

# EDUCATION IN THE VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST YOUTH ASSOCIATION *TINH THẦN GIÁO DỤC CỦA VB YA*

The Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association (VB YA) is a Buddhist organization founded with the mission of educating youths to become genuine Buddhists, help building a society in accordance with Buddhist teachings. Thus, the VB YA's education is based on Buddhist teachings to transmit the spirit of Buddhism to future generations to achieve the purpose of the Organization.

Simply put, VB YA's education is education for a better and more wholesome mind. Before speaking about the education of VB YA, we should know briefly the basic characteristics of Buddhist education.

## I. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF BUDDHIST EDUCATION

Buddhist education has the following basic characteristics:

- a. **Humanity:** Buddhist education focuses on the people by helping people overcome ignorance to achieve enlightenment, liberation and deliverance. It provides guidance so that a person may recognize who he truly is – to recognize he is a collective of five aggregates; is a combination of 12 Conditions of Cause and Effect, etc.
- b. **Ethnicity:** Buddhist education teaches us to know our origin – who our ancestors are, where our homeland is, the history of our people, etc. For if we do not know where we came from, we may have lost our roots.
- c. **Liberation:** Buddhism does not advocate enchanting and enslaving followers under the power of a supreme being. Buddhist education teaches us to open our mind and obtain wisdom, to accept the world's quintessence and achievements of modern science, to open our mind and heart to embrace all that is new and beautiful – and not just stay static and hold on to the pasts of ourselves, our people, our families...thus becoming obsolete.
- d. **Practical:** Buddhism does not teach useless theories. Instead, Buddhism teaches the most practical theories so people could achieve enlightenment and liberation – liberation even in this lifetime. Buddhism is not mysterious; it can be tested and practiced at the present moment. Buddhism does not have the so-called supernatural revelation as other religions. Buddhism not only requires learners to learn but also to reflect and practice the teachings in every minute (Listen, Think, and Practice - V n-T -Tu).
- e. **Generosity, tolerance:** Buddhism does not force or impose absurd dogma. All teachings of Buddhism are like medicine where treatment depends on the disease. If one wants to get well then take the proper medication – no one is forced to.
- f. **True Value:** Buddhism aims at the true value. That is, helping people to know the truth so that we can overcome obstacles and sufferings in life. That is the ultimate goal. Buddhism does not train people to be academics or create dogmatism in practice. Nor does Buddhism

generate a sangha to govern believers. For that purpose, Buddhism values the quality of education rather than the quantity of followers.

## II. EDUCATION OF VB YA

While VB YA leaders may not be trained by institutions or are holders of degrees as scholars and philosophers, but with a heart of love and understanding children, belief in the Three Jewels and Buddhist Youth Association; these leaders have been successful in educating youths to live in accordance with Buddhist teachings. The VB YA education includes:

- a. **Responsibility:** Because of the love our young brothers and sisters, VB YA leaders constantly seek the appropriate method to guide them. With a sense of responsibility, VB YA leaders care for VB YA as brothers, sisters, and friends to be closer to them.
- b. **Practical:** VB YA education teaches members practical ways for them to become upright children, good students, and genuine Buddhists. VB YA educational methods are based on the physiological and psychological makeup of each age group.
- c. **Guidance and Encouragement:** VB YA education teaches the Dharma in a very simple, easy-to-understand, and practical. It does not aim to turn youths into blind believers but instead facilitating youths to develop their own thinking and apply what they have learned in the VB YA to real life – within the family and society.
- d. **Confidence and Autonomy:** The Buddha teaches, "Every being is a future Buddha." Therefore, the VB YA education guides members with confidence and autonomy. Its leaders not only teach but also practice to achieve confidence and autonomy in order to advance on the path to enlightenment.
- e. **Independence:** VB YA education teaches youths to better themselves. The Buddha's teachings is only the torch, and no one else other than themselves must light up the torch.
- f. **Adapting to conditions yet fundamentally unchanged:** VB YA education is not rigid but is adaptable to the surrounding conditions – flexible but always preserving the purpose of the Organization.

## III. CONCLUSIONS

The VB YA's motto is BI - TRÍ - D NG (COMPASSION - WISDOM - PERSEVERANCE). Buddhist education's purpose is to apply the Dharma in our daily life. The virtues that carry both the purposes of Buddhism and the Organization are Compassion – Wisdom, and Perseverance. An education that is based on responsibility, practicality, harmony, openness, confidence and autonomy, independence, and always adaptable to changing conditions without losing its core value will surely guide youths to become valuable children to the family, the Organization, the nation and society. This is the most beautiful contribution to the promotion and conservation of the Way of the Buddha.

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