



FILIAL PIETY, THE FIRST OF ALL VIRTUES

Filial piety is the practice of filial respect, filial obedience, filial duty and the correct moral duty and relationship which exist between a child and his parents or between a disciple and his teacher.

It is believed that from the practice of filial piety, there will be righteousness in the heart. If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. Such is the significance of filial piety in our society.

Jing An is founded on among others, the core precepts of filial piety. It is a place where tradition, culture and spirit of filial piety are recognized and nurtured.



(1)

THE FILIAL CONDUCT THAT MOVED HEAVEN

Shun the Great (the last of the five mythological rulers of China) was ill-treated by his father and family during his childhood. Despite that Shun harboured no ill feelings and treated them with respect and affection. News of his filial piety reached the Emperor who was moved. The Emperor taught Shun the ways of good governance. When Emperor Yao retired, he passed his throne to Shun for his filial conduct and well tested capabilities. The empire prospered under Shun's benevolent rule and continued to learn from him the virtues of filial piety.



(2)

HE ENTERTAINED HIS PARENTS EVEN WHEN HE WAS OLD

Zhou Dynasty: Since young, Lai Zi had been respectful and obedient towards his parents. Even in his advanced age of over seventy, despite having numerous children and grandchildren of his own, he was determined to keep his parents from lamenting over their increasing years. He put on shows so that his aged parents would be amused and happy and in doing so took much care for the mental well being of his parents.



(3)

FEEDING DEER'S MILK FOR HIS AILING PARENTS

Zhou Dynasty: Tan's parents were old and suffered a disease needed to use deer's milk for treatment. He was poor and could not afford to buy the milk, Tan wandered out to the mountains where he saw a herd of deer grazing by the meadow. He then dressed up in deer skin to disguise himself as one of the fawns. When the herd returned to the doe to feed, Tan joined them so that he could extract the necessary deer milk to treat his parents. Over time, his parents began to recover, thanks to their filial son's dutiful sacrifice on the mountainside. During one of these incidents, Tan was nearly shot by some hunters, who mistook him as one of the fawns. His filial duty and sacrifice deeply impressed the hunters.



(4)

CARRYING LOADS OF RICE ON HIS BACK TO FEED HIS PARENTS

Spring and Autumn Period: When he was young, Zi Lu had to travel over a hundred miles from his poverty-stricken neighbourhood to exchange his wild greens and roots for rice to feed his parents. After his parents passed away, Zi Lu joined the civil service and with his righteous character and dedicated learning rose up the ranks to eventually become the Prime Minister. Despite a life of affluent comfort, Zi Lu in his heart constantly pined for the days of his youth, when he was able to serve his mother and father. He later wrote verses which constituted the "Filial Piety Classic" urging everyone to be filial to their parents.



(5)

HE FELT THE PAIN WHEN HIS MOTHER BIT HER FINGER

Spring and Autumn Period: Zeng Shen, a student of Confucius was known as the "Saint of Ancestors". He wrote on the close bonding shared between parent and child. He related one experience when his mother bit her finger in panic during a guest visit, she had nothing to serve and therefore had no way of properly welcoming the guest. Zeng Shen who was then collecting firewood nearby felt the stinging pain and instinctively knew there was something wrong with his mother. He rushed home and his mother exclaimed that he was such a respectful child that he even knew his mother's thoughts from a distance.



(6)

HE SHOWED COMPASSION TO HIS CRUEL STEPMOTHER

Spring and Autumn Period: Min Ziqian, a student of Confucius was ill-treated by his stepmother. Unknown to his father, he often suffered coldness, hungry and felt lonely compared to his step brothers. When his father eventually found out about the cruelty and injustice that Min Ziqian had suffered through his stepmother, he asked her to leave the house. Min Sun pleaded with the father to be lenient to his stepmother and begged him not to punish her. His compassion made his stepmother cried piteously in shame and from that time onwards she turned over a new leaf.



(7)

PERSONALLY TASTED HIS MOTHER'S MEDICINES

Western Han Dynasty: Liu Heng (Emperor Han Wendi) was a ruler who practiced vigorous, just government. He cared for his citizens, moving and inspiring them to self improvement through education. Despite the great efforts required to govern the empire, he still made time to practice his filial pieties. His mother was sicked for three years, during which, he dutifully and lovingly attended to his ailing mother to such an extent that he personally tasted the medicines before feeding her. He gave her personal care throughout her convalescence without complaint or anger.

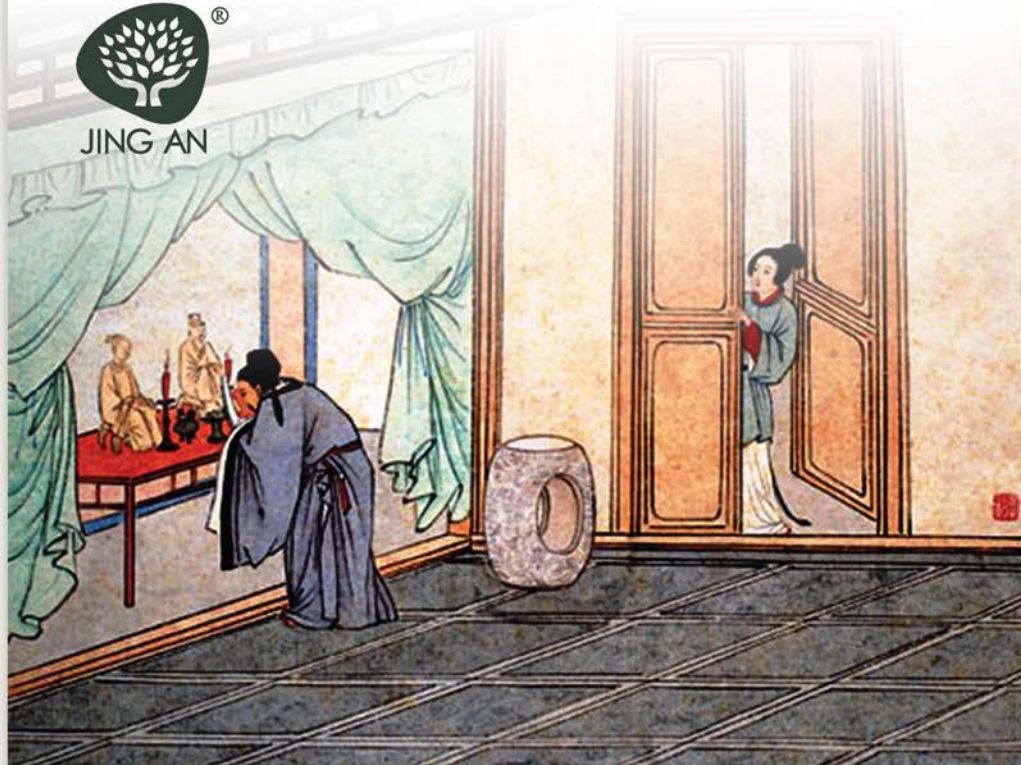
His filial conduct is often told to this day.



(8)

PICKING MULBERRIES FOR HIS MOTHER

Western Han Dynasty: During the civil wars, food was scarce and starvation was rampant. To survive, many had to forage for wild plants and roots for food or to resort to banditry. As his father had passed away, his mother relied on young Cai Shun to forage for food. While picking wild mulberries in the woods, Cai Shun encountered bandits. Cai Shun pleaded with them not to harm him so that his mother would not starve to death. Impressed by Cai Shun's bravery and earnestness, and remembering the sufferings of their own parents, they released him and gave him food and drink so that he could feed his mother.



(9)

PAYING TRIBUTE TO HIS PARENTS

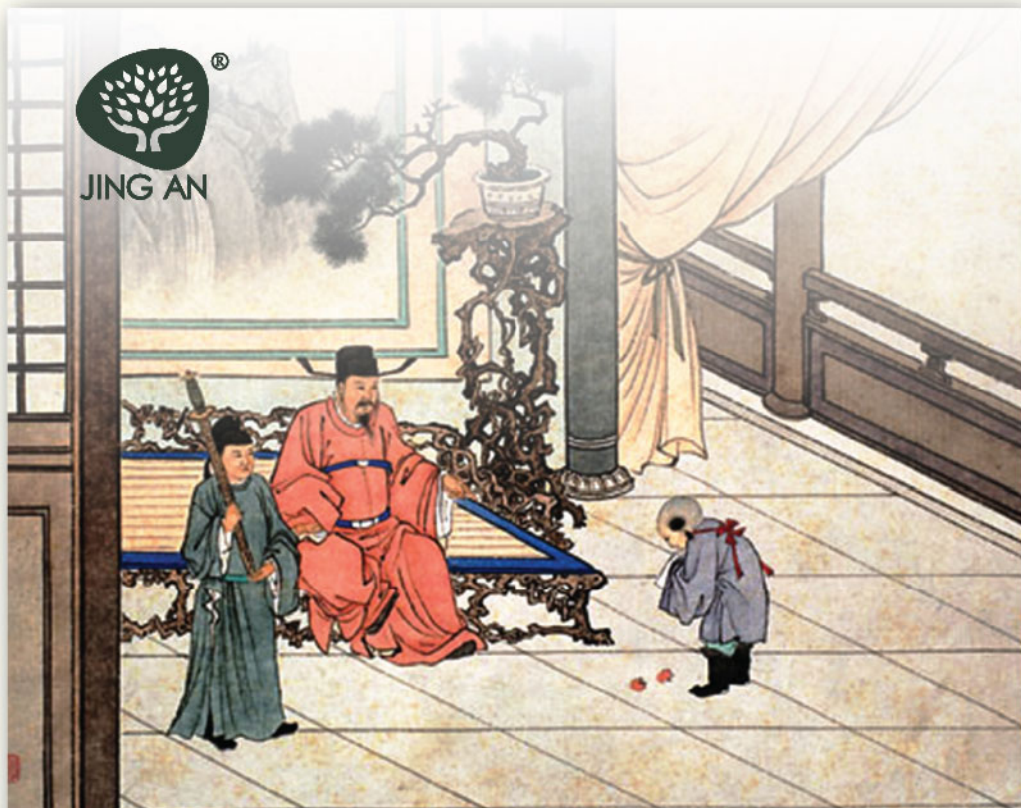
Eastern Han Dynasty: Ding Lan grew up without his parents since an early age. When he became an adult, he longed to pay tribute to his parents. As they had already passed away, he asked a craftsman to carve the image of his parents on a piece of wood. He placed this in his living room and offered incense and bowed to them thrice a day. After his marriage, he led his wife to conduct the daily ritual. His wife later grew weary of the tedious ritual, and one day playfully pricked the hand of one of the statues. When Ding Lan returned home, he noticed the eyes of one of the statues were filled with tears. On closer inspection he saw a trickle of blood oozing out from the tiny finger. When she admitted the wrongdoing, Ding Lan asked his wife to leave the house.



(10)

A BUBBLING SPRING AND LEAPING CARP

Han Dynasty: Jiang Shi's mother liked drinking spring water instead of well water. His wife, Pang, without complaint, travelled daily to far away Yangtze Kiang to fetch water and bring back fresh carps for Jiang Shi's mother and to be shared with their neighbours. After many years, a spring sprang up right behind their house provided them with the very same spring water they used to bring home everyday and two carps would leap out of the spring each day, as if Jiang Shi's wife was waiting to gather them for their meal.



(11)

BRINGING KUMQUAT HOME FOR HIS MOTHER

Eastern Han Dynasty: Lu Ji had eaten two delicious kumquats in the premise of the Chief Minister. He was six years old then and he could not resist bringing some back for his mother. He hid them, but while saying goodbye to the host, the fruits dropped off. Impressed by his filial conduct, the host offered him all the available kumquats to take home for his mother.



(12)

TEARS THAT BROUGHT BAMBOO SHOOTS FROM THE FROZEN GROUND

Jin Dynasty: Meng Zong's widowed mother was stricken with a serious illness and craved for some bamboo shoot broth. Although it was impossible to find bamboo shoots during the winter months, Meng Zong still went out to search so that he would not disappoint his mother. The thought of his sick mother caused him much despair and he tripped and fell into a ravine. He knelt down on the frozen ground and started digging while weeping. He then found a bed of fresh and tender bamboo shoots which he gathered to make broth for his aged mother.



(13)

STRANGLER TIGER TO SAVE FATHER

Jin Dynasty: When Yang Xiang was fourteen, one day, he followed his father Yang Feng to a field to reap grain. His father was attacked and dragged away by a fierce tiger. Without hesitation and thought for his own safety, Yang Xiang strangled the tiger and fought bravely with the beast until it fled. Yang Feng was shocked, but unhurt. When the news reached the neighbourhood, the brave boy was given a heroic welcome.



(14)

ASTING FATHER'S STOOLS WITH ANXIOUS HEART

Southern Qi Dynasty: Yu Qianlou quit his post in the civil service to return home to care for his ailing father. Lacking any proper equipment to diagnose his father's ailment, the physician advised Yu to taste his father's stools. If it taste sweet, then the sickness would be serious, if it taste bitter, then the sickness would be less serious. To Yu's dismay, it was sweet. On that night, he prayed and pledged to the Gods to substitute his life for his father. His truly filial conduct moved the Heaven.



(15)

TAKING ON MENIAL LABOR TO SUPPORT HIS MOTHER

Eastern Han Dynasty: During the turbulent years, Jiang Ge carried his widowed mother on his back to flee to safer areas. Along the way, they met with some bandits who insisted that Jiang Ge join them. He pleaded with them to allow him to take care of his mother. He was spared and later continued to care for his mother by working as a menial servant for a rich family.



JING AN



(16)

FEEDING MILK TO HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Tang Dynasty: Lady Tang was married to the Zeng family. When her mother-in-law grew old and lost all her teeth, she could not chew even soft rice. Every morning after completing her daily tasks, Lady Tang would breastfeed her mother-in-law with her own milk to sustain her. Before her mother-in-law die, she praised Lady Tang's filial conduct and wished all sons and their wives to be filial and respectful as Lady Tang. Lady Tang was well treated and respected by her decendents in her later years.



(17)

WASHING HIS MOTHER'S CHAMBER POT

Song Dynasty: Huang Ting Jian came from a wealthy family. He was so filial that he quit his post in the civil service to take care of his mother. He tended to her needs and brewed medicine for her, including cleaning and scrubbing the filth from her chamber pot. He believed that since parents raised their children without complaints, the children should rightfully take care of their parents in their old age, times in need and not pass this duty to others.



(18)

RESIGNING HIGH OFFICE TO SEARCH FOR HIS MOTHER

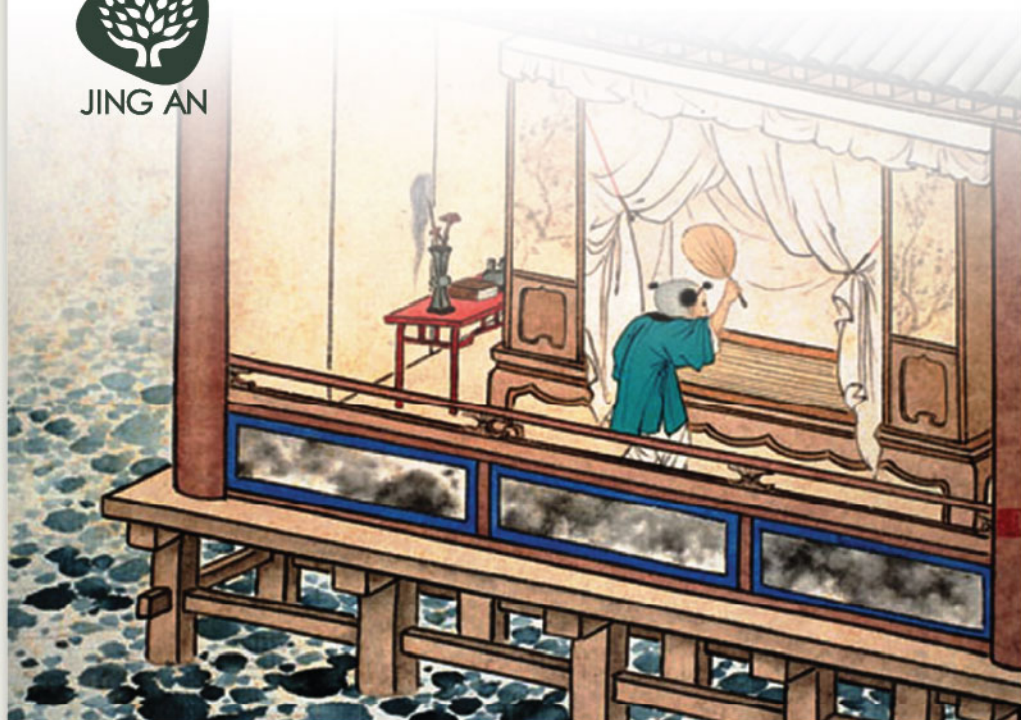
Song Dynasty: Zhu Shouchang was separated from his mother at the age of seven. After rising to become a high ranking officer in the Song Court, he decided to leave and search for his mother and to care for her. He searched long and far without success until one day a man told him that his mother was still alive living in a remote village. Shouchang immediately rushed to the village. Before he could reach there, he fainted due to exhaustion. When asked for the reason for such a rush, Shouchang related his story. Suddenly an old woman stepped out and told him she was the one he was searching for. The weary Shouchang was overjoyed when he realized that his desire had been fulfilled. He happily embraced his mother and thereafter, took her home to care for her properly.



(19)

HIS FILIAL DEVOTION MOVED NATURE

Jin Dynasty: After Wang Xiang lost his mother, his father took another wife. His stepmother was bad-tempered and unkind. She managed to get his father to go against him, but yet Wang Xiang remained filial to both of them. During one harsh winter his stepmother fell sick and demanded that Wang Xiang find fresh carp to make broth. As Wang Xiang could not bear to see her parents unhappy, he went to the freezing cold to fish. Feeling upset for not able to catch any fish, he laid down and wept. Before long his tears and body heat thawed the icy waters in the creek and created a hole in the ice. Two carps suddenly leapt out of the creek. Wang Xiang scooped them up and took them home. His stepmother felt ashamed of her selfishness and became a kind and caring person. The neighbourhoods responded that it was Wang Xiang sincere filial devotion that moved Nature.



(20)

HE FANNED THE PILLOW AND WARMED THE SHEETS FOR HIS FATHER

Eastern Han Dynasty: Huang Xiang lost his mother when he was nine years old. During summer when the weather was hot, Huang Xiang would fan his father's pillow and mat to ensure his father felt cool. During winter nights, he warmed his father's bed and blanket with his body before inviting his father to retire for the night.

The story of dutiful Huang Xiang spread far and wide.



(21)

AT HIS MOTHER'S GRAVE DURING STORMS

Wei Dynasty: When Wang Pu mother was alive, she was afraid of thunder. After his mother passed away, whenever he heard the loud sound of thunderstorm, he would rush to her grave, kneeled and prayed to comfort his mother's spirit. In the later years Wang Pu taught in the school. Whenever he read about departed parents, Wang Pu would weep and cry. Upon realizing his behaviour, his students carefully removed any texts relating to the subject. In his lessons Wang Pu always emphasized on the necessity of repaying the kindness of one's parents while they are still alive. He was considered as a model of filial behaviour.



(22)

ENTERING SERVITUDE TO PAY FOR HIS FATHER'S FUNERAL

Han Dynasty: Dong Yong worked as a farm labourer to support his ailing father, and earned barely enough to buy him medicine. After his father was paralyzed, he brought his father along to the fields so that he could attend to him while working. When his father passed away, he did not have enough money to pay for a proper funeral. To raise money he agreed to become a servant and weave three hundreds reels of cloth to repay his loan. This task would take three years for two people. However, an immortal from Heaven was moved by his filial act, and completed this task for him.



(23)

ATTRACTING MOSQUITOES TO FEED ON HIM TO SPARE HIS PARENTS

Jin Dynasty: Wu Meng's family was poor and could not afford mosquito netting. During summer nights young Wu Meng, would remove his shirt so that mosquitoes would feed on him and spare his parents. This was to ensure his parents slept soundly through the nights. News of the boy's filial respect spread far and wide until it reached the Emperor. The Emperor gave Wu Meng a scholarship and also provided for the family.



(24)

BURYING SON TO SAVE MOTHER

Han Dynasty: Guo Ju lived with his mother, his wife and a three-year old son. They were very poor and rarely had sufficient food to go around. The grandmother was very fond of her grandson, and would often give her scanty portion of food to feed him. Her health deteriorated due to lack of nutrition. In desperation, Guo Ju finally resolved to part with his own son in order to serve his first allegiance, his mother, in proper fashion, during the final days of her life. Guo Ju and his wife decided to bury their son so that his mother would have more to eat. While digging the hole to bury their son, they unearthed a pile of gold coins and silver bars with a note saying "A heavenly gift to the filial son Guo Ju." With this fortune, Guo Ju was able to find a physician to treat his mother, and the family lived happily ever after.