

An attempt of Spreading Buddhist Knowledge and Practical Activity in University System

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Introduction

Under higher education system in Contemporary China, university students have little chance to touch the knowledge about Buddhism in its curriculum system. With the purpose of spreading further knowledge of Buddhism to university students, we applied a liberal education project from Lingnan foundation of American. The project's name is Pluralistic Understanding and Practice of Religion 2005-2008. So we actualized the project from 2005 to 2008 at Sun Yat-sen University. The project included opening the Introductory Course of Religion, visiting the places of religious worship, investigating to the religious institutions, organizing vacation camp and tea party, etc. The effect was quite good. This article aims to introduce its contents of Buddhism involved.

1. Course of Religion

We opened several Introductory Courses of Religion to the students in Sun Yat-sen University (2005-2008. About 1200 students totally took these courses. Philosophy of religions, the knowledge of Buddhism, Christianity and Taoism were introduced. About 800 students chose the topic about Buddhist in their reports, including the theories and practices of philosophy and religions.

2. Visits

In the middle of the every terms, we organized the students to visit the temples and the churches. From 2005 to 2008, about 1000 students visited Guangxiao Temple, Liurong Temple, Guangzhou Chunyang Temple (a Taoist observatory) and some churches. By these visiting activities, the students had great chances to participate in the rituals and discuss with Monks, Ministers and Taoists directly.



3. Vocation Camp

In the period of the project, we organized the vocation camp 6times and

3times of them is Buddhist practice.

From Jan. 14 to Jan.19, 2006, we organized the first religion practical winter camp at Guangdong Liankai Jing Temple in Nanxiong County. During this period, we also led the students to visit Biechuan Zen Temple at the top of the Danxia Mountain, Dongzhen Ancient Temple and Nanhua Zen Temple. This camp involved the religious practice in the form of lectures, meditation, hiking, working, non Atman tea party, singing the Buddhist songs and the candle delivery, etc.



From May 1 to 5, 2006, we organized a six-day religion practical camp at Sizu Temple in Huangmei County, Hubei Province. More than 90 students, the majority of whom were students from the Introductory Course of Religion, took part in the camp. During this period, we also visited other Buddhist temples, including Wuzu Temple in Hubei Province, Donglin Temple in Lu Mountain, Xilin Temple, Baofeng Temple, Zhenru Zen Temple at the top of Yunju Mountain in Jiangxi Province. This camp involved the religious practice in the form of lectures, meditation, hiking, singing the Buddhist songs, non Atman tea party, writing the sutra, yoga training, working as a kitchen help, cleaning the yard, planting trees, collecting the tree branches as fuel, and the candle delivery etc. All of our members have never experienced these before. Nor can they hear from others or learn through books. The students were so impressed that most of them wrote down their true feelings soon after returning home.



From Nov. 15 to 22, 2007, we organized the sixth practical religious winter-camp at Daxiong Zen Temple in Nanxiong County. In the camp, a training course on Buddhist logic was offered with the assistance of the Logic Congress and Buddhist Logic Committee and Institute of Logic and Cognition of Sun Yat-sen University. A total number of about 80 masters and doctors from universities took part in the camp. During the camp, we also led the members to Biechuan Zen Temple, Dongzhen Ancient Temple, Nanhua Zen Temple for research and investigation. This camp also involved the religious practice in the form of lectures, meditation, hiking, working, non-Atman tea party etc.



4. Investigations to the Religious Institutions

From June 15 to July 2, 2007, we organized a religious investigation which gave students an opportunity to know more about religions and cross-cultural communications. The activity lasted for about 20 days. We investigated Guangzhou, Lanzhou, Xining and Tibet. The members of the investigation are students and young teachers with a certain background of religions in Sun Yat-sen University. (The investigation was subsidized by the Lingnan foundation, but with the main expenses paid by the members themselves.) During the investigation, we invited students from Qinghai Normal University and Tibet University for discussions and communications, which achieved desirable effects. More than 80 members participated in the investigation and most of whom wrote reports after the investigation.

The investigated institutions were: Lanzhou Baitashan Temple, the Great Mosque of Xining (the biggest mosque in China), Taer Temple, Lhasa Jokhang Temple, Sera Monastery, Potala Palace, etc. The investigation was different from those organized before. The scope of investigation was multi-religious with a thick Christian, Buddhist and Islamic atmosphere. Because there are a quite number of Islamic populations in Lanzhou and Xining, the investigation focused on the religious life of Islam and the Islamic beliefs. In Tibet, the center of Buddhism, there is quite a population believing in Buddhism and Benism, so the investigation there focused on the Tibetan Buddhism and Benism.

In May, 2008, the program principal Xiao Ping led ten students to investigate the religions in Zhongshan and Huizhou. The investigation mainly focused on Zhongshan Christian Church and Huizhou Christian Church as well as several Buddhist and Taoist institutions nearby.



Conclusion

With the efforts of all the members, the project had been successfully completed as serves as a good example for activities in the future. During the years, more than 1,200 students participated in the religious introductory courses, more than 300 students participated in visit activities, more than 100 students participated in the

Buddhist investigations, and more than 200 students participated in the Buddhist camps. All of the activities are supported mainly by the Lingnan Foundation of America, Liurong temple, Guangxiao temple, Chunyang temple (a Taoist observatory), Liankai Jing temple, Daxiong zen temple, Sizu temple, Wuzu temple, Zhongshan Buddhist Union, Guangxiao Church, Henan church, Union Theological Seminary in Guangdong and other institutions and societies both financially or non-financially. We hope that all students involved in the project to get a correct understanding of Buddhism and other religions, furthermore, to contribute to the world peace.