

Enhance the Morality of College Students by Promoting Excellent Chinese Culture

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Abstract

Since the reform and opening-up in China in 1979, economy has been restructuring and western cultures flowing into Chinese society, causing negative impacts on college students, which shows the significance of improving the education of the Chinese traditional culture. This thesis discusses how the Chinese traditional culture enhances moral education positively in terms of social responsibility improvement, harmonious interpersonal relationship building, etc.

Keywords

traditional culture, morality, harmony, self-discipline, thoughts of righteousness and benefits.

1. Introduction

At the very moment of restructuring economy and thriving China with science and education, the morality among college students is the key factor relevant to Chinese spirit in 21st century, and it also impacts and restricts the development of socialist modernization in China to which we have to pay high attention. Since the reform and opening-up in China in 1979, Chinese traditional idea of value and moral standard has been shocked by amounts of western ideas, causing anomie of moral evaluation and value orientation. As the mainstream of college students' moralities is fully affirmed, it is also important to notice the negative factors around them. For instance, the principle of equivalent exchange from marketing economy penetrates into daily relationship and distorts it; some students tend to practice pragmatism and utilitarianism, even corruption and other unhealthy tendencies on campus; some authorities in college are strong in theories while weak in practice. This phenomenon shows serious negative impacts on college students' moral education. Many scholars argue that Chinese moral standard is going down, and its system is under reconstruction. Actually, Chinese culture can be regarded as a moral-advocating culture, highly focusing on virtue, morality and integrity. College students are required to inherit the traditional culture in a critical way, to improve their morality, which is one of efficient ways for moral education. As for moral issues of college students, we generalize Chinese excellent culture and morality as these aspects.

2. First, Strengthening Education of Patriotism and Social Responsibility

Confucianism focuses on the thoughts of entering political stratum. It proposes that everyone should take care of and take part into the society, and strongly tie themselves' interest with the nation's when dealing with issues concerning the nation and the individual. The spirit of patriotism and the social responsibility has been existing for thousands of years in China. For example, Zeng Zi, an ideologist in ancient China, said in his masterpiece, *The Great Learning*, "rectify the mind, regulate the family, country and the world", showing that everyone has the duty for his/her nation. And to quote the famous saying of Gu Yanwu, also a famous ideologist

in ancient China, "Every man alive has a duty to his country." And in ancient China, a famous poet Lu You said, "Concern the country even in the low social status." Fan Zhongyan, a poet in the Song Dynasty, said, "show concern first and to enjoy themselves last". Zhuge Liang, a strategist in ancient China, put forward "dedicated till you die". Confucius's philosophy also told people "the world belongs to all". The famous Chinese politician in the Qing Dynasty, Lin Zexu proposed that "I will do anything for my country, no matter what it takes, regardless of fortune or misfortune to myself". Chinese now still believe the philosophy of "One prospers in worries and hardships, and perishes in ease and comfort" from the Confucian classic, *Mengzi*. College students in nowadays adore the modernization in western countries, ignoring the negative effect and its corruption, losing national awareness and patriotism day by day. Even worse, some students believe that being indifferent is a good way in their daily life. They pay no attention to the bad behaviors for the lack of sense of social responsibility and justice. It is of importance to upgrade the education of the sense of responsibility and justice from traditional culture, which will be a great step forward for college students to build up patriotism and righteousness.

3. Second, Pursuing Harmonious Interpersonal Relationships

Chinese traditional culture, mainly Confucian culture, highly focuses on interpersonal relationship. The standard of interpersonal relationships, as "Ren", or humanity is the core of the philosophy, sets up a wide-appreciated measure for communication, that is, "Be strict to oneself, be tolerant to others". Confucius believed that benevolence is people's basic emotion, so the fundamental way of loving others is giving them one's kindheartedness, that is, "He who wants to stand and set up a man is open-minded and daring". And it can also be called as "Do unto others, not do to others". Confucius taught us that we must put ourselves in others' position before doing something. But when we try to think in that way, we must assure that we make ourselves well-behaved. Being a "Junzi", a man of noble character, is what Confucians ask people to achieve, which is the supreme level the Chinese can pursue. More than that, in *the Analects of Confucius*, people are taught that "Harmony is the most precious". Another ancient Chinese ideologist, Zhu Xi thought, "Speak when you are in a calm mood", "Junzi can forgive others, rather than be forgiven". On the contrary, many college students have such bad behavior as being extreme, selfish and self-centered. Facing this problem, the excellent morality of Confucianism guides them in a right way to communicate with others well and helps them be part of the harmonious society.

4. Third, Advocating Self-cultivation and Self-discipline

Chinese traditional culture attaches great importance to self-discipline in accordance with morality which means that it is the basis of being a person. As Xun Zi (a famous Confucian in ancient China) said, "He who has good morality neglects power and wealth", "One needs to check himself once sees the well-doing as well as sees the bad-doing." Personally, mind-rectifying is the basis of being an individual and achieving social values, and nationally, it is still a fundamental way to manage the national affairs, so people need to know and rectify himself at any time. In Chinese spiritual construction, "Shen Du", in English "be extremely cautious while alone", is also a key factor. An immoral man can do anything with no monitor while a man with high morality is always focusing on being nice. Now in China, college students are mainly taught to command knowledge and skills rather than to be people of high morality. That's why they hardly take notice of good morality and they keep chasing the power and wealth. It's strongly believed that college students need to know how to be a good person then to know how to live. The education of mind-rectifying consists of conscientious, self-cultivation and self-

discipline. It asks college students to turn the outside demands into inner laws so as to upgrade the effectiveness of the moral education.

5. Fourth, Setting up the Attitude of Ceaseless Self-improvement and Being Vigorous

In *Book of Changes*, it said, "The movement of heaven is full of power; thus, the superior man makes himself strong and untiring." The spirit of self-improvement means self-exerting and self-esteem. Ceaseless self-improvement asks people to do self-knowing, self-winning and determination. In China, Lao Zi said, "He who knows others is intelligent; he who knows himself is wise. He who beats others is powerful; He who beats himself is forceful." In *Mengzi*, it said, "Any individual, family or nation who has been destroyed is destroyed from inside." All these sayings indicate that Chinese have the spirit of striving independently, being persevere and grittiness. Some Chinese fables like "*The Mythical Bird Jingwei Trying to Fill up the Sea with Pebbles*", "*Dayu Harnesses the Floodwater*", "*The Foolish Man Removes the Mountain*" and "*Kua Fu Races with the Sun*" all show the dogged determination of Chinese people. The spirit of self-improvement is the force that has been pushing China move forward for thousands of years. It also breeds the spirit of patriotism which asks people to devote themselves to the country, to the nation and to the society. In Chinese history, the spirit encouraged countless people with lofty ideals risking their lives to protect the country and her dignity with no hesitation. The spirit positively enhances college students' psychological endurance facing setbacks and failures and helps them build the right attitude for fighting and chasing success, preventing them from being frustrated when life does not go well.

6. Fifth, Highlighting the Thought of Righteousness before Benefits in College Education

The Chinese traditional morality focuses on righteousness and sets "being righteousness" as the supreme level of behavior. The issue how to balance the righteousness and benefits is an eternal topic for Chinese people, and it can also be regarded as how to adopt a correct attitude towards the balance between material benefits, especially individual benefits and public benefits. Confucius believed "Righteousness is superior to benefits." and "Being righteous is the basis." And Mencius thought "If I cannot get both, I would take righteousness at the cost of my life." And Xun Zi holds the opinion that "Using righteousness to restrict benefits", "He who puts righteousness first is a superior man, while who puts benefits first not", "Desires should be constrained by morals". While it is no good that getting benefits is over-belittled by the traditional thoughts, there is no denying that social benefits are superior to individuals. And college students are required to obey this principle when they are faced with the conflict between righteousness and benefits. They should think twice whether it is in accordance with the morality when any benefits as material benefit, fame or power seduces them.

7. Sixth, Improving Ritual Education

The education is the key factor for good moral characters lasting forever. The traditional rituals restrict people's behavior and develop good morality. For instance, affectionate father and filial son as well as modest brothers are the family rituals, the important element for a harmonious family. And being ritual first is the significant manner in interpersonal relationships, making sure that people are living in a peaceful world. Confucius puts forward the idea that "A king should behave like a king; a courtier, like a courtier; a father, like a father; a son, like a son." While stubborn loyalty and filial piety as well as exorbitant teacher's sanctity are not advocated, people cannot take no action in communicating with teachers and elders, which symbolizes

one's good morality. Many college students over-emphasize that they can narrow the gap between teachers and students or elders and youngers, causing them unconstrained and disrespectful. That phenomenon even worsens the normal communication and the class order. Facts prove that being no ritual cannot make communication between teachers and students easier, and even worse, the normal teaching process can be ruined. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the ritual education.

8. Conclusion

In order to modernize the moral education, we should set a reasonable starting point and a solid foundation. Along human's history, no any nation can inherit in a new way. Ancient culture in China pays high attention to how to educate people to be good in morality, how to cultivate themselves, and how to build a dream and how to reach a higher spiritual level. All of these are mental treasures for us, also the fundamental elements for teaching morality, the guidance for colleges to set the goal for the education. Nowadays, we advocate "running the country by the rule of ritual", which means we should develop the traditional virtues of the Chinese people, meanwhile, we also need to combine the traditional morality with the spirit of times so as to build a socialist morality system, enhance our national confidence and pride and build a harmonious living environment. In teaching process, we all want to educate students to be men with self-esteem and self-discipline, who have noble sentiment and unceasing learning desire, who are fully educated and have great mind for the nation, who care about everyone in the society. Whether we can make it come true is the significant factor for the social development. Therefore, the excellent traditional culture shows the special value of the moral education.

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