

Integrating the Traditional Festival Culture of China into the Ideological and Political Education of Colleges and Universities

Xin Luo

Oxbridge College, Kunming University of Science and Technology, Kunming, Yunnan Province, China

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Abstract: Traditional festivals are an important part of the Chinese traditional culture. They embody rich ideological connotations, values and codes of conduct. To use these valuable resources in the ideological and political education of colleges and universities is of great practical significance. Based on analyzing connotations of the traditional festival culture, this paper analyzes its ideological and political education function, and puts forward some suggestions and countermeasures to solve problems in the traditional festival culture of colleges and universities at present. We need to fully integrate the traditional Chinese festival culture with the ideological and political education of colleges and universities, so as to promote the healthy growth of the vast number of college students.

1. Introduction

The Chinese nation has created splendid cultures in its long history. Traditional festivals are deeply imprinted in our national culture, and become the common memory of Chinese people. They embody strong national feelings, and set up the common ideals, beliefs, value pursuits and moral sentiment of our nation. At present, western festivals are popular among students, while traditional festivals are forgotten and neglected. Therefore, colleges and universities must attach importance to the education of college students on traditional festival culture, so as to promote the effective combination of traditional Chinese festival culture with the ideological and political education.

2. The Cultural Connotation of Traditional Festivals

2.1 The Social Values: Paying Attention to Ethics and Moral Principles

The Chinese people attach importance to ethics and human feelings, which is one of the most outstanding contributions of Chinese culture to the human civilization. Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has attached great importance to family and affection. The concepts of human relations of “kindheartedness, filial piety and fraternal duty” are deeply rooted in the development and inheritance of traditional festivals. As the core content of traditional moral values, “filial piety” culture is represented in people's social life: filial piety to elders, loyalty to friends, courage to enemies. The consciousness of appreciating the nature and ancestors is also firmly rooted in the hearts of every Chinese people. “Filial piety” culture runs through traditional Chinese festivals. For example, the Spring Festival, as the most representative traditional festival in China, has rich festival contents. In addition to worshipping their ancestors, on the New Year's Eve, the whole family should get together to eat new year's eve dinner and stay up late or all night on. The younger generation should kowtow to the elder to show respect. ^[1] The elders express their hope for the younger through distributing new year's money with blessing. These festivals are full of moral and cultural elements of benevolence, righteousness and propriety. It is not only the Spring Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Mid Autumn Festival, the Double Ninth Festival and other festivals all reflect people's love and responsibility for their families, neighbors and countries. As Professor Hanqiu Li said, “traditional Chinese festivals are the fertile ground for cultivating human ethics and a good carrier for ethics education.” Nowadays, the customs of many traditional festivals have changed greatly, and some new elements of the times have been added. The human ethics contained

in them can also be reflected in people's courtesy and reciprocity of traditional festivals. In addition, these traditional festivals and customs embody people's wisdom and their pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty, which is in line with the core values of socialism advocated by the contemporary society.

2.2 The Views of Nature: Harmony between Man and Nature

Laozi says that, “for I am abstracted from the world, the world from nature, nature from the way, and the way from what is beneath abstraction.” It embodies Chinese people's awe of the nature. Traditional festivals originated from the farming society, while the farming culture is closely related to the nature. Agricultural production means to work according to the changing of natural environment. Traditional festivals also reflect people's prospect of conforming to nature, integrating with nature, and living in harmony with nature.^[2] For example, in the Qingming festival when the grass grows and the warbler flies, people come out of their homes, visit tombs and offer sacrifices to their relatives and friends who passed away. It shows that in the early spring, Chinese people are close to nature and advocate the harmony relationship between man and nature. In the Mid Autumn Festival, family members get together, enjoying the full moon and eating moon cakes, which also reflects the emotional value of Chinese people for yearning and pursuing the harmony among people and between the human being and nature.

2.3 The Optimistic Outlook on Life

The Chinese nation has a long and splendid national culture. It is a great nation that is industrious, brave and optimistic. For thousands of years, these fine qualities have been integrated into traditional Chinese festivals, and have influenced the masses in a subtle and entertaining way. The early customs and activities of festivals are usually related to primitive worship and superstitious taboos. Later, with the evolution of history and the change of dynasties, people's cultural consciousness awakened. The importance of primitive worship and superstitious taboos is weakened; more and more entertainment elements are added, making the traditional festivals more cheerful and jubilant. Through these colorful festival activities, people can feel the charm of the festival, and learn the positive attitude towards life. Traditional Chinese festivals actually represent the spiritual pursuit, value pursuit and moral pursuit of Chinese people. As we all know, during the Dragon Boat Festival, people need to eat Zongzi (rice dumpling), row dragon boats, and hold various festival activities. The public actively participate in traditional festivals. At the same time, in a sense, we can also see that in traditional festivals, Chinese people can be more leisure and enjoy the beauty of life. Traditional festivals can be seen as methods to regulate the pace of people's lives. Integrating these leisure and entertainment cultures of traditional festivals into people's daily life can not only relax and delight people's body and mind, but also help people to form an optimistic outlook toward life.^[3]

3. Problems of the Traditional Festival Culture in the Ideological and Political Education of College Students

The traditional festival culture contains rich ideological and political education functions; it is an inexhaustible resource treasury. In recent years, the traditional festival culture education of college students has made some achievements, but there are still some shortcomings. Only through in-depth discussion and research on these problems, can we improve the ideological and political education of college students.

3.1 Insufficient Awareness and Publicity of Traditional Festivals

At present, traditional festivals still have the lively atmosphere, but their cultural connotations are greatly weakened. Many traditional activities and folk etiquette are abandoned and forgotten; festivals become commercialized. Due to the lack of publicity, attention and protection, it becomes difficult for people to build correct cognition and understanding on traditional festivals. They simply regard festivals as leisure holidays, and fail to deeply understand their profound cultural

connotations and value significance. During these festivals, college students use the holiday to go out for drinking, playing cards, shopping and traveling, or even engaging in superstitious activities, which not only destroys the social atmosphere, but also deviates from the cultural tradition of festivals. In addition, driven by the economic interests, merchants excessively pursue western festivals, and regard traditional festivals of our country as commercial activities. Festivals become the tools of commercial hype, which misleads the people to some extent. Nowadays, both Chinese and western festivals can become the selling points of business promotion. Traditional festivals become the so-called “shopping festivals” and “food festivals”. It is undeniable that businesses do promote and push products with the help of festivals, which indeed adds festival atmosphere, stimulate consumption and inject vitality into the economy. But the cultural connotations behind festivals are gradually forgotten. Young people, especially college students, tend to be misled by this kind of commercial publicity. Instead of understanding the rich and profound culture behind traditional festivals, they choose to give gifts and hold parties in the name of festivals. This kind of festival celebration with strong commercial color will inevitably affect young people's cultural understanding and pursuit for traditional festivals.^[4]

3.2 The Single Form of Traditional Chinese Festivals

Traditional festivals have a long history. They are broad and profound. But festivals based on the agricultural society are largely related to “eating”, such as eating dumplings in the Spring Festival, eating Yuanxiao (sweet dumplings) in the Lantern Festival, eating moon cakes in the Mid Autumn Festival, eating Zongzi in the Dragon Boat Festival, and eating porridge in the Laba (the eighth day of the last lunar month) Festival. In today's China, the economy is developing and the country is rich and strong. During festivals, questions people care the most are “what to eat” and “what to play”. There are no other activities, so it is difficult to attract young people. Traditional festivals should not only meet people's “eating requirement”, but also meet people's spiritual needs, and let young people understand the cultural connotations of traditional festivals. Western festivals pay attention to spiritual needs, personality publicity and emotional demands, so they are favored and liked by many college students. Our traditional festivals should be innovated in the process of inheritance; contents with modernization and sense of the times should be added to attract young people.

3.3 Colleges and Universities Lack Education in Traditional Festival Culture

At present, college students' understanding of traditional festivals mainly comes from families and the society. They have little opportunity to be influenced by the traditional festival culture in school. First of all, most courses offered by colleges and universities aim to cultivate students' professional skills. There are few or no courses related to traditional Chinese festivals. In particular, science and engineering colleges tend to “emphasize science over literature” and “emphasize professional knowledge over humanistic knowledge”. They pay too much attention to professional skills; as a consequence, some college students lack humanistic knowledge. Secondly, now in colleges and universities, there are few education activities with the theme of traditional festival culture.^[5] These activities are formalistic and lack of connotation. College students usually care about the interest of activities, rather than the in-depth exploration of their intrinsic values. In addition, the cultural resources of traditional festivals are not deeply explored. College students only have primitive understanding on traditional festivals. They do not really understand their contemporary values. Finally, as the important spiritual fortress to spread national culture, colleges and universities have not fully realized the importance of traditional festival culture education. Only by strengthening the traditional festival culture education, helping students to learn the origin and customs of traditional festivals and deeply understand relevant cultural connotation, can we fundamentally improve the humanistic quality of college students, and enhance their national pride, national confidence as well as national cohesion.

4. Effective Countermeasures to Integrate the Traditional Festival Culture of China with the Ideological and Political Education of Colleges and Universities

4.1 The Correct Cultural Orientation

Colleges and universities are not only the important position of cultural communication, but also the main battlefield of ideological and political education for college students. To improve the influence of traditional festival culture in college students, we must keep the correct cultural orientation. First of all, colleges and universities should actively carry out the education of traditional festival culture and widely publicize the basic knowledge, so as to help college students truly understand the connotation and historical background of traditional festivals and learn about their profound cultural charm. Students' awareness, cognition and understanding of traditional festival culture can be improved; the correct ideology, value orientation and political position can be established. Then students will be able to treat western festivals with rational attitude. Secondly, the school should use various forms and methods to construct the campus culture atmosphere of respecting, loving and participating in traditional festivals, so that college students can be consciously influenced, and achieve the education goal in silence. Finally, the ideological and political educators in colleges and universities are the guide of students. They play an important role in inheriting traditional festival culture and shoulder the important responsibility of transmitting traditional festival culture in China. Therefore, in that process, they do not only need to impart relevant knowledge, but also should interpret the evolution of the festival history and its cultural connotation, and pay attention to the cultivation of college students' cultural consciousness.

4.2 Create Online Platforms

Ideological and political educators in colleges and universities should make full use of the school website, and organize teachers with profound cultural accumulation and firm ideological and political beliefs. The teachers can select festival culture knowledge and classic works according to the characteristics of students and upload relevant information on the website, so that students can feel the charm of traditional festival culture when they browse the website. The educators can also use existing cultural resources, such as digital library, to promote the development of traditional festival culture in campus culture communication. New media platforms, such as wechat and microblog should also be applied. Teachers can upload micro courses, videos and classic films on traditional festival culture, as well as relevant digital academic reports, historical documentaries and cultural lectures. Students can download resources at will, communicate with each other and ask questions online. In addition, through microblog and QQ, ideological and political educators can cooperate with school cadres to carry out web-page design competitions, idiom games and historical figure forums with Chinese festival culture as the theme, so that students can broaden their knowledge scope in the process of carrying forward traditional festival culture. These activities can effectively stimulate students' enthusiasm and arouse their potential to continuously learning the traditional festival culture.^[6]

4.3 Hold Colorful Activities on Traditional Festivals on Campus

To carry out a variety of traditional festivals is an important part in the ideological and political education of college students. Carrying out traditional festival activities can guide college students to attach importance to the heritage of traditional festival culture, enhance their sense of responsibility in carrying forward traditional festivals, and cultivate their noble moral sentiments for the home and the country. Theme activities of "Chinese traditional culture festivals" can be held in the Spring Festival, the Qingming Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Mid Autumn Festival and the Chongyang, and be carried out with different contents and forms. The thoughts and feelings of college students can be influenced; their spiritual life can be enriched and their cultural realm can be improved. For example, in the Mid Autumn Festival, we can carry out moon cake making competition, original poetry appraising, and drama performance on the story of Chang'e running to the moon. Through tasting traditional food, recalling national history and telling cultural stories, we

can cultivate college students' sentiment, and build the healthy and upward cultural atmosphere.

5. Conclusion

Traditional festivals with rich connotations and profound culture values provide plentiful resources of education. The festivals can improve the quality of national culture and meet the spiritual needs of the people; these excellent educational resources can cultivate the national spirit, humanistic quality moral principles and patriotic enthusiasm of contemporary college students, and improve their ideological levels imperceptibly. Through this kind of education, we can promote the continuation and extension of the national spirit, and improve the senses of national pride and national identity of contemporary college students.

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