TIME TESTED ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE DISCIPLE AS EXPLAINED IN ASHTANGA SANGRAHA AND THEIR ROLE IN CHARACTER BUILDING IN MODERN ERA

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Abstract

Character building is an immense necessity of a human being. This can happen easily in young age or school going age. Schooling is basically a place to build up the character of child for better life or to prepare the child to face the future challenges of the life. Mere academic excellence may not help the child to cope up with the complex challenges of the modern world. Having said this, it is essential to investigate our rich culture and history for time tested attributes of character building. Ashtanga sangraha is one of such important treatises which gives the guidelines for the students for their approach to student hood.

Vagbhata has narrated the qualities of an ideal student in 2nd chapter of sutrasthana of Ashtanga Sangraha. Though it was told in the ancient times of Bharat but they seem to be most contemporary for the current world. Those guidelines were not just focused on transferring the information from teacher to student but it gives the methods how one should behave and treat his teacher, how one should build up a healthy relationship with the mentor, how one should shred the ego and many more.

Thus along with the refined modern methods it is necessary to integrate the ancient methods also to mold the character of the child and thereby build the nation.

INTRODUCTION

Being a good student transcends mere academic excellence; it encompasses qualities that contribute to personal growth and societal contribution. Character, distinct from personality, defines an individual through qualities like honesty and politeness. These traits, rooted in beliefs and experiences from childhood, are nurtured by influential figures such as parents, teachers, and peers. Developing character is a joint effort involving parents, educators, and the community, aligning with Horace Mann's advocacy for balancing academic rigor with character development.

Education, as articulated by Martin Luther King Jr., aims to cultivate both intellect and character. Schools play a pivotal role in this by integrating structured character development programs focused on values like trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. These initiatives are complemented by parental reinforcement at home and can be enhanced through professional assistance, such as speech writing services, which directly influence character-building activities like public speaking.

Effective character development relies on leading by example, encouraging altruism through volunteerism, promoting accountability, fostering discernment between right and wrong, and engaging students in communal responsibilities such as cleaning. Such efforts aim to instill respect for surroundings and cultivate a foundation of ethical behavior early in life.

Hidden curricula through social and cultural activities enhanced the character education process, especially for the quality of interpersonal communication between students, including respect, equality, helpfulness, trust, and honesty. [4] stated that character building through school culture included caring, cleanliness, beauty and tidiness, religious service obedience, conformity to the rules, mutual respect, politeness, family-like relationships, honesty and responsibility, togetherness, tidy document filing and educational infrastructure, and stakeholders' participation and involvement. [5,6]

Character development equips students to confront challenges with resilience and integrity, fostering self-esteem and a sense of purpose. By nurturing strong moral values, educators and parents aspire for students to embody qualities of trustworthiness, compassion, and responsibility, which contribute to healthier communities and positive societal outcomes. (1)

Ultimately, instilling qualities such as teamwork, kindness, integrity, fairness, respect, and accountability empowers students to become effective leaders and compassionate individuals, capable of inspiring and leading others with honesty and empathy.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR CHARACTER BUILDING

Character building holds immense importance in the Indian context, deeply rooted in its cultural and philosophical heritage. Here are several reasons why character building is highly valued in India:

1. Ethical Foundation: Indian society places a strong emphasis on moral and ethical values. Character building helps individuals cultivate virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and humility, which are considered essential for leading a righteous and meaningful life.

2. Spiritual Growth: India has a rich spiritual tradition encompassing various philosophies and religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Character building is seen as a pathway to spiritual growth and self-realization, guiding individuals towards inner peace and harmony. (2)

3. Role of Education: In the Indian education system, character building is often integrated into the curriculum through moral education and value-based teachings. Schools and educational institutions emphasize the importance of developing a strong character alongside academic excellence.

4. Social Cohesion: A person of strong character is seen as a pillar of society. In India, where community and family ties are significant, individuals with good character traits contribute positively to social harmony, respect for diversity, and communal well-being.

5. Leadership and Governance: Character is highly valued in leaders and public figures. Indian historical figures and modern leaders are often revered not only for their achievements but also for their moral integrity and ethical conduct, serving as role models for the nation.

6. Personal Development: Character building is crucial for personal development and self-discipline. It helps individuals make ethical decisions, navigate challenges with resilience, and maintain a sense of purpose and direction in life.

7. Cultural Continuity: Across generations, character building ensures the transmission of cultural values, traditions, and wisdom. It fosters a sense of continuity with the past and prepares individuals to uphold the cultural heritage of India.

ASHTANGA SANGRAHA

One of the brahatrayi, Ashtanga sangraha, written by vaagbhatacharya hold an important role in laying down the foundation of fundamental principles of ayurveda. In second chapter of sutrasthana vaagbhata enumerates the essential and ideal qualities of the disciple. They are viz:

गुरुभक्तो अभियुक्तो अतियुक्तो धीस्मृति पातवैः ।
ऋज्वास्यानासानयनस्तनुस्निग्धनख छविः॥
ब्रम्हचारि जितद्वन्द्वो धीरः सचरितः स्थिरः।
षण्मासानुषितः शक्लो लज्जाशोचक्लान्वितः॥
शिष्यो अध्याप्यो गतो यावदन्तं तन्त्रार्थकर्मणाम्। A.S.S 2/2

1. Gurubhakta: Obedient dedicated to teacher
2. Abhiyukta: Eveready to study the scriptures
3. Atiyukta: Smart enough to understand
4. Dhi-Smriti-Paatava: Optimal level of Perception, retention, and best form of senses
5. Rujwa-Aasya-Nasa-Nayana: undeformed mouth, nose and eyes
6. Tanu snigdha-Nakha chavi: Soft and trimmed nails
7. Bramhachari: Must observe celibacy
8. Jitadwandvi: without ambiguity
9. Dhira: Courageous
10. Sucharita: Well, behaved
11. Sthira: Stable
12. Should not be homesick
13. Should be withing the moral limits
14. Should be pure from inside out.

Each of these Attributes plays a significant role in character building and personal development:

1. Gurubhakta (Obedient and dedicated to teacher): Being respectful and obedient towards one's teachers or mentors fosters humility, discipline, and a willingness to learn from others' wisdom and experience.

2. Abhiyukta (Eveready to study the scriptures): Demonstrates a commitment to continuous learning and spiritual growth, valuing the knowledge and insights found in scriptures or sacred texts.

3. Atiyukta (Smart enough to understand): Emphasizes the importance of intelligence, wisdom, and the ability to comprehend complex ideas and situations, enabling effective decision-making and problem-solving.

4. Dhi-Smriti-Paatava (Optimal level of Perception, retention, and best form of senses): Refers to having keen perception, good memory, and clarity of senses, essential for acquiring and retaining knowledge, as well as for making sound judgments.

5. Rujwa-Aasya-Nasa-Nayana (Undeformed mouth, nose, and eyes): Symbolizes physical cleanliness and the importance of maintaining a wholesome appearance, reflecting inner purity and discipline.

6. Tanu snigdha-Nakha chavi (Soft and trimmed nails): Indicates personal hygiene and attention to grooming, which contribute to self-respect and respect for others.

7. Bramhachari (Observing celibacy): Highlights the discipline of controlling one's desires and impulses, fostering inner strength, focus, and spiritual advancement.

8. Jitadwandvi (Without ambiguity): Stresses clarity of thought, speech, and action, promoting honesty, integrity, and reliability in all dealings.

9. Dhira (Courageous): Encourages bravery in facing challenges and adversity, demonstrating resilience, determination, and fearlessness in pursuing one's goals.

10. Sucharita (Well-behaved): Advocates for good manners, ethical conduct, and respectful behavior towards others, promoting harmonious relationships and a positive influence on society.

11. Sthira (Stable): Emphasizes emotional stability, mental strength, and steadfastness in principles and commitments, enabling consistency and reliability in one's actions.

12. Should not be homesick: Suggests adaptability and comfort in diverse environments, fostering independence and the ability to thrive regardless of circumstances.

13. Should be within the moral limits: Upholds ethical standards, integrity, and respect for moral principles, guiding behavior towards fairness, justice, and compassion.

14. Should be pure from inside out: Encourages inner purity, sincerity, and authenticity, reflecting a genuine alignment between thoughts, words, and actions.

These points collectively contribute to holistic character development, emphasizing qualities such as discipline, integrity, humility, courage, and compassion, which are essential for personal growth and positive contributions to society.

Character building attributes for an ideal student:
हीनान्यवेष आचार्यं पर्युपासीत राजवत्।
शयीत सुप्त एवस्मित उत्तिष्ठेतास्य पूर्वतः।
न ब्रूयात् केवलं नाम नासाध्वपि विनाटयेत्॥ A.S.S 2/4

1. हीनान्यवेषः: uniform inferior to teacher dress
2. आचार्यं पर्युपासीत राजवत् : Teacher must be treated as a ruler
3. शयीत सुप्तः Should sleep after teacher
4. एवस्मित उत्तिष्ठेतास्य पूर्वतः -Rise before teacher
5. न ब्रूयात् केवलं नाम : Teacher should not be addressed with his name
6. नासाध्वपि विनाटयेतः teacher should not be mocked.

Methods of applying the ashtanga samgraha based principles for character building:
1. हीनान्यवेषः uniform inferior to teacher dress

Respecting and valuing teachers is regarded with high importance in various cultures and societies, including India. It involves acknowledging their expertise, honoring their dedication to education, and recognizing their role in shaping individuals' lives and society as a whole. This reverence is deeply rooted in traditions that emphasize the teacher-student relationship as a foundation for knowledge, moral guidance, and personal growth.

It is generally advised not to wear more expensive or ostentatious clothing than that of one's teacher. This practice emphasizes humility, respect, and the acknowledgment of the teacher's authority and wisdom. It reflects cultural norms that prioritize modesty and regard for educators, ensuring that the focus remains on learning and the teacher-student relationship rather than material displays. This tradition fosters a sense of equality and mutual respect within educational settings.

2. आचार्यं पर्युपासीत राजवत् : Teacher must be treated as a ruler

Treating a teacher as a ruler or authority figure is often seen as beneficial for fostering better learning outcomes. This approach emphasizes respect, discipline, and the recognition of the teacher's expertise and guidance. By regarding the teacher with reverence, students are encouraged to pay attention, follow instructions, and engage actively in the learning process. This traditional approach in education aims to create a structured and focused environment where students can benefit from the teacher's knowledge and experience effectively.

3. शयीत सुप्तः Should sleep after teacher

4. एवस्मित उत्तिष्ठेतास्य पूर्वतः -Rise before teacher

In some cultural and educational contexts, it is traditionally advised that students should sleep after their teacher and wake up before their teacher. This practice emphasizes discipline, dedication to learning, and respect for the teacher's schedule and authority.

1. Respect for the Teacher: By aligning one's sleeping and waking hours with the teacher's schedule, students demonstrate respect for the teacher's time and authority. It reflects an understanding of the teacher's role in guiding and educating them.

2. Discipline and Routine: Following a disciplined routine of sleeping and waking early promotes better concentration and focus during study hours. It encourages students to be proactive in their studies and prepared for the day ahead.

3. Cultural Norms: In some cultures, there are specific guidelines on student behavior that include respecting the teacher's daily routine. This tradition reinforces social norms and expectations within educational settings.

4. Personal Development: Adhering to this practice can contribute to personal development by instilling habits of punctuality, discipline, and respect for authority figures, which are valuable qualities in both academic and professional life.

Overall, the practice of sleeping after the teacher and waking up before the teacher is rooted in cultural norms that emphasize respect, discipline, and effective learning habits among students.

5. **न ब्रूयात् केवलं नाम** : Teacher should not be addressed with his name

In many cultures and educational traditions, it is customary and respectful for students not to address their teachers by their first names. This help to establish following factors,

1. **Respect for Authority**: Using a title or honorific underscores the authority and position of the teacher within the educational hierarchy. It shows respect for their role as educators and mentors.

2. **Maintaining Professionalism**: Addressing teachers by their title helps maintain a professional environment in the classroom. It sets a tone of respect and formality, encouraging a focused and disciplined atmosphere conducive to learning.

3. **Cultural Norms**: This practice is often ingrained in cultural norms and traditions that emphasize hierarchy and respect for elders and authority figures. It reflects broader societal values regarding manners and proper etiquette.

4. **Teacher-Student Relationship**: Addressing teachers by their title helps define and reinforce the teacher-student relationship. It establishes clear boundaries and expectations, promoting mutual respect and effective communication.

6. **नासाध्वपि विनाटयेत्: teacher should not be mocked.**

It is considered highly inappropriate and disrespectful to mock or ridicule a teacher in any educational or professional setting. Teachers play a crucial role in imparting knowledge, guidance, and mentorship to students, and mocking them undermines their authority, dignity, and the learning environment as a whole.

1. Respect for Authority: Mocking a teacher shows a lack of respect for their expertise, experience, and role as an educator. It disrupts the teacher-student relationship and diminishes the teacher's ability to effectively teach and manage the classroom.

2. Negative Impact on Learning: Ridiculing a teacher can create a negative atmosphere in the classroom, affecting students' focus, motivation, and willingness to participate in lessons. It detracts from the educational goals and objectives that teachers work hard to achieve.

3. Professional Conduct: Teachers are professionals who deserve to be treated with courtesy and professionalism. Mocking them violates norms of appropriate behavior in educational settings and can have serious consequences for both students and the overall learning environment.

4. Cultural and Ethical Considerations: Across cultures, there are norms and values that emphasize respect for authority figures, including teachers. Mocking a teacher goes against these cultural expectations and ethical standards.

In summary, respecting teachers and refraining from mocking them is essential for maintaining a positive and productive learning environment. It promotes mutual respect, effective communication, and a conducive atmosphere for learning and growth.

DISCUSSION

Building characters based on Indian scriptures offers a rich tapestry of themes, moral dilemmas, and archetypes that have shaped narratives for centuries. Here's a discussion on how these scriptures contribute to character building:

1. Ethical Framework and Values: Indian scriptures, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, are replete with moral teachings and ethical dilemmas. Characters like Lord Rama exemplify virtues such as righteousness (dharma) and duty (karma), while others like Krishna in the Mahabharata embody complex moral reasoning and the concept of divine will (bhagavad-gita).

2. Archetypal Characters: Many characters in Indian scriptures serve as archetypes that represent universal human qualities and conflicts. For instance, Arjuna symbolizes the inner struggle and quest for understanding one's duty, while characters like Sita and Draupadi portray resilience and unwavering faith amidst adversity.

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3. Narrative Complexity: The narratives in Indian scriptures often present intricate webs of relationships and conflicts, providing a nuanced understanding of human nature and motivations. Characters are not one-dimensional; they evolve through challenges, making decisions that reflect their values and beliefs.

4. Spiritual Growth and Transformation: Characters in Indian scriptures undergo profound spiritual journeys that offer lessons in personal growth and transformation. For example, the transformation of Prince Siddhartha into the Buddha in Buddhist scriptures illustrates the path from worldly attachments to spiritual enlightenment.

5. Cultural and Historical Context: Characters in Indian scriptures are also deeply rooted in their cultural and historical contexts, reflecting societal norms, rituals, and philosophical debates of their times. This contextual richness adds depth to character motivations and actions.

6. Contemporary Relevance: Despite their ancient origins, the characters and themes in Indian scriptures continue to resonate in contemporary storytelling and character development. Their universal themes of love, sacrifice, duty, and the struggle between good and evil transcend time and cultural boundaries.

Building characters based on Indian scriptures not only offers a treasure trove of moral teachings and archetypal figures but also invites exploration into complex human dilemmas and spiritual quests. By drawing inspiration from these scriptures, storytellers can create characters that resonate with audiences and convey timeless truths about the human experience.

CONCLUSION

Ashtanga sangraha is one of the Major trio of the Ayurveda which lays down the foundation to understand the components of life, nature, diet, tridosha, daily and seasonal regime and many more cardinal ayurvedic principles. Vagbhata in his sutra sthana of ashtanga sangraha gives several traits to develop character in early stage of life especially for pupils. Character building in the Indian purview is not just about individual behavior but also about shaping a responsible, ethical, and harmonious society. It integrates spiritual, moral, and social dimensions, emphasizing the holistic development of individuals who can contribute positively to their communities and the nation. Thus the attributes of given by the vagbhata in ashtanga sangraha can be utilized for character building the students even in the modern era.

SCOPE

Further empirical studies may confirm the usefulness the attributes.

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