

# The Roots of Wisdom

## 菜根谭

者，凄凉万古。达人观物外之物，思

身之后身。

古之凄凉

涉世浅

深。故云

其出谨，不若

事事留个有余

能忘我，鬼神不能损我。若业必求

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(明)洪应明 原著  
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一六一、真理学问 人皆可求 .....	163
Everyone is entitled to seek truth and engage in learning.	
一六二、信人已诚 疑人已诈 .....	164
He who has trust in others is sincere and deceitful is he who has a distrust of others.	
一六三、春风催生 寒风残杀 .....	165
Spring breeze hastens the growth of life, while piercing cold wind brings life to ruin.	
一六四、善根暗长 恶损潜消 .....	166
The benefit of good deeds grows without being noticed and the harm of evil ones vanishes from sight secretly.	



一六五、愈隐愈显 愈淡愈浓 .....	167
The more esoteric the thing, the more we should be open-minded; the less associated the one, the more we should be warm-hearted.	
一六六、君子立德 小人图利 .....	168
Accomplished men pay attention to moral cultivation, while petty ones are only keen on seeking material gains.	
一六七、意气用事 难有作为 .....	169
Men of easy temperament can scarcely make great achievements.	
一六八、律己宜严 待人宜宽 .....	170
Better be strict with ourselves and lenient to others.	
一六九、为奇不异 求清不激 .....	171
To be outstanding is not the result of a queer deed, nor is that of an extreme one to be noble and unsullied.	
一七〇、恩宜后浓 威宜先严 .....	172
Favors should be bestowed from small to great while authority go first with severity and then with tolerance.	
一七一、心虚性现 意净心清 .....	173
The true nature emerges when internal distracting thoughts are banished; the heart becomes clear when the mind is purified.	
一七二、我自为我 物自为物 .....	174
I am but my self; all the things I have are only my possessions.	
一七三、慈悲心肠 繁衍生机 .....	175
Kind-heartedness ensures endless procreation.	
一七四、心体天体 人心天心 .....	176
Man's heart and the cosmos resemble each other in essence.	
一七五、无事寂寂 有事惺惺 .....	177
Preserve tranquility while unoccupied and keep a clear head while occupied.	
一七六、议事任事 明晓利害 .....	178
Before making a remark or starting with a thing, better be aware of the advantages and disadvantages thereof.	
一七七、操履严明 但毋偏激 .....	179
In preserving moral principles one should be strict rather than drastic.	
一七八、浑然和气 居身之珍 .....	180
To preserve an easy-going manner is the golden rule of getting on in the world.	
一七九、诚心和气 激励陶冶 .....	181
Nobody cannot be roused and molded with sincerity and gentleness.	
一八〇、一念慈祥 寸心洁白 .....	182
A thought of kind-mindedness makes the heart pure and clean.	
一八一、异行奇能 涉世祸胎 .....	183
Unusual behaviors and queer talents are the sources of disasters in social relations.	
一八二、忍得耐得 自在之境 .....	184
Endurance is the gateway to the realm of freedom.	



一八三、心体莹然 本来不失 .....	185
A pure heart enables one to retain his true characters.	
一八四、一张一弛 事先安排 .....	186
Alteration of work and relaxation should be arranged beforehand.	
一八五、为民固本 造福子孙 .....	187
Ensure the lifeblood of the people so as to benefit the coming generations.	
一八六、为官公廉 居家恕俭 .....	188
Be impartial and white-handed when holding office and when managing a household, be lenient and frugal.	
一八七、富贵知贫 少壮念老 .....	189
Be aware of poverty when rich and wealthy and think of being old when young and strong.	
一八八、气量宽厚 兼容并包 .....	190
Be large-minded so as to tolerate people of different qualities.	
一八九、勿仇小人 勿媚君子 .....	191
Never be the enemy of mean fellows nor curry favor with gentlemen.	
一九〇、疾病易医 魔障难除 .....	192
Physical diseases are easy to cure, while mental barriers set up by a demon are hard to remove.	
一九一、百炼成金 轻发无功 .....	193
Gold can only be made with great effort.	
一九二、戒小人媚 愿君子责 .....	194
Better be blamed by a worthy man than be flattered by a mean fellow.	
一九三、好利害浅 好名害深 .....	195
He who is greedy for wealth brings less harm but more does he who is eager for fame.	
一九四、忘恩报怨 刻薄之极 .....	196
To forget others' kindness and requite it with ingratitude is a thing most contemptible in the world.	
一九五、不畏谗言 却惧蜜语 .....	197
Fear no slanders, but beware of flattery.	
一九六、清高褊急 君子重戒 .....	198
An accomplished man should attentively guard against being too stiff and narrow-minded.	
一九七、虚圆建功 执拗愆事 .....	199
Modesty and flexibility lead to success, while stubbornness avails nothing.	
一九八、处世之道 不同不异 .....	200
In dealing with the world, do not totally act in accord with the social mores, nor totally go against them.	
一九九、烈士暮年 壮心不已 .....	201
The heart of a hero in his old age is as stout as ever.	
二〇〇、聪明不露 才华不逞 .....	202
A wise man should never show off his intelligence nor parade his talent.	
二〇一、过俭者吝 过谦者卑 .....	203
Undue thrift is regarded as miserliness and over-modesty as lowliness.	

二〇二、喜忧安危 勿介于心 .....	204
Not turn a hair in the face of joy and worry, safety and danger.	
二〇三、声华名利 非君子行 .....	205
An accomplished man should not sink himself in sensual pleasures nor seek fame and wealth.	
二〇四、乐极生悲 苦尽甜来 .....	206
Extreme pleasure ends in sorrow, and after suffering comes happiness.	
二〇五、过满则溢 过刚即折 .....	207
Overfullness begets spillage and overrigidness induces fracture.	
二〇六、冷眼观人 冷心思理 .....	208
Be sober-eyed when observing the people around you and when pondering the reasons in things, be sober-minded.	
二〇七、心宽福厚 量小福薄 .....	209
Open-mindedness brings in profound happiness, while narrow-mindedness only slight one.	
二〇八、闻恶防谗 闻善防奸 .....	210
Guard against the slanderous when hearing someone has done evil and when hearing someone has done good, watch out for the treacherous.	
二〇九、躁急无成 平和得福 .....	211
Rash-temperredness ends in failure, while calm-heartedness brings about good fortune.	
二一〇、用人不刻 交友不滥 .....	212
Not be too fastidious in choosing a person for a job and in making friends, not be too indiscriminate.	
二一一、立得脚定 著得眼高 .....	213
Get your foothold firm and let your gaze roam afar.	
二一二、和衷少争 谦德少妒 .....	214
Amiability evokes no dispute and modesty arouses no jealousy.	
二一三、居官有节 居乡有情 .....	215
Be moderate when on an official position and when in retirement, be amiable and easy of approach.	
二一四、事上警谨 待下宽仁 .....	216
Be careful when attending upon your superiors and in dealings with your inferiors, be generous.	
二一五、逆境消怨 怠荒思奋 .....	217
When in adversity, try to dispel the grievances from your heart; and when becoming indolent, think about how to rouse yourself.	
二一六、轻诺惹祸 倦怠无成 .....	218
Promise lightly made courts disasters and indolence makes previous work undone.	
二一七、读书得其要领 观物达其实质 .....	219
When reading a book, try to understand its essence; when observing an object, try to reach its substance.	
二一八、勿以长欺短 勿以富凌贫 .....	220
Do not humiliate others with your strong points, nor bully the poor with your wealth.	
二一九、中才之人 高低难成 .....	221
A medium-gifted man is fit for neither a higher post nor a lower one.	



二二〇、守口应密 防意应严 .....	222
The mouth should be closely guarded and the minds well controlled.	
二二一、责人宜宽 责己宜严 .....	223
Better be lenient when censuring another for a fault but strict when making self-reproaches.	
二二二、幼时定基 少时勤学 .....	224
Characters should be tempered from childhood and diligent study begins in youth.	
二二三、君子忧乐 亦怜茆独 .....	225
A man of virtue will be consumed with circumspection in a time of joy and with pity when together with the abandoned and helpless.	
二二四、浓夭淡久 大器晚成 .....	226
Gaudy colors and rich flavors are inferior to light but constant ones and early flourish is not as good as late maturity.	
二二五、静中真境 淡现本然 .....	227
The true realm of a man's life exists amid tranquility and his natural characters emerge from simplicity.	
二二六、乐者不言 言者不乐 .....	228
Those who understand happiness may not talk about it; those who talk about happiness may not understand it.	
二二七、省事为适 无能全真 .....	229
Less engagement leads to leisureliness; incompetence keeps man's nature intact.	
二二八、艳为虚幻 枯为胜境 .....	230
The reality of Nature is revealed by decay instead of brilliance which is nothing but an illusion.	
二二九、天地之闲 因人而异 .....	231
The realization of whether the world is of leisure or not varies from man to man.	
二三〇、盆池竹屋 意境高远 .....	232
Even a basin-sized pool or a bamboo house can bring in profound subtleties.	
二三一、静夜梦醒 月现本性 .....	233
The sound of a temple bell on a still night awakens the dream of life; the moon reflection in the pool reveals the origin of man's nature.	
二三二、天地万物 皆是实相 .....	234
Everything in the world has its own way to express itself.	
二三三、知无形物 悟无尽趣 .....	235
To apprehend a thing by its essence instead of its form leads to boundless subtlety.	
二三四、淡欲有书 神仙之境 .....	236
Books help to weaken men's material desires and guide them into the fairyland.	
二三五、盛宴散后 兴味索然 .....	237
When a grand feast comes to an end, flatness appears.	
二三六、得个中趣 破眼前机 .....	238
Ascertain the subtlety of Nature and perceive the deceptions and trickeries before your eyes.	
二三七、非上上智 无了了心 .....	239
Only with supreme wisdom can one make a thorough comprehension of Nature and human life.	





- 二三八、人生苦短 宇宙无限 ..... 240  
Man's life is transient while the cosmos is boundless.
- 二三九、极端空寂 断不可取 ..... 241  
Extreme void is absolutely undesirable.
- 二四〇、休无休时 了无了时 ..... 242  
Take a rest when time allows; if you wish to do so till all the works in hand are completed, then you will never meet your wishes.
- 二四一、从冷视热 从冗入闲 ..... 243  
In times of calm, reflect on the boisterousness; while being busy, try to take a moment's respite.
- 二四二、轻视富贵 不溺酒中 ..... 244  
Wealth and rank are what men should despise and wine is what they should not wallow in.
- 二四三、不嫌人醉 不夸己醒 ..... 245  
Not cold-shoulder others if they are infatuated with fame and wealth, nor brag that you are the only one who is above the worldly considerations.
- 二四四、心闲日长 意广天宽 ..... 246  
To a leisurely-minded person, a single day is longer than enough; to a broad-minded person, a tiny hovel seems as a large space.
- 二四五、栽花种竹 去欲忘忧 ..... 247  
Raising flowers and planting bamboos are conducive to removal of material desires and mundane worries.
- 二四六、知足则仙 善用则生 ..... 248  
Those content with their lot are happy; those good at making use of opportunities are prosperous.
- 二四七、附势遭祸 守逸味长 ..... 249  
Fawning upon the influential and powerful brings disaster, while preserving ease of mind produces durable taste.
- 二四八、松涧望闲云 竹夜见风月 ..... 250  
At day, watch the floating clouds along the side of a pine-covered rivulet and at night, view the scene of the wind and moon in a bamboo shed.
- 二四九、欲时思病 利来思死 ..... 251  
When lust rages in your mind, think of the trouble; and when benefit comes to you, think of the calamity.
- 二五〇、退后一步 清淡一分 ..... 252  
A pace back makes a road more spacious, lightly seasoned food gives more taste.
- 二五一、忙不乱性 死不动心 ..... 253  
Be steadfast and composed when occupied and fearless when facing death.
- 二五二、隐无荣辱 道无炎凉 ..... 254  
To live as a hermit, give no thought to personal honor and disgrace; to seek morality, pay no heed to the fickleness of human nature.
- 二五三、心静自然凉 乐观无穷愁 ..... 255  
Free from vexation, and one will feel cool of oneself; be optimistic, and one will have no distress about poverty.
- 二五四、进时思退 得手思放 ..... 256  
Think out a way to retreat when progress has been made, and consider how to let go when you set about a task.