者也。”意思是，生命是我想要的，正义也是我想要的，如果二者不能同时得到，那么宁可选择正义而舍去生命。义反映在中国日常生活的方方面面，如在国家的层面，要讲求正义，公平合理地处理各种关系；对朋友交往要讲求义气，互相帮助；而夫妻之间则要重情义，用心经营自己的婚姻。

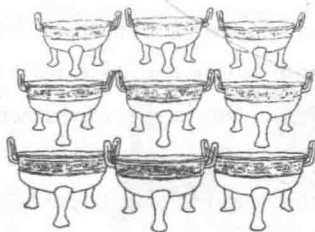
礼，指礼仪、礼节，是国家与国家之间、人与人之间交往和相处

should be impartial and fair dealing. China attaches great importance to the virtue of righteousness. The ancient great thinker Mencius (approx. 372 B.C.-289 B.C.) said life was what I wanted, and I wanted justice, too; if I could not get the two at the same time, I would rather choose justice and give life. Righteousness reflects in daily life in all aspects of China, such as at the national level, to emphasize the justice, to deal with various relations fairly and reasonably; to friends to be loyal and to help each other; between husband and wife, they will have to re-brotherhood, and to carefully manage their marriage.

*Li* (propriety) indicates etiquette and formality, which is ancient laws and regulations and code of conduct between nation and nation, and the interpersonal

的典章制度和行为规范。礼是中国古代法律的重要组成部分。中国人自古便重视礼，认为讲礼才可以维持社会的长治久安，因此中国素有“礼仪之邦”之称。孔子说：“不学礼，无以立。”意思是如果不学习礼，不践行礼，那么就不能在人间立足。在中国古代，礼存在于

communication and getting on. Propriety is an important part of ancient Chinese law. Chinese have attached importance to propriety since ancient times, thinking only politeness can maintain the long-term stability of the community, so China is known as a state of ceremonies. Confucius said if you did not learn the ceremony and practice the ceremony,



天子九鼎  
Emperor's Nine Tripods



诸侯七鼎  
Seigneurs' Seven Tripods



卿大夫五鼎  
Officers' Five Tripods



士三鼎  
Bachelors' Three Tripods

#### • 周代礼器制度

礼器产生于原始社会晚期，是中国古代的贵族在举行祭祀、征战、宴请等礼仪活动时使用的器物，用以表明使用者的身份、等级和权力。

##### Sacrificial Vessel System of the Zhou Dynasty

Sacrificial vessels originated in the late primitive society, which are containers used by the ancient Chinese nobility when holding ceremonial activities as sacrifices, conquests and junketing, etc., in order to show the user's identity, class and power.

各种社会关系之中，且具有强制力，如君臣之间要守礼，主要表现为臣民对君主的敬畏；师生之间要守礼，主要表现为学生要尊敬老师，而老师也不能妄自尊大。

智，是指智慧、知识与经验，意味着知对错、明善恶，要具有较高的见识，对一件事的性质有正确的理解和判断，对于事情的未来发展有精准的预测。孔子说：



you could not gain a foothold in this world. In ancient China, propriety existed in all kinds of social relations, and was enforceable, e.g. to keep ceremony between the monarch and his subjects, mainly as subjects of fear of the monarch; to keep ceremony between the teachers and students, mainly for the students to respect teachers, and the teachers were not arrogant.

*Zhi* (wisdom) referring to knowledge and experience, means to know right with wrong and good with evil. One should have higher experiences, correct understanding and judgment to the nature of a thing, and have the precise prediction for the future development of the thing. Confucius said that as long as there was wisdom, we would not be confused to face the problem. We could make the right decision at the critical moment, thus solving the problem. China has always attached great importance to the virtues of wisdom. Wisdom is reflected in all aspects of life, whether political decision, social management, or family life and personal interaction with others all needing wisdom.

• 孔子像

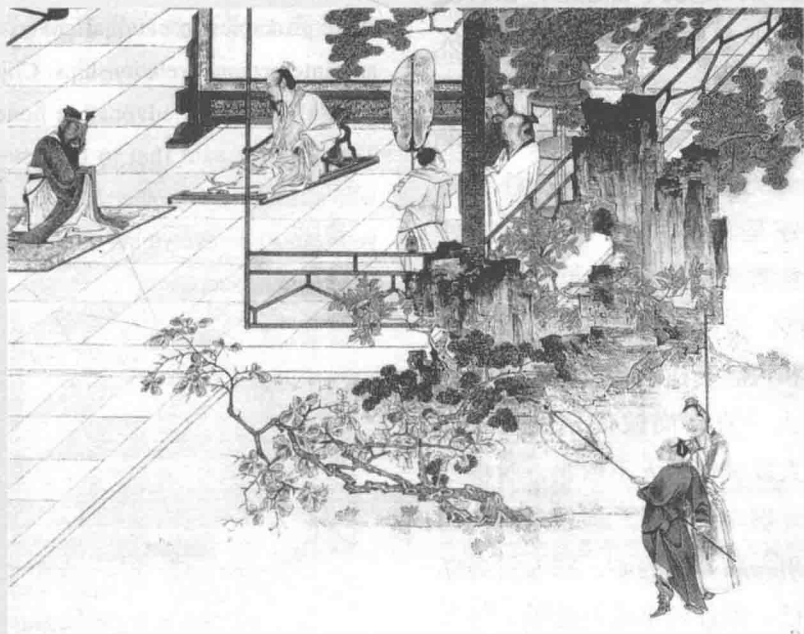
Portrait of Confucius

## 儒家

儒家思想是中国古代最具影响力的思想学派，是中国人的基本文化信仰。儒家思想由春秋时期的伟大思想家孔子创立，后经西汉思想家董仲舒发展成为中国封建社会占主要统治地位的学派。儒家思想以“仁”为核心，崇尚“仁、义、礼、智、信”，提倡“忠恕”（以待自己的态度对待他人）和“中庸”（中正平和）之道，主张“德治”（以道德感化教育人）、“仁政”（宽厚仁慈的统治），重视伦理道德。

## Confucian

Confucianism is the most influential schools of thought in ancient China, which is a basic cultural beliefs of the Chinese people. Confucianism was founded by the great thinker



• 《孔子圣迹图》（清 焦秉贞）

*Picture of Confucius Shrines Figure, by Jiao Bingzhen (Qing Dynasty)*



Confucius in the Spring and Autumn Period, and then developed into the main dominant school of thought in China's feudal society by the thinker Dong Zhongshu in the Western Han Dynasty. Confucianism takes benevolence as the core, advocates benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith, as well as *Zhong Shu* (to treat others in the way of treating oneself) and *Zhong Yong* (peace and gentle), proposes rule of virtue (to teach people with moral reformatory education) and policy of benevolence (benevolent rule), paying attention to ethics.

“智者不惑。”就是指只要有智慧，面对问题就不会迷惑，在关键时刻就能够做出正确的决断，从而解决问题。中国一直非常重视智这一美德，智体现在生活的各个方面。无论是政治决策、社会管理，还是家庭生活、个人为人处世，都需要智慧。

信，指诚信、信义、信用，是治国和人际交往的基本原则之一。中国人一直崇尚诚信，古人云：“对人以诚信，人不欺我；对事以诚信，事无不成。”意思是对待别人要用一颗真诚的心，别人便会尊敬自己；做任何事情都得用诚信去对待，才会获得成功。

*Xin* (faith) refers to credibility, integrity and credit, which is one of the basic principles in national governance and interpersonal relationships. Chinese have always been advocating honesty. The ancients said that to treat people with a sincere heart, others would respect yourself; to do everything with integrity, you could be successful.