



Empowering Youth through Buddhist Education

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Abstract

With proper education imparted to youth, they can become productive, science-oriented, broad-minded and ideal citizens of society. The question is how can we as a society add value to youths who are chasing their dreams? The challenge is to tailor a course for them. This is not simply done as all people are unique. Religion can and should play a big part in all this, and Buddhism in particular can have a big impact on youth. In fact, there are four things from the Buddhist teachings that can help us to empower youth. To keep these in mind we have an acronym; PASS. P stands for purity, A stands amending, S stands for strengthen and the last S stands for sharing. Finally, we need to ensure that Buddhism is not just a thing we find in temples and not just a ritual. It must be brought to others in orphanages, senior citizens homes, schools and in many places. Education has a huge role to play in all this.

Keywords: Buddhist teachings, science-oriented, citizens of society

1.1 billion, almost one fifth of world, is what we are going to discuss about, youth.

A very good morning to all

Firstly, let me ask all of you a question, how many of you think that you are a youth?

People always say that being a youth, there is an age limitation which is between 18-25 years old. But I certainly reject that notion. As a youth myself, I believe we were placed in the middle ground, where we might not be childish enough to be called a kid, or even experience to be called an adult. We might still be innocent and childish, yet we are the center of absolute everything.

Youthfulness in this case is when someone facing a whole change—a perfect transition in terms of physique and mentality, society and environment. When we are a small kid, we dare to dream, maybe to be a pilot, a millionaire or even an Olympic champion. Dreaming is what we can do best, most of us certainly don't have the capability to archive it. When you grow older around the age of 30 and above, you tend not to dream, you only chase and compete with the society, you may be thinking to go up the ladder, get more money and be rich and certainly being too rich you forgot what you left behind. After retiring, you won't have time to think, you reflect, to whatever you have done in your life and conclude what you have contributed.

Therefore, youth mind-set can be easily manipulated. As a youth, we are in a process where we dare to dream, we urge for the best, we strive and try to make lifelong dream a concrete reality. We dream big, throwing our body into something we love to, we create and one day in the we will conquer the society. We as youth are shaky and easy to be influence and yet we can make decision. Therefore, population being in this stage is crucial to be developing to have sustainable wisdom, morale and happiness so that they can lead this society to be a better place.

Then we came up to this question, how do we add value to these youth while they are chasing their dream? If they are so important to the mother earth, how can we tailor a course for them to take in so that they won't become a bad person while pursuing their destiny? On a side note, the reason behind an existence of a bad person is because there is an existence of a good person and we usually compare them.

And the answer is simple, there is no answer to that question. Youth are all a unique individual, where we might have different knowledge, idea, exposure and certainly a diversified background. Besides sending them to school, grasping knowledge and doing tons of homework

to achieve good grades, is there no other way to made them a person a socially acceptable one. I sincerely believe religion thus can play a huge part in this matter.

Therefore, I came to a point to believe that Buddhist is a religion that will have enormous impact when we are structuring, and it will suit most the youth and let's talk about why it may certainly empower a youth.

Buddhism is the only religion which we treat everyone equally. we won't force someone to pray an amount in a day, wear anything to resemble the religion or need to be in the temple for once a week. People who believe in Buddhism have freedom to choose how they want to pursue dharma.

Originally, Buddhism was a religion which included the young ones but somehow was mistaken for a religion belonging only to the elderly. For example, some people will use "Wait till I am old" as an excuse for rejecting Buddhism. They seem to think that Buddhism is a religion that belongs to the aged only, and you cannot become a Buddhist unless your hair has all turned grey and all your teeth have fallen out.

But the truth is we can and there is lot to learn from Buddhism. If we today wanted to empower youth through Buddhism, there is four things from the teachings of the buddha that we should always keep in mind and try to compromise. I even create an acronym for these four steps which are PASS.

First P which resemble purify. If we want to have a harmonious and happy society, we all should observe the five precepts. Today, many youths want to have a long life, and yet they kill the innocent. They want to be rich, so they steal and bribe. They want to have a harmonious family and yet they violate the peace of other's families. They want to be famous, yet they speak falsely of others. They want to be wise, and yet they always do stupid things.

Thus, if we as youths want to stand upright, to retrieve what seems to be hopeless, to radiate brilliant light to benefit all sentient beings, we need to observe the precepts as our basis. Don't kill, steal, lie, false talk and violation is the five precepts and it will not simply hinder your potential to achieve your dream. Instead I felt, with the basis of five precept, society will be more balanced and which we can purify our lives and bring some liveliness to the society. If youth constantly stood by the five precept, the society will be in perfect order and hence a better place. For instance, in Europe, a lot of families try to send their children to Buddhist temple, the reason behind it is they believe that Buddhist precepts are not too demanding and fair to all. It can cultivate a lot of good character in someone's life which may lead to good karma.

Then, we have A, Amending, in Buddhism, we don't forced youth the way of amending their weaknesses or fault. Comparing in a society, when you make a mistake, you are getting into jail or if you fail in a university examination, you are a fall out student. Instead, I believe Buddhism provide a good stage where people uses self-conscious to amend their bad habit. For youth like me, when I believe it did something which I shouldn't, I will go to meditate or listen to some rituals, this is not a punishment to myself but make me self-digest and reflect what I have done. I can only get an answer not because people force me to change it but in my subconscious I am able to explore and think more mindfully.

After that we have a S, Strengthen. Today's society is in a confused state. People always feel uncertain and anxious. The worst thing of all is not knowing where to place one's body and mind. For example, some people work at a job they do not like, yet if they do not work they feel bored. If they watch television all day or gamble, play, eat and wander around all the time, the emptiness within makes them feel hopeless. Thus, settling our body and mind is of utmost importance. In Buddhism, repeating the name of Buddha can ease our body and mind.

After we have trained our body and mind and are experienced in ease, we will be able to feel the joy of nature. We not only meditate when we are sitting, but also when we are eating, sleeping or working. If we Buddhist youths have the experience of Dharma, regardless of whether we are walking, sleeping or sitting, or whether we are studying or practicing, we can feel the beauty of life and be at ease with ourselves.

After we have attained self-peace, we still must cultivate our wisdom. For example, if a person decided to read a chapter of a book each day, he would have read 365 chapters in a year; that would be 3,650 chapters in ten years. All of these put together is a tremendous amount. After we have gained wisdom, everything we look at is different from before. Why did Buddha say that all living creatures have the Buddha Nature? if we look at this world with our wisdom eye, we can see the light of truth. But the wisdom we talk about in Buddhism is different from the wisdom used by scientists. Worldly wisdom is not separated from the differentiations of our consciousness, while the wisdom of Buddhism is to reveal our original nature and help us to destroy all illusions.

Buddhism is like a high mountain. When we climb up, we can see through all worldly phenomena. Buddhism is also like an ocean. If we understand it, our wisdom is vast and boundless.

Last S will be sharing. For Buddhist youths, just observing the precepts, understanding the Dharma and purifying one's self is not enough. The spirit of Buddhism is not only to save ourselves. We must save others as well. We must benefit ourselves and others. We must attract and convert all sentient beings with altruism and happiness.

If we cannot be of any benefit to others in this world, our existence here is meaningless.

Buddhism is not a religion of empty talk. We must start by improving people's lives. We cannot aim too high and forget about the fundamentals. We must be realistic. Just talking about truth is not enough. We must benefit everyone and make them happy.

How can we benefit others? How can we bring happiness to others? The establishment of orphanages, senior citizens' homes, schools, hospitals, Buddhist museums, libraries, cultural centers, celebration parties, Sunday schools, language classes and all sorts of social activities such as performing marriage and funeral ceremonies are all beneficial to the public. From now on, Buddhism will not only build monasteries and perform rituals, but will also follow what the Buddha taught and bring a new life-style to people. I feel that it is the responsibility of today's Buddhist youths to benefit and bring happiness to all sentient beings. The load is heavy, and the road is long and winding. If we do not take the responsibility, who will?

Let me bring you to one of the event we have done in the past in this University. The event motive is to bring in youth from 13 different countries and create a big family by mingling and bonding for 10 days. During the 10 days, we made them expose to real world scenario through Buddhist education by know. As most of them came from a different diverse background, our job is to first make them know who they are, by exploring themselves through meditation and mindful one on one conversation with experience venerable. Because locating themselves as a youth ensure they set great and suitable target for their future life. It is not a textbook learning classroom but by indulging in other's stories you start to think about what have your life made you and then think of what it is to improve in the future.

We have also very fascinated activities in Srisaket province where we show the youth different pole of life. More of the youth came from beautiful big city and easily to be spoon fed by their parents. However, when we brought them to the village, they get to experience hunger, severe working condition and other difficult mitigate circumstances, but they get to also see people in these conditions are happy with what they have. That in instance can spark them the way of life, to be happy and control oneself emotion when they face uncomfortable situation in the future. They are made to appreciate what they have, cherish the love and stop complaining what is not enough in their life.

Finally, education as a medium of all-comprising developments: Education to youth is as important as soul to body. To wipe out poverty, have sustained and equitable economy, sustainable development, social and political enrichment, globally aware society, stabilized and secure world—a decent life, education is on top of all the possible means to achieve the said objectives. Further, behavior refinement, and biodiversity are the two other key developments the youth can achieve through education. Similarly, with the help of education, the youth can promote competitive issues like analytical precision, envisioning future scenarios and decision-making. Gender gap is another chief issue which the youth can reform, and that way resolve through education. Keeping good health and creating suitable peaceful conditions and working for security are the other developments which the youth can achieve through education.

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In conclusion, with proper Buddhist education imparted to youth, the youth can become productive, broad-minded, and ideal citizens of the society as the society is significantly influenced by this category of people