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FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

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UNITED NATION DAY OF VESAK 2025

MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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FOREWORD

His Eminence Thích Thiện Nhơn

President of the Executive Council, Vietnam Buddhist Sangha

The anthology “*Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future*,” comprising 56 in-depth Buddhist studies, is one of the five thematic volumes under the Academic Conference Series of the United Nations Day of Vesak 2025, centered on the overarching theme: *Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development*. The publication of this volume stands as a vivid testament to the strategic vision and unwavering commitment of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in applying the Buddha’s teachings to global education—particularly during this era of societal transformation following the pandemic and amid ongoing global climate challenges.

The United Nations Day of Vesak 2025, held at the Vietnam Buddhist University in Ho Chi Minh City from May 6th to 8th, bears special historical significance: it marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945–2025) and the 50th anniversary of the nation’s reunification (1975–2025). Within this solemn and momentous context, the promotion of mindfulness education—a pillar of Buddhist ethical instruction—has emerged as a strategic direction for nurturing inner peace, cultivating collective wisdom, and shaping a future for humankind rooted in compassion and insight.

The content of this anthology reflects both a breadth of interdisciplinary perspectives and a profound depth of scholarly engagement. Topics range from the role of mindfulness in the development of emotional intelligence, mental well-being, and moral character to its concrete applications in primary, secondary, and higher education, educational management, environmental education, and intersections with fields such as ecology, technology, media, and social engagement. Several standout contributions offer detailed analyses of canonical Pāli texts, grounded in the foundations of mindfulness (P. *satipaṭṭhāna*) and the eightfold path (P. *aṭṭhaṅgika magga*), underscoring the distinctly Buddhist character of this volume.

The Editorial Board—led by Most Ven. Thích Đức Thiện and Most Ven. Thích Nhật Từ—has made extraordinary efforts in shaping the scholarly framework of this volume, fostering international collaboration, curating

and reviewing submissions, and overseeing a highly professional publication process. Their contribution lies not only in academic excellence but also in their intercultural vision and capacity to bridge scholars across nations and disciplines.

The value of this anthology also lies in its interdisciplinary and cross-cultural scope, bringing together scholars from India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the United States, Europe, and East Asia. These contributors are not only Buddhist studies experts but also educators, psychologists, sociologists, environmental scientists, and media researchers. Their works offer not only theoretical insight but also practical, implementable models and methods for integrating mindfulness into education amid the realities of globalization and digital transformation.

More than a collection of case studies or academic analysis, this volume signals a forward-looking research trajectory: positioning mindfulness as a foundation for liberal education, human development, and sustainable peace. In the years ahead, further scholarship should be encouraged to explore how mindfulness may be interwoven with global ethics, societal transformation, and collective resilience in times of ecological, social, and spiritual crisis.

In this spirit, “*Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future*” is not merely a valuable academic reference—it is a powerful message from Vietnamese Buddhism to the global community: that the journey to peace begins with awakened individuals who cultivate inner tranquility and, from there, help forge a stable and enduring peace for all humanity.

FOREWORD

By Most Ven. Prof. Dr. Brahmmapundit

President of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV)

The United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV), initiated by Thailand and embraced by the global Buddhist community, stands as a profound response to the United Nations Secretary-General's call to commemorate Vesak Day worldwide. This occasion marks the sacred triple events of the Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment, and *Mahāparinibbāna*—not merely as a global cultural festival, but as a sacred duty of the international Buddhist community to advance peace, compassion, and wisdom in alignment with the noble objectives of the United Nations. As Buddhists, we share a collective responsibility to bring the teachings of the Buddha to bear upon the urgent challenges of our time, from social injustice to climate change.

Thailand, with the gracious support of the Thai Royal Family and the Supreme Sangha Council of Thailand, has played an important role in this sacred mission. Spearheaded by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and supported by the Royal Thai Government, we established the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV) in 2004. This laid the foundation for the inaugural United Nations Day of Vesak in the same year, uniting global Buddhist leaders in vital forums to explore Buddhist principles as solutions to global issues—resonating with the vision and mandate of the United Nations.

Over the course of twenty UNDV celebrations, Thailand has had the honor of hosting fifteen, Sri Lanka one, and Vietnam has proudly hosted four—namely in 2008, 2014, 2019, and 2025. Each of Vietnam's contributions to UNDV has been remarkably successful, exemplifying visionary Buddhist leadership and international solidarity. The Government of Vietnam and the leadership of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha have demonstrated unwavering commitment and dedication in organizing these momentous events, showcasing the power of Buddhist unity and collective action for global peace.

The main theme of UNDV 2025, *"Solidarity and Tolerance for Human Dignity: Buddhist Wisdom for World Peace and Sustainable Development,"* reflects the vision of the United Nations and the aspirations of the Government of Vietnam for peace and sustainability in the spirit of the Buddha's teachings. It also honors the Buddha's immense contributions to human history, while commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the founding of the Socialist

Republic of Vietnam and the 50th Anniversary of the country's reunification.

I deeply appreciate and hold in high regard the organizational capabilities, vision, and tremendous devotion demonstrated by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in hosting the four UNDV celebrations. These efforts stand as a testament to the highest standards of Buddhist leadership and an enduring commitment to peace and sustainable development.

The present volume, *"Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future,"* brings together diverse and profound reflections on the transformative role of mindfulness in modern education. It explores how Buddhist mindfulness can contribute to character development, collective healing, inclusive learning, and sustainable peace.

This thematic collection features five English-language forums with more than 600 scholarly papers and five Vietnamese-language forums with over 350 research contributions. The high-quality submissions from monastics and scholars alike highlight the academic depth, intellectual diversity, and cross-cultural values of the Buddhist world in dialogue with modern global issues.

As we approach UNDV 2025, I warmly welcome the expected participation of above 1,200 international delegates from 80 countries and 5 territories. Furthermore, I commend the cultural dimensions of UNDV Vesak 2025, including the Buddhist Art Exhibition, the Vietnamese Buddhist Cultural Festival, and the international Buddhist cultural performances from India, China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

These scholarly, cultural, and spiritual perspectives collectively contribute to the profound success of this sacred Vesak celebration. Together, let us ensure that the 20th United Nations Day of Vesak in Vietnam becomes a beacon of peace, unity, and sustainable development for the entire world.

INFINITE COMPASSION: THE EVOLUTION OF KUAN YIN AS EMBODIMENT OF KARUṆĀ IN BUDDHIST PRACTICES

Dr. Elora Tribedy*

Abstract:

This paper examines the evolution of Kuan Yin as the embodiment of *Karuṇā* (compassion) in Buddhist traditions and its profound implications for human development and global ethical responsibility. As Buddhism spread across China, Vietnam, and beyond, the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara transformed into Kuan Yin and Quan Âm, adapting to local cultural values and social needs while maintaining the Mahāyāna ideal of compassion in action. The study explores how Kuan Yin's veneration, rooted in the *Lotus Sūtra's* doctrine of skillful means (*upāya*), fosters communal resilience and humanitarian engagement, demonstrating that Buddhist compassion extends beyond personal ethics into collective responsibility. By analyzing Kuan Yin's feminization, imperial patronage, and integration into Vietnamese religious life, this paper highlights the interplay between Buddhist doctrine and social transformation. Case studies illustrate how Buddhist compassion actively shapes ethical leadership, humanitarian efforts, and sustainable development. Ultimately, this paper affirms that the cults of Kuan Yin and Quan Âm exemplify *Karuṇā* as a dynamic force for spiritual and social progress, reinforcing Buddhism's shared responsibility for global human well-being.

Keywords: *Karuṇā, Buddhist compassion, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Avalokiteśvara, upāya, human development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Buddhist concept of *Karuṇā* (compassion) lies at the heart of Mahāyāna Buddhism, serving as both a spiritual ideal and an ethical imperative. As one of the Four Brahmavihāras, *Karuṇā* is more than an abstract virtue - it is a

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transformative force that guides practitioners toward enlightenment through selfless service to others.¹ Among the many manifestations of compassion in Buddhist traditions, Kuan Yin (Guānyīn, 觀音) stands as its most enduring embodiment. Originally venerated as the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, Kuan Yin's iconography, gender representation, and salvific role evolved over centuries, reflecting the dynamic interplay between Buddhist doctrine, cultural adaptation, and social engagement.²

A central focus of this study is the expansion of Kuan Yin's role as a compassionate savior across China, Vietnam, and broader East Asian Buddhist traditions, where she became an accessible, maternal figure responding to the suffering of all beings. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (Lotus Sūtra), particularly its Universal Gate Chapter, played a pivotal role in shaping her compassionate identity, portraying her as a bodhisattva who manifests in limitless forms to alleviate suffering.³ This doctrine of skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*) reinforced the idea that true compassion is active, adaptable, and deeply engaged with the realities of human suffering.⁴ Over time, Kuan Yin's veneration transcended monastic settings, integrating into popular devotion, temple rituals, and visual culture, ensuring that her compassion remained accessible across social and cultural boundaries.⁵

This paper examines how Kuan Yin's embodiment of *Karuṇā* evolved within Buddhist traditions, particularly through her feminization, political patronage under figures like Empress Wu Zetian, and her integration into Vietnamese religious life.⁶ Furthermore, it explores how compassionate action, as exemplified by Kuan Yin, extends beyond religious doctrine into contemporary humanitarian and social movements, including the work of the Kuan-Yin Contemplative Order in Malaysia.⁷ By tracing the evolution of Kuan Yin as a symbol of infinite compassion, this study highlights the enduring power of *Karuṇā* as both a spiritual ideal and a force for social transformation in the modern world.

II. KARUṆĀ AND THE EMBODIMENT OF COMPASSION IN BUDDHIST ETHICS

The Buddhist concept of *Karuṇā* (compassion) is a cornerstone of Buddhist ethics, deeply interwoven into both spiritual practice and social responsibility. As one of the Four Brahmavihāras, alongside *Mettā* (loving-kindness), *Muditā* (sympathetic joy), and *Upekkhā* (equanimity), *Karuṇā* is not a passive sentiment but an active force that compels moral and compassionate action⁸. It is fundamental

¹ Soguilon (2024): 2.

² Levine (2013): 21.

³ Tay (1976): 148.

⁴ Chappell (1983): 219.

⁵ Murase (1971): 45.

⁶ Rodin (2016): 1400.

⁷ Chia (2015): 586.

⁸ Soguilon (2024): 2.

to the path of a bodhisattva, urging practitioners to not only alleviate suffering but to cultivate a profound sense of interconnectedness with all sentient beings. The role of *Karuṇā* in Buddhist thought extends far beyond personal morality, forming the ethical foundation of Engaged Buddhism, where compassion translates into direct action in social, political, and humanitarian spheres⁹.

Among the embodiments of *Karuṇā* in the Buddhist tradition, Kuan Yin (Guānyīn, 觀音) stands as its most profound and enduring representation. Originally venerated as Avalokiteśvara, Kuan Yin's evolution within Chinese Buddhism saw her emerge as a distinctly feminine figure, epitomizing boundless mercy and an unwavering commitment to alleviating suffering¹⁰. Her very name, "She Who Hears the Cries of the World," underscores her role as a sentient force of compassion, ever-responsive to those in distress. Unlike a passive deity, Kuan Yin is an active agent of intervention, answering pleas for assistance, offering solace, and serving as a guiding presence for those in need¹¹. Her countless manifestations - as a healer, protector, and savior - demonstrate that *Karuṇā* must be enacted through both wisdom (*prajñā*) and skillful means (*upāya*), embodying the bodhisattva ideal as a lived, dynamic expression of compassion.

III. KARUṆĀ IN THE ROLE OF KUAN YIN

Karuṇā is not merely a moral aspiration or ascetic practice; it is an active, engaged force that compels direct intervention in alleviating suffering. In Buddhist ethics, *karuṇā* is a cornerstone of Engaged Buddhism, demanding practical applications in social, political, and humanitarian spheres. The bodhisattva ideal, embodied by Kuan Yin, calls upon followers to transcend self-interest and work toward the liberation of all beings from suffering¹². Kuan Yin exemplifies this selfless commitment, having vowed to remain in the world until all beings achieve liberation, ensuring that compassion manifests as action rather than sentiment. Her presence in Buddhist traditions across Asia underscores the belief that compassion must be engaged, responsive, and transformative, influencing both individual morality and collective social responsibility.

Buddhist engagement, driven by *karuṇā*, extends beyond ritual practice into tangible social activism. Throughout history, Buddhist communities have actively confronted social injustice, alleviated poverty, mediated conflicts, and provided relief in times of crisis. *Karuṇā*'s role as a catalyst for social action is evident in Buddhist humanitarian responses to major global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Myanmar conflict, and the war in Ukraine¹³. In each instance, Buddhist practitioners and institutions have mobilized resources, provided aid, and promoted nonviolent resolutions, demonstrating

⁹ Soguilon (2024): 5.

¹⁰ Levine (2013): 21.

¹¹ Levine (2013): 34.

¹² Soguilon (2024): 5.

¹³ International Crisis Group (2023): 15.

that *Karuṇā* is not just a theological construct but an ethical imperative demanding engagement with the world.

The principle of *upāya* (skillful means) further enhances *karuṇā*'s practical expression. *Upāya* refers to the ability to adapt one's actions based on the needs of others, ensuring that compassion is not rigid but dynamically responsive to suffering.¹⁴ Kuan Yin embodies the ultimate expression of *upāya*, appearing in countless manifestations - as a celestial savior, a humble guide, or a protector in moments of despair. Her thousand-armed form represents an infinite capacity to respond to suffering, while her iconographic attributes, such as the vase of pure water and the willow branch, symbolize healing, adaptability, and purification of suffering. The fluidity of her manifestations reinforces the notion that true compassion is not static but requires constant evolution to meet the challenges of human suffering.

Beyond spiritual liberation, *karuṇā* compels Buddhists to address tangible suffering in everyday life. The Buddhist Peace Fellowship, among other Engaged Buddhist movements, applies *karuṇā* to contemporary issues such as human rights, environmental sustainability, and economic justice, recognizing that genuine compassion must extend beyond prayer and meditation into structural change.¹⁵ This approach emphasizes that Buddhism does not advocate for passive resignation to suffering but actively seeks solutions to alleviate it.

A crucial dimension of Kuan Yin's embodiment of *karuṇā* is its transformative power, affecting both the giver and receiver of compassion. As Levine illustrates, the legend of Miao Shan epitomizes the journey from suffering to enlightenment through compassion.¹⁶ Miao Shan, through her unwavering dedication to selflessness, transcends personal pain and attains divine realization as Kuan Yin, embodying the boundless compassion necessary to heal the world. Her story reinforces the Buddhist teaching that suffering, when met with compassion, wisdom, and courage, becomes a vehicle for spiritual transformation.

Kuan Yin's *karuṇā* is not passive - it is fearless, boundless, and engaged, challenging both practitioners and Buddhist institutions to translate compassion into action. Whether through social justice initiatives, humanitarian relief, or personal ethical conduct, the Bodhisattva of Compassion serves as a living testament that *karuṇā* is the foundation of both inner transformation and external change.

IV. THE LOTUS SŪTRA AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF KUAN YIN

The *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka Sūtra* (妙法蓮華經), commonly known as the *Lotus Sūtra*, serves as the doctrinal foundation for the veneration of Kuan Yin (觀音) and her integration into Chinese Buddhist traditions. As one of the most influential

¹⁴ Levine (2013): 52.

¹⁵ Queen (1996): 35.

¹⁶ Levine (2013): 76.

Mahāyāna scriptures, the *Lotus Sūtra* upholds the doctrine of Ekayāna (一乘, the One Vehicle), affirming that all beings possess the potential for enlightenment and that compassionate bodhisattvas like Avalokiteśvara (Kuan Yin) function as salvific figures in guiding humanity toward liberation.¹⁷ The widespread dissemination of the *Lotus Sūtra* in China played a critical role in elevating Kuan Yin to the status of the most revered bodhisattva, facilitating her transformation from a male figure associated with Avalokiteśvara in Indian Buddhism into a distinctly feminine and maternal embodiment of boundless compassion.¹⁸

A defining moment in Kuan Yin's spiritual evolution lies in the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, known as the "Universal Gate Chapter" (Pumen Pin, 普門品). This passage explicitly details Kuan Yin's compassionate vows and salvific interventions, portraying her as a bodhisattva who responds unconditionally to the suffering of all beings.¹⁹ The text emphasizes the importance of skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*, 方便), which allows bodhisattvas to manifest in different forms - male, female, human, celestial - depending on the needs of devotees.²⁰ This principle was instrumental in shaping Kuan Yin's transformation from Avalokiteśvara into a female deity in China, a shift that aligned with Confucian and Taoist ideals that emphasized maternal compassion and nurturance.²¹ Through this cultural and theological adaptation, Kuan Yin transcended her role as an abstract figure of mercy, becoming an intimately accessible and responsive presence for lay devotees, offering aid in both material and spiritual concerns.

The *Lotus Sūtra* not only established Kuan Yin's doctrinal authority but also structured the ritual framework of her worship, elaborating six fundamental methods of Buddhist practice as a path to liberation. These six practices - merit-making (*punya*), generosity (*dāna-pāramitā*), moral discipline (*śīla*), mental cultivation (*samādhi*), cognitive transformation (*prajñā*), and skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*) - became the core ethical and ritual principles of Kuan Yin devotion in China.²² While these practices were rooted in monastic traditions, they became increasingly accessible to lay practitioners, reinforcing the bodhisattva's role as a protector and guide for those seeking both spiritual enlightenment and worldly relief. Over time, these methods were integrated into Chinese Buddhist ritual life, strengthening Kuan Yin's position as a divine savior, an ethical model, and a compassionate protector.

Beyond monastic and scriptural contexts, the worship of Kuan Yin in China took on distinctive devotional practices, many of which were shaped by the *Lotus Sūtra's* depiction of her compassionate vows. These included the practice of fearlessness (*abhaya-dāna*), the cultivation of ethical conduct

¹⁷ Tay (1976): 148.

¹⁸ Tay (1976): 152.

¹⁹ Chappell (1983): 219.

²⁰ Tay (1976): 154.

²¹ Goossaert (2006): 97.

²² Tay (1976): 157.

grounded in a compassionate mind, mindfulness through prayer and chanting, and wisdom-based actions aimed at alleviating suffering.²³ The recitation of Kuan Yin's name, a practice explicitly outlined in the *Lotus Sūtra*, became a central component of devotional practice in Chinese Buddhism, drawing parallels with the Pure Land tradition of chanting Amitābha's name as a means of attaining spiritual merit.²⁴ Additionally, Buddhist temples and monastic centers dedicated to Kuan Yin flourished across China, ensuring her presence in both elite Buddhist discourse and popular religious engagement.²⁵

The cultural adaptation of Buddhism in China, often referred to as the sinification of Buddhism, played a pivotal role in Kuan Yin's transformation from Avalokiteśvara into a feminine deity of mercy. While the *Lotus Sūtra* provided the doctrinal foundation for her veneration, its assimilation into Chinese religious traditions led to modifications in imagery, narratives, and ritual practices. The shift from a masculine Avalokiteśvara to the feminine Kuan Yin was shaped by Chinese conceptions of divine nurturance, familial piety, and maternal compassion, blending Buddhist principles with Confucian ideals of filial devotion and Taoist notions of spiritual transformation.²⁶ This transformation was further reinforced in Buddhist literature and artistic depictions, particularly in the iconography of the White-robed Kuan Yin (*Baiyi Guanyin*, 白衣觀音) and the Fish-basket Kuan Yin (*Yulankuan Guanyin*, 魚籃觀音), both of which emphasize maternal compassion and divine intervention in moments of crisis.²⁷

A crucial element of Kuan Yin's widespread appeal was her role as a divine protector and miracle worker, an aspect explicitly emphasized in the *Lotus Sūtra*. The text describes thirty-three distinct manifestations through which Kuan Yin aids devotees, including rescuing sailors from shipwrecks, intervening in wrongful executions, and granting children to barren women.²⁸ This narrative framework positioned Kuan Yin as a living force of salvation, reinforcing the belief that she could be petitioned for protection, prosperity, and relief from suffering. The geographical spread of her veneration was also reinforced through the establishment of localized sacred sites, such as Mount Putuo (普陀山), which became one of the most significant pilgrimage centers for Kuan Yin worship in China.²⁹

An intertextual analysis of the *Lotus Sūtra* and its related texts reveals that Kuan Yin's veneration in China was not only deeply rooted in Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine but also dynamically shaped by local religious and cultural traditions. The domestication of Kuan Yin's cult mirrors broader patterns of

²³ Chappell (1983): 224.

²⁴ Reat (1994): 303.

²⁵ Tay (1976): 160.

²⁶ Goossaert (2006): 102.

²⁷ Tay (1976): 165.

²⁸ Chappell (1983): 227.

²⁹ Reat (1994): 306.

Buddhist adaptation in East Asia, where Indian scriptural traditions were reinterpreted through the lens of Chinese cosmology, morality, and religious practice³⁰. Although the *Lotus Sūtra* remains the foundational text for Kuan Yin devotion, further research is required to explore her presence in other Buddhist scriptures, such as the *Surangama Sūtra* (楞嚴經) and the *Karandavyuha Sūtra*, which elaborate on her salvific role and esoteric significance.³¹ A comparative examination of Kuan Yin's transformation across different Buddhist traditions, including her manifestations in Japan as Kannon (觀音) and in Tibet as Chenrezig, would provide a deeper understanding of the evolution of her worship within the broader *Mahāyāna* Buddhist world.

The visual representation of Kuan Yin in paintings, murals, and illuminated manuscripts reflects the pervasive influence of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the devotional significance of the bodhisattva in Chinese Buddhism. The iconography of Kuan Yin, shaped by the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (*Lotus Sūtra*), became a central feature of Buddhist artistic traditions, reinforcing her role as the ultimate savior and protector of all beings. Among the most significant artistic expressions of Kuan Yin's salvific role is the illuminated manuscript of the *Kuan Yin Sūtra*³² housed in the British Museum, which provides a rare insight into the intersection of visual narrative and textual devotion.³³

The Universal Gate Chapter (Pumen Pin, 普門品) in the *Lotus Sūtra* played a pivotal role in shaping Kuan Yin's artistic identity, detailing her thirty-three manifestations and emphasizing her compassionate responsiveness to suffering. This chapter was among the most widely illustrated Buddhist texts in China, Japan, and Korea, demonstrating the centrality of Kuan Yin in visual culture.³⁴ The Dunhuang manuscript S. 6983, a rare illustrated booklet recovered from Dunhuang, presents a fully illustrated sequence of Kuan Yin's miraculous interventions, depicting her rescuing beings from shipwrecks, wild beasts, and executioners. The manuscript's integration of text and image highlights the inseparability of visual and literary devotion in Buddhist practice, ensuring that Kuan Yin's compassionate role was not only understood but vividly experienced.³⁵

The murals from Dunhuang, Yungang, and Longmen cave temples further illustrate the enduring legacy of Kuan Yin's iconography, portraying her as a majestic, compassionate savior. Large-scale frescoes frequently depict Kuan Yin standing upon a lotus, encircled by supplicants and celestial beings, visually affirming her role as a universal protector³⁶. The narrative paintings in Cave 205 at Dunhuang showcase Kuan Yin's intervention in moments of peril,

³⁰ Faure (1993): 184.

³¹ Tay (1976): 168.

³² Kuan Yin Sūtra (S. 6983).

³³ Murase (1971): 58.

³⁴ Murase (1971): 40.

³⁵ Murase (1971): 43.

³⁶ Murase (1971): 45.

closely aligning with the miraculous rescues described in the Lotus Sūtra³⁷. These compositions employ sequential storytelling, wherein various forms of Kuan Yin are depicted responding to the diverse needs of suffering beings, illustrating her limitless capacity for compassion and adaptation.³⁸

The British Museum manuscript S. 6983 exemplifies how Buddhist devotion was transmitted through portable media, extending Kuan Yin's influence beyond temple walls. Unlike cave paintings, which were primarily public devotional objects, illuminated manuscripts allowed for private engagement with sacred narratives, making them invaluable tools for personal meditation and religious study.³⁹ These manuscripts circulated widely among monastic communities and lay practitioners, reinforcing the accessibility and adaptability of Kuan Yin's teachings. The intricate illustrations of S. 6983, along with other illustrated versions of the *Kuan Yin Sūtra*, underscore the fusion of artistic, textual, and devotional traditions, reflecting Buddhist visual culture's profound engagement with narrative theology.⁴⁰

The integration of Kuan Yin's imagery into illuminated manuscripts and monumental temple murals demonstrates how artistic traditions were employed to cultivate devotion and facilitate spiritual connection. Whether in elaborately painted scrolls, monumental cave frescoes, or intricate manuscript illustrations, the iconography of Kuan Yin remained deeply rooted in the textual authority of the *Lotus Sūtra*, reinforcing her role as the embodiment of boundless compassion. These visual representations not only preserved Buddhist theological principles but also ensured that Kuan Yin's compassionate presence was a tangible and ever-present force in the religious consciousness of Buddhist practitioners.

V. IMPERIAL PATRONAGE OF THE CULT OF KUAN YIN

The integration of Buddhism into Chinese religious life was not a passive adoption but an active process of transformation, aligning foreign doctrines with indigenous cosmology, philosophy, and social structures.⁴¹ Kuan Yin's widespread acceptance resulted from this adaptive process, as she was not merely incorporated as a foreign deity but redefined to reflect Chinese moral and spiritual values. Edward Said's⁴² assertion that cultures reinterpret foreign influences to fit their worldviews is particularly relevant to Kuan Yin's evolution from Avalokiteśvara into a distinctly Chinese bodhisattva of compassion, demonstrating the deliberate domestication of Buddhist figures within Confucian-Taoist frameworks.

The Sinification of Buddhism further reinforced Kuan Yin's transformation,

³⁷ Murase (1971): 48.

³⁸ Murase (1971): 50.

³⁹ Murase (1971): 55.

⁴⁰ Murase (1971): 59.

⁴¹ Zürcher (1991): 67.

⁴² Said (1978): 67.

particularly through the rise of Sino-Japanese Buddhist schools, such as Tiantai (Tendai), Huayan (Kegon), Pure Land (Jōdo), and Chan (Zen). While these traditions preserved Buddhist teachings, they also reinterpreted them through Chinese philosophical and religious lenses.⁴³ This was particularly evident in the feminization and localization of Avalokiteśvara into Kuan Yin, making her more culturally accessible to Chinese practitioners. As Kuan Yin became associated with specific sacred sites and localized cults, she transitioned from a transcendent bodhisattva to an intimately present savior embedded in everyday spiritual life.⁴⁴

A defining feature of Kuan Yin's transformation was her fluid gender representation, which shifted across different historical periods. Initially depicted as masculine, Kuan Yin retained this form in early Chinese Buddhist art and literature until the Song dynasty (960 – 1279), when feminine representations began to emerge. By the Yuan dynasty (1271 – 1368), the feminization of Kuan Yin was largely complete, and from the Ming period (1368 – 1644) onward, she was almost exclusively depicted in female form.⁴⁵ However, monastic settings preserved masculine or androgynous depictions, adhering to Tang dynasty (618 – 907) iconographic traditions.⁴⁶ Some Dunhuang murals even retained masculine depictions with mustaches, reflecting a lingering reverence for earlier iconography.⁴⁷ Given this historical complexity, the use of both masculine and feminine pronouns (she/ he) remains appropriate, capturing the fluidity and adaptability of Kuan Yin's evolving religious identity.

The political climate of imperial China also played a pivotal role in Kuan Yin's transformation and institutionalization. The reign of Empress Wu Zetian (625 – 705) was particularly significant in feminizing Avalokiteśvara and solidifying Kuan Yin's status as a universal savior. Wu Zetian aligned herself with Buddhist ideology, using Kuan Yin's image as a legitimizing force for her unprecedented rule.⁴⁸ Her association with Kuan Yin as a compassionate yet authoritative figure mirrored her political ambitions, reinforcing her divine right to rule.⁴⁹

Wu Zetian's influence extended beyond political symbolism into artistic and doctrinal transformations. She played a critical role in popularizing Kuan Yin's feminization, a process reinforced by her promotion of Buddhist texts, particularly the Lotus Sūtra, and her patronage of Buddhist art and statuary.⁵⁰ The colossal Vairocana Buddha statue at the Longmen Grottoes, believed to be

⁴³ Tang (1991): 78; Chappell (1983): 201.

⁴⁴ Goossaert (2006): 102.

⁴⁵ Shahar (2008): 189.

⁴⁶ Whitfield (2004): 162.

⁴⁷ Whitfield (2004): 168.

⁴⁸ Rodin (2016): 1397.

⁴⁹ Rodin (2016): 1400.

⁵⁰ Rodin (2016): 1401.

modeled after Wu Zetian herself, exemplifies this fusion of female sovereignty and Buddhist sanctity.⁵¹ Additionally, her court propagated the imagery of the Eleven-headed and Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, reinforcing the bodhisattva's omnipresence and ability to aid all beings.⁵²

Wu Zetian's reign also saw the institutional promotion of Kuan Yin's devotion. She commissioned Buddhist temples and monasteries dedicated to the bodhisattva and sponsored the distribution of Buddhist scriptures emphasizing Kuan Yin's salvific power.⁵³ This period marked a significant expansion of Kuan Yin's cult, integrating her into popular religious practices beyond monastic circles. Wu Zetian's bridging of Taoist deities, particularly the Great Mother (Xi Wangmu), with Buddhist ideals of compassion, further cemented Kuan Yin's status as a divine maternal figure, revered as a protector, healer, and provider of blessings.⁵⁴

The political utilization of religious figures was not unique to Wu Zetian. Her patronage of Kuan Yin closely mirrors the role of Empress Pulcheria (399 – 453) in promoting devotion to the Virgin Mary in the Byzantine Empire. Like Pulcheria, Wu Zetian leveraged religious imagery to solidify her legitimacy, fostering devotion to a sacred female figure that resonated with imperial power and divine right.⁵⁵ While Pulcheria's influence became institutionalized within Christian doctrine, Wu Zetian's legacy remained more contested, particularly as Confucian orthodoxy reasserted itself after her reign. However, the cult of Kuan Yin flourished in later centuries, largely due to the religious transformations initiated under Wu Zetian.⁵⁶

VI. THE EVOLUTION AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS OF QUAN ÂM WORSHIP IN VIETNAM

The veneration of Quan Âm in Vietnam is deeply connected to the broader transformation of Kuan Yin (觀音) across East Asian Buddhist traditions. As the Vietnamese counterpart of Avalokiteśvara, Quan Âm shares the compassionate, salvific attributes of Kuan Yin while embodying distinct cultural adaptations that reflect Vietnam's spiritual and historical landscape. Introduced through Mahāyāna Buddhism, which arrived in Vietnam via Chinese and Cham influences, Quan Âm evolved from a transcendent bodhisattva into an intimately protective and maternal deity, integrating elements of Buddhist, Confucian, and indigenous goddess traditions.⁵⁷

A key element in Quan Âm's regional adaptation is her association with protective and fertility deities, a pattern observable in many Vietnamese religious practices. The Vietnamese perception of Quan Âm mirrors the protective

⁵¹ Rodin (2016): 1402.

⁵² Rodin (2016): 1403.

⁵³ Rodin (2016): 1404.

⁵⁴ Rodin (2016): 1405.

⁵⁵ Rodin (2016): 1398.

⁵⁶ Rodin (2016): 1406.

⁵⁷ Taylor (2002): 86.

qualities of indigenous guardian spirits, reinforcing her accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of the people.⁵⁸ For instance, in central and southern Vietnam, Quan Âm is often invoked as a maternal figure, sharing devotional and ritual similarities with Mẫu Thoải (Mother of Waters) and Bà Chúa Xứ (Lady of the Realm).⁵⁹ The fluidity of Vietnamese spiritual traditions allowed these divine representations to overlap, creating a hybrid devotional framework that integrates Buddhist concepts of salvation with indigenous protective functions.

The ritual and festival traditions surrounding Quan Âm further highlight her evolving role in Vietnamese religious life. Annual festivals dedicated to Quan Âm, particularly in southern coastal regions, feature elaborate processions, offerings, and acts of merit-making, reinforcing her position as both a Buddhist savior and a deity of local protective power. These festivals often draw pilgrims and devotees from across Vietnam, underscoring the enduring significance of Quan Âm in communal worship.⁶⁰ Additionally, temples dedicated to Quan Âm, such as Quan Âm Phật Đài in Bạc Liêu, serve as major pilgrimage sites, where devotees seek blessings, healing, and divine intervention in their personal and communal lives.

Beyond her role in popular devotion, the feminization of Avalokiteśvara into Quan Âm in Vietnam was reinforced by Confucian ideals of motherhood, filial piety, and compassion. This transition made Quan Âm more relatable to lay practitioners, particularly women, who saw her as an empathetic divine presence capable of offering maternal care and guidance.⁶¹ Unlike the Indian Avalokiteśvara, often depicted as an androgynous or male figure, Vietnamese artistic traditions emphasized Quan Âm's femininity, depicting her with soft features, flowing robes, and gestures of compassion that resonated with Vietnamese social ideals of virtue and nurturance.⁶² Whether through manuscript depictions, temple iconography, or oral traditions, Quan Âm has remained a central figure in Vietnamese spirituality, embodying both Buddhist wisdom and the protective power of divine femininity. As Vietnamese religious landscapes continue to evolve, the veneration of Quan Âm remains a testament to the enduring adaptability of Buddhist traditions and their ability to integrate with local cultural and spiritual frameworks.

The worship of Quan Âm Nam Hải extends beyond individual acts of devotion, shaping the cultural and spiritual identity of coastal communities in Vietnam. As a guardian of the sea, her veneration is not only a personal practice of protection and gratitude but also a shared communal tradition that fosters collective resilience in the face of maritime uncertainties.⁶³ The integration of Buddhist rituals with seafaring customs demonstrates how spiritual beliefs are

⁵⁸ Taylor (2002): 91.

⁵⁹ Taylor (2002): 94.

⁶⁰ Taylor (2002): 97.

⁶¹ Taylor (2002): 102.

⁶² Murase (1971): 59.

⁶³ Dương (2020): 52.

deeply intertwined with occupational realities, reinforcing Quan Âm Nam Hải's dual role as a Buddhist savior and a practical protector of daily life.

A key aspect of Quan Âm Nam Hải's influence is her association with seasonal fishing festivals and maritime ceremonies, which serve as both religious and social events. These festivals held at temples, shrines, and coastal gathering sites, include elaborate rituals, collective prayers, and offerings of symbolic items such as paper boats and food.⁶⁴ The Lễ Cầu Ngư (Fishermen's Prayer Festival) is among the most prominent, during which local fishing communities honor Quan Âm Nam Hải before embarking on major fishing expeditions. These festivals are not merely acts of religious reverence but also opportunities for communal solidarity, reinforcing a shared dependence on the bodhisattva's guidance and protection.⁶⁵

In addition to temple-based worship, floating shrines dedicated to Quan Âm Nam Hải are a distinctive feature of Vietnamese maritime spirituality. These portable altars, often placed on boats and docks, ensure that her presence is immediate and accessible even at sea.⁶⁶ Some larger fishing boats carry small shrines, where sailors light incense and recite prayers before long journeys. This practice underscores the intimate relationship between fishermen and their patron deity, transforming each voyage into a spiritually guided endeavor.⁶⁷

Another unique element of Quan Âm Nam Hải's veneration is the belief in her miraculous interventions at sea. Oral traditions recount numerous instances where fishermen claim to have been saved by her divine presence, often describing visions of Quan Âm appearing amidst storms, calming the waves, or guiding lost sailors back to shore.⁶⁸ These stories passed down through generations of fishing families, reinforce the continuity of devotion and affirm Quan Âm Nam Hải's role as a direct and responsive protector. The connection between faith and survival in these narratives highlights how spirituality is interwoven with the lived experiences of Vietnam's maritime communities.

The worship of Quan Âm Nam Hải is thus an example of how Buddhist devotion is integrated into localized belief systems, reflecting both the doctrinal core of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the practical needs of seafaring communities. As climate and economic conditions continue to impact Vietnam's fishing industry, the role of Quan Âm Nam Hải remains deeply relevant, offering a source of comfort, guidance, and communal identity. Her enduring presence in temples, boats, and shared oral traditions illustrates how devotion adapts to the needs of its practitioners without losing its foundational significance.

⁶⁴ Dương (2020): 54.

⁶⁵ Dương (2020): 57.

⁶⁶ Dương (2020): 59.

⁶⁷ Dương (2020): 61.

⁶⁸ Dương (2020): 64.

VII. CASE STUDY: THE KUAN-YIN CONTEMPLATIVE ORDER (KYCO) IN MALAYSIA

The Kuan-Yin Contemplative Order (KYCO) in Malaysia serves as a contemporary case study of Buddhist devotion, self-cultivation, and moral transformation. Founded in 1979 by Tony Wong Kuan Ming, KYCO is a lay Buddhist organization that integrates Buddhist compassion, spiritual discipline, and ethical development within an urban, middle-class Malaysian context⁶⁹. Unlike traditional monastic institutions, KYCO functions as a non-sectarian, inclusive spiritual community, drawing influence from redemptive societies, Vajrayana Buddhism, and self-help movements.⁷⁰

A core principle of KYCO's practice is self-cultivation, undertaken through prayer, chanting, Dharma lectures, and acts of charity. Rooted in the Bodhisattva ideal, members strive to embody Kuan-Yin's compassion by dedicating themselves to alleviating suffering and fostering moral betterment.⁷¹ The organization places a strong emphasis on moral reasoning, empathy, and deep listening, advocating personal growth over doctrinal rigidity. This is reflected in KYCO's communal activities, including charitable outreach, healing sessions, and spiritual counseling, all of which reinforce its commitment to universal compassion and ethical living.⁷²

KYCO also operates within a broader transnational Buddhist network, maintaining affiliations with Tibetan Buddhist clergy, the Sai Baba movement, and various charitable organizations. Its expansion has been shaped by Malaysia's evolving religious landscape, requiring KYCO to navigate spiritual ideals alongside socio-political realities⁷³. While avoiding direct political involvement, KYCO's inclusive spiritual approach resonates with Malaysia's multiethnic and multireligious environment, positioning it as a moral and spiritual alternative to sectarian religious expressions.⁷⁴

Ultimately, KYCO exemplifies how modern Buddhist organizations adapt traditional devotion to contemporary urban life, blending Kuan-Yin veneration with ethical self-improvement and humanitarian engagement. As religious landscapes continue to shift, KYCO stands as a testament to the enduring relevance of Buddhist compassion, shaping individual ethics, communal well-being, and social transformation.⁷⁵

VIII. RELEVANCE OF THE PAPER: KARUṆĀ AS A PATH TO COLLECTIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Kuan Yin's role as the embodiment of *Karuṇā* (compassion) and *Prajñā*

⁶⁹ Chia (2015): 582.

⁷⁰ Chia (2015): 584.

⁷¹ Chia (2015): 586.

⁷² Chia (2015): 589.

⁷³ Chia (2015): 590.

⁷⁴ Chia (2015): 593.

⁷⁵ Chia (2015): 597.

(wisdom) within Buddhism demonstrates the transformation of the Bodhisattva ideal from an abstract philosophical principle into an engaged, active force for the well-being of humanity. As a spiritual guide, Kuan Yin is not merely a revered figure in Buddhist devotion but a manifestation of compassionate action, deeply integrated into the ethical and social lives of practitioners (Hart, n.d.). Her widespread veneration in temples, homes, and public spaces underscores the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist principle that enlightenment is not an isolated pursuit but a shared responsibility toward the liberation and development of all beings. Kuan Yin's association with Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, highlights her significance in Buddhism's evolution across diverse cultural landscapes, demonstrating its ability to adapt and respond to the unique challenges of different societies.⁷⁶

The symbolism associated with Kuan Yin reinforces her role as a force for human flourishing through the cultivation of *Karuṇā*. Artistic depictions of Kuan Yin standing upon a lotus symbolize purity and transcendence, while the vase containing amrita (the nectar of immortality) signifies the limitless nature of her compassion.⁷⁷ The Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara-Kuan Yin, a motif from Tibetan Buddhist iconography, embodies her infinite capacity to alleviate suffering, reflecting the integration of wisdom and *upāya* (skillful means) in addressing human distress.⁷⁸ In the Chinese tradition, her transformation from a male deity to a distinctly maternal figure aligns with Confucian and Taoist values of nurturance and filial piety, allowing her to function as a protector, healer, and guide in both personal and communal contexts.⁷⁹

This synthesis of *Śūnyatā* (emptiness) and *Karuṇā* in East Asian Buddhism emphasizes that wisdom is inseparable from compassionate action. While Indian Buddhist philosophy often underscores *Śūnyatā* as the ultimate reality, Chinese Buddhist traditions place greater emphasis on compassion as a relational and engaged force.⁸⁰ The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya Sūtra* (Heart Sutra) reflects this integration, depicting Kuan Yin's profound realization that even the skandhas (the five aggregates of human existence) are empty, leading to an understanding that "form differs not from the void, nor void from form". This realization reinforces the Bodhisattva's vow to remain within *saṃsāra* until all sentient beings attain liberation, ensuring that compassionate service remains at the heart of the Buddhist path.

The Bodhisattva Vow undertaken by Kuan Yin is central to her ethical and spiritual significance in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Tradition holds that upon reaching the threshold of *nirvāṇa*, she turned back upon hearing the cries of suffering beings, vowing to remain within the cycle of birth and rebirth until

⁷⁶ Blofeld (1978): 56.

⁷⁷ Koerber (1941): 12.

⁷⁸ Suzuki (1935): 89.

⁷⁹ Tay, 1976):144.

⁸⁰ Zimmer (1959): 212.

all sentient beings were liberated.⁸¹ This act of renunciation for the welfare of others encapsulates the Mahāyāna ethical vision, affirming that compassion is not secondary to wisdom but its highest expression. Her mantric invocation, Om Mani Padme Hum (The Jewel in the Lotus), further emphasizes that the potential for enlightenment and boundless compassion resides within all beings, awaiting realization through selfless service and awakened action.

The *Lotus Sūtra* further emphasizes Kuan Yin's adaptability and responsiveness to human suffering, reinforcing the Bodhisattva's mastery of *upāya*.⁸² The text describes her ability to manifest in various forms, including warriors, monks, women, and children, depending on the needs of those she seeks to aid. This fluidity in form and approach reflects the Mahāyāna ideal that true wisdom is dynamic, responsive, and actively engaged in alleviating suffering. It also underscores Kuan Yin's role in fostering social cohesion, moral upliftment, and ethical responsibility within Buddhist communities worldwide.

The presence of Kuan Yin statues and devotional imagery in both public and private spaces further highlight her deep integration into Buddhist ethics and social values. Large statues in Japan and Korea, often placed in workplaces, hospitals, and urban centers, serve as visual reminders of the importance of compassion, service, and selflessness.⁸³ This public engagement with Kuan Yin devotion illustrates the Buddhist principle of interbeing, wherein individual transformation is inherently connected to the collective well-being of the community.

Beyond regional boundaries, Kuan Yin's ethical significance extends into global discourses on human development, gender inclusivity, and humanitarian engagement. Whether revered as a goddess, a Bodhisattva, or an awakened ideal, she symbolizes the latent potential within every being to transcend suffering through acts of compassion. Her presence in Vietnam as Quan Âm, particularly in coastal and seafaring communities, reinforces her function as a protective force for vulnerable populations, demonstrating how Buddhist compassion extends beyond doctrinal texts into the lived realities of marginalized groups.⁸⁴

The ethical contributions of Kuan Yin's devotion are not limited to individual practice but extend to institutional structures, humanitarian projects, and global Buddhist movements. As contemporary Buddhism continues to evolve, Kuan Yin's legacy as a force of infinite compassion remains relevant, guiding efforts toward social justice, community healing, and global ethical transformation. Kuan Yin's significance in shaping Buddhist humanitarianism further suggests that her cults, whether in China, Vietnam, or Malaysia, serve as models of socially engaged Buddhism, reinforcing the shared responsibility

⁸¹ Purucker (1974): 331.

⁸² Tay (1976): 148.

⁸³ Koerber (1941): 16.

⁸⁴ Dương (2020): 54.

for human development through acts of *Karuṇā*. As global crises—such as poverty, displacement, and environmental challenges—continue to threaten the well-being of communities, the Bodhisattva's ideal of boundless compassion serves as a guide for engaged action. The Mahayāna Buddhist commitment to alleviating suffering is ultimately reflected in Kuan Yin's vow to remain within *saṃsāra*, a principle that underscores the inseparability of wisdom and compassion in building a more just and compassionate world.

IX. CONCLUSION

The urgency of practicing *Karuṇā* (compassion) in the modern world has never been more critical, as global interconnectedness amplifies shared challenges, from natural disasters and humanitarian crises to social inequality and conflict. The veneration of Kuan Yin and Quan Âm, rooted in Buddhist traditions of compassion and ethical responsibility, provides not only a spiritual framework for individual transformation but also a model for collective action aimed at human development. As demonstrated throughout this paper, *karuṇā* is not merely a philosophical ideal but an engaged and dynamic practice, compelling practitioners to actively relieve suffering and promote social harmony. In this sense, the cult of Kuan Yin and Quan Âm is far more than religious devotion; it is a living expression of compassion in action, fostering spiritual and social resilience across diverse Buddhist communities.

By examining the manifestation of *karuṇā* in the worship of Kuan Yin and Quan Âm, this paper has demonstrated how Buddhist compassion extends beyond personal ethics into communal responsibility. Whether through charitable outreach, humanitarian initiatives, or localized devotional practices, the spiritual principles embodied by Kuan Yin and Quan Âm continue to shape moral consciousness and ethical engagement across cultures. The social participation inspired by these bodhisattvas reflects the Mahayāna Buddhist commitment to alleviating suffering, ensuring that compassion remains an active force for positive change. This reinforces the idea that *karuṇā* is not a passive virtue but a transformative power, one that enables both spiritual realization and tangible improvements in the world.

The study of *karuṇā* through Kuan Yin's evolving role has shown that compassionate action is not limited to individual practice but extends to global human development. Through Buddhist-inspired humanitarian efforts, including the Kuan-Yin Contemplative Order in Malaysia, and the integration of Quan Âm into Vietnamese maritime traditions, we see how compassion continues to inform both social justice movements and community resilience. These manifestations of Buddhist compassion highlight the interconnectedness of individual enlightenment and collective well-being, demonstrating that *karuṇā* serves as a bridge between personal spiritual growth and social responsibility.

As Buddhist traditions continue to adapt to contemporary social realities, the legacy of Kuan Yin and Quan Âm remains a powerful reminder that the cultivation of *karuṇā* is central to building a just, compassionate world. By integrating the principles of wisdom (*Prajñā*) and skillful means (*Upāya*) with

active social engagement, Buddhist practitioners uphold the Bodhisattva ideal as a shared responsibility for human development. This paper has illustrated that the embodiment of *karuṇā* through the cults of Kuan Yin and Quan Âm is not only a spiritual endeavor but a necessary approach to fostering ethical transformation in a rapidly changing world.

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DHAMMA: INDIA'S ROLE IN WORLD PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

The 21st century presents humanity with complex challenges, including climate change, socio-political conflicts, and economic inequalities, necessitating a unified and inclusive global response. Central to this vision is India's growing influence as a champion of peace and sustainable development, guided by the principles of *Buddha Dhamma* and the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This article explores the enduring relevance of Buddhist teachings in addressing contemporary global crises. By promoting the ideals of compassion, non-violence, and interdependence, Buddhism offers a pathway to resolving conflicts and fostering collective well-being. India, as the cradle of Buddhism, holds a unique position to lead these efforts, particularly within the Global South. Initiatives like the International Buddhist Confederation and the Asian Buddhist Summit highlight India's commitment to leveraging Buddhist philosophy for global harmony. Underlining the ethos of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the world as one family), India's policies emphasize dialogue and collaboration over confrontation. Through platforms like the G20 Presidency and the International Solar Alliance, India integrates sustainable development with cultural and spiritual dimensions, demonstrating that solutions to global challenges must be rooted in ethical and mindful practices. As the world looks toward the "Asian Century," India's leadership in promoting Buddhist principles resonates deeply with the aspirations of nations striving for equitable growth and peace. By combining its spiritual heritage with modern strategies for sustainable development, India provides a model for a harmonious and inclusive global order.

Keywords: 21st century, Asian century, world peace, global harmony, India's role.

I. INTRODUCTION

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According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, “We belong to a country that has given the world not *yuddh* but *buddh*.”¹ The modern world, though increasingly interconnected, remains riddled with conflicts and disparities. Addressing challenges that threaten human dignity, such as climate change, socio-political conflicts, and economic inequalities, requires unity and inclusivity. In this context, *Buddha Dhamma*,² with its emphasis on compassion, interconnectedness, and non-violence, offers a timeless framework for fostering peace and sustainable development. India, as the birthplace of *Buddha Dhamma*, stands uniquely positioned to lead these global efforts. Rooted in ancient wisdom, India’s contemporary policies under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflect the enduring relevance of Buddhist principles in addressing modern challenges. Through initiatives such as the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC),³ India has reaffirmed its commitment to promoting Buddha’s teachings as a means to achieve global harmony. Central to *Buddha Dhamma* is the recognition of interconnectedness - a principle that aligns with the idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*⁴ (the world as one family). This ethos underpins India’s global outreach, from its presidency of the G20 to its active participation in climate-focused initiatives like the International Solar Alliance. India’s efforts emphasize dialogue, cooperation, and shared responsibility as the foundation for sustainable development. Prime Minister Modi has championed *Buddha Dhamma*’s principles as a guide for fostering inclusivity and non-violence. The recent Asian Buddhist Summit⁵ and other platforms have enabled India to encourage collaboration among nations, particularly in the Global South, to address collective challenges. These initiatives also resonate with the aspirations of the “Asian Century,” where Asia’s cultural and philosophical heritage is poised to influence global policies significantly. The teachings of *Buddha Dhamma* also offer practical guidance for resolving conflicts and fostering mindfulness in governance. Principles like the Middle Path inspire balanced, ethical decision-making, while the Four Noble Truths encourage introspection and transformation - values that are indispensable in tackling global crises. India’s contributions extend beyond policy and diplomacy. Through cultural exchange programs, academic collaborations, and spiritual gatherings, India is fostering a deeper understanding of Buddhist philosophy. These efforts are not limited to promoting peace but also aim to integrate sustainable development into the global agenda. For instance, initiatives supporting renewable energy, water conservation, and equitable economic growth align with the Buddhist ideal of living in harmony with nature. As the world grapples with urgent crises, the

¹ PM’s address to the UNGA. (n.d.). United Nations General Assembly, Sept 2019 https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-address-to-the-unga/

² International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) on the recommendation of the Academic Coordination Team using Buddha Dhamma not Buddhism in the official uses.

³ IBCWORLD: Home. (n.d.). <https://www.ibcworld.org/>

⁴ Maha Upanishad 6.71 – 75.

⁵ Ministry of Culture and International Buddhist Confederation organized First Asian Buddhist Summit on 5th -6th November 2024 in New Delhi.

relevance of *Buddha Dhamma* becomes ever more apparent. India's leadership highlights how ancient wisdom can be harnessed to address contemporary challenges. By championing unity and inclusivity, India is not only preserving its cultural legacy but also offering a vision of hope and cooperation for the global community. In the "Asian Century," India's embrace of *Buddha Dhamma* serves as a guiding light for nations striving for peace, equity, and sustainable development. This synergy of ancient principles and modern strategies provides a model for addressing the pressing issues of our time, ensuring a harmonious and inclusive future for all.

II. BUDDHIST INSIGHTS FOR GLOBAL HARMONY

2.1. The core teachings of Buddha's dhamma on unity and peace

Buddha Dhamma, rooted in the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, offers profound insights into fostering unity and peace in both individual and collective contexts. At its heart are principles emphasizing interconnectedness, compassion, and ethical living, which transcend cultural and temporal boundaries. These teachings form a robust framework for addressing modern challenges to global harmony. The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path: "That both I and you have had to travel and trudge through this long round is owing to our not discovering, not penetrating the four truths. What four? They are: the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the origin of suffering, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, and the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering."⁶ The Buddha's first teaching after attaining enlightenment was the Four Noble Truths (*Chatvari-arya-satyani*),⁷ which encapsulate the essence of human suffering and its resolution. These truths - recognizing suffering, understanding its causes, realizing the possibility of its cessation, and following the Eightfold Path - guide individuals toward inner peace and harmonious living. The Eightfold Path serves as a moral and ethical compass, structured into three categories: wisdom (right view, right intention), ethical conduct (right speech, right action, right livelihood), and mental discipline (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration). While these steps are designed to lead individuals to enlightenment, they also foster collective well-being by promoting values such as honesty, empathy, and social responsibility. A society rooted in these principles is likely to experience reduced conflict and increased harmony. The phrase "When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises,"⁸ comes from the Dependent Origination⁹ teachings in Buddhism. One of Buddha Dhamma's most profound teachings is Dependent Origination, which asserts that all phenomena arise interdependently. Nothing exists in isolation; every action, thought, and phenomenon is interconnected. This

⁶ DN 16.

⁷ *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* 'Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth'. Mahavagga, vol - I, P. 9; S, vol - V, p. 420.

⁸ SN 12. 1.

⁹ SN 12. 1, 92. Pali text: "Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppāda idaṃ uppajjati..."

principle encourages individuals to see themselves as part of a greater whole, fostering a sense of collective responsibility. “Whatever is dependently arisen, that is explained to be emptiness. That, being a dependent designation, is itself the middle path.”¹⁰ Dependent Origination also challenges the illusion of separateness, which is often the root of conflict. By understanding that individual well-being is inextricably linked to the welfare of others, people are inspired to act in ways that promote mutual benefit. This interconnected worldview is particularly relevant in addressing global challenges like climate change, where the actions of one nation or community impact the entire planet. Non-violence (*ahiṃsā*)¹¹ is a cornerstone of Buddhist ethics. The Buddha emphasized resolving conflicts through understanding and compassion rather than aggression. Non-violence is not merely the absence of physical harm but extends to speech, thought, and intention. It requires individuals to refrain from actions that cause suffering to others and to actively cultivate peace. The first precept (*pañca sīla*) in Buddhism, means: “I undertake the training rule to refrain from taking life.”¹² In the context of societal living, *ahiṃsā* promotes diplomacy, dialogue, and reconciliation as tools for conflict resolution. Its relevance is evident in the strategies employed by leaders like Emperor Ashoka, who renounced violence after embracing *Buddha’s Dhamma* and propagated the *Dhamma* as a means of uniting diverse communities. The core teachings of *Buddha Dhamma* offer timeless insights into creating a world grounded in unity and peace. By embracing interconnectedness, ethical living, and non-violence, individuals and societies can transcend divisions and work collaboratively toward harmonious coexistence. These principles not only provide a moral framework for personal growth but also serve as a blueprint for addressing global challenges in an increasingly interconnected world. This verse comes from the *Dhammapada*: “Hatred is, indeed, never appeased by hatred in this world. It is appeased only by loving-kindness such is the ancient law.”¹³ and is one of the most well-known teachings of the Buddha on non-violence and peace.

2.2. Historical contributions to peace

Buddha Dhamma’s role in shaping a peaceful world has been pivotal throughout history. By prioritizing values like compassion, non-violence, and interconnectedness, *Buddha Dhamma* has provided a moral and ethical framework that has transcended boundaries and inspired peace on a global scale. Its historical contributions are particularly evident in the transformative reign of Emperor Ashoka and its influence along the cultural and intellectual corridors of

¹⁰ *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*: “Yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tāṃ pracakṣmahe, sā prajñāptir upādāya pratīpat saiva madhyamā.

¹¹ *Dhp* 129 – 30.

¹² Undertaking the Five Precepts – (fist of the five). Pali text: “Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhā-padaṃ samādiyāmi”

¹³ *Dhp* 5.

Asia.¹⁴ Emperor Ashoka's *Dhamma* Diplomacy: The reign of Emperor Ashoka (268 – 232 BCE) marks a turning point in the history of *Buddha Dhamma* as a global force for peace. Known as one of India's greatest rulers, Ashoka initially expanded his empire through military conquest. However, the devastating Kalinga war profoundly transformed him. Witnessing the immense suffering caused by the war, Ashoka embraced *Buddha Dhamma*, renounced violence, and adopted a policy of "*Dhamma* diplomacy."¹⁵ Ashoka's *Dhamma* was a code of ethical living, inspired by Buddhist teachings, that emphasized non-violence, tolerance, and compassion. He actively promoted harmony among his diverse subjects, encouraging mutual respect among different communities and faiths. One of Ashoka's significant contributions was the dissemination of *Buddha Dhamma* beyond India. Through edicts inscribed on pillars and rocks, he spread messages of peace and ethical living across his empire and beyond. He sent emissaries to regions such as Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Hellenistic kingdoms, facilitating the global spread of Buddhist ideals. For instance, the mission to Sri Lanka, led by Ashoka's son Mahinda, laid the foundation for the country's enduring Buddhist tradition. Ashoka's policies created a legacy of peace and inclusivity, demonstrating that governance rooted in ethical principles can lead to societal harmony. His reign is often cited as a model for moral leadership, inspiring leaders and movements throughout history.¹⁶ Cultural Bridges Across Asia: *Buddha Dhamma* played a crucial role in building cultural and intellectual bridges across Asia, particularly along the Silk Road. As Buddhist monks, scholars, and traders traveled across vast regions, they facilitated the exchange of ideas, art, and knowledge, contributing to the peaceful integration of diverse cultures. (1) Trade Road Networks: The Trade Road, a network of trade routes linking East and West, became a conduit for the spread of *Buddha Dhamma*. Buddhist teachings traveled from India to Central Asia, China, Korea, and Japan. Along these routes, monasteries served as centers of learning and refuge, fostering dialogue and cooperation among diverse communities¹⁷. (2) Art and Architecture: The transmission of Buddhist art, such as the iconic Gandhara sculptures blending Indian and Hellenistic styles, illustrates how *Buddha Dhamma* encouraged cultural syncretism. Pagodas, stupas, and monasteries became symbols of shared heritage across Asia. (3) Intellectual Exchange: *Buddha Dhamma* fostered intellectual collaboration through the translation of texts and the exchange of philosophical ideas. Centres like Nalanda University in India became hubs of international learning, attracting scholars from across Asia. *Buddha Dhamma*'s historical contributions to peace exemplify its power to unite diverse communities through shared values and dialogue. From Emperor Ashoka's transformative leadership to the

¹⁴ Thapar, R. (2002). *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*. Oxford University Press, p. 45.

¹⁵ Geiger, W. (1912). *Mahavamsa: The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*. Pali Text Society, p. 45.

¹⁶ Sircar, D. C. (1957). *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*. Vol. 1, University of Calcutta, p. 98.

¹⁷ Sen, T. (2003). *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600 – 1400*. University of Hawaii Press, p. 112.

cultural and intellectual exchanges along the Silk Road, *Buddha Dhamma* has consistently demonstrated its ability to build bridges and create harmony. These historical examples serve as enduring reminders of *Buddha Dhamma's* relevance in fostering peace in today's interconnected world.¹⁸

2.3. Buddha Dhamma and modern global challenges

In the face of modern global challenges like environmental degradation and escalating conflicts, *Buddha Dhamma* offers timeless wisdom that addresses these issues with profound simplicity and relevance. Rooted in principles of interconnectedness, non-violence, and mindfulness, Buddhist teachings provide practical approaches to fostering sustainability and resolving conflicts in an increasingly fragmented world. (1) Environmental Ethics: Buddhist teachings emphasize living in harmony with nature, viewing humans as integral components of the ecological system rather than its dominators. This perspective resonates deeply in the context of today's environmental crises, including climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. This verse: "All sentient beings, all living things, all creatures, everyone: may they see only nice things, may bad not come to anyone" is a beautiful expression of loving-kindness (*mettā*). It is a universal wish for the well-being of all living beings.¹⁹ Reverence for All Life: The Buddhist principle of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence) extends to all living beings, advocating against practices that harm the environment. By promoting compassion toward all forms of life, *Buddha Dhamma* fosters a deep ecological ethic.²⁰ Simplicity and Moderation: The teachings of the Buddha encourage mindful consumption and contentment with less, countering the culture of overconsumption and waste that drives environmental degradation. The Middle Way, which avoids extremes of indulgence and austerity, offers a sustainable path for modern lifestyles²¹. Interconnectedness (*Pratītyasamutpāda*):²² The concept of Dependent Origination underscores the interdependence of all beings and systems. This holistic view aligns with modern ecological thinking, emphasizing that human well-being is inseparable from the health of the environment²³. *Buddha Dhamma* inspires practical initiatives for environmental preservation. For instance, Buddhist communities worldwide are engaged in tree-planting drives, conservation efforts, and campaigns against pollution. Monasteries in Thailand, for example, have championed the ordination of trees as "forest

¹⁸ Gombrich, R. (1988). *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. Routledge, p. 216.

¹⁹ AN 4.67: "Sabbe sattā sabbe paṇā, sabbe bhūtā ca kevalā; Sabbe bhadrāni passantu, mā kañci pāpamāgamā."

²⁰ *Dhammapada* (Verses 129 - 130).

²¹ Müller, F. M. (1881). *The Dhammapada: A Collection of Verses*. Oxford University Press, p. 356.

²² *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Bodhi, B. (2000). Wisdom Publications, p. 1178.

²³ *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Bodhi, B. (2012). Wisdom Publications, p. 2156.

monks,” symbolically protecting them from deforestation. (2) Conflict Avoidance: The world today is marred by conflicts fuelled by political, ethnic, and religious differences. Buddhist teachings on non-violence, compassion, and mindfulness offer effective tools for conflict resolution that prioritize dialogue and mutual understanding. Cultivating Inner Peace: *Buddha Dhamma* posits that external conflicts are often manifestations of internal turmoil. Practices like meditation and mindfulness foster inner calm, enabling individuals and communities to approach disputes with clarity and compassion. This verse highlights profound Buddhist teachings on mental defilements, suffering, and true peace: “There is no fire like passion. There is no crime like anger. There is no pain like the personalized aggregate of phenomena. There is no higher happiness than the supreme peace.”²⁴ Compassionate Communication: The principle of Right Speech, a component of the Eightfold Path, emphasizes truthful, kind, and constructive communication. This approach facilitates a dialogue that bridges differences rather than deepens divides.²⁵ Forgiveness and Reconciliation: *Buddha Dhamma* encourages letting go of anger and resentment, focusing instead on healing and restoring relationships. This ethos is embodied in initiatives like the *Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement* in Sri Lanka, which applies Buddhist principles to promote grassroots reconciliation in post-conflict areas.²⁶ Buddhist-inspired conflict resolution has also influenced global peace-building efforts. The Dalai Lama, a prominent advocate of non-violence, has emphasized dialogue and understanding as the only sustainable paths to resolving international disputes, from political tensions to community-level conflicts. *Buddha Dhamma*’s emphasis on harmony with nature and compassionate resolution of conflicts makes it highly relevant in addressing modern global challenges. Its teachings inspire both individual and collective action, fostering a world where sustainability and peace are not ideals but achievable realities. By integrating these principles into global strategies, humanity can confront pressing crises with wisdom, balance, and hope for a harmonious future.

III. INDIA’S LEADERSHIP IN FOSTERING UNITY AND INCLUSIVITY

3.1. India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has emerged as a global advocate for unity, inclusivity, and sustainable development. Drawing inspiration from its ancient traditions and values, the nation has blended its cultural heritage with modern strategies to address global challenges. India’s approach is deeply rooted in the ethos of “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*” (The World is One Family), reflecting a vision of global cooperation and shared prosperity.

²⁴ *Dhp* 202: “*rāgasamo aggi natthi, dosasomo kali natthi khandhasamā dukkhā natthi, natthi santiparam sukham*”

²⁵ Badiner, A. H. (1990). *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*. Parallax Press.

²⁶ Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka. (n.d.). *Sarvodaya Sri Lanka: The Past And Future*. <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Sarvodaya.pdf>

The principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is at the heart of India's foreign policy under Modi. This ancient idea, drawn from the Upanishads, emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and the need for global solidarity. Modi has applied this philosophy in diplomatic engagements, fostering international partnerships that prioritize collaboration over competition. It has been a recurring theme in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, where India consistently advocates for global unity in addressing shared challenges like climate change, terrorism, and pandemics. Additionally, India has positioned itself as a champion of the Global South, voicing the concerns of developing nations and pushing for reforms in international institutions like the United Nations to ensure they reflect contemporary geopolitical realities.

3.2. International Buddhist Conventions

As the birthplace of *Buddha Dhamma*, India has leveraged its rich Buddhist heritage to foster global harmony. Under Modi's leadership, the nation has hosted numerous international Buddhist conventions and summits, bringing together leaders, scholars, and practitioners to address modern challenges through Buddhist principles. (1) Promoting Peaceful Dialogue: These conventions serve as platforms for discussing pressing issues like conflict resolution, environmental sustainability, and ethical governance, guided by the Buddha's teachings. (2) Strengthening Civilizational Connect: By revitalizing its Buddhist legacy, India has strengthened ties with Buddhist-majority countries, particularly in Southeast Asia and East Asia. Initiatives like the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) have further enhanced India's role as a hub of Buddhist culture and philosophy.²⁷ (3) Pali as Classical Language: On October 3, 2024, the Indian government officially conferred Classical Language status upon Pali, along with Marathi, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali. This recognition underscores Pali's profound historical and cultural significance, particularly as the liturgical language of *Theravāda* Buddhism. By elevating Pali to this esteemed status, India aims to strengthen its civilizational connections with Buddhist-majority countries, fostering deeper cultural and spiritual ties.²⁸ This move not only honors India's rich linguistic heritage but also enhances diplomatic relations with nations sharing a Buddhist legacy.²⁹ (4) Buddhist Pilgrimage Circuits: The development of Buddhist circuits linking key heritage sites, such as Bodh Gaya and Sarnath,

²⁷ International Buddhist Confederation located in New Delhi is a NGO, engaged to promote Dhamma worldwide.

²⁸ PM's address at the inauguration of International Abhidhamma Divas. (n.d.). https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-address-at-the-inauguration-of-international-abhidhamma-divas/#:~:text=Once%20again%2C%20I%20have%20the,participating%20in%20that%20as%20well.

²⁹ Cabinet approves conferring status of Classical Language to Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali languages. (n.d.). https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/cabinet-approves-conferring-status-of-classical-language-to-marathi-pali-prakrit-assamese-and-bengali-languages/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

has not only promoted tourism but also reinforced cultural bonds with nations sharing a Buddhist heritage.

3.3. India's G20 Presidency in 2023

India's leadership during the G20 summit in 2023 underscored its commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable development³⁰. (1) A Focus on Inclusivity: The summit, themed "One Earth, One Family, One Future," echoed the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. India prioritized issues such as climate resilience, equitable economic growth, and digital inclusion.³¹ (2) Bridging Divides: India successfully facilitated dialogue among diverse stakeholders, balancing the priorities of advanced economies and developing nations. Initiatives like the Global Biofuel Alliance and the International Solar Alliance showcased India's ability to lead on sustainable energy solutions. (3) Empowering Marginalized Voices: India's G20 presidency highlighted its role as a bridge between the Global North and South, advocating for policies that address the concerns of the developing world. Under Narendra Modi, India has championed unity and inclusivity on the global stage by blending ancient wisdom with contemporary strategies. Through the philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, international Buddhist conventions, and its G20 leadership, India has reinforced its position as a global leader committed to fostering harmony and sustainable development. This holistic approach not only honors India's rich cultural heritage but also contributes meaningfully to building a peaceful and inclusive global order.

3.4. Key initiatives for global harmony

India has consistently sought to foster global harmony by integrating its rich spiritual heritage with pragmatic policies. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has amplified its efforts through initiatives that emphasize conflict resolution, regional cooperation, and solidarity with the Global South³². These initiatives reflect the nation's commitment to promoting peace and inclusivity on the global stage.

Bharatiya Diplomacy Rooted in Spiritual Heritage: Indian diplomacy is deeply influenced by its spiritual traditions, particularly Buddhist values such as compassion, non-violence, and mutual respect. These principles have guided India's approach to conflict resolution and international engagement.³³ (1) Buddhist Values in Diplomacy: India's Buddhist heritage underscores its efforts to mediate conflicts and promote peaceful dialogue. In multilateral forums, India has emphasized the importance of understanding and reconciliation, drawing

³⁰ G20. (2023). *G20 New Delhi leaders' declaration*. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/CPV/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf>

³¹ V. Srinivas. *G20@2023, The Roadmap to Indian Presidency*. Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, 2022, p. 132.

³² Sushil Kuamr, *India's G20 Presidency as a Voice of Global South*, papge 10-21 RIS, New Delhi, 2024, p. 256.

³³ Narendra Modi, *India's agenda chairing its G20 Presidency will go inclusive, ambitious action oriented, and decisive*. The Indian Express, 1 December 2022.

inspiration from Buddhist teachings on *ahimsā* (non-violence) and the Middle Way. (2) Cultural Diplomacy: Initiatives such as the International Buddhist Confederation and the celebration of Buddha Purnima at the United Nations have enhanced India's soft power, showcasing its role as a custodian of Buddhist values. These efforts foster cross-cultural understanding and build bridges with Buddhist-majority nations in Asia and beyond. (3) Conflict Resolution Efforts: India has actively participated in peace-building initiatives, including mediating disputes and supporting post-conflict reconstruction in the regions. By advocating for solutions rooted in dialogue and inclusivity, India embodies its spiritual legacy in diplomacy.

India's Neighbourhood First Policy reflects its commitment to fostering regional harmony and cooperation in South Asia. This policy prioritizes building strong relationships with neighboring countries through economic assistance, cultural exchanges, and collaborative projects.³⁴ (1) Humanitarian Assistance: India has extended aid to neighbors during crises, such as providing COVID-19 vaccines under its *Vaccine Maitri initiative*³⁵ and offering disaster relief to nations like Nepal and Bangladesh. These actions reinforce India's image as a responsible regional leader. (2) Connectivity and Trade: India has undertaken projects to improve regional connectivity, such as the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline and the development of transport corridors linking South Asian nations. These initiatives facilitate trade and strengthen economic ties. (3) Cultural and Religious Linkages: India promotes shared heritage through initiatives like the Buddhist Circuit, connecting key pilgrimage sites, and fostering cultural ties with countries like Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

As a leader of the Global South, India has championed solidarity among developing nations by emphasizing shared challenges and opportunities.³⁶ (1) Developmental Assistance: India has supported infrastructure, education, and healthcare projects in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean through its Lines of Credit program. These initiatives contribute to sustainable development in partner countries. (2) Cultural Exchanges: By hosting events like the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* and facilitating academic exchanges, India strengthens ties with the diaspora and enhances cultural diplomacy. (3) Leadership in Multilateral Forums: India has used platforms like the G20, BRICS, and the International Solar Alliance to advocate for the interests of developing nations, ensuring their voices are heard in global decision-making processes. India's key initiatives for global harmony are a testament to its ability to balance its spiritual heritage with

³⁴ Ministry Of External Affairs India's Neighbourhood First Policy Twenty Second Report, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi July, 2023.

³⁵ Pant, H. V. (2023, December 4). *Adding heft to diplomacy with some help from science*. orfonline.org. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/adding-heft-to-diplomacy-with-some-help-from-science>

³⁶ Gray, K., & Gills, B. K. (2016). South–South cooperation and the rise of the Global South. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(4), 557–574. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1128817>

modern diplomacy. Through its commitment to Buddhist principles, regional cooperation, and South-South solidarity, India continues to play a pivotal role in fostering peace and inclusivity in an interconnected world. These efforts highlight the nation's dedication to creating a more equitable and harmonious global order.

3.5. India's role in multilateral forums

India has played a transformative role in multilateral forums, championing inclusivity, cooperation, and reforms to address the pressing challenges of the modern era. Guided by its values of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" (The World is One Family) and its commitment to global equity, India has leveraged platforms like the United Nations, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to advocate for a fair and representative global order.³⁷

(1) United Nations and Global Reforms: India has been a vocal advocate for reforming the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to better reflect the realities of the 21st century.³⁸ Advocating for Inclusivity: India has consistently highlighted the need for equitable representation in global governance. It supports expanding the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to include nations from Africa, Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific, regions currently underrepresented in the council's permanent membership. India's G4 Initiative: Alongside Brazil, Germany, and Japan, India has championed the G4 model, which seeks UNSC reforms to incorporate these nations as permanent members. This proposal reflects the growing influence of emerging economies and their legitimate aspirations for a greater voice in decision-making. Leadership in Peacekeeping: India has been a significant contributor to UN peacekeeping missions, demonstrating its commitment to global peace and stability. Indian troops have served in some of the world's most challenging conflict zones, reinforcing India's role as a responsible international actor.³⁹ Development and Climate Advocacy: India uses its platform at the UN to emphasize sustainable development and climate action. Through initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and its proactive participation in COP conferences, India leads efforts to address climate change collaboratively.

(2) BRICS: Strengthening Emerging Economies⁴⁰ As a founding member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), India plays a crucial role in fostering cooperation among emerging economies.⁴¹ Economic

³⁷ Rajeesh Kumar, *Principled But Evolving, India's Approach to Multilateral Peace and Security*. MP-IDASA Monograph Series, No-71, New Delhi, 2021, p. 458.

³⁸ Mohan, C. R. (2019). *Modi's World: Expanding India's Global Footprint*. HarperCollins, p. 157.

³⁹ United Nations Peacekeeping. *India's Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Missions*. www.un.org/en/peacekeeping

⁴⁰ BRICS is an Intergovernmental Organization that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Aim to create economic and geopolitical cooperation and coordination among member states.

⁴¹ Frolova, E., & Sharma, R. (2022). *BRICS and the Global Economy: Challenges and Pros-*

Collaboration: India has worked within BRICS to promote trade, investment, and development initiatives. Platforms like the New Development Bank (NDB) provide financial support for sustainable projects in member countries, reflecting India's emphasis on equitable growth.⁴² Technological Innovation: India has encouraged innovation and digital cooperation among BRICS nations. Initiatives like India's Digital Public Infrastructure model have been shared to help other countries harness technology for development. People-to-People Connectivity: India advocates for cultural and academic exchanges within BRICS to deepen mutual understanding and strengthen ties among member states.

(3) Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO): India's active participation in the SCO underscores its commitment to regional stability and connectivity.⁴³ Counter-Terrorism and Security: India has used the SCO to address critical security challenges, including terrorism and extremism. It actively promotes dialogue and cooperation to ensure regional peace. Economic and Cultural Engagement: India advocates for expanding trade, connectivity, and cultural exchanges among SCO member states, enhancing regional collaboration. Initiatives like the Chabahar Port and the International North-South Transport Corridor align with SCO's objectives of greater integration. India's leadership in multilateral forums exemplifies its dedication to fostering a fair and inclusive global order. Through its advocacy for UN reforms, active engagement in BRICS, and strategic role in the SCO, India continues to champion cooperation among nations while addressing critical global and regional challenges. These efforts not only reinforce India's position as a key global player but also contribute to building a world rooted in equity, sustainability, and peace.

IV. BUDDHA DHAMMA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Buddha Dhamma, with its enduring principles of compassion, interconnectedness, and non-violence, has much to offer the Global South as it seeks solutions to developmental challenges. These nations, spanning Asia, Africa, and Latin America, share common struggles, including poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and the search for sustainable development. By embracing Buddhist values, the Global South can foster cultural unity and prioritize human well-being, making these teachings a catalyst for transformative change.⁴⁴

4.1. The Global South and its shared challenges

The term "Global South" refers to a group of nations, primarily in Asia,

pects. Springer, p. 267.

⁴² BRICS (2023). *Johannesburg Declaration on Strengthening Emerging Economies*, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_18

⁴³ SCO- *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an Inter-governmental organization that focuses on political, economic, security and defense cooperation*, established in 2001.

⁴⁴ Schumacher, E. F. (1973). *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. Harper & Row, p. 176.

Africa, and Latin America, united by shared histories of colonialism and underdevelopment. These countries face a range of challenges that hinder their progress toward equitable and sustainable development.⁴⁵ Economic Inequalities: Many nations in the Global South struggle with income disparities, limited access to resources, and reliance on volatile global markets. Social Issues: Challenges such as illiteracy, inadequate healthcare, and social inequities persist, further marginalizing vulnerable populations. Environmental Crises: Deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and vulnerability to climate change disproportionately impact the Global South, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity. Global Disparities in Governance: The lack of adequate representation in global institutions hampers these nations' ability to advocate for their interests in international decision-making. Despite these challenges, the Global South is also home to rich cultural traditions and immense growth potential. *Buddha Dhamma*, deeply rooted in several of these regions, can serve as a unifying and guiding force for addressing these issues collectively.

4.2. Buddha Dhamma as a catalyst for change

Buddha Dhamma's values and teachings provide practical solutions for fostering cultural unity and promoting human-centric development. Its emphasis on harmony, moderation, and ethical living resonates deeply with the aspirations of the Global South.

4.2.1. Cultural unity

Buddha Dhamma as a Bond:⁴⁶ *Buddha Dhamma* has historically served as a cultural bridge across nations in Asia and beyond. Its teachings transcend ethnic, linguistic, and national boundaries, fostering shared values and understanding.⁴⁷ Shared Heritage in Asia: Countries in the Global South, such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam, have deep Buddhist traditions. These shared cultural roots enhance cross-border cooperation, from education to cultural preservation. Promoting Peaceful Coexistence: Buddhist teachings emphasize compassion and mutual respect, reducing tensions in ethnically or religiously diverse societies. This has been especially impactful in regions where social harmony is essential for stability. Cultural connection: By promoting Buddhist heritage through global forums, cultural exchanges, and pilgrimages, nations in the Global South can strengthen ties, enhance mutual understanding, and foster regional unity. India, as the birthplace of *Buddha Dhamma*, plays a crucial role in this endeavor by hosting international Buddhist summits and developing Buddhist pilgrimage circuits.

4.2.2. Economic and social development

A Buddhist Perspective: Buddhist teachings emphasize well-being and

⁴⁵ Payutto, P. A. (1994). *Buddhist Economics: A Middle Way for the Market Place*. Gunalan-kar Press, p. 237.

⁴⁶ Geiger, W. (1912). *Mahavamsa: The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*. Pali Text Society, p. 598.

⁴⁷ Bodhi, B. (2012). *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Anguttara Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 1134.

ethical governance, offering a model for holistic development that balances material progress with spiritual and ecological health. Prioritizing Human Well-Being: The Buddhist approach advocates for policies that place human well-being at the centre of development. This contrasts with growth models focused solely on GDP and material accumulation, often at the expense of societal and environmental health. Gross National Happiness (GNH):⁴⁸ Bhutan, inspired by Buddhist values, has pioneered the GNH framework, emphasizing the importance of spiritual well-being, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation alongside economic growth. This model has inspired policymakers in other parts of the Global South to rethink traditional development metrics.⁴⁹ Promoting Equity and Inclusion: *Buddha Dhamma's* teachings on compassion and non-attachment to wealth encourage fair distribution of resources and social equity. Policies inspired by these principles address structural inequalities, ensuring that marginalized communities have access to opportunities. Community-Centered Development: Buddhist organizations in Southeast Asia often lead initiatives in education, healthcare, and rural development, demonstrating how Buddhist values translate into practical, community-focused action.⁵⁰ Environmental Sustainability: The Buddhist ethos of living in harmony with nature aligns with the Global South's urgent need for sustainable practices to combat environmental degradation⁵¹. Mindful Consumption: The Middle Way advocates moderation, encouraging lifestyles that reduce waste and environmental impact. Ecological Conservation: Monasteries and Buddhist communities across Asia have spearheaded reforestation drives, wildlife protection initiatives, and campaigns to combat pollution, providing models for sustainable living.

4.3. Buddha Dhamma and good governance

Buddhist principles of ethical leadership and moral accountability can guide governance in the Global South.⁵² By emphasizing the welfare of citizens over personal or political gain, these teachings foster transparency and public trust. Dhamma as a Governance Model: Inspired by Emperor Ashoka's example, modern leaders can adopt Buddhist values to create systems that prioritize justice, equity, and sustainability⁵³. Conflict Resolution: Buddhist teachings on reconciliation and dialogue offer tools for resolving disputes,

⁴⁸ GNH- Gross National Happiness Index | Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/gross-national-happiness-index>

⁴⁹ Royal Government of Bhutan (2008). *Gross National Happiness Index Report*, <https://ophi.org.uk/gross-national-happiness>.

⁵⁰ Cowell, E. B. (1895). *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*. Cambridge University Press, p. 457.

⁵¹ Sivaraksa, S. (1992). *A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*. Parallax Press, p. 356.

⁵² Strong, J. S. (1983). *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna*. Princeton University Press, p. 34.

⁵³ Gombrich, R. (1988). *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. Routledge, p. 97.

both within and between nations. By fostering understanding and mutual respect, these principles can help reduce conflict and promote peace in regions affected by instability.

Buddha Dhamma offers the Global South a framework for addressing its shared challenges, emphasizing cultural unity, ethical governance, and human-centred development. Its teachings inspire a vision of progress that values inclusivity, sustainability, and harmony. As nations in the Global South strive for equitable growth and stronger collaboration, *Buddha Dhamma* stands as a beacon of wisdom, providing timeless solutions to modern problems.

India, as a custodian of Buddhist heritage and a leader in the Global South, plays a pivotal role in fostering this vision. By promoting Buddhist principles through cultural diplomacy, developmental cooperation, and multilateral forums, India helps amplify *Buddha Dhamma's* transformative potential for creating a peaceful and inclusive world. The synergy between Buddhist teachings and the aspirations of the Global South holds the promise of a future where development and harmony coexist, benefiting all of humanity.

V. INDIA'S ROLE IN PROMOTING BUDDHIST HERITAGE: REVITALIZING A GLOBAL LEGACY

India's role in promoting Buddhist heritage extends beyond its borders, reflecting both its deep historical connection to *Buddha Dhamma* and its contemporary strategic vision for cultural diplomacy. As the birthplace of *Buddha Dhamma*, India has long been a significant player in the preservation, promotion, and global dissemination of Buddhist philosophy, art, and practices⁵⁴. In recent years, India has revitalized its Buddhist legacy, strengthening ties with countries in the Global South and engaging with the world through initiatives that focus on *Buddha Dhamma's* educational, cultural, and spiritual heritage. Two critical strategies for India's efforts in this regard include the revival of Nalanda University and the promotion of the Buddhist Pilgrimage Circuit⁵⁵, both of which highlight the country's ongoing commitment to being a global hub for Buddhist studies and a facilitator of cultural exchange.

5.1. Revival of Nalanda University: A global centre for Buddhist studies⁵⁶

The revival of Nalanda University is one of the most significant efforts India has undertaken to re-establish its role as the cradle of Buddhist learning and scholarship. The original Nalanda University, established in the 5th century CE under the Gupta Empire, became one of the greatest centers of learning in ancient India, particularly known for its focus on Buddhist philosophy, monastic education, and intellectual exchange. It attracted scholars and

⁵⁴ Sircar, D. C. (1957). *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*. Vol. 1, University of Calcutta, p.171 - 8.

⁵⁵ . Ministry of Tourism, India (2023). *Buddhist Circuit: Promoting Spiritual and Cultural Tourism*. www.tourism.gov.in

⁵⁶ *History and Revival - Nalanda University*. (2024, June 17). Nalanda University. <https://nalandauniv.edu.in/about-nalanda/history-and-revival/>

students from across Asia, including China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia. Nalanda's reputation as a seat of Buddhist scholarship continued until it was destroyed in the 12th century CE by invaders. The loss of this once-great institution marked a decline in the global dissemination of Buddhist knowledge from India⁵⁷.

In the 21st century, India has revived Nalanda University as part of a larger vision to reassert its leadership in Buddhist education and research. In 2006, the Indian government, in collaboration with several Asian countries, launched the effort to establish a new Nalanda University in the state of Bihar, near the ancient ruins of Nalanda. The objective was clear: to create an international academic institution that would serve as a centre for global Buddhist studies, fostering research in Buddhist philosophy, history, literature, and art while offering programs in various disciplines such as ecology, economics, and political science.

The revival of Nalanda University goes beyond being just a physical institution; it is also a symbol of India's commitment to preserving and promoting its Buddhist heritage. The new Nalanda University is designed to attract students and scholars from across Asia and the rest of the world. It offers a platform for intellectual exchange and promotes an understanding of the Buddhist teachings that once inspired scholars from around the globe. The university's modern campus, with state-of-the-art facilities, stands as a bridge between ancient wisdom and contemporary knowledge. Additionally, the presence of Nalanda University has reinvigorated the region as a pilgrimage site, drawing people interested in *Buddha Dhamma's* historical and cultural significance.

India's leadership in the revival of Nalanda University is particularly important for fostering deeper connections with countries in the Global South, many of which share historical and cultural ties to *Buddha Dhamma*. The university serves as an academic and diplomatic tool, helping India strengthen relationships with Southeast Asian nations, East Asian countries, and even nations in Africa and Latin America that are increasingly interested in Buddhist philosophy and practices. By offering courses in Buddhist studies and creating platforms for scholarly dialogue, India contributes to global cultural and intellectual exchange while promoting the understanding of *Buddha Dhamma* as an important element of global heritage.

5.2. Buddhist pilgrimage circuit: Connecting heritage sites across Asia

In addition to the revival of Nalanda University, India has taken proactive steps to promote its Buddhist heritage through the development of a Buddhist Pilgrimage Circuit⁵⁸. This initiative aims to connect India's Buddhist heritage

⁵⁷ Shekhar, V. & IPCS. (2007). Revival of Nalanda University: Key Players and their Soft Power Diplomacy. In *IPCS SPECIAL REPORT*. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/93329/IPCS-Special-Report-48.pdf>

⁵⁸ Sircar, D. C. (1957). *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*. Vol. 1,

sites with other important Buddhist sites in Asia, thereby enhancing tourism and fostering cultural ties between countries with shared Buddhist traditions. By promoting this circuit, India hopes to revitalize the spiritual and cultural linkages between nations and establish itself as a focal point for Buddhist pilgrimage and tourism.

India is home to several key Buddhist pilgrimage sites, including Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar and other Sravasti, Sankissa. These locations are deeply significant in the life of the Buddha and are recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Bodh Gaya, for example, is where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, and it remains one of the most important pilgrimage destinations for Buddhists worldwide. Similarly, Sarnath is the place where the Buddha delivered his first sermon, marking the beginning of his public teachings.⁵⁹

The Buddhist Pilgrimage Circuit connects these sacred sites in India to other key locations across Asia, such as Lumbini (in Nepal), where the Buddha was born, and Kushinagar, where he attained *Mahaparinirvana*.⁶⁰ In addition, the circuit extends to other countries with rich Buddhist traditions, such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, and Japan. This initiative is not only about promoting tourism; it also serves to encourage a deeper understanding of Buddha Dhamma's global influence and its shared cultural and spiritual heritage across national boundaries.

By connecting these important sites through a pilgrimage circuit, India is not only enhancing tourism but also fostering stronger ties with other nations in the Global South. These connections are vital, as many of these countries share a historical and cultural connection to *Buddha Dhamma* and its practices. The promotion of a Buddhist pilgrimage route can help reinforce regional cooperation, cultural exchange, and people-to-people interactions. Pilgrimage is, after all, not just a religious activity but also an experience of cultural immersion, mutual respect, and shared values.

The Indian government has also worked to improve infrastructure and accessibility to these pilgrimage sites. Efforts have been made to build better roads, establish world-class accommodations, and improve transportation networks to facilitate smooth travel for international tourists. In addition to the physical infrastructure, India has also focused on developing digital tools and resources to enhance the experience for pilgrims and tourists⁶¹. Virtual tours, educational programs, and mobile applications are designed to provide information about the historical and spiritual significance of each site, helping

University of Calcutta.

⁵⁹ World Bank <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/zh/387491563440124268/pdf/The-Buddhist-Circuit-A-Program-for-the-Development-of-the-Buddhist-Circuit-in-South-Asia.pdf>

⁶⁰ DN 16.

⁶¹ Ministry of Tourism, India (2023). *Buddhist Circuit: Promoting Spiritual and Cultural Tourism*. www.tourism.gov.in

tourists deepen their understanding of Buddhist heritage.⁶²

5.3. Strengthening ties with the global south

India's revitalization of its Buddhist heritage is not just about preserving the past; it is about strengthening its influence and role as a leader in the Global South. India shares cultural, historical, and spiritual ties with many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, particularly in the realms of Buddha Dhamma, peace, and non-violence. By revitalizing Buddha Dhamma as a cultural and intellectual force, India is engaging in a form of soft diplomacy that brings together nations based on shared values.

Through initiatives like the revival of Nalanda University and the promotion of the Buddhist Pilgrimage Circuit, India is encouraging cross-cultural dialogue and exchanges that help forge deeper ties with its neighbours. By offering opportunities for educational collaboration and spiritual pilgrimage, India is fostering goodwill and cooperation in the region. These initiatives promote mutual understanding, promote the shared cultural and philosophical heritage of the Global South, and help position India as a leading force for peace and stability in the region.

India's efforts to promote its Buddhist heritage through the revival of Nalanda University and the development of the Buddhist Pilgrimage Circuit reflect the country's deep commitment to preserving its cultural legacy while fostering global cooperation. These initiatives not only help reinforce India's status as the birthplace of Buddha Dhamma but also strengthen ties with countries in the Global South by creating avenues for intellectual, cultural, and spiritual exchange. As India continues to leverage its Buddhist heritage as a diplomatic tool, it is setting an example of how cultural heritage can be a means for fostering peace, unity, and cooperation in the modern world⁶³.

VI. BUDDHA DHAMMA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE ASIAN CENTURY

The Buddha instructs his disciples to spread the Dhamma for the "welfare and happiness of the many," which aligns with the modern role of Buddhism in international diplomacy and cultural exchange.⁶⁴

⁶² International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) (2023). *Annual Report on Buddhist Pilgrimage Initiatives*. www.ibcworld.org World Bank <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/zh/387491563440124268/pdf/The-Buddhist-Circuit-A-Program-for-the-Development-of-the-Buddhist-Circuit-in-South-Asia.pdf>

DN 16.

Ministry of Tourism, India (2023). *Buddhist Circuit: Promoting Spiritual and Cultural Tourism*. www.tourism.gov.in

International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) (2023). *Annual Report on Buddhist Pilgrimage Initiatives*. www.ibcworld.org

⁶³ Mukherjee, R. (2020). *Buddhism as Soft Power: India's Cultural Influence in Asia*. Springer, p. 225.

⁶⁴ DN 16.

6.1. Buddha Dhamma in the 21st Century: The Asian Century

The 21st century is often referred to as “The Asian Century,” a period in which Asia is emerging as the global epicentre, shaping economic, political, and cultural trends worldwide. The continent, home to over half of the world’s population, has seen an extraordinary transformation in recent decades, especially with the rapid rise of China and India as major global powers. As Asia’s economic growth continues, so does its cultural influence, and Buddha Dhamma, as one of the continent’s oldest and most enduring spiritual traditions, plays a key role in shaping the region’s identity and its place in the global discourse. The role of Buddha Dhamma in this “Asian Century” extends beyond the spiritual realm and contributes significantly to the region’s soft power, international relations, and Pan-Asian cooperation on key issues such as climate change and education.

6.2. Asia as the global epicenter

In the 21st century, Asia stands at the crossroads of global change. The continent is the largest economic hub, with countries like China, India, Japan, and Southeast Asian nations driving much of the global economy. Asia’s economic growth has been fuelled by industrialization, urbanization, and the rapid expansion of trade and technology. Countries in the region are projected to dominate global markets, reshaping the world order. As Asia’s economic power grows, so does its political influence, challenging the dominance of Western powers. In particular, China’s rise as a global power and India’s emergence as a major player in geopolitics, trade, and technology have altered the global balance of power. Along with Japan and Southeast Asia, the region is increasingly influential in shaping global discussions on key issues such as trade, security, and technology. However, Asia’s importance is not solely economic or political. The region is also the epicenter of some of the world’s oldest and richest cultures, with diverse traditions, philosophies, and religions. These cultural elements have a profound impact on how Asia engages with the rest of the world. *Buddha Dhamma*, with its teachings that transcend national borders and cultural divides, is one of the most significant cultural exports of the region. As Asia continues to grow in stature, *Buddha Dhamma’s* role in global affairs becomes more important, influencing not just regional dynamics but also international relations.

6.3. Buddha Dhamma’s role in the Asian Century

As Asia continues to assert its economic, political, and cultural influence, Buddha Dhamma plays a multifaceted role in shaping both the region’s identity and its place in the broader global context. Its influence extends beyond the realm of religion and philosophy, contributing to Asia’s soft power diplomacy, fostering regional cooperation, and offering ethical frameworks for addressing pressing global challenges.

6.3.1. Cultural Diplomacy: *Buddha Dhamma* Enhances Asia’s influence in global discourse

One of the most significant ways in which *Buddha Dhamma* influences

the global landscape in the 21st century is through its contribution to Asia's soft power. Soft power refers to a country's ability to influence others through non-coercive means, such as culture, values, and diplomacy. In this context, *Buddha Dhamma* serves as a vital tool for enhancing Asia's cultural diplomacy and international influence.⁶⁵

Buddha Dhamma's emphasis on peace, compassion, and non-violence resonates deeply with global audiences and positions Asia as a promoter of values that encourage harmony, mutual respect, and understanding. As a philosophy that stresses interconnectedness, mindfulness, and the alleviation of suffering, *Buddha Dhamma* aligns well with contemporary global concerns such as human rights, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Asian countries with rich Buddhist traditions, including Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, Japan, and South Korea, often utilize *Buddha Dhamma* as a form of soft power in their international relations, projecting an image of peaceful engagement and moral leadership on the world stage.⁶⁶

The promotion of Buddhist teachings and practices in various international forums, such as the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, and interfaith dialogue platforms, strengthens Asia's position in the global community. *Buddha Dhamma's* influence is particularly evident in initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue among civilizations and promoting peace in conflict-ridden areas. Countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka, which have long been associated with *Buddha Dhamma*, are increasingly seen as important players in peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and global humanitarian efforts.

Moreover, *Buddha Dhamma* plays a key role in the Asia-Pacific region's diplomatic engagement with the rest of the world. For instance, the Dalai Lama, as a spiritual leader and advocate for peace and human rights, represents the global face of *Vajrayana* and is regarded as an influential figure in international affairs. His efforts to promote interreligious dialogue, non-violence, and environmental stewardship have made *Buddha Dhamma* a powerful symbol of Asia's diplomatic outreach.

6.3.2. Pan-Asian Cooperation: Buddhist teachings foster regional collaboration on issues like climate change and education

Buddha Dhamma's influence extends beyond soft power and into practical realms such as Pan-Asian cooperation, particularly in addressing shared challenges such as climate change, education, and public health. Buddhist teachings, which emphasize interdependence, mindfulness, and ecological balance, offer ethical frameworks for addressing pressing global issues, many of which affect countries across Asia.

Buddha Dhamma's emphasis on interconnectedness makes it particularly

⁶⁵ . International Buddhist Confederation (2023). *Annual Report on Buddhist Diplomacy and Global Engagement*. www.ibcworld.org

⁶⁶ United Nations General Assembly (1999). *Resolution 54/115 – International Recognition of Vesak Day*.

relevant to discussions about climate change and environmental sustainability. Buddhist traditions across Asia have long emphasized the importance of living in harmony with nature, viewing human beings as part of a larger web of life. This perspective encourages a holistic approach to environmental issues, which resonates with global efforts to combat climate change. Countries such as Bhutan, which practices Gross National Happiness (GNH)⁶⁷ — a development philosophy rooted in Buddhist principles — have taken significant steps in promoting sustainability, conservation, and environmental well-being. Bhutan's commitment to remaining carbon-negative and preserving its natural heritage has positioned it as a model for other nations seeking to balance development with environmental stewardship.

Buddha Dhamma's role in promoting environmental sustainability is also evident in the efforts of Buddhist organizations and communities across Asia. From the monastic networks in Thailand and Sri Lanka to grassroots movements in India and Nepal, Buddhist teachings are increasingly being invoked to address the ecological crises facing the region. Buddhist monks and activists are using their platforms to advocate for policies that protect the environment, promote sustainable lifestyles, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In addition to environmental issues, *Buddha Dhamma* plays a significant role in fostering regional cooperation on education. Buddhist educational institutions, such as Nalanda University in India and various Buddhist universities across Southeast Asia, serve as centres for the study of both Buddhist philosophy and contemporary issues facing the region. These institutions are also becoming increasingly global in their outreach, offering courses and programs in subjects like peace studies, international relations, and sustainable development.

Buddha Dhamma's influence in the educational sphere extends beyond formal academic institutions. Buddhist teachings on mindfulness and meditation have been integrated into educational curricula in several Asian countries, with schools adopting these practices to enhance students' well-being, focus, and emotional intelligence. As Asia's economies continue to modernize and expand, the emphasis on ethical education and the development of inner peace through Buddhist practices becomes an essential part of preparing future generations to navigate complex global challenges.

6.4. The global influence of Buddha Dhamma in the 21st Century

Buddha Dhamma's contributions to Asia's rise in the 21st century is undeniable. As Asia becomes more influential in global politics, trade, and culture, Buddha Dhamma offers a unique set of values and teachings that help shape the region's role in the world. The emphasis on peace, compassion, and the interconnectedness of all life provides a solid foundation for regional

⁶⁷ Bodhi, B. (2012). *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 1187.

cooperation and international diplomacy.⁶⁸

Through soft power diplomacy, *Buddha Dhamma* enhances Asia's influence, positioning the continent as a global leader in promoting values of peace, respect, and harmony. Buddhist teachings also foster regional collaboration, encouraging Asian countries to work together to address critical challenges such as climate change, education, and social justice. The enduring relevance of *Buddha Dhamma* in the 21st century, coupled with Asia's economic and cultural growth, positions the region as not only the economic epicentre but also the spiritual and ethical leader on the world stage.

As the Asian Century unfolds, *Buddha Dhamma's* role in shaping the region's identity and its global influence will continue to grow. The values it promotes — mindfulness, peace, sustainability, and compassion — are more relevant than ever in a world facing complex challenges. In this new era, Asia, with *Buddha Dhamma* as a guiding force, has the potential to lead the world in creating a more balanced, harmonious, and interconnected future.

6.5. The International Buddhist Confederation (IBC): History and contributions to promoting Buddha Dhamma

The International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) stands as one of the most significant global organizations devoted to the promotion and preservation of Buddha Dhamma. Established to unite Buddhist traditions, institutions, and practitioners under a common banner, the IBC serves as a vital platform for dialogue, collaboration, and action in addressing global challenges through the wisdom of Buddhist teachings. Rooted in the principles of compassion, non-violence, and interconnectedness, the IBC has emerged as a beacon of Buddhist unity and a catalyst for the spread of *Buddha Dhamma* in the contemporary world.

6.6. Historical overview

The International Buddhist Confederation was officially founded in 2012 in New Delhi, India, with the motto of "*Collective Wisdom, United Voice*" as a grantee body of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and with the active support of Buddhist leaders and organizations worldwide. The idea for the IBC stemmed from the need for a unifying global body that could bring together diverse Buddhist traditions and institutions to address modern challenges collaboratively.

The inaugural meeting of the IBC brought together over 900 delegates from 46 countries, representing all major Buddhist traditions, including *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna*, and *Vajrayāna*. The establishment of the IBC marked a historic moment, as it was the first time such a diverse assembly of Buddhist representatives had come together with the shared goal of promoting Buddha Dhamma on a global scale. The IBC was envisioned as a non-sectarian, inclusive

⁶⁸ Chair's summary: 3rd Voice of Global South Summit (August 17, 2024). (n.d.). Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/38186/Chairs_Summary_3rd_Voice_of_Global_South_Summit_August_17_2024

organization that would foster dialogue, strengthen cooperation among Buddhist communities, and promote the core values of Buddha Dhamma as a means of addressing global issues such as conflict, environmental degradation, and social inequality.

The IBC is headquartered in New Delhi, India, symbolizing the country's role as the birthplace of *Dhamma* and its commitment to preserving and disseminating the teachings of the Buddha. Its activities are guided by the principles of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* ("The world is one family") and the core teachings of *Buddha Dhamma*, emphasizing interconnectedness, compassion, and ethical living.

Objectives of the IBC. The primary objectives of the International Buddhist Confederation include:

- (1) Preservation of Buddhist Heritage: Safeguarding and promoting the rich cultural, philosophical, and spiritual legacy of Buddhism.
- (2) Global Networking: Establishing a platform for dialogue and collaboration among Buddhist traditions, organizations, and practitioners worldwide.
- (3) Promotion of *Buddha Dhamma*: Disseminating the teachings of the Buddha as a means to address contemporary global challenges.
- (4) Humanitarian Initiatives: Addressing social and environmental issues through the application of Buddhist principles and practices.

VII. EFFORTS BY THE IBC IN PROMOTING BUDDHA DHAMMA

Since its inception, the International Buddhist Confederation has undertaken numerous initiatives to promote *Buddha Dhamma* and address pressing global challenges. Its efforts span a wide range of activities, including organizing international conferences, supporting cultural and educational projects, and fostering interfaith dialogue. Below are some key areas where the IBC has made significant contributions:

6.1. Organizing global conferences and summits

The IBC has organized several high-profile international events to promote dialogue, collaboration, and the dissemination of Buddhist teachings:

(i) Global Buddhist Congregation (2011): Although held before the formal establishment of the IBC, this event in New Delhi was instrumental in shaping the vision for the IBC. It brought together Buddhist leaders from around the world to discuss the relevance of *Buddha Dhamma* in addressing contemporary challenges.⁶⁹

(ii) Flagship event- Annual Celebrations of Buddha Purnima, Ashadh Purnima and Abhidhamma Divas: The IBC has taken a leading role in organizing celebrations of *Buddha Purnima* (the day commemorating the birth, enlightenment, and Parinirvana of the Buddha), flagship event on a global scale.

⁶⁹ *The Office of His Holiness The Dalai Lama | The 14th Dalai Lama*. (n.d.). The 14th Dalai Lama. <https://www.dalailama.com/messages/buddhism/buddhist-congregation-2011-address>

These events highlight the universal relevance of *Buddha Dhamma* and provide a platform for showcasing the rich cultural diversity of Buddhist traditions.

(iii) Global Buddhist Summit: The IBC organised The First *Global Buddhist Summit* is an international conference that brings together Buddhist monks, scholars, Sangha leaders, and Dharma practitioners from various countries. The First GBS was held on April 20–21, focused on the theme “*Responses to Contemporary Challenges: Philosophy to Praxis*.” It was attended by 700 participants from 38 countries.⁷⁰

(iv) International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage of SCO member states⁷¹: For the first time under India’s leadership of the SCO (from September 17, 2022, to September 2023), a unique initiative brought together Central Asian, East Asian, South Asian, and Arab nations on a common platform to discuss “*Shared Buddhist Heritage*.” The SCO countries include Member States, Observer States, and Dialogue Partners, such as China, Russia, Mongolia, and Pakistan. Scholars and delegates from SCO nations presented research papers on the subject, with contributions from institutions like the Dunhuang Research Academy in China, the State Museum of the History of Religion, and the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University in Myanmar, among others.

(v) International Buddhist Media Conclave: Media is very important in the era of information and communication technology. To grab the new era information, The International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) and the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) will host the 2nd International Buddhist Media Conclave on the theme “*Mindful Communication for Conflict Avoidance and Sustainable Development*.” Scheduled for September 11, 2024. Media representatives from 18 countries are expected to participate. The conclave’s primary goal is to explore how Buddhist teachings can inspire modern media practices to address global challenges and build trust in media institutions. It seeks to promote ethical journalism, encourage mindful communication, and establish a network of Buddhist media professionals across Asia. Approximately 150 delegates, including Buddhist journalists and media figures from 12 countries, laid a strong foundation for integrating Buddhist principles into contemporary media practices.

(vi) International Young Buddhist Scholar Conference⁷²: A unique initiative started by IBC in 2023 to connect with the young generation by organising International Conference of Young Buddhist Scholars. This event focused on making next generation of Academicians, scholars in India also in other parts of the World.

⁷⁰ IBCWORLD: Events. (n.d.-b). <https://www.ibcworld.org/events/view/35>

⁷¹ IBCWORLD: Events. (n.d.). <https://www.ibcworld.org/events/view/33>

⁷² Young academicians, researchers take part in conference on ‘Significance of Buddhist Pilgrimage.’ (2023, August 2). ANI News. <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/young-academicians-researchers-take-part-in-conference-on-significance-of-buddhist-pilgrimage20230802195247/>

6.2. India's leadership in the Asian Century

India's Leadership in the Asian Century⁷³

As the world enters what is being called the “Asian Century,” India has emerged as one of the most influential players in shaping the future of Asia and the global order. With its vast and growing economy, a rich cultural heritage, and strategic geopolitical positioning, India is playing an increasingly pivotal role in regional and global affairs. In particular, India's leadership in initiatives such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the International Solar Alliance (ISA), active role in Global South forums⁷⁴ underlines its commitment to fostering Asian unity, promoting regional stability, and advancing sustainable development in the 21st century.

India's engagement in these initiatives speaks to a broader vision of contributing to a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable Asia. Through strategic collaborations with key regional and global partners, India is not only shaping the security and economic landscape of Asia but also establishing itself as a leader in global governance, particularly in areas such as renewable energy and multilateral diplomacy. India's approach to leadership is grounded in its values of democracy, peace, inclusivity, and sustainability, which reflect the aspirations of the people of Asia and beyond.

6.2.1. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad): Ensuring regional stability

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, is one of the most significant security initiatives that showcases India's growing leadership role in the Asian Century. Formed in 2007, the Quad initially consisted of four countries: the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. The goal of the Quad is to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific, ensuring regional stability and security through multilateral cooperation⁷⁵.

While the Quad initially faltered, it has regained momentum in recent years, particularly due to the rising geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific region. The resurgence of the Quad has been marked by increased cooperation among the four nations in areas such as maritime security, counterterrorism, cyber security, infrastructure development, and climate change. India has played a central role in reenergizing the Quad, aligning its foreign policy with the broader strategic interests of regional security and stability.

⁷³ “SAMVAD highlights Asian century social values, not only economic values”: PM Modi. (2025, February 14). ANI News. <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/samvad-highlights-asian-century-social-values-not-only-economic-values-pm-modi20250214170957/>

⁷⁴ Zhang Jie, India's Strengthening Relational with the Global South: Strategic Ambitions and Constraints. China Institute of International Studies, Chinese Academic research on International Affairs, Washington, January, 2024

⁷⁵ Ali, Z. (2023, May 1). *India's relationship with the Quad* | GJIA. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2023/05/01/engagement-not-entanglement-indias-relationship-with-the-quad/>

India's leadership in the Quad reflects its commitment to a rules-based international order and its growing influence as a regional power. The country's participation in the Quad allows it to play an active role in addressing challenges posed by rising geopolitical tensions, particularly in the South China Sea and the broader Indo-Pacific region⁷⁶. India's strategic location, with its vast coastline and proximity to critical maritime routes, makes it a key player in ensuring the security and stability of the region. The Indo-Pacific, home to some of the world's busiest shipping lanes and the economic centre of gravity, is critical to global trade and security, and India's involvement in the Quad reflects its commitment to maintaining peace and order in the region.

India's approach to the Quad is not just military or strategic. The country has consistently advocated for a diplomatic and multilateral approach to resolving regional tensions. India, with its democratic values and strong emphasis on dialogue, brings a sense of inclusivity and balance to the Quad, promoting cooperation over confrontation. The Quad's efforts to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific align with India's broader vision of an inclusive, cooperative, and multipolar Asia that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Furthermore, India's leadership within the Quad is also about balancing its relationships with other key stakeholders in the region, including China. While China's growing influence has prompted many nations to seek stronger security ties through the Quad, India has consistently emphasized that the dialogue is not aimed at containing any particular nation but rather at promoting peace, stability, and security across the Indo-Pacific region. India's diplomatic efforts ensure that the Quad remains an open, flexible framework that does not seek to isolate China but rather to encourage constructive engagement in the region.

In addition to its focus on regional security, the Quad also addresses other critical areas such as public health, infrastructure development, and humanitarian aid. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, led the Quad countries to enhance cooperation in vaccine distribution and public health initiatives. India's leadership in these efforts underscored its role as a responsible global leader, committed to not only safeguarding its national interests but also contributing to global well-being.

6.2.2. International Solar Alliance (ISA): Leading renewable energy efforts in Asia⁷⁷

Another key initiative where India is exercising its leadership in the Asian Century is the International Solar Alliance (ISA). Launched in 2015, the ISA is a coalition of 121 countries, primarily located between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, with a shared goal of promoting solar energy as a sustainable and renewable source of power. India, as the founding member and the driving force behind the ISA, is spearheading efforts to transition to clean and renewable energy sources, with a particular focus on solar energy.

⁷⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, India (2018). *Shangri-La Dialogue: India's Indo-Pacific Vision*.

⁷⁷ International Solar Alliance. (n.d.). ISA INT. <https://isa.int/>

The ISA represents India's commitment to addressing the global challenge of climate change while simultaneously driving economic development and energy security in Asia and beyond. The organization aims to promote solar energy through technology transfer, funding, research, and collaboration between countries. India's vision is to make solar energy more affordable and accessible to developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. By focusing on renewable energy, India seeks to address two critical challenges: the need for sustainable energy solutions and the imperative of mitigating the environmental impact of traditional energy sources.

India's leadership in the ISA is driven by its own national goals of increasing renewable energy capacity. India has set ambitious targets to expand its renewable energy infrastructure, intending to generate 500 gigawatts (GW) of non-fossil fuel energy by 2030⁷⁸. This ambitious target is part of India's broader commitment to reduce its carbon emissions and meet the Paris Agreement targets. Solar energy, with its vast potential in India's sunny climate, plays a central role in this vision. By investing in solar energy, India is not only advancing its energy transition but also positioning itself as a leader in the global renewable energy revolution⁷⁹.

The ISA fosters collaboration between its member countries in areas such as policy advocacy, financing, technology development, and capacity building. India's leadership within the ISA has led to the creation of innovative financing mechanisms, such as the Solar Development Fund, to support solar projects in developing countries. By facilitating affordable financing for solar energy projects, India is ensuring that the benefits of solar energy reach countries that might otherwise struggle to access clean energy technology. This commitment to addressing the energy needs of the Global South further strengthens India's position as a leader in the Asian Century, promoting sustainable development and tackling climate change on a global scale.

Furthermore, India's role in the ISA is also a reflection of its broader foreign policy objectives of fostering South-South cooperation. As a country with significant experience in both solar energy development and tackling energy poverty, India is uniquely positioned to share its knowledge and expertise with other countries in the Global South. This collaborative approach promotes mutual growth and strengthens the ties between India and other developing nations, particularly in Asia and Africa.

India's leadership in renewable energy, exemplified by its work with the ISA, also aligns with its broader regional and global goals of enhancing energy security and reducing dependence on fossil fuels. The ISA is a critical platform for India to promote renewable energy solutions, foster regional cooperation

⁷⁸ Sunita Narain, Nivit Kumar Yadav, Binit Das, Arvind Poswal, Sunita Narain, Nivit Kumar Yadav, Binit Das, & Arvind Poswal. (2025, January 17). *The 500 GW switchover*. Down to Earth. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/energy/the-500-gw-switch-over>

⁷⁹ <https://isolaralliance.org/uploads/docs/e1af69b3b0d1820b3b03d0fd7c8c2f.pdf>

on climate change, and contribute to the achievement of global sustainability goals. By leading the ISA, India is also helping to position Asia as a leader in the global transition to clean energy.

6.2.3. India's role in shaping the future of Asia

India's leadership in initiatives such as the Quad and the ISA reflects its broader vision for the Asian Century, where Asia plays a central role in shaping the future of the world. India's commitment to Asian unity and regional cooperation is evident in its approach to multilateral diplomacy, where it actively works with other nations to address common challenges and promote shared values.⁸⁰ Through these initiatives, India is asserting its role as a responsible global leader, focused on peace, stability, and sustainable development.

India's leadership in the Quad ensures regional stability in the Indo-Pacific, a region critical to global trade and security. By participating in the Quad, India is promoting a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, where all nations can thrive in a secure and peaceful environment. At the same time, India's leadership in the ISA underscores its commitment to environmental sustainability and renewable energy, providing a model for other nations to follow in addressing climate change and energy poverty.⁸¹

In the Asian Century, India's role as a key driver of regional cooperation, security, and sustainable development will only continue to grow. As the world turns increasingly to Asia for economic growth, technological innovation, and leadership on global challenges, India is positioned to lead the charge toward a more prosperous, peaceful, and sustainable future for Asia and the world. Through its initiatives in the Quad and the ISA, India is proving that it is not just a regional power but also a global leader in shaping the future of the 21st century.

VII. TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As the world faces escalating environmental challenges — from climate change and pollution to the depletion of natural resources — the need for sustainable development has never been more urgent. Nations are searching for innovative solutions that balance economic growth with ecological preservation. In this search for answers, traditional wisdom, and modern technological innovations are increasingly being integrated to create pathways toward a more sustainable future. One of the most profound contributions to the conversation around sustainability comes from *Buddha Dhamma*, with its emphasis on simplicity, mindful consumption, and reverence for nature.⁸²

⁸⁰ CFR Editors. (2023, February 7). The future of India. *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/event/future-india#:~:text=India%20has%20emerged%20as%20a,as%20a%20critical%20international%20actor>.

⁸¹ India becomes 3rd Most Powerful Nation in Asia, Surpasses Japan in Asia Power Index. (n.d.). https://pib.gov.in/FeaturesDeatils.aspx?NotelId=153319&ModuleId=2*=3&lang=1

⁸² Cowell, E. B. (1895). *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*. Cambridge University Press, p. 457.

In parallel, India has been a significant force in implementing sustainability initiatives that blend cultural values with cutting-edge technologies, especially in energy production and environmental conservation. Together, Buddhist perspectives on sustainability and India's initiatives offer a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to tackling ecological challenges.

7.1. Buddhist perspectives on sustainability

Buddha Dhamma, as an ancient spiritual tradition, provides valuable insights into sustainability that are particularly relevant in today's world. Central to Buddhist philosophy are principles such as interdependence, impermanence, and mindfulness, which have direct implications for how human beings interact with the environment⁸³.

7.2.1. Interdependence and ecosystem balance

One of the most important teachings in *Buddha Dhamma* is the concept of interdependence, or *pratītyasamutpāda*, which asserts that all phenomena are interconnected. This understanding emphasizes that humans are not separate from nature but part of a larger web of life. The health of ecosystems is intricately tied to the well-being of all living beings.⁸⁴ This concept of interconnectedness is crucial in shaping an ecological mindset because it fosters an understanding that human actions — whether positive or negative — affect the environment and all creatures within it. Therefore, maintaining balance and harmony in the natural world is not just an ecological necessity but a moral responsibility.

Buddha Dhamma teaches that human actions can either contribute to or detract from the harmony of the world. The degradation of natural resources, environmental destruction, and pollution are viewed as signs of disharmony between humans and nature. Buddhist teachings emphasize the importance of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *karuṇā* (compassion) — values that advocate for the protection of all living beings, including the environment. To harm the environment is to cause harm to oneself and others, as all are interconnected. The Buddhist worldview thus suggests that the sustainability of ecosystems is a moral obligation and a key component of living a righteous life.

7.2.2. Simplicity and mindful consumption

In today's consumer-driven world, *Buddha Dhamma* advocates for simple living⁸⁵ and mindful consumption as essential practices for environmental sustainability. The Buddhist principle of *dukkha* (suffering) teaches that attachment to material possessions and excessive consumption leads to dissatisfaction and suffering. Buddhist teachings encourage people to examine their desires and live with less — focusing instead on the essentials of life, such as relationships, spiritual growth, and compassion. By practicing simplicity and mindfulness, individuals can reduce their ecological footprint and live in greater harmony with nature.

Buddha Dhamma emphasizes moderation and the importance of making

⁸³ *Pratītyasamutpāda Sutta* (Saṃyutta Nikāya 12. 1).

⁸⁴ *Vanaropa Sutta* (Aṅguttara Nikāya 3. 71) – Planting Trees as a Meritorious Act.

⁸⁵ *Aṭṭhakulā Sutta* (Aṅguttara Nikāya 8. 54) – The Middle Way and Simple Living.

thoughtful, deliberate choices in how resources are used. Mindful consumption involves being conscious of the impact of one's actions on the environment and other living beings. The act of consuming food, energy, and resources is not merely a mechanical act but one that should be performed with awareness of the effects it has on the world around us. The Buddhist practice of mindfulness encourages individuals to consider the environmental impact of their daily choices, promoting sustainable living practices⁸⁶.

7.2.3. Reverence for nature

Nature holds a special place in Buddha Dhamma, not just as a source of resources but as a reflection of the Buddha's teachings. Many Buddhist scriptures describe nature as sacred and full of spiritual significance. Mountains, trees, rivers, and animals are revered as manifestations of the natural world's beauty and interconnectedness⁸⁷. Buddhist temples and monastic communities often emphasize living in harmony with nature, with gardens, sacred groves, and natural environments playing an important role in spiritual practice. The eco-friendly architecture of many Buddhist temples is an expression of the belief that human life should be in balance with nature, rather than in opposition to it.

Buddhist monastic traditions have also long been involved in ecological conservation, with many monks actively advocating for the protection of forests, wildlife, and water sources. In countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka, Buddhist communities have worked to preserve forests from deforestation, using their influence to protect natural areas as sacred sites. Reverence for nature, coupled with the Buddhist commitment to right livelihood — an ethical form of livelihood that does not harm others — has historically played a role in sustaining the natural world.

In the face of modern ecological crises, Buddhist principles offer sustainable solutions grounded in respect for nature and the cultivation of an ethical, simple, and mindful lifestyle.

7.3. India's sustainable development initiatives

India, as a major developing country and an emerging global power, plays a crucial role in shaping the future of sustainability. India's approach to sustainable development integrates traditional wisdom and modern technology, offering a comprehensive and multifaceted response to ecological challenges. Two of the most notable initiatives that exemplify India's commitment to sustainability are the National Solar Mission and the Namami Gange Mission.

7.4. National Solar Mission

As part of its broader effort to combat climate change and reduce carbon emissions, India launched the National Solar Mission (NSM) in 2010. This is part of India's broader commitment to increasing its renewable energy capacity

⁸⁶ King, S. B. (2009). *Socially Engaged Buddhism: Dimensions of Theory and Practice*. University of Hawaii Press, p. 67.

⁸⁷ Tucker, M. E., & Williams, D. R. (1997). *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*. Harvard University Press, p. 55.

and reducing dependence on fossil fuels, which contribute to global warming and environmental degradation.⁸⁸

The National Solar Mission is a key component of India's strategy to meet its growing energy demands while also addressing climate change. India is endowed with an abundance of solar energy, with large stretches of land receiving high levels of sunlight throughout the year. By harnessing this vast potential, India aims to generate clean, sustainable energy, providing power to millions of people, particularly in rural areas, while also reducing its carbon footprint.

The NSM has made significant progress, driving both technological innovation and the growth of the solar energy industry. Solar power has emerged as one of the most cost-effective and scalable sources of renewable energy, with India now among the top countries globally in solar capacity. In addition to its environmental benefits, the solar energy sector has created jobs, stimulated local economies, and contributed to India's energy security. The development of solar parks and decentralized solar energy systems has empowered communities, especially in remote areas, by providing them with clean, affordable electricity.

India's commitment to the National Solar Mission also underscores the integration of traditional wisdom with modern technology. Just as Buddhist teachings emphasize harmony with nature, India's approach to solar energy embraces the idea of working with natural forces to create a sustainable and ecologically responsible future.

7.5. Namami Gange Mission⁸⁹

Another major initiative that reflects India's commitment to environmental sustainability is the Namami Gange Mission, launched in 2014 to rejuvenate and clean the Ganga River, one of the most important waterways in India and a lifeline for millions of people. The Ganga has deep cultural and religious significance in Hinduism, and its pollution has been a longstanding issue. For centuries, the river has been a source of sustenance, spirituality, and economic activity, but rapid urbanization, industrial growth, and unregulated sewage discharge have severely polluted the river.

The Namami Gange Mission is a comprehensive program aimed at cleaning the Ganga, restoring its ecological health, and ensuring its sustainable management for future generations. The initiative combines traditional knowledge, scientific methods, and advanced technology to address the many challenges facing the river. The mission focuses on cleaning up polluted water, improving waste management

⁸⁸ *Solar Overview* | MINISTRY OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY | India. (n.d.). <https://mnre.gov.in/en/solar-overview/>

⁸⁹ 'Namami Gange Programme', is an Integrated Conservation Mission, approved as 'Flagship Programme' by the Union Government in June 2014 with budget outlay of Rs.20,000 Crore to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga

practices, promoting eco-friendly tourism, and restoring biodiversity in the Ganga ecosystem.

The Namami Gange Mission exemplifies India's approach to sustainability, where cultural heritage and ecological responsibility intersect. The Ganga is revered as a sacred river, and the effort to restore its health reflects a deep reverence for nature embedded in India's cultural and religious traditions. By blending this reverence with modern ecological practices and technological solutions, India is setting a precedent for integrating environmental sustainability with cultural values.

The mission also emphasizes community participation, with local people being engaged in river conservation efforts. Through initiatives such as the cleaning of ghats (riverfront steps), the promotion of sustainable agriculture in river catchment areas, and the reduction of industrial pollution, the Namami Gange Mission is fostering a sense of collective responsibility for the health of the river.

7.6. Global impact

India's leadership in sustainable development initiatives serves as a model for integrating traditional wisdom with modern technology to address environmental challenges. Both the National Solar Mission and the Namami Gange Mission demonstrate how countries can combine ancient cultural values, such as respect for nature and reverence for sacred spaces, with cutting-edge technologies and policies aimed at achieving sustainability.

Moreover, India's efforts in renewable energy and river rejuvenation have a global impact, providing lessons for other countries, particularly those in the Global South, on how to achieve sustainable development while honouring their cultural heritage. India's work with the International Solar Alliance (ISA), which it launched to promote solar energy worldwide, is another example of how India is not only addressing its own sustainability challenges but also helping other nations transition to clean energy sources.

Through these initiatives, India is showing that a sustainable future is possible when societies work together to blend innovation with tradition, spirituality with science, and environmental protection with cultural reverence. India's example underscores the importance of sustainable development in building a future where both people and the planet can thrive in harmony.

As we move toward a sustainable future, the Buddhist principles of simplicity, mindfulness, and reverence for nature, combined with India's modern technological advancements and cultural traditions, offer a holistic model for addressing the pressing environmental challenges of the 21st century. This integrated approach holds the potential to create a more harmonious and sustainable world for future generations.

VIII. CONCLUSION

India's leadership in fostering global unity and sustainability

India's rich cultural and spiritual heritage positions it uniquely to lead

the world toward a future rooted in unity, peace, and sustainability. As the birthplace of *Buddha Dhamma*, India carries forward a legacy that emphasizes compassion, non-violence, and interconnectedness—principles that resonate with the aspirations of a harmonious global order. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has revitalized its Buddhist heritage, integrating ancient wisdom with contemporary strategies to address pressing global challenges.

The teachings of *Buddha Dhamma*, with their focus on unity, moderation, and ethical living, offer a robust framework for tackling modern issues such as climate change, social inequalities, and political conflicts. By championing the philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family), India advocates for inclusivity and cooperation, evident in its efforts to foster dialogue across cultural, political, and economic spheres. Through initiatives like the revival of Nalanda University and the development of Buddhist pilgrimage circuits, India strengthens its ties with nations across the Global South, reinforcing the shared cultural and spiritual bonds that transcend borders.

In the realm of sustainable development, India has emerged as a global leader. Its National Solar Mission and Namami Gange Mission exemplify a harmonious blend of technological innovation and traditional ecological ethics. By promoting renewable energy and ecological restoration, India sets an example of responsible development that aligns with Buddhist principles of living in harmony with nature.

India's active role in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) underscores its commitment to global equity and representation. Through its advocacy for UN reforms, India seeks to amplify the voices of underrepresented regions, reflecting its aspiration for a more balanced and inclusive global order. Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance further highlight India's leadership in addressing global challenges collaboratively.

As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, India's embrace of its Buddhist heritage serves as a guiding light. The principles of mindfulness, ethical governance, and interconnectedness embedded in *Buddha Dhamma* offer timeless solutions to modern crises. By integrating these values into its policies and global engagements, India fosters a vision of progress that prioritizes human dignity, environmental preservation, and collective well-being.

India's leadership in promoting Buddhist values and sustainable development is not just about addressing the challenges of today but also about shaping a future defined by peace and inclusivity. By leveraging its cultural legacy and global influence, India inspires the world to aspire for a civilization grounded in harmony and shared prosperity—a vision that echoes the enduring wisdom of *Buddha Dhamma*. Through these efforts, India reaffirms its role as a beacon of unity in an increasingly interconnected world, championing a path where progress and compassion coexist.

Unity and inclusivity are not mere ideals but necessities for a harmonious and sustainable world. Buddha Dhamma, with its timeless teachings, offers profound insights for fostering global harmony. India's leadership, inspired by Buddhist values, is shaping a new narrative for the 21st century—a narrative of compassion, cooperation, and shared prosperity.

By embracing its Buddhist heritage and leveraging its growing global influence, India is not only contributing to the “Asian Century” but also setting a precedent for a world rooted in dignity, peace, and sustainability.

This vision of global unity, guided by the principles of *Buddha Dhamma*, reaffirms the idea that true progress lies in collective well-being and mutual respect—a message that resonates deeply in our interconnected world.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: THE BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY APPROACH

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Abstract:

The study presents the integration of mindfulness into education as a means to address the challenges of the 21st century. The study findings suggest that mindfulness can improve students' mental health, promote emotional intelligence, and promote ethical and sustainable behavior. The study also discusses the psychological, social, and ecological benefits of mindfulness, providing practical recommendations for integrating it into educational frameworks. The study highlights the role of Buddhist philosophy in enhancing mindfulness education, emphasizing the importance of compassion, interdependence, and environmental awareness. Ultimately, the study advocates the use of mindfulness to create a more compassionate and sustainable future for all.

Keywords: *Buddhism, mindfulness, compassion.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century presents unprecedented challenges, including social inequality, mental health crises, and environmental degradation. Educational institutions are uniquely positioned to address these issues by shaping the values and behaviors of future generations. Mindfulness, defined as the practice of maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and surrounding environments, has gained recognition as a tool for fostering emotional intelligence and ethical behavior. Modern education often focuses heavily on academic performance, sometimes at the expense of students' mental health and emotional well-being. As students face mounting pressures from competitive environments and societal

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expectations, the integration of mindfulness offers a means to restore balance. By encouraging present-moment awareness and non-judgmental attitudes, mindfulness enables individuals to cope with stress while fostering empathy and compassion.¹ In addition, mindfulness has the potential to address broader societal challenges. For instance, promoting mindfulness in schools can create a ripple effect, influencing families and communities to adopt more compassionate and sustainable lifestyles. This interconnected approach aligns with the growing recognition of education's role in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to health, well-being, and environmental sustainability. By equipping students with mindfulness skills, educators can prepare them to lead lives characterized by resilience, ethical decision-making, and environmental stewardship. This paper argues that integrating mindfulness into education is critical for developing a compassionate and sustainable future. Through an exploration of its psychological, social, and ecological dimensions, this study underscores the transformative potential of mindfulness and offers practical recommendations for embedding it within educational frameworks.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

(1) Enhancing Emotional Regulation: Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and breath awareness, enhance students' ability to regulate emotions. Studies have shown that mindfulness reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, leading to improved academic performance and emotional stability.² (2) Building Resilience: Incorporating mindfulness into education fosters resilience by helping students navigate challenges and setbacks. Resilience is essential not only for academic success but also for personal growth and societal contribution. Mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to reduce the impacts of trauma and build adaptive coping mechanisms.³ (3) Strengthening Attention and Focus: Mindfulness has a direct impact on cognitive functioning by improving attention and focus. Students engaged in mindfulness practices develop greater awareness of their mental processes, which enhances their ability to concentrate on tasks and filter out distractions. This is particularly beneficial in classrooms where multitasking and overstimulation are common. Neuroscientific studies reveal that mindfulness strengthens neural pathways related to sustained attention and working memory. (4) Promoting Self-Awareness: Mindfulness encourages introspection, allowing students to understand their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors better. By fostering self-awareness, mindfulness helps students identify negative thought patterns and replace them with constructive ones. This heightened awareness is

¹ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). *Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future*. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), p. 144 - 156.

² Zoogman, S., Goldberg, S. B., Hoyt, W. T., & Miller, L. (2015). Mindfulness interventions with youth: A meta-analysis. *Mindfulness*, 6 (2), p. 290 - 302.

³ Davis, D. M., & Hayes, J. A. (2011). What are the benefits of mindfulness? A practice review of psychotherapy-related research. *Psychotherapy*, 48 (2), p. 198 - 208.

foundational for personal growth, enabling students to set realistic goals and pursue them with clarity and determination. (5) Mitigating Academic Stress: Academic stress is a growing concern in modern education. Mindfulness offers tools for stress management by teaching students to respond to challenges with equanimity rather than reactivity.⁴ Techniques such as mindful breathing and body scans help students ground themselves during stressful situations, promoting a sense of calm and balance. (6) Fostering Emotional Intelligence: Mindfulness equips students with tools to understand and manage their emotions effectively. Emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, is critical for success in personal and professional life. By practicing mindfulness, students develop greater empathy and are better able to navigate social dynamics, enhancing their ability to work collaboratively and maintain healthy relationships.⁵ (7) Reducing Symptoms of Burnout: In high-pressure educational environments, both students and educators are at risk of burnout. Mindfulness interventions provide a buffer against the exhaustion and cynicism that often accompany burnout. By cultivating a sense of presence and self-compassion, mindfulness helps individuals recharge and maintain a positive outlook, even in demanding circumstances.⁶ (8) Supporting Neuroplasticity: Emerging research highlights the role of mindfulness in promoting neuroplasticity - the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections.⁷ Regular mindfulness practice enhances areas of the brain associated with learning, memory, and emotional regulation, such as the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus. This supports students in adapting to new challenges and acquiring skills more effectively. (9) Improving Sleep Quality: Sleep quality is closely linked to academic performance and overall well-being, yet many students struggle with sleep due to stress and irregular schedules. Mindfulness practices, such as guided relaxation and meditation, can improve sleep quality by calming the mind and reducing intrusive thoughts. Better sleep enhances memory consolidation, emotional regulation, and cognitive function, providing students with the energy they need to thrive in their academic pursuits. (10) Boosting Motivation and Engagement: Mindfulness fosters a sense of intrinsic motivation by helping students connect with their personal values and interests. When students are mindful, they are more likely to engage deeply with their learning experiences, finding joy and purpose in their education. This intrinsic motivation not only improves academic outcomes but also instills a lifelong

⁴ Shapiro, S. L., Brown, K. W., & Astin, J. A. (2011). Toward the integration of meditation into higher education: A review of research evidence. *Teachers College Record*, 113 (3), p. 493 - 528.

⁵ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. Delacorte Press.

⁶ Neff, K. D. (2011). Self-compassion, self-esteem, and well-being. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, p.1-12.

⁷ Holzel, B. K., Lazar, S. W., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D. R., & Ott, U. (2011). How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6 (6), p. 537 - 559.

love for learning. (11) Enhancing Creativity and Problem-Solving Skills: Mindfulness cultivates an open and curious mindset, which is essential for creative thinking and effective problem-solving. By reducing mental clutter and fostering a state of relaxed awareness, mindfulness allows students to approach challenges with fresh perspectives.⁸ This skill is particularly valuable in today's complex and rapidly changing world, where innovative solutions are often required.

III. SOCIAL DIMENSIONS: COMPASSION AND EMPATHY

(1) Cultivating Compassion: Mindfulness plays a pivotal role in cultivating compassion by fostering a sense of non-judgmental awareness and kindness towards oneself and others. This is particularly significant in diverse educational environments where understanding and tolerance are essential for harmonious interactions. Mindfulness helps students recognize the shared human experiences of suffering and joy, promoting a sense of interconnectedness. Research indicates that mindfulness training significantly increases pro-social behaviors such as helping, sharing, and volunteering. These behaviors contribute to a compassionate classroom culture, where students feel safe, respected, and valued. Compassion developed through mindfulness also extends beyond the classroom, influencing students' interactions within their communities. For instance, mindfulness practices encourage students to reflect on the consequences of their actions, fostering responsible decision-making and ethical behavior. Compassionate students are more likely to contribute positively to society, creating a ripple effect that enhances the well-being of others.⁹ (2) Fostering Empathy: Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is a cornerstone of social-emotional learning. Mindfulness enhances empathy by helping students become more attuned to their own emotions and the emotions of others. By cultivating present-moment awareness, mindfulness enables students to listen actively and respond thoughtfully in social interactions. This heightened emotional attunement strengthens interpersonal relationships and reduces conflicts. Mindfulness practices such as loving-kindness meditation explicitly target the development of empathy. These practices involve generating feelings of goodwill towards oneself and others, even those with whom one may have difficulties.¹⁰ "He who practices loving-kindness sleeps at ease, wakes at ease, and dreams no evil dreams. He is dear to human beings and non-human beings alike."¹¹ Such exercises help students break down biases and develop a more inclusive perspective. Research has shown that regular mindfulness practice

⁸ Lippelt, D. P., Hommel, B., & Colzato, L. S. (2014). Focused attention, open monitoring, and loving kindness meditation: Effects on attention, conflict monitoring, and creativity - A review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, p.1083.

⁹ Post, S. G. (2005). Altruism, happiness, and health: It's good to be good. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 12 (2), p. 66 - 77.

¹⁰ *Sutta Nipata* 1.8 - *Metta Sutta* (Discourse on Loving-Kindness), p. 149 - 150.

¹¹ *AN* 5.161 - *Mettanisaṃsa Sutta* (The Benefits of Loving-Kindness).

enhances activity in brain regions associated with empathy and compassion, such as the anterior cingulate cortex and the insula. Empathy nurtured through mindfulness also fosters a sense of global citizenship. As students become more aware of the challenges faced by others, they are more likely to engage in social justice initiatives and advocate for marginalized groups. (3) **Fostering Interpersonal Relationships:** Mindfulness significantly contributes to the development of healthy and meaningful interpersonal relationships. By encouraging active listening and reducing reactivity, mindfulness equips students with the skills needed to navigate social dynamics effectively. Students who practice mindfulness are more likely to approach conflicts with a collaborative mindset, seeking win-win solutions rather than engaging in adversarial behaviors. “Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone hatred is appeased. This is an eternal law.”¹² This verse highlights the principle of resolving conflicts through non-adversarial means, aligning with a collaborative mindset. In the classroom, mindfulness fosters a supportive environment where students feel encouraged to express their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment. Teachers who model mindfulness create a ripple effect, inspiring students to adopt similar behaviors. This leads to stronger teacher-student connections and peer relationships, enhancing the overall learning experience. (4) **Encouraging Inclusivity:** In an increasingly globalized world, inclusivity is a critical value that must be nurtured from an early age. Mindfulness promotes inclusivity by helping students recognize and appreciate differences while focusing on shared humanity. Practices such as group meditations and reflective dialogues encourage students to understand perspectives different from their own.” By patience, loving-kindness, and mutual respect, harmony is established. One should listen and understand different views without clinging to one’s own opinion.” This sutta emphasizes resolving disputes through dialogue, mindfulness, and understanding different perspectives, which aligns with group meditation and reflective discussions.¹³ This reduces stereotypes and prejudices, fostering a classroom culture of respect and acceptance. Mindfulness also empowers students from marginalized backgrounds by giving them tools to manage stress and build self-confidence. When students feel included and valued, they are more likely to engage actively in their education and contribute positively to the community. (5) **Supporting Teacher-Student Connections:** Teachers play a crucial role in modeling mindfulness and fostering empathetic relationships with their students. Educators who practice mindfulness are better able to regulate their emotions, remain calm under pressure, and respond to students’ needs with patience and understanding. This creates a classroom atmosphere where students feel seen, heard, and supported. Mindful teachers are also more attuned to the emotional states of their students, enabling them to identify signs of distress or disengagement early. “A bhikkhu dwells observing the body in the body,

¹² *Dhammapada - Yamakavagga*. Verse 5 (Overcoming Hatred).

¹³ MN 48 - *Kosambiya Sutta* (The Discourse on the Quarrelsome Monks).

the feelings in the feelings, the mind in the mind, and the mental objects in the mental objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful.” This emphasizes the practice of mindfulness in observing emotions and mental states, which applies to teachers being present and aware of their students’ emotional well-being.¹⁴ By addressing these issues proactively, teachers can build trust and strengthen their connections with students. These positive relationships are foundational for effective teaching and learning. (6) Developing Conflict Resolution Skills: One of the most tangible social benefits of mindfulness is its impact on conflict resolution. By promoting emotional regulation and active listening, mindfulness equips students with the tools to resolve disputes constructively. When conflicts arise, mindful students are more likely to pause, reflect, and approach the situation with empathy and understanding. This reduces the likelihood of escalation and fosters a culture of mutual respect. Mindfulness-based programs often incorporate role-playing exercises and group discussions to help students practice conflict resolution in a supportive environment. These activities build confidence in handling difficult conversations and navigating complex social situations.¹⁵ “One should speak only words that are true, beneficial, and timely, not out of anger or ill intent.” This aligns with the objectives of role-playing exercises, teaching students how to navigate conflicts with mindfulness and compassion.¹⁶

IV. ECOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

(1) Connecting with Nature: Mindfulness cultivates a profound sense of connection with the natural world, encouraging students to engage with their environment consciously and respectfully. Activities such as mindful walking, gardening, or simply observing natural surroundings foster an appreciation for biodiversity and ecological systems. These practices not only promote personal well-being but also instill a sense of responsibility toward the environment. By encouraging students to be present in nature, mindfulness reduces the sense of detachment that often accompanies modern lifestyles. This connection can inspire a deeper commitment to protecting the planet, as students recognize their role as stewards of the Earth. (2) Promoting Environmental Stewardship: Mindfulness reinforces the values of sustainability by fostering critical thinking about consumption patterns and ecological impact. By bringing awareness to their daily habits, students learn to make intentional choices that align with environmental ethics. This may include reducing energy usage, opting for sustainable products, or supporting conservation initiatives. Educational programs that integrate mindfulness with environmental education empower students to address global challenges such as climate change, deforestation,

¹⁴ MN 10 - *Satipatthana Sutta* (The Foundations of Mindfulness).

¹⁵ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Lawlor, M. S. (2010). The effects of a mindfulness-based education program on pre- and early adolescents’ well-being and social and emotional competence. *Mindfulness*, 1 (3), p. 137 - 151.

¹⁶ MN 58 - *Abhaya Sutta* (Fearless Speech).

and pollution.¹⁷ For example, mindfulness exercises focused on gratitude for natural resources can deepen students' understanding of the interdependence between human activity and ecological health. "The wise one, meditating, perceives the impermanence of all things and understands the need to live in harmony with nature."¹⁸ Moreover, mindfulness helps students cultivate resilience in the face of environmental crises. By managing eco-anxiety stress or despair about climate change and environmental degradation, students can channel their emotions into meaningful action. This ability to remain hopeful and solution-focused is crucial for nurturing the next generation of environmental leaders. (3) Instilling a Sense of Responsibility: Mindfulness practices encourage students to reflect on their impact on the environment and develop a sense of accountability for their actions. This is particularly important in fostering a culture of sustainability, where individual choices collectively contribute to larger societal shifts. Through reflective practices such as journaling or group discussions, students explore the ethical implications of their consumption and consider ways to minimize harm to the planet. For instance, schools that incorporate mindfulness into recycling or sustainability campaigns report higher levels of student participation and enthusiasm. This engagement stems from students' ability to connect their actions to a broader purpose, reinforcing the idea that small changes can lead to significant positive outcomes. (4) Building Ecological Empathy: Ecological empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of all living beings, is a natural outcome of mindfulness.¹⁹ By heightening awareness of interconnected ecosystems, mindfulness encourages students to view themselves as part of a larger ecological web. This perspective fosters compassion for animals, plants, and other organisms, reducing behaviors that contribute to environmental harm. Loving-kindness meditations, often used in mindfulness practices, can be adapted to include gratitude and care for the natural world. Students may be guided to focus on sending positive intentions toward endangered species, forests, or oceans. This exercise not only deepens their connection to nature but also motivates them to advocate for environmental protection. (5) Encouraging Sustainable Communities: Mindfulness has the potential to inspire collective action by fostering a shared sense of responsibility among students and educators. Schools that prioritize mindfulness and sustainability create communities committed to addressing environmental challenges together.²⁰ These initiatives may include planting school gardens, organizing clean-up drives, or participating in advocacy campaigns for renewable energy

¹⁷ Orr, D. W. (1994). *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect*. Island Press.

¹⁸ *Dhp* 39 - Awareness of nature.

¹⁹ Amel, E. L., Manning, C. M., & Scott, B. A. (2009). Mindfulness and sustainable behavior: Pondering attention and awareness as means for increasing green behavior. *Ecopsychology*, 1 (1), p. 14 - 25.

²⁰ Wamsler, C., Bristow, J., & Osborne, N. (2021). Mindfulness in sustainability science, practice, and teaching. *Sustainability Science*, 16 (1), p. 1 - 15.

and climate justice. By embedding mindfulness into school culture, institutions can model the behaviors and values necessary for building a sustainable future. Students learn that their actions, when combined with those of others, can lead to meaningful change. This sense of empowerment encourages lifelong engagement with environmental causes. (6) Supporting Long-Term Behavioral Change: Unlike short-term awareness campaigns, mindfulness promotes lasting changes in attitudes and behaviors toward the environment. By integrating mindfulness into daily routines, students develop habits that align with sustainable living. For example, mindful eating practices can reduce food waste, while mindful consumption encourages thoughtful purchasing decisions. In the long term, these behaviors contribute to the formation of environmentally conscious citizens who prioritize sustainability in their personal and professional lives. As mindfulness becomes a core component of education, its ripple effects on society and the environment can lead to a more equitable and sustainable future.

V. INTEGRATING BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY INTO MINDFULNESS EDUCATION

Incorporating Buddhist-inspired mindfulness into education can also address issues of systemic inequality and injustice. For example, mindfulness practices grounded in compassion (*karuna*) encourage students to consider the well-being of others and take action to alleviate suffering. Buddhism emphasizes that mindfulness is not a standalone practice but one that is deeply interwoven with ethical principles. The cultivation of mindfulness supports ethical conduct by encouraging individuals to act with intention and compassion. Educational institutions can draw from this ethical dimension to promote values such as kindness, honesty, and respect among students. “Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) is to be cultivated alongside right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) as part of ethical conduct (*sīla*).”²¹ Incorporating Buddhist-inspired mindfulness into education can also address issues of systemic inequality and injustice. For example, mindfulness practices grounded in compassion (*karuṇā*) encourage students to consider the well-being of others and take action to alleviate suffering. (1) Cultivating Compassion Through Loving-Kindness: A key aspect of Buddhist mindfulness is the practice of *metta* (loving-kindness meditation), which involves generating unconditional goodwill toward oneself and others.²² This practice can be a transformative addition to educational settings, helping students develop empathy and reduce aggression. When students practice loving-kindness meditation, they learn to expand their circle of concern beyond themselves to include peers, teachers, and even those they may perceive as adversaries. This shift in perspective not only improves interpersonal relationships but also fosters a sense of unity and cooperation

²¹ DN 22, *Mahāsatipatthana Sutta* - Noble Eightfold Path.

²² Salzberg, S. (1995). *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*. Shambhala Publications.

within diverse classrooms. (2) Interdependence and Sustainability: Buddhist teachings emphasize the principle of interdependence (*pratityasamutpada*), which recognizes the interconnectedness of all phenomena. This principle is highly relevant to the ecological dimensions of mindfulness education. By understanding that their actions impact the environment and future generations, students are encouraged to adopt more sustainable behaviors. For example, mindfulness practices inspired by interdependence might include reflections on the origins of daily items, such as food or clothing, and the labor and resources involved in their production. Such exercises can deepen students' appreciation for the natural world and motivate them to reduce waste, conserve energy, and support ethical consumption. (3) Addressing Cravings and Overconsumption: In Buddhism, the concept of *tanha* (craving) is identified as a root cause of suffering. Modern consumer culture often exacerbates this craving, leading to overconsumption and environmental degradation.²³ "One should know moderation in eating, drinking, and wealth, for excess leads to ruin."²⁴ This encourages mindful consumption, which contrasts with modern consumer culture. Mindfulness practices grounded in Buddhist philosophy can help students recognize and counteract these tendencies. For instance, mindful eating exercises teach students to savor each bite, fostering gratitude for the food and the effort behind it. This awareness can translate into broader ecological mindfulness, encouraging students to consume resources thoughtfully and avoid unnecessary waste. (4) Developing Equanimity in a Changing World: Equanimity (*upekkha*) is a cornerstone of Buddhist mindfulness, promoting a balanced and composed state of mind amidst life's uncertainties.²⁵ This quality is particularly valuable in the context of climate change and other global crises, which often provoke feelings of anxiety and helplessness among students. By integrating practices that cultivate equanimity, educators can help students approach these challenges with a sense of calm and determination. This not only enhances their well-being but also equips them to take constructive action, such as participating in environmental advocacy or community service projects. (5) Bridging Ancient Wisdom and Modern Education: Buddhist philosophy provides a rich framework for mindfulness education, offering both practical techniques and ethical guidelines. "A monk, established in mindfulness and clear comprehension, abides with a purified mind, free from defilements, cultivating wisdom and ethical conduct." This sutta links *sati* with ethical development (*sīla*) and wisdom (*paññā*).²⁶ However, its integration into modern classrooms requires sensitivity to cultural and religious diversity. By presenting mindfulness as a secular and inclusive practice, educators can honor its Buddhist roots while ensuring its accessibility to all students. For

²³ Harvey, P. (2013). *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices*. Cambridge University Press.

²⁴ DN 31 - *Sigalovada Sutta* (The Layperson's Code of Ethics).

²⁵ Bodhi, B. (2000). *The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering*. Buddhist Publication Society, AN 4.125 - *Brahmavihara Sutta* and, *Dhp* 81.

²⁶ DN 2 - *Samannaphala Sutta* (The Fruits of the Contemplative Life).

example, educators can introduce mindfulness as a universal human skill that transcends specific religious traditions, emphasizing its benefits for mental health, emotional intelligence, and ecological awareness. This approach allows students to appreciate the wisdom of Buddhist philosophy without feeling excluded or obligated to adopt its spiritual beliefs.

VI. COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AND BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

A compassionate and sustainable future prioritizes the well-being of all beings, recognizing the interconnectedness of life and the importance of living in harmony with the environment. Central to this vision is the idea that true sustainability- whether environmental, social, or economic- requires an ethical foundation rooted in compassion, mindfulness, and respect for all forms of life. Buddhist philosophy provides a rich framework for this approach, offering profound insights into how we can live more harmoniously with ourselves, each other, and the planet. At the heart of Buddhist teachings is the principle of interdependence (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), which emphasizes that all things are interconnected. This understanding encourages individuals to recognize the impact of their actions on others and the environment. In this context, a sustainable future is not merely about managing resources wisely or reducing harm; it is about cultivating an awareness of the web of life and the consequences of our choices. When we act with an awareness of how deeply interconnected we are with the natural world and one another, sustainability becomes not just a set of actions but an expression of our ethical responsibility. “One should act with mindfulness, care, and consideration for all beings, knowing that the welfare of one is tied to the welfare of all.”²⁷ This sutta supports the idea that sustainability is a moral duty rooted in interconnectedness. Another essential aspect of Buddhist philosophy is the practice of mindfulness which encourages individuals to be fully present and aware of their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Mindfulness fosters a deep awareness of the impact our choices have on the world around us. It enables individuals to make conscious decisions that align with values of compassion and sustainability.²⁸ In this way, mindfulness helps to shift the focus away from short-term gratification or consumerism to a deeper understanding of what truly brings lasting happiness - living in harmony with others and the Earth. To be precise, Buddhist philosophy offers a powerful and holistic framework for cultivating a compassionate and sustainable future. By embodying the principles of interdependence, compassion, mindfulness, impermanence, non-violence, and wisdom, individuals and societies can create a world that values harmony, respect, and sustainability. The teachings of Buddhism invite us to look beyond individual concerns and consider the broader impact of our actions, recognizing that true fulfillment comes from living in balance with the world around us. The concept of a compassionate

²⁷ DN 31 - *Sigalovada Sutta* (Ethical Duties in Society).

²⁸ Thich Nhat Hanh (2012). *The Miracle of Mindfulness*. Beacon Press. & Bodhi, B. (2000). *The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering*. Buddhist Publication Society.

and sustainable future, deeply embedded in Buddhist philosophy, is rooted in the belief that our actions, choices, and lifestyles should reflect an awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings and the planet. This vision of the future challenges the dominant, often exploitative paradigms that prioritize individual gain and short-term objectives over long-term collective well-being. In the Buddhist worldview, sustainability and compassion are not abstract goals but are expressions of a deep, spiritual understanding that all life is interconnected and that the well-being of one depends on the well-being of all.²⁹ Buddhist teachings on interdependence offer profound insights into the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings. This teaching underscores that nothing exists in isolation; every element of the universe is interdependent with every other.³⁰ The idea that we are part of a vast, intricate web of life emphasizes the need for cooperation, compassion, and respect for others and the natural world. In this context, compassion plays a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable future. Compassion in Buddhism is not merely about feeling sympathy for the suffering of others; it is a call to act in ways that alleviate suffering and promote the well-being of all sentient beings. When applied to environmental and social issues, compassion requires that we address the root causes of suffering in society, poverty, inequality, and environmental destruction - and take steps to heal and restore balance. Finally, the right livelihood (*samma-ajiva*) is an important Buddhist principle that directly relates to the creation of a compassionate and sustainable future.³¹ Right livelihood encourages individuals to earn a living in ways that do not harm others or the environment. This can involve choosing careers or businesses that promote ethical practices, such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, or environmental conservation. By aligning one's work with ethical values, individuals contribute to the creation of a world where the pursuit of profit does not come at the expense of people or the planet. Hence, Buddhist philosophy offers a comprehensive and deeply ethical framework for building a compassionate and sustainable future. Through the teachings of interdependence, compassion, mindfulness, impermanence, non-violence, wisdom, and right livelihood, Buddhism encourages individuals to live in ways that recognize the interconnectedness of all life. A compassionate future, in this context, is one where the needs of all beings- human, animal, and environmental- are considered in decision-making, and sustainability is seen as an ethical responsibility that extends beyond the individual to encompass the entire planet. By embodying these principles, we can create a world that is

²⁹ Kaza, S. (2000). Overcoming consumerism: A Buddhist perspective. *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, 4 (1), p. 41 - 58.

³⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh. (2012). *The heart of the Buddha's teaching: Transforming suffering into peace, joy, and liberation*. Broadway Books.

³¹ DN 22 - *Mahasatipatthana Sutta. The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikāya*. Walshe, M. (trans.) (1995). Wisdom Publications. & *Khuddakapatha - Sigalovada Sutta The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya*. Walshe, M. (trans.) (1995). Wisdom Publications.

not only ecologically sustainable but also just, compassionate, and harmonious for all.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the integration of mindfulness in education holds the potential to radically transform not only the learning experience but also the broader goals of education in shaping a compassionate and sustainable future. By prioritizing mindfulness, educational systems can move beyond traditional academic outcomes to nurture students' mental, emotional, and social development, creating well-rounded individuals who are equipped with the tools to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Mindfulness encourages a deep connection to the present moment, fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation. This is particularly crucial for students in an era marked by increasing stress, distraction, and uncertainty. Furthermore, mindfulness cultivates empathy and compassion, which are essential in promoting positive interpersonal relationships. In a classroom setting, these qualities help build a culture of respect, understanding, and cooperation, where students not only focus on their success but also on collective well-being. When students learn to listen deeply, understand others' perspectives, and respond with kindness, they are better prepared to engage in their communities and contribute to a society that values inclusivity and mutual support. In the context of sustainability, mindfulness fosters an awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings and the environment. By fostering a sense of responsibility toward both the planet and future generations, mindfulness can inspire students to make decisions that reflect long-term thinking and ethical considerations. By embedding mindfulness practices into the curriculum, schools have the opportunity to create compassionate and conscious citizens, ready to address global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and conflict. Educators, in turn, play a critical role in modeling mindfulness and promoting a compassionate classroom environment, ultimately creating a ripple effect that extends beyond the school walls into society at large. In essence, mindfulness in education is not just a tool for improving academic performance; it is a vital strategy for cultivating a generation of individuals who are compassionate, resilient, and deeply connected to their communities and the world around them. By embracing mindfulness as an integral part of education and accepting Buddhist philosophy in this regard, we are preparing students not only to succeed in their personal and academic lives but also to contribute to a more compassionate, sustainable, and harmonious future for all.

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BUDDHIST CANON OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

In the postmodern scenario, where everything is seen in a state of flux and fluidity, the human soul is tempted by varied pressures and concerns. The educational system is not untouched. The current classrooms offer a heterogeneous scenario under the push and pull of life in the humdrum of the world. The institutions seldom realize the extent of wear and tear the pupils endure. The mental health of students is affected by societal and institutional stress, anxiety, and burnout. Given this context, mindfulness provides a direct solution by addressing the root cause of mental suffering rather than merely managing symptoms. Mindfulness, a concept rooted in Buddhist philosophy, has gained significant attention in modern education. By incorporating Buddhist-inspired mindfulness practices into educational settings, a compassionate and sustainable future can be cultivated that shall be a more compassionate system for a sustainable future. Here, the students can be mentored toward a world of balance, wisdom, and compassion. As the world faces increasing social and environmental challenges, the teachings of mindfulness, rooted in ancient wisdom but highly relevant to modern education, offer a path toward resilience and collective well-being. The present paper offers an analytical note on the practical uses of the Buddhist Canon of Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, teaching, Buddhist canon of mindfulness, empathy, sensitivity.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many students suffer the most from the push and pull of life in the humdrum of the world, and sometimes, the institutions seldom realize the extent of wear and tear they endure. We often see the results of their mental health issues, stress, anxiety, and burnout. These psychological struggles are not new phenomena but have been recognized in Buddhist teachings as forms of *dukkha* (suffering), as explained in the First Noble Truth.¹ Modern research supports this understanding, indicating that chronic stress can severely affect students' cognitive abilities and overall well-being.² The Buddha taught that suffering arises due to *taṇhā* (craving) and attachment to unstable circumstances.³ Given this context, mindfulness provides a direct solution by addressing the root cause of mental suffering rather than merely managing symptoms.⁴ Imagine handing students the key to ease all their mental anguish. Mindfulness is the key. This means teaching them mindfulness techniques in the classroom during lessons. Helping them gain emotional regulation, attention, focus, creativity, and problem-solving skills while simultaneously building the ethos of compassion and empathy. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* states that mindfulness enhances awareness, which leads to insight, emotional balance, and ethical conduct.⁵ Mindfulness is not merely an intellectual exercise but a deep practice that transforms perception, allowing individuals to become more attuned to themselves and their surroundings.⁶

Mindfulness, a concept rooted in Buddhist philosophy, has gained significant attention in modern education. In the earliest Buddhist texts, written in Pāṇi and Sanskrit, mindfulness is referred to as *sati* in Pāṇi and *smṛti* in Sanskrit, meaning “to remember” or “to keep in mind”. This notion emphasizes the practice of maintaining awareness and attentiveness to the present moment. According to Mahasi Sayadaw (1991), mindfulness is the foundation for *vipassanā* (insight meditation), which helps individuals cultivate clarity and self-awareness.⁷ By incorporating mindfulness practices into educational settings, we can cultivate a compassionate and sustainable future. This approach not only benefits students' mental well-being but also fosters a more empathetic and environmentally conscious society. Goenka (2000) notes that

¹ SN 56.11: The four noble truths of suffering (*dukkha*), cause of suffering (*samudaya*), end of suffering (*nirhodha*), and the path that releases us from suffering (*maggā*).

² Sawyer (2018): 66.

³ MN 9.

⁴ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994): 4.

⁵ MN 10: *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is a canonical text on meditation, focuses on four foundations of mindfulness.

⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 89. Thich Nhat Hanh, who is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, is considered father of mindfulness and has greatly influenced Buddhist practices among the westerners.

⁷ Mahasi Sayadaw (1991): 11.

mindfulness, as taught in *ānāpānasati*,⁸ enables students to develop focus and emotional resilience, ultimately leading to enhanced cognitive flexibility and ethical decision-making. Stemming from Buddhism, mindfulness goes beyond the concepts of personal well-being, nurturing interpersonal relations, and empathy within the educational framework. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* teaches the importance of ethical relationships and responsible social conduct, which can be strengthened through mindfulness.⁹ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018) argues that integrating mindfulness into education fosters a sense of interconnectedness and social responsibility, preparing students to contribute meaningfully to society.¹⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh, a renowned Buddhist monk, writes in “The Miracle of Mindfulness” that: “In mindfulness, one is not only restful and happy but alert and awake. Meditation is not evasion; it is a serene encounter with reality.”¹¹ This statement highlights how mindfulness can enable students to be present and proactive, fostering inner peace and clarity while developing a sustainable approach to the realities of the world. Reinforces this by stating that “all conditioned things are impermanent;”¹² when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering.”¹³ This perspective aligns with modern cognitive psychology, which emphasizes the role of mindfulness in enhancing mental clarity and emotional regulation.¹⁴ D. Sawyer (2018), in his article “Mindfulness Meditation:¹⁵ A Sartrean Analysis,” illustrates the interest in mindfulness meditation in the West and offers an analysis from a Sartrean phenomenological and ontological perspective. He focuses on a common form of Buddhist meditation known as *ānāpānasati*, which emphasizes mindful breathing to cultivate inner stability.¹⁶ He further mentions that: “It has almost become customary for people in the West to adopt and adapt various Eastern practices and traditions in efforts to engage in new, novel, and (one could say) fashionable forms of self-help, and the recent increase in interest, both socially and academically, in Buddhist mindfulness practices and meditation is likely no different.” This statement suggests that mindfulness has become an integral part of modern psychological therapies, aligning with evidence-based practices in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT).¹⁷ Moreover, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* provides a framework for developing mindfulness through observation of the body, feelings, mind, and mental

⁸ MN 118: *Ānāpānasati* is the act of paying attention to breathing.

⁹ DN 31: *Sigālovāda Sutta* is a Buddhist scripture that teaches ethical and moral principles.

¹⁰ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 267.

¹¹ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 91.

¹² *Dhp* 277.

¹³ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 13.

¹⁴ Goenka (2000): 23.

¹⁵ Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre was a French philosopher and freedom of choice was at the centre of Sartrean Existentialism.

¹⁶ Bodhi, 2005: 14.

¹⁷ Linehan (1993): 56.

phenomena.¹⁸ Sawyer (2018) further argues that, increasingly, mindfulness practices and meditation have found a home among Western psychologists and align quite comfortably with various forms of psychotherapy.¹⁹ Goenka (2000) highlights that Buddhist mindfulness techniques have been integrated into therapeutic interventions aimed at reducing anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)²⁰. This integration reflects a growing recognition of the therapeutic potential of mindfulness in both Eastern and Western traditions.

II. BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES OF MINDFULNESS

Buddhism is a scientific and rational philosophy that emphasizes appropriate efforts toward maintaining peace and steadfastness. The Noble Eightfold Path, particularly Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*), is fundamental in Buddhist teachings.²¹ Mindfulness is not just about awareness but also about cultivating ethical behavior, wisdom, and compassion, all of which are essential in educational settings.²² The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) outlines mindfulness as a systematic practice that involves observing the body, feelings, mind, and mental objects, which in turn, fosters personal growth and ethical decision-making.²³ Four fundamental Buddhist principles of mindfulness can be applied to education to foster emotional intelligence, resilience, and ethical conduct.

2.1. Present-moment awareness

This principle refers to focusing on the present moment without dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. According to the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (MN 118), mindfulness of breathing is a key practice that anchors individuals in the present moment, helping them develop concentration and mental clarity.²⁴ Modern students face significant distractions due to the encroachment of social media and the availability of numerous electronic devices, making sustained attention a challenge. Research shows that constant digital stimulation can lead to reduced attention spans and increased anxiety.²⁵ In contrast, mindfulness helps students enhance their focus and engagement with their studies.²⁶ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015) argues that mindfulness training in classrooms can mitigate these challenges by improving students' ability to remain present and attentive.

Additionally, Mahasi Sayadaw (1991) emphasizes that *vipassanā* (insight

¹⁸ MN 10.

¹⁹ Sawyer (2018): 69.

²⁰ Goenka (2000): 45 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental condition caused by traumatic events that adversely impacts the ability to function normally.

²¹ Bodhi (2012): 9.

²² Mahasi Sayadaw (1994): 38.

²³ Bodhi (2005): 17.

²⁴ Bodhi (2005): 41.

²⁵ Linehan (1993): 56.

²⁶ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 7.

meditation) strengthens present-moment awareness,²⁷ allowing individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions without attachment. This practice aligns with the Dhammapada (Verse 348), which states:

“Let go of the past, let go of the future, let go of the present. With a free heart, cross over to that shore beyond.” Teachers can introduce small mindfulness exercises such as focused breathing, guided meditation, or mindful listening to help students develop the habit of present-moment awareness.²⁸ According to Goenka (2000), the practice of mindfulness reduces impulsivity and increases patience, both of which are crucial for effective learning and emotional regulation.

2.2. Non-judgmental acceptance

One has to learn to accept experiences without judgment. Often, we are too quick to judge our everyday experiences, and in doing so, we lose opportunities for growth and learning. Any activity or experience can be an enriching one if we take the time to observe and reflect upon it. The Dhammapada (Verse 277) states that “all conditioned things are impermanent; when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering.” This verse highlights the importance of observing life’s experiences without excessive attachment or aversion.²⁹ Goenka (2000) suggests that non-judgmental acceptance helps students regulate emotions more effectively, enabling them to manage academic stress and interpersonal challenges.³⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) explains that mindfulness fosters a deep sense of self-compassion and patience, allowing individuals to embrace both successes and failures with equanimity. In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10), the Buddha instructs practitioners to observe bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions with detachment, recognizing them as transient phenomena rather than absolute truths.³¹ Bhikkhu Arjanh (2010) argues that in educational settings, fostering a culture of non-judgmental acceptance can reduce performance anxiety and encourage intellectual curiosity.³² Teachers can incorporate mindfulness training that encourages students to embrace challenges without self-criticism, promoting a growth mindset rather than a fear of failure.

Furthermore, Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018) highlights the role of mindfulness in enhancing the adjustment quotient (AQ), which refers to an individual’s ability to adapt to new situations and overcome setbacks.³³ This aligns with modern psychological findings that suggest mindfulness-based cognitive

²⁷ Mahasi Sayadaw (1991): 79. Present-moment awareness is being attuned with thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the environment without being consumed by them.

²⁸ Goenka (2000): 62.

²⁹ Goenka (2000): 79.

³⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 55.

³¹ Bodhi (2005): 83.

³² Bhikkhu Arjanh (2010): 3.

³³ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 119.

therapy (MBCT)³⁴ is effective in reducing negative self-talk and increasing resilience.³⁵

2.3. Compassion and empathy

Mindfulness technique develops nurturing qualities such as respect, kindness, tolerance, compassion, empathy, and understanding toward oneself and others. The Metta Sutta (Sn̐ 1.8) underscores the importance of loving-kindness,³⁶ teaching that individuals should cultivate goodwill toward all beings.³⁷ When students practice mindfulness, they become more aware of their own emotions and, consequently, develop a greater sensitivity toward the emotions of others.³⁸ According to Thich Nhat Hanh (2001), mindful compassion is an essential element of social-emotional learning, as it enables students to navigate interpersonal conflicts with patience and understanding.³⁹ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015) asserts that integrating mindfulness-based compassion training in education leads to reduced bullying, increased peer support, and stronger community bonds. The Sigālovāda Sutta (DN 31) teaches ethical conduct and responsible social behavior, principles that can be reinforced through mindfulness practices in schools.⁴⁰ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994) emphasizes that *karuṇā* (compassion) is an essential component of mindfulness, as it transforms self-awareness into meaningful action.⁴¹ He states that true mindfulness should lead to ethical engagement with the world rather than being a purely individualistic endeavor. Teachers can incorporate mindfulness-based compassion exercises, such as guided loving-kindness meditations, to help students develop a sense of interconnectedness and social responsibility. Research indicates that such practices enhance emotional intelligence and prosocial behavior, fostering a more harmonious and supportive learning environment.⁴²

2.4. Interconnectedness

Mindfulness creates the capacity to recognize the interconnectedness of all living beings and the environment. The *Saṃyutta Nikāya* describes ‘*paṭiccasamuppāda*’ (dependent origination)⁴³, emphasizing how all phenomena are interconnected (Bodhi, 2000).⁴⁴ Understanding interconnectedness helps students develop a deeper appreciation of the natural world and the

³⁴ Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is a therapeutic approach for depression by employing mindfulness and cognitive behavioral techniques.

³⁵ Sawyer (2018): 75.

³⁶ The *Metta Sutta* is the Buddhist teaching of sustaining loving kindness.

³⁷ Bodhi (2012): 60.

³⁸ Thich Nhat Hanh (2001): 87.

³⁹ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 11.

⁴⁰ Bodhi (2012): 114.

⁴¹ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994): 8.

⁴² Goenka (2000): 86.

⁴³ SN 12.23.

⁴⁴ Bodhi (2000): 134.

importance of environmental sustainability.⁴⁵ According to Mahasi Sayadaw (1991), mindfulness cultivates an awareness of the reciprocal relationship between human actions and the broader ecological system. This aligns with modern ecological psychology, which stresses that increased mindfulness leads to greater environmental responsibility (Dr. Dhamma Sami, 2018).⁴⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) explains that mindfulness fosters a deep connection with nature,⁴⁷ reinforcing the notion that personal well-being is intricately linked to planetary well-being. In educational settings, teachers can introduce mindfulness exercises that encourage students to observe and appreciate their surroundings, reinforcing sustainable attitudes and behaviors.

Moreover, the Cakkavatti Sutta⁴⁸ discusses the role of ethical leadership in maintaining harmony between human society and the environment. Dr. Dhammapiya (2015) argues that mindfulness education should include discussions on global sustainability and social justice,⁴⁹ encouraging students to become active contributors to a better world. We are familiar with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations in 2015, which aim to create a better world by 2030 by ending poverty, fighting inequality, and addressing climate change. Mindfulness can play a direct role in achieving these goals by fostering ethical awareness, responsible consumption, and compassionate leadership.

2.5. Mindfulness practices in education

There are various ways to integrate mindfulness into education, and it can be seamlessly incorporated into existing curricula without any difficulty. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta provides a comprehensive framework for developing mindfulness through systematic practice.⁵⁰ In educational settings, this can be adapted into various activities such as meditation, mindful movement, nature-based learning, social-emotional learning, and inquiry-based learning. Mindfulness-based education enhances students' cognitive functions, emotional resilience, and interpersonal skills, helping them navigate academic challenges and personal growth with clarity and composure.⁵¹ Goenka (2000) suggests that schools adopting mindfulness programs often see improvements in student behavior, emotional regulation, and overall well-being.⁵² The following mindfulness practices can be effectively implemented in educational institutions:

2.6. Meditation and deep breathing

Coordinating regular mindfulness practice sessions at any given time

⁴⁵ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994): 156.

⁴⁶ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 173.

⁴⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 94.

⁴⁸ DN 26: *Cakkavatti Sutta* is a narrative recounting the power of skillful action, Bodhi (2012): 121.

⁴⁹ MN 10. Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 15.

⁵⁰ Bodhi (2005): 93.

⁵¹ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994): 76.

⁵² Goenka (2000): 147.

can reduce stress, alleviate anxiety, and increase focus and concentration. The Ānāpānasati Sutta (MN 118) describes breath meditation as a powerful tool for cultivating mindfulness and mental clarity.⁵³ This practice involves paying close attention to the breath, allowing thoughts to settle and the mind to become more focused. Research has shown that students who engage in mindful breathing exercises experience significant improvements in attention span, academic performance, and emotional stability.⁵⁴ Goenka (2000) highlights that ānāpānasati (mindfulness of breathing) is particularly effective in training young minds to develop sustained concentration and inner calm.⁵⁵

Teachers can introduce simple breath-awareness exercises, such as:

Three-minute mindful breathing breaks at the beginning or end of a lesson.

Guided meditation sessions to help students manage test anxiety and emotional stress.

Body scan techniques allow students to connect with their present experiences and reduce tension.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) explains that mindful breathing bridges the gap between body and mind, helping students stay grounded in the present moment.⁵⁶ This aligns with the Dhammapada (Verse 25), which states:

“Through diligence, mindfulness, discipline, and self-control, the wise become an island that no flood can overwhelm.” By incorporating mindfulness meditation into the school day, students develop the ability to regulate their emotions and sustain attention, leading to a more productive and harmonious learning environment.⁵⁷

2.7. Mindful movement

Educational institutions can incorporate physical activities like yoga or tai chi⁵⁸ into physical education classes to promote mindfulness and self-awareness. These activities foster a connection between the mind and body, helping students cultivate focus and discipline. The Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22) mentions that walking meditation (cankama) is a powerful way to integrate mindfulness into movement, reinforcing awareness in daily activities.⁵⁹ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015) explains that movement-based mindfulness practices enhance cognitive flexibility, reduce stress, and support emotional regulation.⁶⁰ Teachers can introduce:

Walking meditation during recess or between classes.

⁵³ Bodhi (2005): 43.

⁵⁴ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 15.

⁵⁵ Goenka (2000): 160.

⁵⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 106.

⁵⁷ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994): 95.

⁵⁸ Tai-chi is ancient Chinese martial arts.

⁵⁹ Bodhi (2005): 66.

⁶⁰ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 17.

Yoga sessions focusing on slow, deliberate movements to encourage body awareness.

Stretching and breathing exercises that students can perform before tests to enhance concentration.⁶¹ Goenka (2000) suggests that incorporating mindful movement into education improves students' ability to regulate their energy levels and manage restlessness.⁶² Bhikkhu Arjanh (2010) highlights that young learners benefit greatly from movement-based mindfulness practices⁶³ as they provide an active yet calming way to engage with the present moment. In alignment with these ideas, the Cūḷavedalla Sutta (MN 44) discusses the importance of bodily awareness in cultivating wisdom and insight, emphasizing that mindfulness should extend beyond formal meditation into everyday movements.⁶⁴

III. NATURE-BASED EDUCATION

Educational institutions can introduce outdoor learning experiences that encourage students to connect with the natural world. The Sutta Nipāta (Snp 4.11) highlights the value of nature in fostering mindfulness and spiritual well-being.⁶⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) asserts that spending time in nature enhances mindfulness by grounding individuals in their surroundings and creating a sense of interconnectedness with the environment.⁶⁶ This aligns with the Buddhist principle of paṭiccasamuppāda (dependent origination), which teaches that all life is interconnected (SN 12.23).

Ways to incorporate nature-based mindfulness practices in education include:

Outdoor meditation sessions in gardens or parks.

Nature walks where students observe their surroundings mindfully.

Mindful gardening projects that help students develop patience and responsibility.

According to Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018), engaging with nature fosters environmental responsibility and emotional resilience, encouraging students to appreciate the world around them.⁶⁷ The Cakkavatti Sutta (DN 26) emphasizes ethical leadership and environmental care, reinforcing the importance of sustainability in mindfulness education.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Goenka (2000): 36.

⁶² Bhikkhu Arjanh (2010): 9.

⁶³ Movement-based mindfulness practices are exercises that incorporate mindfulness, physical movement, and focused attention.

⁶⁴ Bodhi (2005): 80.

⁶⁵ Bodhi (2012): 93.

⁶⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 126.

⁶⁷ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 16.

⁶⁸ Bodhi (2012): 108.

3.1. Social-emotional learning

Mindfulness can be integrated into social-emotional learning (SEL) curricula to foster respect, empathy, tolerance, compassion, and social skills. The Sigālovāda Sutta (DN 31) outlines ethical conduct and responsible behavior, principles that are essential for student development.⁶⁹

Mindfulness enhances emotional intelligence by helping students:

Recognize and regulate their emotions.

Improve conflict resolution skills.

Develop stronger interpersonal relationships.

Thich Nhat Hanh (2001) emphasizes that mindfulness fosters empathy and deep listening, allowing students to engage with others more compassionately.⁷⁰ Goenka (2000) suggests that schools incorporating mindfulness-based SEL programs report fewer incidents of bullying and stronger peer relationships.⁷¹ Furthermore, the Metta Sutta (Snp 1.8) encourages the cultivation of mettā (loving-kindness), which can be reinforced through mindfulness exercises such as Loving-kindness Meditation, where students silently wish happiness and peace for themselves and others. Gratitude journaling to develop a positive mindset by capturing all the aspects one is grateful for per day. Empathy exercises that encourage students to reflect on others' emotions and perspectives. Dr. Dhammapiya (2015) argues that mindfulness-based SEL cultivates resilience and emotional intelligence, preparing students for personal and professional success.⁷²

3.2. Inquiry-based learning

Lessons and exercises must be designed in such a way that encourages students to explore and learn through mindful inquiry and curiosity.⁷³ The Kālāma Sutta (AN 3.65) encourages critical thinking and self-inquiry, advocating for an open-minded approach to learning.⁷⁴

Mindfulness promotes: Curiosity-driven learning, where students explore topics based on genuine interest; Reflective questioning, allowing students to analyze their thoughts and biases; Creative problem-solving, where mindfulness enhances innovative thinking. Bhikkhu Arjanh (2010) suggests that mindfulness enhances metacognition, enabling students to think about how they learn and process information.⁷⁵ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994) emphasizes that mindfulness leads to deeper intellectual engagement, as students learn to

⁶⁹ Bodhi (2012): 114.

⁷⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh (2001): 37.

⁷¹ Goenka (2000): 80.

⁷² Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 18.

⁷³ *Kālāma Sutta* is the discourse on free inquiry and rational thought in Buddhist Pali canonical text.

⁷⁴ Bodhi (2012): 94.

⁷⁵ Bhikkhu Arjanh (2010): 11.

approach problems with calmness and clarity.⁷⁶

IV. BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

There are numerous benefits to integrating mindfulness into education. The twenty-first-century education system is vested in instilling lifelong skills that promote holistic development. Mindfulness is one of the most promising methods to achieve various educational goals, as it enhances cognitive flexibility, emotional resilience, and ethical awareness. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) describes mindfulness as the direct path to wisdom, emotional regulation, and self-awareness, all of which are crucial for academic and personal success.⁷⁷ Modern research confirms that mindfulness significantly improves students' focus, stress management, and social-emotional skills.⁷⁸ The *Dhammapada* (Verse 25) states: "Through diligence, mindfulness, discipline, and self-control, the wise become an island that no flood can overwhelm." This wisdom is highly applicable to education, where students must develop self-regulation, resilience, and adaptability. Below are some of the key benefits of integrating mindfulness into education.

4.1. Improved mental health

Mindfulness improves mental health by helping students regulate their emotions and cope with stress. It is a well-known phenomenon that teenagers often struggle with anxiety, depression, and emotional turmoil, which, if not managed properly, can negatively impact their well-being and academic performance. The *Cūḷavedalla Sutta* (MN 44) explains that mindfulness fosters insight and mental composure, reducing emotional suffering (Bodhi, 2005).⁷⁹ Mahasi Sayadaw (1991) argues that mindfulness allows students to observe their thoughts and emotions objectively,⁸⁰ preventing them from being overwhelmed by negative experiences.⁸¹ In addition, Goenka (2000) highlights that *vipassanā* (insight meditation) enables individuals to recognize the impermanent nature of emotions, helping them cultivate emotional resilience.

Teachers can introduce mindfulness techniques such as: Mindful breathing exercises to manage test anxiety; Body scan meditation to promote relaxation and reduce stress; Journaling mindfulness reflections to enhance self-awareness. According to Dr. Dhammapiya (2015), students who practice mindfulness show lower levels of stress and depression, increased self-confidence, and better emotional stability.⁸² The *Dhammapada* (Verse 348) states: "Let go of the past, let go of the future, let go of the present. With a free heart, cross over to that shore beyond." This teaching emphasizes the value of mindfulness in maintaining mental clarity and reducing unnecessary worry.

⁷⁶ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994): 46.

⁷⁷ Bodhi (2005): 112.

⁷⁸ Sawyer (2018): 76.

⁷⁹ Bodhi (2005): 131.

⁸⁰ Mahasi Sayadaw (1991): 61.

⁸¹ Goenka (2000): 79.

⁸² Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 16.

4.2. Increased focus and concentration

Many students struggle with maintaining focus, especially in an era dominated by social media and digital distractions. The Ānāpānasati Sutta (MN 118) describes breath meditation as a technique for developing sustained attention and concentration (Bodhi, 2005). This practice can be particularly effective for students who find it difficult to focus during lessons or while completing assignments.⁸³ Goenka (2000) asserts that ānāpānasati (mindfulness of breathing) enhances mental discipline, allowing students to develop stronger cognitive control.⁸⁴ Bhikkhu Arjanh (2010) suggests that mindfulness practices improve working memory and executive function, leading to better academic performance.

Simple mindfulness techniques to enhance focus include: Mindful listening exercises to strengthen auditory attention; One-minute mindful pauses between subjects to reset concentration; Visualization techniques to reinforce learning.

Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018) explains that mindfulness reduces cognitive overload, helping students retain information more effectively.⁸⁵ Researchers suggest that schools incorporating mindfulness programs see significant improvements in students' attention spans, learning efficiency, and task completion rates. In alignment with these findings, the Dhammapada (Verse 282) states that "When a wise person, well-trained in mindfulness, meditates, they find great joy in awareness." This verse reinforces the importance of cultivating mindfulness to develop a sharp and disciplined mind.

4.3. Enhanced empathy and compassion

Mindfulness fosters empathy and compassion, leading to more harmonious relationships and improved social interactions. The Metta Sutta (Sn̐ 1.8) teaches the practice of loving-kindness, encouraging individuals to cultivate goodwill toward all beings (Bodhi, 2012).⁸⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh (2001) explains that mindfulness fosters deep listening and understanding,⁸⁷ allowing students to navigate conflicts with patience and compassion. Dr. Dhammapiya (2015) asserts that mindfulness-based compassion training reduces bullying, increases peer support, and strengthens emotional intelligence.⁸⁸

Practical ways to cultivate mindfulness-based compassion include:

Loving-kindness meditation, where students silently wish happiness and peace for themselves and others.

Gratitude exercises, encouraging students to reflect on acts of kindness.

Empathy circles, where students share their emotions in a supportive

⁸³ Goenka (2000): 86.

⁸⁴ Bhikkhu Arjanh (2010): 19.

⁸⁵ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 134.

⁸⁶ Bodhi (2012): 83.

⁸⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh (2001):160.

⁸⁸ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 15.

environment.

Goenka (2000) suggests that mindfulness helps students develop an intrinsic sense of moral responsibility, leading to stronger ethical behavior.⁸⁹ The *Sigālovāda Sutta* (DN 31) outlines principles of ethical conduct, emphasizing respect, honesty, and kindness, which can be reinforced through mindfulness education.⁹⁰ The *Dhammapada* (Verse 223) states, “Conquer anger with love, conquer evil with good, conquer the stingy with generosity, conquer the liar with truth.” This wisdom can guide students toward cultivating positive relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

4.4. Environmental awareness

Mindfulness creates a deeper appreciation for nature and fosters environmental responsibility.⁹¹ The *Samyutta Nikāya* (SN 12.23) discusses *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination), emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life.⁹² Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) advocates for nature-based mindfulness practices, stating that mindfulness enhances students’ connection to the environment.⁹³ Mahasi Sayadaw (1991) explains that recognizing interdependence fosters ecological awareness and ethical decision-making.⁹⁴

Ways to integrate environmental mindfulness into education include: Mindful nature walks, encouraging students to observe their surroundings. Eco-conscious projects, such as gardening or sustainable living initiatives. Reflection on interdependence, reinforcing the connection between human actions and nature. The *Cakkavatti Sutta* (DN 26) emphasizes ethical leadership and environmental stewardship, reinforcing the importance of sustainability in education.⁹⁵ The *Dhammapada* (Verse 129) states: “All tremble at violence; all fear death. Comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause others to kill.” This verse supports the ethical responsibility of protecting and preserving nature.

4.5. Better decision-making

Mindfulness improves decision-making by fostering self-awareness, patience, and critical thinking. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) explains that mindfulness cultivates wisdom and discernment, helping individuals make thoughtful choices.⁹⁶ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018) highlights that mindfulness strengthens executive function, allowing students to approach problem-solving

⁸⁹ Goenka (2000): 91.

⁹⁰ Bodhi (2012): 104.

⁹¹ *Samyutta Nikaya* is the third of the five collections of the Buddhist scriptures.

⁹² Bodhi (2000): 113.

⁹³ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 126.

⁹⁴ Mahasi Sayadaw (1991): 17.

⁹⁵ Bodhi (2012): 133.

⁹⁶ Bodhi (2005): 117.

with a balanced and rational mindset.⁹⁷ Research suggests that mindfulness-based interventions improve impulse control and cognitive flexibility, leading to more effective decision-making.⁹⁸

Strategies to improve mindfulness-based decision-making include: Pause and reflect exercises, where students assess different perspectives before making decisions. Mindful journaling encourages self-reflection and awareness. Scenario analysis, where students mindfully evaluate various outcomes. The Dhammapada (Verse 227) states: “A wise person, grounded in mindfulness, examines actions carefully and walks the noble path.” This wisdom reinforces the importance of cultivating mindfulness to enhance ethical and rational decision-making.

V. CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Any change in education does not occur overnight. It requires collaboration among all stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, students, and parents, to ensure mindfulness practices are effectively integrated into the education system. The implementation of mindfulness in schools is most successful when it is made a priority at both institutional and policy levels. However, despite its proven benefits, several challenges remain in establishing mindfulness as a core component of education. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10) teaches that mindfulness is a gradual practice that requires commitment and consistency (Bodhi, 2005). Similarly, modern research indicates that sustainable mindfulness programs require long-term planning, training, and adaptation to cultural and social contexts.⁹⁹ Some of the key challenges and future directions for integrating mindfulness into education are given below:

5.1. Teacher training and support

Only a trained teacher can impart authentic training of mindfulness to students. Educators need proper training, ongoing support, and resources to integrate mindfulness into their teaching practices. The Sigālovāda Sutta (DN 31) emphasizes the importance of education and ethical leadership, highlighting the teacher’s role in shaping the moral and intellectual development of students (Bodhi, 2012).¹⁰⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) argues that teachers who practice mindfulness themselves are better equipped to impart its benefits to their students.¹⁰¹ Without proper training, educators may struggle to facilitate mindfulness practices effectively. Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018) explains that teachers need both theoretical knowledge and personal experience with mindfulness to create a supportive learning environment.¹⁰²

Key strategies to enhance teachers’ training include: Mindfulness-based

⁹⁷ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 73.

⁹⁸ Sawyer (2018): 80.

⁹⁹ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 18.

¹⁰⁰ Bodhi (2012): 125.

¹⁰¹ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 233.

¹⁰² Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 235.

professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills. Regular mindfulness retreats for educators, allowing them to deepen their practice. Collaborative support groups, where teachers can share experiences and strategies for implementing mindfulness in the classroom. Goenka (2000) highlights that when teachers embody mindfulness, their presence alone creates a calming and focused atmosphere, benefiting the entire classroom.¹⁰³ The Dhammapada (Verse 158) reinforces the following idea: “One should first establish oneself in what is proper, then only should one instruct others. Thus, the wise one does not get stained.” Future efforts should prioritize providing teachers with accessible and well-structured mindfulness training programs to ensure successful implementation in schools.

5.2. Curriculum integration

One of the key challenges in promoting mindfulness in education is integrating it into existing curricula, policies, and standards. Many educational systems focus heavily on standardized testing and academic performance, leaving little room for social-emotional learning practices such as mindfulness. The Kālāma Sutta (AN 3.65) encourages critical thinking and open inquiry, which are essential for incorporating mindfulness into modern educational frameworks.¹⁰⁴ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015) suggests that mindfulness should not be treated as an additional subject but should instead be woven into various aspects of the curriculum.¹⁰⁵

Practical ways to integrate mindfulness into education include:

Embedding mindfulness exercises in daily classroom routines (e.g., starting the day with a short breathing meditation).

Incorporating mindfulness into subjects such as literature, science, and physical education (e.g., studying the effects of mindfulness on the brain in science class).

Encouraging reflective practices in assignments and classroom discussions (e.g., students writing about their experiences with mindfulness).

The Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22) describes mindfulness as a tool that can be applied to all aspects of life, emphasizing its adaptability.¹⁰⁶ Schools that successfully integrate mindfulness into their curriculum report improvements in student engagement, emotional well-being, and classroom dynamics.¹⁰⁷

5.3. Cultural sensitivity and adaptation

Mindfulness is rooted in Buddhist philosophy, but it is important to adapt its teachings to diverse cultural and social contexts. The Dhammapada (Verse 354) states:

¹⁰³ Goenka (2000): 174.

¹⁰⁴ Bodhi (2012): 93.

¹⁰⁵ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 19.

¹⁰⁶ Bodhi (2005): 124.

¹⁰⁷ Mahasi Sayadaw (1994): 111.

“Just as a flower does not pick and choose where it spreads its fragrance, so too should wisdom and mindfulness be shared freely, adapting to the needs of all.”¹⁰⁸ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018) explains that while mindfulness originates from Buddhism, it is a universal practice that transcends religious boundaries. However, some communities may perceive mindfulness as a religious practice rather than a secular tool for mental well-being.

Key approaches to ensuring cultural sensitivity include:

Presenting mindfulness as a scientific and psychological practice rather than a religious one.

Allowing flexibility in how mindfulness is practiced, so that it aligns with different cultural traditions.

Providing clear evidence of the psychological and academic benefits of mindfulness makes it more widely accepted in secular education systems.

Goenka (2000) asserts that mindfulness is ultimately about awareness and self-regulation, which are relevant to people of all backgrounds.¹⁰⁹ Mahasi Sayadaw (1991) notes that mindfulness should be taught in a way that resonates with students’ lived experiences, ensuring greater acceptance and engagement.¹¹⁰

5.4. Research and evaluation

To fully integrate mindfulness into education, it is essential to conduct studies that assess the effectiveness of mindfulness programs. The Cūḷavedalla Sutta (MN 44) emphasizes the role of wisdom and discernment in evaluating different approaches to mental training (Bodhi, 2005).¹¹¹ Dr. Dhammapiya (2015) highlights that empirical research on mindfulness in education has grown significantly,¹¹² yet more studies are needed to:

Assess the long-term impact of mindfulness on students’ cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Evaluate different mindfulness techniques to determine which are most effective in classroom settings.

Investigate how mindfulness can be tailored for students of various age groups and learning styles.

The Kālāma Sutta (AN 3.65) encourages the careful evaluation of practices to ensure their effectiveness.¹¹³ Schools that implement mindfulness programmes should actively collect feedback from teachers, students, and parents to refine and improve their approach.¹¹⁴ Sawyer (2018) suggests

¹⁰⁸ Dr. Dhamma Sami (2018): 125.

¹⁰⁹ Goenka (2000): 108.

¹¹⁰ Mahasi Sayadaw (1991): 14.

¹¹¹ Bodhi (2005): 65.

¹¹² Dr. Dhammapiya (2015): 127.

¹¹³ Bodhi (2012): 97.

¹¹⁴ Sawyer (2018): 69.

that collaboration between neuroscientists, psychologists, and educators can further validate mindfulness as a beneficial educational tool. As research continues to develop, mindfulness may become an integral part of global education systems, much like traditional subjects such as mathematics and literature.

VI. CONCLUSION

By incorporating Buddhist-inspired mindfulness practices into education, we can cultivate a more compassionate and sustainable future. The Dhammapada (Verse 1) states:

“The mind is everything. What you think, you become.” This profound teaching highlights the power of mindfulness in shaping students’ lives. Mindfulness fosters emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and cognitive clarity, all of which contribute to a balanced and fulfilling educational experience. However, for mindfulness to become a widespread educational tool, challenges such as teacher training, curriculum integration, cultural sensitivity, and research validation must be addressed.¹¹⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) argues that mindfulness is a lifelong practice, and its integration into education requires patience, dedication, and collaboration. As educators, policymakers, and individuals, we must work together to prioritize mindfulness in education and create a more harmonious and environmentally conscious world. The Cakkavatti Sutta (DN 26) emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership, reminding us that the education of future generations is one of the most significant responsibilities of society.¹¹⁶ Through mindfulness, we can mentor students toward a world of balance, wisdom, and compassion. As the world faces increasing social and environmental challenges, the teachings of mindfulness - rooted in ancient wisdom but highly relevant to modern education - offer a path toward resilience and collective well-being.

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¹¹⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 183.

¹¹⁶ Bodhi (2012): 147.

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THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE IN EDUCATION

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Abstract:

The introduction of mindfulness in education not only brings many benefits to students but is also popular in all fields. This is considered a positive practice - can help people discover their potential. For teachers and students, mindfulness increases educational effectiveness; cultivates emotional intelligence, and improves school relationships. Currently, the world considers mindfulness as a major subject, because it brings many significant benefits, not only for teachers but also for students. Mindfulness in Vietnam is currently being applied in several international schools, bringing encouraging signs. In the future, with the attention of researchers, it can be widely applied in the Vietnamese educational environment.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, mindfulness practice, role of mindfulness, application of mindfulness.*

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT OVERVIEW

Mindfulness is an important practice of Buddhism, commonly mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures and widely applied effectively for everyone. Currently, mindfulness is researched and applied in the educational environment more and more fully, with clear methods. The practice of mindfulness aims to help students enhance their ability to receive knowledge, understand problems comprehensively and master the activities of the body; control strong emotions, as well as develop communication and behavioral skills in the relationship between the government and everyone. But most importantly, mindfulness also helps you to perceive all phenomena objectively and healthily, nurture your ambitions and dreams, and have more joy, peace and confidence in yourself. Through these mindfulness practices, you can calm all stress, anxiety, sadness, negative thoughts, and violence that are inherent in

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yourself. The education system often focuses on exam and test results, without paying attention to improving teaching or training on how to take care of your own emotions, as well as the necessary behaviors when communicating with the social community. Of course, the educational environment needs to equip you with the necessary skills and knowledge, at the same time creating strength and stability when facing emotional storms, the ability to accept and tolerate differences in thinking, perception, and lifestyle of people in society is equally important. The purpose of this article is to explore the benefits of practicing mindfulness in education, a positive and effective method that has great potential in supporting, nurturing, and developing self-generative skills while contributing to the peace of the surrounding community.

II. RESEARCH CONTENT

2.1. Definition of mindfulness

Mindfulness or right mindfulness is one of the eight important factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, which is the complete awareness of all dharmas, of what is present, arising right in each moment of the present, now and here. Mindfulness is considered the breath - the heart of all practices.¹ Jon Kabat-Zinn said: “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”² That is, mindfulness is described as a way of being, placing the mind in a certain practice with intention, and always attached to the present life, the relationship between the self and the object, in which the mind has no discrimination and judgment.

Joseph Goldstein said: “Mindfulness always a wholesome factor ... in a true moment of mindfulness there is freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion ... through the practice of mindfulness, all of the other factors of enlightenment (mindfulness, investigation, energy, rapture, calm, concentration, and equanimity) are automatically cultivated. Mindfulness does have that function of drawing the other factors of enlightenment together.”³ Andrew Olendzki explains how this is presented in the *Abhidharma*: “One of the more astonishing insights of the *Abhidhamma* is that mindfulness always co-arises with eighteen other wholesome mental factors. We are used to thinking of these factors as very different things, but the fact that they all arise together suggests they can be viewed as facets of the same jewel, as states that mutually define one another. By reviewing the range of wholesome factors that co-arise with it, we can get a much closer look at the phenomenology of mindfulness. First, there is equanimity ... It is therefore also characterized by non-greed and non-hatred. This is the generic *Abhidhamma* way of referring to generosity or non-attachment on the one hand and loving-kindness

¹ S. Samyaksamr̥ti; P. Sammāsati; T. ཡང་དག་པའི་དྲན་པ། ; H. 正念; E. Correct mindfulness

² Kabat-Zinn, J *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*, New York: Hyperion, 1994, p. 14.

³ Cullen, M., Gates, B., & Nisker, W., *Mindfulness: the heart of Buddhist Meditation, Inquiring Mind*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2006, p. 5.

on the other”⁴

It is important to remember that mindfulness is both the result (mindful awareness) and the practice (mindful practice). Here mindful awareness refers to a sustained presence or awareness, a deep understanding that manifests as freedom of the mind. For example, freedom from the conditioning of perception, thinking, and imagining); Mindfulness practice is the systematic practice of meditating on a subject in a way that focuses attention on the object. A definition that encompasses both aspects of mindfulness, Shapiro & Carlson suggest: “Mindfulness is the awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open, accepting, and discerning way to whatever is arising in the present moment.”⁵ Shinzen Young proposed a concept of “mindfulness awareness is a certain way of paying attention to what is going on around and inside you. It consists of three core skills, each of which is different from the others and they work together to strengthen each other.”⁶ These definitions have established the importance of mindfulness for the cultivation of individual personality, as well as the effects of the community in the environment that need to be mentioned. Therefore, it can be said that: Mindfulness is the perception of the dharmas, they are happening around at the present moment - in a state without discrimination or delusional thoughts of the individual towards that phenomenon. These definitions have clearly stated the importance of mindfulness in cultivating and training individual personality, as well as the impacts of the community in the environment that need to be mentioned. Therefore, it can be said that: Mindfulness is the perception of the dharmas, they are happening around at the present moment - in a state without discrimination or individual delusion towards that phenomenon.

2.2. What is mindfulness in education?

In the field of education, mindfulness can help students control their emotions, thoughts, or stress in difficult situations and focus on the learning material being presented. In addition, mindfulness not only reduces anxiety when students encounter it, but also helps support mental, emotional, and physical health. Mindfulness is not only a concept or term for religion, but also a state of awareness that benefits everyone in society. Therefore, when introducing mindfulness into education, teachers will introduce activities that engage students in mindfulness techniques. The hypothesis is that we can use the “wellness wheel” to explore mindfulness through different aspects of a person. Regarding these techniques, teach students how to be self-aware, empathize, communicate mindfully, learn ways to calm and focus the mind,

⁴ Olendzki, A *The real practice of mindfulness. Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly*, 2008, p. 50.

⁵ Shapiro, S. L., & Carlson, L. E., *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions*. American Psychological Association, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Publications, 2009, p. 248.

⁶ Young, S *Five Ways to Know Yourself: An Introduction to Basic Mindfulness*, Independently Published, 2016, p. 7.

take care of the body, and manage their emotions (Figure 1). Once students apply this well, mindfulness is not an additional activity - integrated into the curriculum, but mindfulness is considered the lifeblood of daily life.

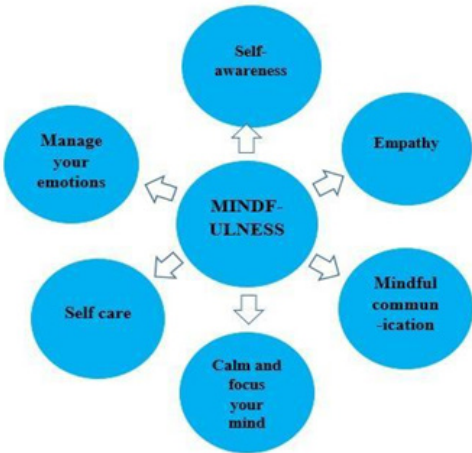


Figure 1. Mindfulness-based health education model (Source: Author, 2025)

In recent decades, the topic of mindfulness has been widely studied, considered a subject, and taught in schools, bringing benefits to students, teachers, and the community in general. In advanced countries in the world such as the US, UK, Canada, etc., the application of mindfulness in schools has been somewhat different in scale and form. For example, in the US, the IRP’s K-8 curriculum (The Inner Resilience Program) helps teachers create an optimal teaching environment in their classrooms, by teaching students how to control their inner self, stay calm when facing unexpected incidents, relax the body and calm the mind, and at the same time improve students’ concentration skills. The IRP provides teachers with a long-term training course, a total of 10 hours, with the support of professional consultants, as well as mindfulness trainers.⁷ To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, the Fetzer Institute evaluated the well-being of teachers and students in the classroom environment, through a trial with IRP participants and non-IRP participants. The study was conducted from September 2007 to May 2008 by Claire Aulicino and took place in third- through fifth-grade classrooms in schools across New York City. Participants included 57 classroom teachers, with 29 randomly assigned to the IRP (treatment) group and 28 to the control group. 855 of these teachers’ students also participated in the study (471 in the treatment group and 384 in the control group). Teachers in the IRP group participated in activities designed to reduce teacher stress and increase their ability to focus, concentrate, and feel satisfied with their work, as well as improve their relationships with their colleagues. Specifically, the IRP group

⁷ Lantieri, L., n.d. *Cultivating inner resilience in educators and students*. Available at: <https://lindalantieri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/chap-8-cultivating-inner-resilience-in-educators-and-students.pdf>.

participated in a series of weekly yoga classes, monthly “inner-nourishment” meetings, a weekend residential retreat, and training and used a module in the curriculum that “builds resilience from within” for students.⁸ To ensure the objectivity and reliability of the research results, all teachers and students from both the treatment and control groups will write a report after the program ends. Therefore, the results achieved will be evidence to prove the results after implementing the program. Thus, in the US, the mindfulness method in education is implemented very systematically and brings optimal efficiency in helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning and creating a unique school culture environment. This is also a model that deserves attention and attention, and needs to be actively implemented in popular schools.

In the Vietnamese educational environment, the application of mindfulness practice is still a very new issue. Although mindfulness has existed for a long time and has been deeply associated with Vietnamese culture and history since very early on.⁹ Therefore, to respond and positively direct the practice of mindfulness in the school environment, it is thought that each teacher must be consistent in sharing responsibility, by encouraging students with the following two methods. First, teachers can set an example of mindfulness themselves. Second, foster mindfulness activities interwoven into everyday life, so that students can approach and know how to apply these activities in different situations. For example, body scan meditation, mindful breathing, and awareness of the senses. Currently, mindfulness in education has been applied by several international schools, such as The Olympia Schools in Hanoi; British International School in Hanoi; ISHCMC International School in Ho Chi Minh City, and Tue Duc Pathway International School in Ho Chi Minh City..., which have brought about certain results. The technique is mainly implemented through mindfulness expert teachers to guide the practice, in which participants perform the movements: mindful breathing, mindful eating, and mindful communication. Furthermore, a great way to start incorporating mindfulness into your curriculum is to create a comprehensive mindfulness challenge for your students. This challenge could include some different mindfulness activities and outline specific goals for your students to achieve. Below, we can suggest a few ideas for some fun mindfulness exercises and activities to consider incorporating.

2.2.1. Mindful reading

Mindful reading involves short breaks where students sit and read. During mindful reading, students should be allowed to read whatever they like. Studies have shown that reading for six minutes can reduce stress by up to 68%. After a set amount of time, usually around 10 minutes, encourage students to discuss the information they have just received and the emotions associated with the

⁸ Brian C. Wilson, *John E. Fetzer and the Quest for the New Age*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018, p. 200.

⁹ Bodhi, B., What does Mindfulness really mean? A canonical perspective. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 12, 2011, p. 19-39.

material. Making sure we do this will help the discussion flow smoothly and be enjoyable. In addition to reducing stress, mindful reading exercises in the classroom can also help students change their perspective by encouraging them to look at life from a different perspective that is positive, open, and universally beneficial.

2.2.2. Mindfulness meditation

Meditation is a great way to encourage mindfulness in students, but it takes time to practice. With the guidance of an expert teacher, it can help students learn to calm their bodies and connect with their emotional state. You can find guided meditation videos on YouTube of various lengths that your class can follow, or you can learn the techniques and lead your meditation practice. One way to begin meditation¹⁰ is to have students sit on the floor with their legs in a half lotus position, with their feet flat on the floor. Have them place their hands on their thighs, palms facing up. After they close their eyes, exhale completely. Give them a word to focus on, and repeat that word several times. Encourage them to focus on that word and clear their minds of other thoughts as they breathe deeply. Let them sit in this calm manner for a few minutes, then slowly have them open their eyes and return to their schoolwork (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Meditation time for primary school students at Step Up School¹¹

2.2.3. Yoga, mindful breathing, and other mindful movements

The purpose of this mindfulness meditation is to help students engage their minds and emotions as well as their bodies. Yoga exercises can help young people learn how to move their bodies while encouraging mindfulness. If possible, take young people out for a slow walk in nature (mindful walking), moving their bodies while enjoying the natural environment. Another option

¹⁰ Baesler, E. James, *Meditation in the Classroom: Cultivating Attention and Insight*, Communication & Theatre Arts Faculty Publications, 2015.

¹¹ Step Up School, 2019. *Role of meditation in education*. Available at: <https://www.stepup-school.in/role-of-meditation-in-education/>

to consider is mindful breathing. An activity called color breathing can be effective in the classroom. Ask students to think of a relaxing color and another color that represents anger, frustration, or sadness. Now, ask students to close their eyes and imagine that they are breathing in the relaxing color and letting it fill their entire body. As they exhale, ask them to visualize the negative color leaving their body and dissipating throughout the room.

2.2.4. Practice gratitude

Gratitude is an expression of the connection between the individual and the community; they always have a mutually dependent relationship. This spirit in Buddhism, inspired by the teachings of the Buddha, is the four heavy graces. So, what should we be grateful for? This question is posed to students to help them escape negative thoughts and follow the path of positive thinking. It is also a great way to awaken mindfulness. Encourage students to write a wholesome wish of their choice in their diary at the beginning of the week. If they do so, it is considered the completion of the exercise—an action that activates beautiful and meaningful words in life.

2.3. The power of mindfulness

Mindfulness is the source of energy that helps us recognize what is happening in the present. When people are mindful, they will have peace, because the magnetic field always spreads in every gesture, behavior, or action, when walking, standing, sitting, studying, and entertaining..., at the same time avoiding mistakes, and difficulties, and enlightening us in all daily activities. Before the prospect of a good deed, a beautiful image, a good word, a sympathetic look - people feel very happy and joyful, why? That person is living in mindfulness. "Therefore, the power of mindfulness has the ability to eliminate negative energies and keep the mind in a state of peace."¹² Furthermore, mindfulness involves a state of deep awareness of: (1) one's present being, what one is doing at a particular moment; (2) one's feelings, perceptions, thoughts, perceptions, and all phenomena around one at a given moment; (3) one's thoughts or opinions; and (4) the true nature of all activities (learning, movement, and relationships) which are transient and not fixed. The essential thing for mindfulness in all cases is to be aware in a simple, non-reactive, and unbiased way, giving the subject a clear picture of the mental, emotional, and physical processes and states that arise depending on oneself at the present moment. In another case, mindfulness can reveal the truth about the impermanence of one's experience; discovering the sensory, mental, or emotional elements interwoven in the process in wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral ways.

Mindfulness is training in the constant awareness of the consequences of one's actions, expressed through body, speech, and mind. From this perspective, we can apply and follow, based on the four levels of contemplation that are often mentioned in the *Nikāya* texts, which are: contemplating the body with the

¹² Thich Nguyen Dinh, *Art and Culture of Buddhism in Tibet*, Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, 2025, p. 277.

body, contemplating feelings with the feelings, contemplating the mind with the mind, and contemplating phenomena with diligence, alertness, mindfulness to overcome all desires and worries.¹³ The development of mindfulness prevents one from getting lost in the spiritual journey, because of the sensations, emotions, desires, thoughts, and ideas that operate through the mind. In this sense, being mindful of what one is thinking and feeling can help one direct one's efforts in the right direction. The insight of mindfulness provides the spiritual awareness of oneself and the community around, necessary to skillfully change oneself and contribute to a better world in which one lives. Mindfulness is the presence of the mind that grasps the object in conscious concentration. It recognizes the nature and condition of the thing being contemplated and determines what it is and what its purpose is. In this way, mindfulness is called paying attention to whatever one is doing, without being mixed up by any other thoughts. For example, when contemplating the movement of the physical body, such as when we are in walking meditation, we know why we are walking and what is the function and purpose of walking like that? Another example: when we are concentrating on a certain research topic, we must know what the object is that needs to be referred to? And what is the direction of that solution? Although the scenes of the outside world cause disturbances, we do not care about them with our personal feelings and impressions. Mindfulness also means being careful, precise, and attentive to every detail. More specifically, it makes people fully perfect in their perception and brings about certain good results. A mindful person knows and understands everything according to the truth and does not cling or cling to everything with aimless desires, because they always observe ethical behavior in every thought, are careful with their words when speaking, and always consider every gesture, action, and deed. When one enters the right path with energy and attention, one can fully realize the benefits of the progressive state in the present moment, and act responsibly to help others in terms of emotional transformation. As we know, the mind is the ultimate source of all happiness and suffering, when the mind is established in mindfulness, one should not think, judge, associate, plan, imagine and wish, but should note, because mindfulness is untying these knots and tangles simply by noting. It does nothing but note, watching each occasion of experience as it arises, stops, and disappears. In observing, mindfulness facilitates the attainment of both equanimity and wisdom and it can lead to deep concentration (*samadhi*) or wisdom, depending on the method applied. Mindfulness is also cultivated through the practice of the four foundations, which are: contemplation of the body (mindfulness of breathing, great dignity, small dignity, contemplation of impurity, contemplation of the four elements, contemplation of a corpse, contemplation of a decaying corpse, contemplation of bones, contemplation of decaying bones); contemplation of feelings; contemplation of the mind and

¹³ *Majjhima Nikāya*, translated by I. B. Horner as *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004 (First Published in 1954-9 by Pāli Text Society, UK), three volumes. A new translation by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi as *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p. 55 - 56.

contemplation of dhammas (contemplation of the five aggregates, contemplation of the six sense bases, contemplation of the seven factors of enlightenment, contemplation of the four noble truths) (Figure 3).

This is explained by the Buddha: "...What is right mindfulness? ...dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief concerning the world. He dwells contemplating feeling in feelings... states of mind in states of mind...phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief is concerning the world."¹⁴

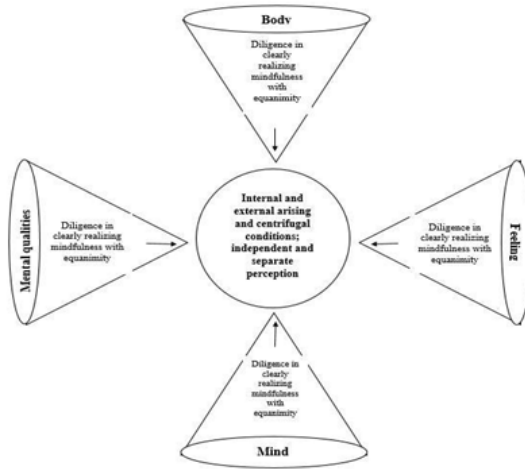


Figure 3: Essential characteristics and mental functions related to the Four Foundation of Mindfulness¹⁵

Professor Peter Harvey said: "In the course of practicing them, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration are accompanied by the way to practice meditation, which purifies the mind through mental training, the highest level of practice. Undoubtedly, the right effort and right mindfulness lead to the right concentration. Though wisdom is the primary tool for deliverance, the penetrating vision can only open up when the mind has been composed and collected. Therefore, the factor of concentration needs the aid of effort and mindfulness. Right concentration refers to various levels of deep calm known as *Jhāna*, a state of inner collectedness arising from attention closely focused on a

¹⁴ The *Dīgha Nikāya*, translated by Maurice Walshe as *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995; by T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids as *Dialogues of the Buddha*, vols. III, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000, p. 61.

¹⁵ Kudesia, Ravi S., and Yongey Nyima. "Mindfulness Revisited: A Buddhist-Based Conceptualization." *Journal of Management Inquiry*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2015, pp. 3 – 24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492614532315>.

meditation object”¹⁶

Therefore, to be happy in the present life, an individual’s mind must first be peaceful and happy. Personal happiness benefits the happiness of society and people, and thereby, world peace will be built. In this form, the interdependent, bilateral interaction between right view, right effort, and right mindfulness always works in the direction of correct and healthy thinking. As Rupert Gethin explained: “How one speaks, acts, and thinks at any time is dependent on one’s vision of oneself and the world”¹⁷ (Figure 4).

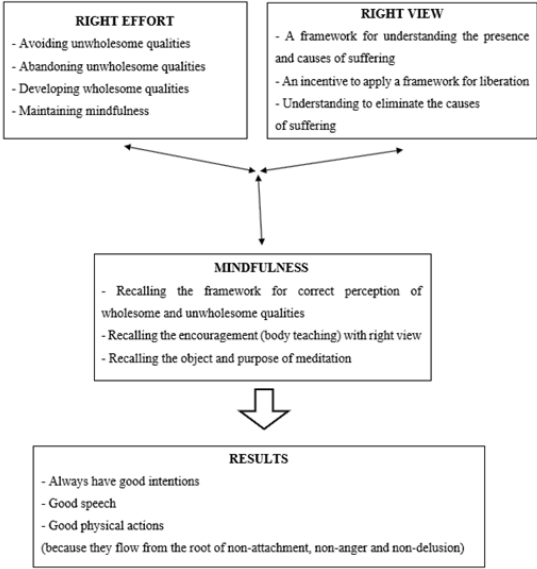


Figure 4. The triad of Buddhist mindfulness (Source: Author, 2025)

Mindfulness practice also focuses on the idea or perspective, of empathy for others. The Buddha often taught that: The views one uses to understand life could distort one’s awareness of how things really are. Mindfulness in speech and action needs clear comprehension as its companion: knowing the purpose, the skillful means, the awareness of Dhamma, and the results. When we live with mindfulness, there is a marked difference in our awareness. We know what is happening to ourselves, but we do not become involved in it. When anger arises, we know it is arising, but we do not have to become angry. That is a great skill. Mindfulness is available to everyone and is used by everyone for survival, but since survival is a lost cause, we might as well use some more mindfulness in order to become liberated and free. Mindfulness is a skillful means and a clear comprehension, the wisdom that can discriminate, so we can change our direction if necessary. The perspectives that people use

¹⁶ Harvey, P *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundation, Values and Issues*, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 38.

¹⁷ Gethin, R *The Buddhist path to awakening: A study of the Bodhi-Pakkhiya Dhamma*, Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2001, p. 221.

to understand life can distort their perception of the true nature of things. Mindfulness in speech and action needs clear understanding as its companion: knowing the purpose, skillful means, and awareness of the Dharma and the result. When we live with mindfulness, there is a clear difference in people's perceptions. Because we know what is happening to ourselves but we do not get involved in it. When anger arises, we know it is arising, but there is no need to get angry, which is a great skill. Mindfulness is available to everyone and is used for survival, but since survival is a lost cause, we can also use more mindfulness to become liberated and free. Mindfulness is also a skillful means and a clear understanding, a discriminating wisdom, so we can change direction if necessary.¹⁸ Every day, we often walk, sit, lie down, eat, and sleep... but in reality, we often do the opposite of what we intend to do in our daily lives. Why? Perhaps we are caught up in projects, worries, anxiety, pressure, or busy with work, lacking a free spirit. Therefore, when mindfulness is present in every action - when the mind stays in the present *dhamma*, does not regret the past, and does not worry about the future - we come into contact with the mystery of life. Each step becomes a step that nurtures happiness, and we cultivate a safe and fearless lifestyle. This is the source of energy that helps us return to ourselves and live in true happiness. Professor Donald Mitchell said: "Mindfulness practice involves focusing the mind on an object, thus contributing to the next step, namely, right concentration."¹⁹

2.4. Benefits of mindfulness in education

Currently, mindfulness is receiving attention from countries around the world, including Vietnam. It is used as an effective method to reduce pressure, anxiety, or stress in teaching as well as daily life. In addition, mindfulness also helps teachers increase their sense of happiness, and achieve efficiency and quality in knowledge transfer. Therefore, when we bring mindfulness into the classroom, it will bring some significant benefits, including:

2.4.1. Reduce stress and anxiety

The world out there is stressful, anxious, and fearful, especially for young people. When we use mindfulness techniques to calm our minds and bodies, it can also help reduce the negative effects of stress, including behavioral problems in the classroom. According to the American Psychological Association, mindfulness reduces the stress response by lowering blood pressure and heart rate, so students feel less stress and anxiety related to classroom activities, such as taking a test or discussing a lesson.

2.4.2. Improve self-regulation

Self-regulation can be divided into two categories: behavioral and emotional. Behavioral self-regulation involves behaving in a way that is

¹⁸ Khema, *A Being Nobody, Going Nowhere-Meditations on the Buddhist Path*, Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1987, p. 164.

¹⁹ Mitchell, *D Buddhism Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 56.

consistent with one's personal values and goals. Emotional self-regulation is the ability to respond to an experience, with different emotions, in a flexible way or to delay those reactions in order to deal with them appropriately. In general, self-regulation is "knowing how to control oneself". Both forms of self-regulation have positive effects on mindfulness activities.²⁰ The practice of self-regulation can be applied to both: First, helping students self-regulate through daily routines. For example, greeting teachers, eating regularly, and maintaining a consistent bedtime routine. Routines help students learn what to expect, making them feel cc Second, self-regulation for adults because this practice allows everyone to have the right to choose how to respond to situations. Although we may feel life is full of colors, the most important thing is not how we are treated, but how people react to it. In this situation, we will have three options: (1). Approach, avoid and fight; (2). Be aware of your own emotions, by silently forgiving or venting anger on the person who hurt you. (3). Monitor your body to know the signs of your emotions, if you do not recognize them immediately. For example, a rapid heart rate and a change in facial expression can be signs that we are angry, frustrated, or even having a crisis. Thus, self-regulation can play an important role in relationships, happiness, and success in life. People who can master their emotions and control their behaviors are better able to manage stress, resolve internal conflicts, and achieve their goals.

2.4.3. Improve academic performance

When students maintain a balanced state, it will help them learn and absorb knowledge more effectively. Research from the National Institutes of Health shows that college students have lower stress levels, while higher mindfulness and its aspects explain better cognitive function. The University of California also shows that higher mindfulness and better academic performance in school are closely related. Mindfulness prolongs students' ability to focus and pay attention. Over time, mindfulness can strengthen the connection between the mind and body, improving academic performance and IQ levels, analytical ability, and intelligence.

III. CONCLUSION

Integrating mindfulness in education is not just a trend, but a transformative approach, aiming to nurture the holistic development of students, and more deeply - in terms of practice that can be applied universally to everyone, through the wise teachings of the Buddha. By enhancing concentration and attention, managing stress and anxiety, cultivating emotional intelligence, improving learning outcomes, and promoting a positive learning environment. Furthermore, mindfulness equips students with the necessary skills to succeed in both their academic and personal goals. More importantly, for educational leaders - always continue to recognize the profound impact of mindfulness, and its role in shaping the future generation to have a truly humane direction.

²⁰ Leyland, A., Rowse, G., & Emerson, L. M. (2019). Experimental effects of mindfulness inductions on self-regulation: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Emotion*, 19 (1), 108 - 122. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000425>.

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BUDDHIST MINDFULNESS EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Bijay Veer Singh*

Abstract:

In Buddhism, the environment is seen as a fundamental part of natural life and is highly valued. Buddhist teachings emphasize the interconnectedness of all living beings, including humans and the natural world. Consequently, the well-being of the natural environment is crucial for the well-being of all life. The concept of interdependence also highlights the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions and their impact on the environment. Buddhist teachings encourage environmental awareness and compassion, which can lead to sustainable living practices. Additionally, Buddhism's principle of ahimsa promotes a lifestyle in harmony with nature, including minimizing waste and consumption and conserving natural resources. Many Buddhist organizations and communities actively engage in environmental protection and sustainability initiatives, such as promoting renewable energy, reducing carbon footprints, and protecting natural habitats. Overall, Buddhism's teachings on interdependence, compassion, and ahimsa provide a strong philosophical foundation for environmental protection and sustainable development. However, for Buddhism, as for many other religions interested in ecological sustainability, it is particularly important when it is a philosophical perspective in the original Buddhist teachings, where the topic has been discussed in great detail from both a worldview and a religious perspective. Buddhists believe that human greed and unbridled willpower are responsible for environmental problems, and the Buddha's teachings emphasize moderation. From this perspective, effective environmental protection strategies must consider the psychological aspects of human nature and work to promote greater awareness, compassion, and wisdom.

Keywords: *Buddhism, teachings, environment, education, sustainability.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

When we adopt sustainable mindfulness practices, we find a deeper connection to ourselves, others, and the natural world. Mindfulness increases our subjective well-being, leading us to conscious consumption, sustainable behavior, and green lifestyles. In the field of sustainable living, mindfulness provides us with the opportunity to be fully present and intentional in our daily choices. By developing environmental mindfulness, we can make sustainable lifestyle choices that reduce our impact on the planet and create a more harmonious coexistence with nature. Mindfulness promotes environmental consciousness, with an emphasis on the human-nature connection. It teaches us to recognize our interconnectedness with the environment and motivates us to adopt environmentally responsible practices. By integrating mindfulness into our lives, we can become advocates for equality issues, social activism, and climate change adaptation. There are growing applications of mindfulness recognition in various fields such as organizations and education. Mindfulness is becoming an integral part of sustainability science, practice, and teaching, paving the way for a more holistic and reflective approach to creating a sustainable future. Join us on this journey of mindfulness and sustainability, as we explore the transformative power of mindfulness in personal growth, social change, and building a greener and more resilient world. Mindfulness and Environmental Consciousness - Mindfulness plays a transformative role in developing environmental consciousness and fostering a deeper connection with nature. By practicing mindfulness, individuals become more aware of their impact on the environment and understand their responsibility toward its preservation and sustainability. Mindfulness techniques also encourage individuals to connect with the natural world and develop a deeper appreciation for its beauty and interconnectedness. 2300 years ago, Emperor Ashoka understood this well and spread the immortal message of Gautama Buddha to the masses even in distant lands! In modern times, Green Mindfulness, also known as Eco-Mindfulness, involves specific exercises that help individuals develop a more profound sense of environmental consciousness. These exercises include.

- Mindful nature walks involve taking time to immerse yourself in nature, paying attention to the sights, sounds, and sensations of the environment.
- Eco-meditation practices mindfulness in an outdoor setting and uses nature as a focal point for meditation and contemplation.
- Nature-based mindfulness involves activities such as gardening, birdwatching, and spending time in natural settings while being fully present in each moment.

Engaging in these activities helps individuals connect with the natural world on a deeper level, leading to a greater sense of reverence and responsibility for the environment. By recognizing the interconnectedness between all living creatures and the ecosystems we are a part of, mindfulness promotes environmentally conscious actions. The earth has music for those who listen.
– George Santayana.

By bringing a mindful approach to our daily lives, we can make more sustainable choices and actively contribute to preserving the environment. Mindfulness allows us to be more present and thoughtful about the consequences of our actions, leading to more mindful consumption, waste reduction, and conscious decision-making. Mindfulness for Well-being and Sustainability - Mindfulness has a profound impact on subjective well-being, which encompasses the mental, emotional, and physical aspects of our lives. By incorporating sustainable mindfulness practices into our daily routine, we can develop inner peace, which reduces stress levels, improves emotional regulation, and enhances our overall well-being. This sustainable mindfulness also plays an important role in promoting a greater sense of interconnectedness with self, others, and the environment, leading to a more sustainable lifestyle. Embracing sustainable mindfulness allows us to be fully aware and present in each moment, experiencing it with intention, compassion, and non-judgment. By developing this constant and mindful awareness, we can make conscious choices that are in line with our values and create a greener and more sustainable world. With greater mindfulness, we also become more aware of the impact of our actions on the environment and actively find changes in our daily lives that promote sustainability.

In today's fast-paced world, sustainability mindfulness provides a pause button, allowing us to step back, reflect, and consciously make choices that are in the interest of our well-being and thus support sustainable living.

Sustainability mindfulness not only benefits individuals, but it also has wider benefits for society as a whole. By developing a mindful approach to our well-being, we become more resilient and better equipped to meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world. This resilience extends to our ability to address environmental and social issues, motivating us to take meaningful action toward a more sustainable future.

II. MINDFULNESS AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Mindfulness is a catalyst for social activism by fostering a sense of compassion and social responsibility. By developing mindfulness, individuals become more aware of social inequities and are motivated to take action for positive change. Mindfulness-based practices help individuals develop a stronger sense of empathy, compassion, and understanding for others, and motivate them to engage in advocacy and activism for a variety of equity issues, including environmental justice, social equity, and climate action. By integrating mindfulness into their daily lives, individuals become more aware of the systemic inequities and injustices that exist in society. This increased awareness leads to a desire for change and a commitment to creating a more equitable world. Mindfulness also helps individuals navigate difficult conversations and confront inconvenient truths, allowing for more open dialogue and the possibility for transformative action. Through mindfulness, individuals can engage in social activism with intention, compassion, and a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings. "The best way to predict the future is to create it." – Peter Drucker said. Whether it's advocating for equal access to resources, fighting for social justice, or

working toward environmental sustainability, mindfulness is an essential tool for individuals to effect meaningful change. By developing mindfulness, individuals become better equipped to recognize their own biases, challenge oppressive systems, and support initiatives that promote equality and justice. Mindfulness can empower individuals to become change agents, also inspiring others to join in the pursuit of a fairer and equitable world.

- **Mindfulness in Action: Examples of Social Activism** - Below are some examples of how mindfulness can be applied to social activism in different contexts:

- Practicing mindfulness in community organizing and grassroots movements to promote cooperation, empathy, and collective well-being.
- Using mindfulness techniques to maintain calm, nonviolent communication, and peaceful engagement during protests and demonstrations.
- Applying mindfulness to address equity issues in organizations and institutions by promoting inclusive policies, diversity, and social justice.

Through these examples, it is clear that mindfulness has the potential to make a profound impact on society by fostering compassion, empathy, and a commitment to social change.

III. MINDFULNESS AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Mindfulness plays a critical role in supporting adaptive responses to climate change. As individuals develop mindfulness, they develop intentional, flexible, and adaptive behaviors that help them navigate the challenges presented by climate change with resilience and adaptability. Mindfulness practices not only increase psychological flexibility but also facilitate emotional regulation. This emotional balance enables individuals to effectively navigate the complex emotions and uncertainties associated with climate-related risks. By being present in the moment and developing self-awareness, individuals can make informed decisions that contribute to climate change adaptation. More rigorous research is needed to fully explore the potential of mindfulness in climate change adaptation and risk reduction. By examining the relationship between mindfulness and adaptive responses to climate change, we can gain valuable insights into how mindfulness practices are contributing to building a more sustainable and resilient future.

Benefits of Mindfulness in Climate Change Adaptation

Mindfulness provides several benefits that support adaptive responses to climate change

- Increases psychological flexibility
- Improves emotional regulation
- Effective decision-making when facing uncertainties
- Increases awareness of climate-related risks
- Promotes pro-environmental behaviors

Mindfulness serves as a valuable tool for individuals seeking to address

the challenges of climate change and contribute to sustainable solutions. By incorporating mindfulness practices into our lives, we empower ourselves to make mindful choices that positively impact both our well-being and the health of our planet (Fig.). Mindfulness and personal transformation – Mindfulness has the power to transform our lives, leading us to a deeper connection with ourselves and the natural world around us. By embracing mindfulness, we begin a profound inner journey that leads to more sustainable and meaningful ways of living. At the heart of this transformation is the exploration of the spiritual dimension of mindfulness. By delving into the depths of our being and developing a greater sense of self-awareness, we align our values, beliefs, and actions with the principles of sustainability. A powerful practice that aids in this journey is spiritual ecology. This approach recognizes the interconnection between spirituality and the environment and encourages individuals to develop a deep sense of reverence for nature and our place within it. Spiritual ecology invites us to respect and protect the natural world, nurturing a sense of responsibility and guardianship for the planet. The closer we look at nature, the more we recognize our intrinsic bond with it. This realization triggers a profound change within us, leading to a more sustainable and holistic way of life. Through mindfulness and spiritual ecology, we can undergo an inner transformation - a shift in consciousness that ignites personal growth, awakening, and a new sense of purpose. As we develop mindfulness, we become more aware of our inner values and aspirations, and we live in harmony with the world around us. Mindfulness is the catalyst that fuels this personal transformation, empowering us to adopt sustainable living practices and make choices that are consistent with our deepest beliefs. It inspires us to become advocates for a greener and more equitable world, dedicated to finding innovative solutions to the challenges we face. As we embark on this transformational journey, we must remember that the path of mindfulness and sustainability is a collective effort, one that we have to take to come together and create a future that is just, prosperous, and sustainable for all.

IV. THE POWER OF INNER TRANSFORMATION

Inner transformation is not just about individual growth. It is a ripple effect that extends beyond ourselves to others. When we go through a deep inner shift, positive energy radiates and inspires those around us to begin their transformational journeys. This interconnectedness is at the core of mindfulness and sustainability. As we develop mindfulness and embark on our path of personal transformation, conditions automatically fall in place and we contribute to a collective awakening that fosters a sense of unity that is essential to building a sustainable future.

Mindfulness in Sustainability Science and Teaching - Though somewhat neglected, mindfulness has played a vital role in sustainability science and teaching. Concepts such as sustainability from within, ecological mindfulness, and contemplative practice have not received the attention they deserve. However, scientific evidence has shown the positive effects of mindfulness on various aspects of sustainability! It thus becomes imperative to integrate mindfulness

into sustainability science, practice, and teaching. Research has shown that mindfulness practice is always beneficial to humans and other organisms across all conditions (Fig.).

V. AWARENESS OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

When it comes to sustainable living, awareness plays a key role. By practicing environmental awareness and making conscious choices, individuals can live a more sustainable lifestyle that is in line with their values and contributes to a greener planet. Awareness means developing intentional, compassionate, and non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. By developing awareness in our daily lives, we can become more conscious consumers, adopt sustainable behaviors, and make greener choices in various aspects of our lives.

The biggest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.
- Robert Swan

To help you embrace sustainable living and incorporate mindfulness into your daily routine, here are some eco-friendly mindfulness tips and sustainable lifestyle choices.

Sustainable Living Tips.

- Practice conscious consumption by choosing sustainably sourced, organic, and ethically produced products.
- Reduce waste by practicing conscious waste management techniques such as recycling, composting, and reusing items whenever possible.
- Choose sustainable transportation options such as walking, cycling, or using public transportation to reduce your carbon footprint.
- Turn off lights and unplug electronics when not in use to create energy-saving habits.
- Sustainable food choices are a no-no by choosing locally sourced, seasonal, and plant-based foods.

Ramsey¹ Harrington² Scoones³ Berg⁴ pointed out that sustainability is considered a normative concept based on what people value or find desirable. The pursuit of sustainability involves linking what is known through scientific

¹ Ramsey, Jeffry L. (2015). "On Not Defining Sustainability". *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*. p.28 (6): 1075 – 1087. Bibcode:2015JAE...28.1075SR. doi:10.1007/s10806-015-9578-3. ISSN 1187-7863. S2CID 146790960.

² Harrington, Lisa M. Butler (2016). "Sustainability Theory and Conceptual Considerations: A Review of Key Ideas for Sustainability, and the Rural Context". *Papers in Applied Geography*, pp. (4): 65 – 382. Bibcode: 2016PAGeo...2...365H. doi:10.1080/23754931.2016.1239222. ISSN 2375-4931. S2CID 132458202.

³ Scoones, Ian (2016). "The Politics of Sustainability and Development". *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. 41 (1): pp. 293 – 319. doi:10.1146/annurev-environ-110615-090039. ISSN 1543-5938. S2CID 156534921.

⁴ Berg, Christian (2020). *Sustainable action: overcoming the barriers*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-429-57873-1. OCLC 1124780147

study to applications in the pursuit of what people want for the future. The 1983 United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) had a major influence on the use of the term sustainability today. The Commission's 1987 Brundtland Report defined sustainable development. This report, *Our Common Future*, defined it as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The report helped bring sustainability into the mainstream of policy discussions. It also popularized the concept of sustainable development⁵.

Sustainability can be defined as the ability to maintain or improve the status and availability of desirable materials or conditions over a long period. Sustainability is the long-term viability of a community, group of social institutions, or social practice. In general, sustainability is understood as an intergenerational ethic in which environmental and economic actions taken by current individuals do not reduce the opportunities for future individuals to enjoy similar levels of wealth, utility, or well-being. Sustainability means meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In addition to natural resources, we also have to preserve social and economic resources. Sustainability is not just environmentalism. In most definitions of sustainability, we also find concerns for social equity and economic development⁶. Sustainability is far from a new concept. Indigenous peoples have practiced elements of sustainable living for generations by living in harmony with the natural environment and its limits, cycles, and changes. This understanding is commonly referred to as traditional ecological knowledge, the deep knowledge, and beliefs about the relationships between people, plants, animals, natural phenomena, landscapes, and the timing of events in a specific ecosystem. Many organizations in many places have discussed this fact and finally found that Buddha's teachings are beneficial to human well-being in some way or the other.

Sustainability Theory⁷, Sustainability⁸ explained that in the past, sustainability meant environmental sustainability. It meant using natural resources so that people could depend on them long into the future. The concept of sustainability, or *Nachhaltigkeit* in German, dates back to Hans

⁵ Purvis, Ben; Mao, Yong; Robinson, Darren (2019). "Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins". *Sustainability Science*. 14 (3) pp. 681–695. Bibcode:2019SuSc...14..681P. doi:10.1007/s11625-018-0627-5. ISSN 1862 - 4065. Text was copied from this source, which is available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

⁶ University of Alberta: "What is sustainability?" (PDF). mcgill.ca. Retrieved 13 August 2022

⁷ Sustainability Theories". *World Ocean Review*. Retrieved 20 June 2019.

⁸ "sustainability". *Oxford English Dictionary* (Online ed.). Oxford University Press. (Subscription or participating institution membership required.) The English-language word had a legal technical sense from 1835 and a resource-management connotation from 1953.

Carl von Carlowitz (1645 - 1714) and was applied to forestry. The term for this would now be sustainable forest management. He used the term to mean the long-term responsible use of a natural resource⁹ and explained that in his 1713 work *Silvicultura Oeconomica*, he wrote that the highest art science of entrepreneurship would lie in the conservation and replanting of wood in a way that would allow for its continued, continuous and sustainable use.

The shift in the use of sustainability, from the preservation of forests (for future timber production) to the broader conservation of environmental resources (to sustain the world for future generations), is rooted in a 1972 book by Ernst Basler based on a series of lectures at M. I. T.¹⁰, Gadgil and Berkes¹¹ explained that the idea is very old. Communities have always been concerned about the ability of their environment to sustain them over long periods. Many ancient cultures, traditional societies, and indigenous peoples have restricted the use of natural resources. The environmental dimension is central to the overall concept of sustainability. In the 1960s and 1970s people became more and more aware of environmental pollution. This led to discussions on sustainability and sustainable development. This process began in the 1970s with concern for environmental issues. These included natural ecosystems or natural resources and the human environment. Later it spread to all systems that support life on Earth, including human society¹². Reducing these negative impacts on the environment will improve environmental sustainability¹³. Environmental pollution is not a new phenomenon. But it has been only a local or regional concern for most of human history. Awareness of global environmental issues increased in the 20th century¹², Carson¹⁴. In the 1960s, the harmful effects and global spread of pesticides such as DDT were examined and the world was made aware through a variety of cartoons, etc. on its use. Williams¹³ explained that in the 1970s it was discovered that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) were destroying the ozone layer. This resulted in a de facto ban on CFCs with the Montreal Protocol in 1987. In the early 20th century, Arrhenius discussed the effect of greenhouse gases on the climate (see also History of Climate Change

⁹ Dresden, SLUB. "Silvicultura Oeconomica, Oder Haußwirthliche Nachricht und Naturmäßige Anweisung Zur Wilden Baum-Zucht". digital.slub-dresden.de (in German). Retrieved 28 March 2022.

¹⁰ Basler, Ernst (1972). *Strategy of Progress: Environmental Pollution, Habitat Scarcity and Future Research* (originally, *Strategie des Fortschritts: Umweltbelastung Lebensraumverknappung und Zukunftsforschung*). BLV Publishing Company

¹¹ Gadgil, M.; Berkes, F. (1991). "Traditional Resource Management Systems". *Resource Management and Optimization*. 8: 127 – 141.

¹² William L. Thomas, ed. (1956). *Man's role in changing the face of the earth*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 78.

¹³ Raskin, P.; Banuri, T.; Gallopín, G.; Gutman, P.; Hammond, A.; Kates, R.; Swart, R. (2002). *Great transition: the promise and lure of the times ahead*. Boston: Stockholm Environment Institute. ISBN 0-9712418-1-3. OCLC 49987854.

¹⁴ Carson, R., (1962), *Silent Spring*, 2002 edition, First Mariner Books, New York, USA, p. 67.

Science). Climate change caused by human activities became an academic and political topic several decades later. This resulted in the establishment of the IPCC in 1988 and the UNFCCC in 1992. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in 1972¹⁴.

This was the first UN conference on environmental issues. It stated that it is important to protect and improve the human environment. It emphasized the need to protect wildlife and natural habitats¹⁵. The earth's natural resources, including air, water, land, flora and fauna, and natural ecosystems, should be safeguarded through careful planning or management for the benefit of present and future generations. Williams¹⁶ pointed out that the Buddhist critique highlights the need for a more sustainable and equitable approach to development, centered around the well-being of all living beings, including humans, and the environment. Furthermore, the Buddhist critique offers a unique perspective on development that is different from the dominant Western model and can contribute to the development of alternative development models¹⁷. An evaluation of the Buddhist critique of development will involve an analysis of the practical application of its teachings and an assessment of its effectiveness in promoting sustainable and equitable development. The application of the Buddhist critique of development is not without challenges and limitations. For example, it may be difficult to translate the Buddhist critique into practical action, as Buddhist teachings are often perceived as abstract and difficult to apply. Additionally, the Buddhist critique has encountered resistance from dominant development models and cultural values that prioritize economic growth over welfare. Furthermore, the Buddhist critique has faced challenges in terms of implementation, as it requires a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to development that may be difficult to achieve. Despite these challenges, the Buddhist critique of development represents a unique and valuable perspective on development that has the potential to contribute to the development of alternative development models. Through analysis of Buddhist communities and development initiatives, it has been found that the Buddhist critique is effective in promoting sustainable development. However, the application of Buddhist critique has also faced challenges, such as the difficulty of translating Buddhist teachings into practical action and resistance from the dominant development model.

This research has only scratched the surface of Buddhist critique of development and much remains to be discovered. Further research could examine the relationship between Buddhist philosophy and sustainable development in more depth, as well as the challenges and limitations of

¹⁵ UN (1973) Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1, Stockholm, 5 – 16 June 197.

¹⁶ Williams, P. (2012). *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*. Routledge, p. 45.

¹⁷ Gross, R. (1993). *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 56.

applying Buddhist critique. Additionally, more case studies should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of Buddhist critique in promoting sustainable development in different cultural and regional contexts. Buddhist critique of development is important because it provides a unique and valuable perspective on development that has the potential to contribute to the development of alternative development models. According to Udayakumar¹⁸, Buddhist critique challenges the dominant development model and presents an approach to development that prioritizes well-being and sustainability. By exploring the Buddhist critique of development, we can gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between development and well-being and contribute to the development of more holistic and sustainable development models. Environmental and economic Dimensions - People often debate the relationship between the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability¹⁹. In academia, this is discussed under the term weak and strong sustainability. In that model, the weak sustainability concept states that capital created by humans can replace most natural capital.²⁰ Natural capital is a way to describe environmental resources. People refer to it as nature. An example of this is the use of environmental technologies to reduce pollution. The opposite concept in that model is strong sustainability. It assumes that nature provides functions that technology cannot replace²¹. Thus, strong sustainability acknowledges the need to maintain ecological integrity. The loss of those functions renders many resources and ecosystem services impossible to recover or repair. Examples are biodiversity with pollination and fertile soils. Others are clean air, clean water and the regulation of climate systems.

Weak sustainability has thus been criticized. It may be popular with governments and business but it does not ensure the preservation of the Earth's ecological integrity²². This is why the environmental dimension is so important. The World Economic Forum gave an example of this in 2020. It found that \$44 trillion of economic value creation depends on nature. This

¹⁸ Udaykumar, L. Aadi Bhavani Shankar and Yadla Penchalaya (2023). Buddhism On Sustainable Development. *IJCRT*, 11, 7 July 2023 p. 1 – 6.

¹⁹ Robert U. Ayres & Jeroen C. J. M. van den Bergh & John M. Gowdy, 1998. "Viewpoint: Weak versus Strong Sustainability", *Tinbergen Institute Discussion Papers* 98-103/3, Tinbergen Institute.

²⁰ Ayres, Robert; van den Berrgh, Jeroen; Gowdy, John (2001). "Strong versus Weak Sustainability". *Environmental Ethics*. 23 (2): 155–168. doi:10.5840/enviroethics200123225. ISSN 0163-4275

²¹ Cabeza Gutiérrez, Maite (1996). "The concept of weak sustainability". *Ecological Economics*. 17 (3): 147 – 156. Bibcode:1996EcoEc..17..147C. doi:10.1016/S0921-8009(96)80003-6.

²² Bosselmann, Klaus (2017). *The principle of sustainability: transforming law and governance* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge, p. 45.

value, more than half of the world's GDP, is thus vulnerable to nature loss²³. Three large economic sectors are highly dependent on nature: construction, agriculture, food and beverages. Nature loss is caused by several factors. Long before the modern world coined terms like sustainability and sustainable resource management, these concepts were deeply ingrained in traditional customs and cultural practices in India. Ancient scriptures emphasises the importance of ecological conservation and moderation in the use of natural resources. Many traditions of Indian worship recognize that all of nature, whether it is rivers, mountains, lakes, forests, stars or the sky, is permeated by a divine presence, and even today there is great reverence and respect for nature. Over the years, social customs and religious beliefs and rituals, especially by the forest dwellers or Adivasis of India, have always worked in harmony with nature to make the most of the resources. This has influenced the attitudes of communities towards forests and resulted in the development of different systems of management. Although there have been instances of conflict, these systems were widely followed within and outside communities and closely monitored at the local level. Some common characteristics of traditional systems are: a holistic view of the ecosystem a deep attachment to culture and traditions (such as cultural festivals that reinforce belief in the conservation of nature) resource ownership is attributed to communities and use of natural resources is restricted to meeting basic needs. In contemporary India, the term indigenous people is synonymous with the term adivasi (Tribes), which refers to these communities as vanvasis (forest dwellers) or adivasis (natives). Etymologically and spatially, the lives and livelihoods of these tribal communities are intrinsically linked to forests²⁴.

Their lifestyle is generally defined by the absence of exploitative classes and organized state structures, the complex ways and means by which they relate to each other and cooperate within and between kinship bonds, the ubiquity of religion, frequent cooperation among members for common goals, low level of technology, fragmented character of the socio-economic unit, distinct taboos, customs and moral codes and similar territory, descent, language and culture. Although there are many tribes in India and a wide range of linguistic and cultural differences among them, their attitude towards forest conservation is generally determined by religious injunctions (such as do's and don'ts in sacred groves), belief systems and social norms²⁵. Tribal traditions

²³ IPBES, 2019, "Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services", <https://ipbes.net/news/ipbes-global-assessment-summary-policy-makers-pdf> (link as of 16th Dec 2019).

²⁴ Mitra, S. & Gupta, G. 2009. The logic of community participation: experimental evidence from West Bengal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44 (20), pp. 51 – 57.

²⁵ Gadgil, M. & Guha, R. 1992. *This fissured land: an ecological history of India*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, p. 89.

generally display pro-social behavior towards forests²⁶. Sumedha Thero²⁷ has extensively referred to Indian tribal traditions and how they are intertwined with nature. The following case studies show that traditional systems remain strong in many communities in India.

Religious leaders have emphasized the importance of caring for nature and environmental sustainability. In 2015 more than 150 leaders from different faiths issued a joint statement at the UN Climate Summit in Paris 2015. They also reiterated a statement made at the Interfaith Summit in New York in 2014: As representatives of different faiths and religious traditions, we stand together to express deep concern for the consequences of climate change on the Earth and its people, which, as our religions show, we have all entrusted to our common care. Climate change is indeed a threat to life, a precious gift we have received and which we need to take care of. The concept of development has been an important area of study and practice in the modern world. The idea of development covers various aspects such as economic growth, social progress, and cultural enhancement. Over the years, the dominant development paradigm has been the Western model, which is primarily centered around economic growth and modernization. However, there has been growing concern and criticism of this model due to its negative impacts on the environment and marginalized communities. In this context, alternative development models have been proposed, including a critique of development from a Buddhist perspective²⁸. Western culture, led by natural science, believed in the myth of unlimited growth until the mid-20th century. This theory was established in the 1600s by Buddhist scholars. The alienation of mankind from nature, due to the development of the prevailing scientific-materialist philosophy, was increasing industrial and technological development. The notion of unlimited economic growth fit well into the unlimited growth myth of the profit-centered Western world. In the 20th century many cracks began to appear in the wall of this myth. The first significant event was the publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962²⁹. In her famous book, Rachel Carson brought together research on toxicology and ecology to suggest that agricultural pesticides and the products of the chemical industry are linked to harming animal species, and human health, and destroying entire ecosystems. *Silent Spring* drew attention to the importance of a holistic perspective that was lacking in the contemporary reductionist approach of scientific materialism.

In a world marked by consumption-driven economies and environmental challenges, the principles of conscious consumption and ethical living

²⁶ Gurven, M. & Winking, J. 2008. Collective action in action: prosocial behavior in and out of the laboratory. *American Anthropologist*, 110 (2): 179 – 190.

²⁷ Sumedh Thero (Dr. Banwari Lal Suman) 2024. *Tribes of india's 7* Evincepub Publishing Shivam Complex, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh 495009 India. Website: www.evincepub.com

²⁸ Batchelor, S. (2010). *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. Spiegel & Grau, p. 45.

²⁹ Carson, R., (1962), *Silent Spring*, 2002 edition, First Mariner Books, New York, USA, p. 93.

rooted in Theravada Buddhist practices provide a profound framework for promoting sustainable societies. Drawing on centuries-old teachings, conscious consumption, derived from this practice, encourages individuals to approach their consumption habits with awareness and intentionality, developing a deeper understanding of the interconnection between their choices and the well-being of the planet and all beings. Ethical living, another pillar of Theravada Buddhist teachings, revolves around the cultivation of ethical virtues such as compassion, generosity, and non-violence. By aligning their actions with ethical principles, individuals can minimize harm to themselves and others, promote social harmony, and contribute to the well-being of society and the environment. The lives of Buddhist monks revolve around nature (Fig.). They follow the 227 and 311 Vinaya rules established by the Buddha. They are always exposed to environmental challenges³⁰. In the Donapaka Sutta, its primary purpose is to emphasize the importance of being mindful and practicing restraint in all aspects of one's actions (Fig.a). The sutta teaches that by being mindful in six areas - eating, drinking, speaking, seeing, hearing, and thinking - one can achieve a state of balance and avoid falling into extremes in life. It highlights the potential dangers of excessive indulgence and the negative consequences that arise from mindless behavior. Eight Causes of Illness It is common to believe that illness is caused by the food one eats or by the influence of weather and external factors. Others think that whatever illnesses they suffer are due to past karma. In the Shivaka Sutta³¹.

Bile, phlegm, and also wind, Imbalance and climate too, Carelessness and assault, with *kamma* result as the eighth³². Health in balance can be said to be that in the Anagata-Bhayani Sutta, the Buddha considered a healthy person to be one who is free from disease, and in whose mind unpleasant feelings do not arise. Such a person is able to tolerate the heat and cold of the environment and also has a good digestive system. I am free from disease and discomfort, I have a good digestion – not too cold, not too hot, of moderate strength and endurance. The Buddha advised disciples not to eat in the evening because it was considered unnecessary for proper nutrition and also not suitable for meditators or those engaged in high mental activity. The Kitāgiri Sutta mentions five results of not eating three meals a day.

Buddha did end up recommending that monastics not eat anything after noon. This practice could be considered a kind of intermittent fasting, which restricts eating to a specific time period³³. The Lord and the community of

³⁰ Davids, T. W. Rhys, Oldenberg, Hermann (joint tr): Vinaya texts, Oxford, The Clarendon press 1881, p. 90.

³¹ SN 36.21.

³² SN 36.21 (S. IV. 230) CDB ii 1278 Sivaka Sutta: To Sivaka translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu © 2005 Alternate translation: Nyanaponika. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.021.than.html>

³³ Moderation in eating why do monks not eat after noon? <https://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?t=3045https://www.google.co.in/search?q=Kit>

monks abstain from dinner. When they abstain from dinner, they experience almost no illness, almost no suffering, lightness, strength, and a comfortable abode. In addition, it can be observed that the daily activities of monks such as getting up early in the morning and walking long distances to collect alms, walking up and down for meditation, or cleaning the courtyard in the monastery are also good for health. It is a practice of maintaining your mindfulness and health balance³⁴. The environmental problems facing our earth today are of an unusual and unprecedented nature. The inevitable challenges of the environment such as air shortage, air pollution, climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and degradation of forests, etc. have trapped our earth in the trap of an existential crisis.

For billions of years, the interaction between biotic and abiotic components of the ecosystem has created favorable habitats for species. However, the overexploitation of natural resources has forced us to question our relationship with limited natural resources. On the one hand, man connects himself with the environment through the habitat provided by natural resources. On the other hand, man has become the destroyer of his own homes. With such a realization the urgent need to protect the environment has been discussed and decided by people all over the world.

However, unless people consider themselves an integral part of the environment, nothing will work. It is necessary to analyze our attitude towards the environment ethically. The idea of doing good deeds and living in harmony with all other living things on Earth should be reintroduced into people's minds to minimize the negative effects³⁵. The feeling of involvement in everything that happens on Earth and the sense of responsibility for the lives of other living things are becoming increasingly necessary lessons to learn in today's society³⁶.

This can be achieved through the teachings of Buddhism. Buddhism is believed to have a unique and important contribution to discuss environmental issues along with ethical and moral treatment towards natural resources. Due to the inherent desire of humans to satiate material possessions and experiences, the pursuit of external desire only fuels climate change. Spiritual engagement can be of great benefit in preserving the environment. But it is regrettable that people are neglecting the spiritual realm in favor of the endless greed and desire of the materialistic realm, which inevitably results in environmental destruction. 85% say that it is the responsibility of the government, while 46%

³⁴ Ven Bhikhuni Dao Thi Lan, 2024. *Physical Balance; The Buddhist Perspective, Meditation methods and development of a person's*, pp 141 - 151. *Dynamics in South Indian Buddhism*. Ed by Ven. Dr Sumedh Thero and Ven. Bhikhu Mouriyar Buddha Thero, Pub. Perfect Writers, New Delhi, India, p. 258.

³⁵ Thathong, K. (2012). A spiritual dimension and environmental education: Buddhism and environmental crisis. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, pp.5063 - 8.

³⁶ Dorzhigushaeva, O. V., & Kiplyuks, A. V. (2020). Environmental ethics of Buddhism. *International Journal of Environmental Science and Development*, 11(3), pp.154 - 158.

feel that people themselves should do something for this purpose. As companies are set to actively influence environmental concerns, the primary task will be to understand where consumers are currently and track their evolution to ensure that brands are at the right place with the right message throughout the consumer journey. As we have seen, Indian consumers have a complex mix of high concern and good intentions, coupled with a lack of knowledge and high expectations. Also, one size does not fit all. Consumer segments show varying degrees of understanding of the problem, the actions taken, and the priorities for them. The triple impact felt globally -climate, pollution, and biodiversity loss -is attracting some media attention and will increase in the coming future -creating a need for greater awareness and action³⁷. Buddhism allows us to think, analyze, and recognize the environment as an integral part of our lives. Such thinking will be helpful in tackling climate change. This paper intends to analyze Buddhist insights and will be able to assist in this effort. It is possible to argue that the environmental crisis is also a crisis of the human spirit. It has been suggested that reducing spiritual pollution will also reduce natural pollution³⁸.

Environment and Buddhism-The term environment refers to a broad field encompassing all aspects of biology, physiology, ecology and society that have a direct or indirect impact on human health and well-being. Today, humanity faces difficulties when the environment is degraded or destroyed. The term environmental degradation is used to describe a change in both the quantity and quality of environmental factors that adversely affect the survival of species, damage the ecosystem, and causes the extinction of organisms (Fig.). Environmental degradation is a very serious issue that has had a harmful effect in many countries. Therefore, it is the duty of every person living on the planet to protect the environment and keep it clean at all times. Environmental protection is needed for the well-being of every species and organism present on this planet at the individual, local, national, and global levels³⁹. Anthropogenic activities affect the atmosphere which further leads to many extended environmental problems. Therefore, we need to create some policies, rules and norms that guide such human behavior⁴⁰. Some of the causes of environmental threats are irrational use of natural resources, outdated technologies to solve today's environmental problems, inadequate financing, bureaucratic crises, rampant development of infrastructure, etc., due to which environmental problems are increasing very rapidly on a global

³⁷ Ipsos, India Sustainability Report 2024.

³⁸ Cremo, M. A., & Goswami, M. (1995). *Divine nature: a spiritual perspective on the environmental crisis*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, p. 56.

³⁹ Nhat, P. C. (2019). *The Role of Buddhism in Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development in Vietnam Today*. Socio-Economic and Environmental Issues in Development, p. 692.

⁴⁰ Salako, S.E. (2017). *Climate Change, Environmental Security and Global Justice*. International Law Research, 6(1), pp.119 - 131.

scale⁴¹. Such anthropogenic activities are the result of the growing population and their greedy demands without any direction. Buddhism teaches that if a person has the right mindset, the actions he or she takes will be beneficial not only to him or her but to the whole world, including the environment. The belief is that people's actions affect the planet in a harmful way because they are selfish and crave things. These actions will only result in more suffering in the future. The effects of karma will continue to work in a person's rebirths, so by being kind, they can make a better future for themselves and the environment. The Buddhist Declaration at Assisi emphasizes the need for all people to have respect for wildlife and the environment. The belief is that the main danger to the world so far has been that humans have been indifferent to the effects of their actions on other creatures. The Dalai Lama said that we are the generation that is aware of a great danger. We are the ones who have the responsibility and the ability to take concrete action steps before it is too late.

This means that Buddhists must make themselves aware of the damage they are causing to the environment so that they can act to change it ^{42,43}. Many Buddhists believe that people should live simply and respect the cycles and balance in nature so that everything can continue for future generations. For some Buddhists, living efficiently means living without creating waste. Avoiding unnecessary exploitation benefits the whole world. Holistic Buddhism can be described as changing the way people look at the world. Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh⁴⁴ said that to bring about change we must reclaim ourselves, one must be whole. Since this requires an environment conducive to the person's healing, one must seek a lifestyle that is free from the destruction of his or her human qualities. Buddhism accepts change in nature. The belief is that change is an inevitable part of evolution. People must allow change in the world. Solving the world's environmental problems requires a moral commitment and people need an awakened conscience. Such fundamental change can be achieved through religious awareness that allows humans to connect with their natural world consciously. Buddhism is one of the world's religions that comes from the land of India, which allows a person to focus on his spiritual problems and how to deal with them. Looking inside one's problems and learning to solve them in an ahimsa (non-violence) way teaches a person to understand the importance of a non-violent approach towards the outside world.

⁴¹ Morgacheva, N.V. and Levashova, O.V. (2021). March. Environmental security in the national security system. In IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science p.677, 4-042115.

⁴² Ron Epstein 2005. Environmental Issues: A Buddhist Perspective, Vajra Bodhi: A Monthly Journal of Orthodox Buddhism, v. 35, series 83, March 2005, pp. 28 - 31.

⁴³ Sumedh Thero, (2024), Meditation and Ordination may overcome Abnormal Eating disorders, Clinical Research and Clinical Reports, 3(5); DOI:10.31579/2835-8325/104

⁴⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh, 2013 <https://www.parallax.org/mindfulnessbell/article/dharma-talk-to-make-reconciliation-possible/>

An attitude of non-violence or non-injury provides a deep realization of our interconnectedness with other species in the world. Buddhism has always integrated itself with nature. The core of Buddhism is the environment. For example, Bodh Gaya, a historical place, is believed to be where the Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama, experienced his great awakening⁴⁵. Gautama Buddha, who gave up the life of a prince to travel and do asceticism, sat in meditation under the Bodhi tree⁴⁶ on the banks of the Phalgu River. Gautama Buddha attained his enlightenment under a tree symbolizing the importance of staying connected to nature. By collaborating with nature, one can work towards building a more sustainable and regenerative relationship with the environment.

Nature is not something that can be controlled or dominated, but rather it is something that must be nurtured and cared for. When a person considers nature as his friend, he develops a deep appreciation for its beauty and its importance in life. Buddhist masters have repeatedly emphasized the value of living in harmony with nature, respecting all living things, setting aside time to meditate, living a simple life, and using nature as a spiritual force. This is possible only when we indulge in loving-kindness, compassion, fairness, and joy by syncretizing with nature.

The Buddha realized in his lifetime that the idea that we are a separate entity is an illusion. All things are connected to each other, and because of our relationships, we do not exist independently. It is because it is, it is not because it is not, it is born because it is born, and it dies because it dies, according to the Buddha. The mind and its surrounding environment are considered interdependent and inseparable from all external and internal phenomena. Selfishness and greed are prime examples of issues of the human mind. Therefore, instead of trying to solve physical issues with cutting-edge technology, we should focus our efforts on addressing the psychological causes of environmental problems. In this regard, Buddhism can help solve environmental issues. Lord Buddha taught people to live their lives in the following ways, as highlighted by Prayutto,⁴⁶ which is cited in Thathong's article 'A Spiritual Dimension and Environmental Education Buddhism and the Environmental Crisis'⁴⁷. Consume less and eat only what is necessary to survive and not live to eat. Live in harmony with other people and animals in the environment and be aware of the natural laws that govern the cycle of birth, aging, illness, and death. Use nature wisely

Use what you learn from it to help people's minds and behavior. Monks have approached private companies to garner support for their mission and have taken initiatives to educate farmers on the use of environmentally friendly

⁴⁵ Mahābodhiyā Sanskrit.

⁴⁶ Payutto, P. A. (1997, July 23). The Dhamma in earth beauty with our hands. Thai Television Channel 5, aired at 18.30 p.m. (In Thai)

⁴⁷ Thathong, K. (2012). A spiritual dimension and environmental education: Buddhism and environmental crisis. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, pp. 5063 - 8.

fertilizers. One example is Phrakku Win Mektripop, who lives in Bangkok and helps villagers build inexpensive huts from mud and natural materials, and is also installing solar panels in monasteries. In Cambodia, Bhadant Bun Saluth, once the head monk at Samrong Pagoda in Oddar Meanchey province, has established the Monks Community Forest, the largest community-managed forest conservation site in Cambodia, which has benefited about 4,000 people in six villages since 2002. Elsewhere, monks are implementing other strategies. The practice of protecting forests by initiating trees is becoming increasingly popular in Sri Lanka. In 2014, a group of monks and lay devotees visited the Neelgala Forest Reserve and gave another important figure in this movement is His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa⁴⁸. He is recognized worldwide not only for his prominent feminism but also for his environmental activism, such as his padayatra initiative – taking long journeys across the Himalayan mountain ranges to collect rubbish and litter. In 2013, His Holiness was named the Guardian of the Himalayas for his services in the field of water conservation and awareness. Environmentally conscious monks have been taught to think and behave in an ecologically conscious way, inspired by the Buddha's teachings. When we apply the Buddhist principle of causality to the entire world, the individual is no longer seen as an isolated being independent of environmental concerns. Since humans are interconnected with nature, Buddhist leaders and communities have a major role to play in this existential battle that will determine our future⁴⁹.

VI. BUDDHIST MODELS OF PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

In his article 'Buddhism, Nature and the Environment'⁵⁰ Bloom mentions that "for Buddhism the problem of man lies not outside him but within him, in his mind, his thoughts, his values, and the actions that result from them." Therefore, spirituality should be the primary focus for understanding man and his nature. Special attention should be paid to the principles of the spiritual world when solving environmental issues. Conservation of the environment can greatly benefit from our spiritual connection as it allows us to connect with the ecology⁵¹ mentioned that it is regrettable that people are ignoring the spiritual realm in favor of the endless greed and desire of the materialistic realm, which always results in environmental destruction. To minimize the negative effects of such a phenomenon, people should once again embrace the idea of doing good deeds and living in harmony with all other species. All of

⁴⁸ Green Guru' to HH Gyalwang Drukpa". Darjeelingtimes.com. Archived from the original on 14 July 2014. Retrieved 16 February 2015.

⁴⁹ Dipen Barua 2021. For the Earth: Buddhist Environmental Thought and Activism-
file:///C:/Users/A%20B%20C/Downloads/For_the_Earth_Buddhist_Environmental_Tho.pdf

⁵⁰ Bloom, A. (1972). Buddhism, Nature and the Environment. *The Eastern Buddhist*, 5 (1), pp. 115 – 129. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44361321>

⁵¹ Devkota, K. H. (2003), A Spiritual Dimension of Buddhism for Environmental Protection, p. 68.

the world's major religions can play an important role in this regard as they all share the values of encouraging good deeds, condemning evil deeds, and promoting peace and happiness for all people.

The *Bodhisattva* ideal has proven inspiring for eco-Buddhists in an age of climate instability, where it may feel as though one's individual actions are meaningless, even if everyone's individual actions taken collectively are destructive.

By exemplifying the Buddhist path of ethical action, mindfulness and meditation, and wisdom, the figure of the bodhisattva, who is dedicated to working to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings, serves as a model for maintaining a commitment to working toward an impossibly lofty goal⁵⁰. The Agganna-Sutta, the Lotus Sutra, and the teachings on Gaia, mindfulness, compassion, interdependence, and impermanence are all powerful examples of ancient Buddhist wisdom that are relevant today in bringing balance and transformation in harmony with the Earth⁵². Undoubtedly, the reckless consumption of goods and services and the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources are examples of human behavior driven by greed (*lobha*) or hatred (*dosha*), which have both direct and indirect negative impacts on the environment. This issue is more challenging to address because egoistic thoughts and beliefs (*ditthi*) also serve to maintain the gravity of greed and hatred⁵³. This is where Buddhism can play a vital role.

Education on the environment from a Buddhist perspective -Environmental education, on the other hand, is the need of the hour. The environment and its sustainability can only happen when people have basic knowledge about nature. Ecosystem, biodiversity, ecology, and atmosphere are subjects that must be taught to students so that they can learn and contribute to Mother Earth. Environmental education helps students form a personal spiritual connection with the environment, which increases their willingness and readiness to take environmental action⁵⁴. Interestingly, Lord Buddha often drew parallels between natural phenomena and human behavior to illustrate and explain his teachings, which is another example of his insight into the relationship between humans and nature⁵⁵. For example, the Buddha's emphasis on the peaceful coexistence of people and nature shows that he is aware of how interdependent all living things are with their surroundings. Buddhism is recognized as one of the top religions that puts forward concepts related to sustainability and environmental protection in its teachings. These

⁵² Trone, C. D. (2018), A Buddhist perspective on the global environmental crisis: poetics of the wild, p. 56

⁵³ Payutto, P. A. (1994), Dependent origination. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, p. 67

⁵⁴ Skamp, K. (1991), Spirituality and environmental education. Australian Journal of Environmental Education, 7, pp. 79 - 86.

⁵⁵ Thathong, K. (2012), A spiritual dimension and environmental education: Buddhism and environmental crisis. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 46, pp.5063-5068.

ideas can be found in Buddhist teachings as well as in its ritual structure and ways of daily practice.

Studying Buddhist philosophical concepts about environmental protection and sustainable development is important for both theory and practice⁵⁶. The teachings of Buddhism describe a systematic relationship between humans and nature. For example, the principle of cause and effect (*pratitya samutpada*) is also called karmic causality. People and nature coexist in harmony for both their survival and evolution. Sadly, if one party is depressed, everyone is affected. All things in the world are different and plentiful, but they all coexist in a partnership.

Sadly, if one party is depressed, everyone is affected. All things in the world are different and plentiful, but they all coexist in a partnership that provides support and influence. Both the cause and effect of the existence of the other are their shared presence. Everything and every event in the world exists as a result of specific circumstances or causes⁵⁷.

Ultimately, anyone who values non-nuisance to future generations must achieve the wisdom of what Buddhists call “mindfulness”. A good way to stop harming the environment and other living things is to be “mindful” of how your actions affect the rest of the world. Many Buddhists believe that until this apathy stops and we learn to be mindful and compassionate, peace, harmony, and balance will not return to the world. Then people will be able to live happier lives and consequently be free from the harmful effects of craving. In a world that is currently turbulent, disrupted, and degraded, Buddhism is a must-follow. Buddhism’s teachings of peace, compassion, and connectedness are widely held. As the Dalai Lama has pointed out: “We are facing significant environmental challenges, and we must take concrete action to address them”. However, meaningful change can only occur when individuals and communities come together to take responsibility for their actions and work toward sustainable solutions. The teachings of Buddhism encourage a sense of collective responsibility and emphasize the importance of working for the common good. Therefore, Buddhism can be a valuable resource for individuals and communities who want to take action to protect the environment and create a more sustainable future. Ultimately, the teachings of Buddhism can help individuals develop a greater sense of awareness, compassion, and responsibility for the environment, and inspire them to take meaningful action to address the environmental challenges we face today. The idea that nature and all other created things exist for the benefit of mankind is completely rejected by Buddhism.

⁵⁶Nhat, P. C. (2019). The Role of Buddhism in Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development in Vietnam Today. *Socio-Economic and Environmental Issues in Development*, p. 692.

⁵⁷ Raghawi 2023. Protecting Environment through the Teachings of Buddha. *Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies* Volume 4 Issue 2 Date of publication: 30 Sep 2023 Aug - Sep 2023 <https://doi.org/10.47362/EJSS.2023.4210.220>

Although not in a position of dominance, humanity is an important component of the order of the universe. Like all other sentient beings, humans are subject to the natural order of the universe. People must learn to take control of their actions. Right action, a path described in Buddhism, includes the precept- to refrain from harming sentient beings. In a world where war has become a common thing, people must rise up collectively to achieve non-violence. This includes stopping poaching, hunting game, killing animals directly or indirectly, cutting down trees, polluting the environment or exploiting any creature. Due to ignorance, greed and lack of respect for other living things on the planet, nature and natural resources are being destroyed. If world peace is not created and environmental destruction continues at the current rate, this lack of respect extends even to the descendants of the first humans to live on the planet. These descendants will inherit a planet that has been severely degraded. Consider how global warming is caused by the burning of fossil fuels, an activity that seems relatively benign at first glance, but evidence suggests that if not curbed in the coming years, it could reach uncomfortably high levels that pose a serious threat to life on Earth.

VII. CONCLUSION

Mindfulness and sustainability are intrinsically linked, creating a powerful synergy that can positively transform our lives and the world we live in. By developing sustainable habits for mindfulness and incorporating them into our daily routines, we can experience improved personal well-being and contribute to a greener and more sustainable future. Incorporating mindfulness into daily life allows us to develop an intentional and compassionate approach to our actions, leading to more conscious consumption and sustainable behavior. It connects us with the values of sustainability and helps us form a deeper connection to ourselves, others, and the environment. The integration of mindfulness into sustainability science, practice, teaching, and learning provides a profound opportunity for personal and societal transformation. It allows us to deepen our understanding of sustainability and find innovative ways to address the challenges we face. While progress has been made, further research and exploration are necessary to unlock the full potential of mindfulness and sustainability. By continually refining our understanding and application of mindfulness, we can create a harmonious and resilient world that values well-being, social justice, and environmental stewardship.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Prof. Kshanika Sannasgala Hirimburegama

Abstract:

Buddhism has long shaped Asia's spiritual, cultural, and social life and expanded to the West in the early 20th century. Over time, it has adapted to global challenges while promoting unity and inclusivity. This year's theme, *"Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development,"* highlights the importance of compassionate and sustainable education, supported by mindfulness.

Mindfulness fosters interconnectedness, recognizing that different faiths and cultures share core values such as love, justice, and respect. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* (DN 31) emphasizes friendship and support, reinforcing the need for mutual understanding. Through mindfulness and STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts Social science, Culture, Literature), individuals develop critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity, essential for a sustainable future.

Education, infused with mindfulness, empowers individuals to address poverty and global challenges while upholding cultural values. It cultivates essential qualities such as patience, tolerance, deep analytical thinking, and problem-solving skills. By integrating mindfulness into education, we nurture responsible global citizens capable of making positive societal changes. Ultimately, Education for Sustainable Development equips individuals with the knowledge and attitudes needed to create a just, compassionate, and thriving world.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, compassionate and sustainable future, STEAM education, interfaith harmony, education for sustainable development (ESD).*

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is a religion and philosophy derived from the teachings of the Buddha.¹ In the modern world, Buddhism has played an important role in Asia's spiritual, cultural, and social life, and it spread to the West in the early twentieth century. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Buddhism responded to new challenges and opportunities that cut across the regional religious and cultural patterns that defined the Buddhist world in the premier era. The theme of this year's celebration, "Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development," is highly relevant to today's world. Lord Buddha's teaching is based on the reality of human suffering and the ultimately unsatisfactory nature of human life. The primary goal of Buddhism is to understand the true nature of life and mind.^{2, 3}

The mind is everything – what you believe you could become; the mind is the most powerful force in the human world. The Eightfold Path Lord Buddha taught us: the right views, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Meditation leads to mindfulness and education for a more compassionate and sustainable future. The Theravāda tradition has practiced two basic forms of meditation.⁴

The first of these, (which is closely related to the Hindu yoga tradition), involves a moral and intellectual purification process. Initially, the *Theravādin* meditator seeks detachment from sensual desires and impure states of mind through reflection, to enter a state of satisfaction and joy. In the second stage of this form of meditation, intellectual activity gives way to complete inner serenity; the mind is in a state of "one-pointedness" (concentration), joy, and pleasantness. In the third stage, all emotions, including joy, have vanished, leaving the meditator indifferent to everything. In the fourth stage, satisfaction, any desire for a good or bad state of mind, pain, and serenity is abandoned, and the meditator enters a state of supreme purity, indifference, and pure awareness.^{5, 6}

The emergence of so-called "engaged Buddhism" is another reaction, where Buddhist teachings and practices emphasize the application of progressive social, political, and economic activities. This movement has gained recognition among Western converts, with its concepts and initiatives playing a significant role in promoting global justice and peace.⁷

¹ The term "Buddha" literally means "awakened one" in Sanskrit.

² Joseph M Kitagawa, Donald S. Lopez: Britannica, February 03, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Buddhism>

³ Robert Wright. (2017), p. 121 - 141.

⁴ Pāli: *jhāna*, Sanskrit: *dhyāna*.

⁵ Bhikkhu Sujato: *Sīṅgālasutta*: DN 31. (2021), p. 1 - 10.

⁶ MacDonald, Paul A. Jr. (2023), p. 306 - 311.

⁷ Ibid.

The beauty of the world's many cultures and religions is significant. A very personal phenomenon is faith. Its root, which comes from the Latin "fides" and the Old French "feid," means "belief" or "trust." Religion may offer a social forum for faith, but faith itself is beautiful. Beyond our religious or cultural upbringing, each of us may discover a faith that speaks to us.⁸ Religions and civilizations offer diverse ways of fostering harmony, morality, and mutual respect. Each contributes its own beauty, like unique flowers blooming in a shared garden^{9,10}

Buddhism, for example, offers the Eightfold Path, which offers a well-rounded perspective on morality and well-being. However, it is important to remember that other religions include comparable insight. Islam emphasizes justice and community, while Christianity emphasizes love and forgiveness. The concept of *karma* is explained in Hinduism, and indigenous faiths frequently emphasize a profound reverence for the natural world.

Many religions share common values that promote harmony and cooperation. These values are not just theoretical but serve as practical guides for establishing world peace.¹¹ Communities around the world collaborate in charitable efforts, disaster relief, and interfaith celebrations – embodying virtues like compassion, generosity, and social justice. Such cooperative endeavors highlight the universal principles that unite different faiths while respecting individual beliefs. In actuality, all believers in various religions celebrate one other's religious and cultural holidays together, respecting religious customs without interfering with one another's thoughts.

They frequently result in the same universal principles of understanding, love, and peace. Comprehending other viewpoints is enlightening and crucial for maintaining world peace⁷. Achieving this understanding requires education, candid communication, and putting aside prejudices and ego. Organizations such as Religions for Peace provide great venues for this kind of interfaith instruction and discussion. Your faith strengthens my faith, and your tranquility is my peace. Therefore, rather than being a barrier, the diversity of our cultures and ideas serves as a springboard for improved understanding and harmony.¹²

What is the significance of mindfulness in education for a compassionate and sustainable future? Now, why is mindfulness so crucial in this situation? By assisting us in becoming completely conscious and in the moment, mindfulness promotes a greater comprehension and admiration of the diverse

⁸ Lisa Maynard-Atem. The Profound Tapestry of Diversity: Enriching the Human Experience in *Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers. Culture and Religion*, volume 23, Issue 4 (2023): 484 - 488.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Yourgrau, Palle. (2023), p. 185 - 201.

¹¹ Mariam Rawan Abdulla. "Culture, Religion, and Freedom of Religion or Belief across the Commonwealth" in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, vol 16, issue 4 (2018), p. 102 - 115.

¹² Abdul Kalam (2003), p. 28 - 30.

range of world religions and cultures. By practicing mindfulness, we can start to recognize the values that unite us: justice, compassion, love, and a sense of belonging. This attitude of thoughtful interfaith communication is embodied by organizations like “Religions for Peace” which provides inclusive solutions to urgent global issues, crossing religious boundaries. However, understanding alone is not enough – action is necessary. According to a well-known saying, “Faith without works is dead”. Mindfulness is a potent instrument for both individual and group enlightenment and action. It enables us to interact with the world in an ethical and caring manner, especially for children and those yet to be born. We must acknowledge that our varied cultures and religions serve as bridges rather than obstacles to respect and understanding among people. Our shared ethical values and goals bind us all together in the web of mankind. By acting as our guide, mindfulness can assist us in navigating this web with grace and discernment.¹³ Whatever our culture or religion, we are all affected by the issues we confront, whether it be environmental degradation, inequity, or violence. Climate change is undoubtedly the most pressing issue that cuts across all boundaries and ideologies.

In actuality, this might entail interfaith groups committed to sustainable practices, energy efficiency, and environmental preservation. It might entail congregations of all faiths adopting green practices and events like this one focusing on the pressing problem of global warming. It could reflect the Judeo-Christian value of “loving your neighbor,” extending to future generations who will inherit the Earth, or the Buddhist concept of “Right Livelihood,” interpreted in today’s context as living ethically and sustainably. Beyond the realms of politics and science, climate change is a shared obligation that affects all facets of mankind, irrespective of nationality, culture, or religion. We have a chance to use our many spiritual and cultural traditions as a wealth of knowledge and guiding practices because of this common issue. Climate change is not just a scientific problem; it is a moral and spiritual one that forces us to put aside our differences and come together as a global society to fight for environmental justice and swift action.¹⁴ “May all beings be at peace,” stated Lord Buddha, referring not only to people but also to all other living beings on the planet, including plants and invisible creatures. Therefore, let this day be a turning point and a call for educated, group action as well as discussion. Because the beauty that every religion and culture adds to the human tapestry is a priceless gem that can only last on the earth that we all call home. People make up a nation. A nation may progress and achieve anything it desires with its efforts. The main goal of our ignited thoughts is to inspire Sri Lankans, particularly the younger generation. They have also been enslaved and obedient due to political and governmental instability, which has prevented them from realizing their full potential.

¹³ Goulden, C, and D’Arcy, C. (2014), p. 1-10; Barrientos, A., A - G. Abdulai, D. (2016), p. 27.

¹⁴ MacDonald, Paul A. Jr. (2023), p. 306 - 311; Abdul Kalam (2003), p. 28 - 30.

Young people who are driven and put in a lot of effort can accomplish their goals. Sri Lankan people, particularly the younger generation, are capable of achieving the greatest heights in the world. To raise their families when they leave the nation, they must labor sincerely and diligently: “Who is the enemy of ours?” “Poverty is our enemy.” According to President APJ Abdul Kalam, it is the source of our issues and ought to be the target of our battle rather than our own.¹⁵ In general, what is poverty? “Poverty is a condition in which an individual or a community lacks basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and has limited access to health care, education, and economic resources” Poverty is often characterized by a lack of resources to meet the basic needs, low living standards, and limited opportunities for economic and social mobility. Low living standards, limited prospects for social and economic mobility, and a lack of resources to meet necessities are common characteristics of poverty. Significant social and economic gaps between people with and without access to resources are frequently the outcome of poverty. Intellectual poverty: A person’s capacity to comprehend and navigate the intricacies of their surroundings or society may be severely hampered by a lack of education, critical thinking abilities, and information. Intellectually poor people may find it difficult to have access to educational opportunities or may face social and financial obstacles that keep them from learning new things. A more comprehensive form of poverty that includes both material and non-material deprivation is intellectual poverty.¹⁶

Ethical poverty: Absence of moral standards, ethical ideals, and principles that allow people or groups to live in harmony, respect, and dignity with one another and the environment. It is the failure to act in a way that complies with moral principles, societal conventions, and human rights, as well as to acknowledge and respect each person’s intrinsic value and dignity. Corrupt practices, injustice, prejudice, exploitation, and environmental damage are just a few examples of how ethical poverty can appear.¹⁷ How could poverty be eliminated: Poverty in general could be overcome by education where meditation appears to be in all aspects for a compassionate and sustainable future. Also, it could be eliminated, especially through STEAM education where critical thinking is inculcated through STEAM education. However, parents and teachers instill ethical poverty, and children or students can develop ethics if their parents and teachers lack moral character. In order to ensure a nation’s socioeconomic stability, parents and educators must first act morally. Without ethics, there would be no socioeconomic stability.

What is STEAM education? (1) S: Science. (2) T: Technology. (3) E: Engineering. (4) A: Arts: Social sciences, culture, & literature gives added

¹⁵ Deshani N and Hirimburegama K (2024), p. 67 - 78.

¹⁶ Aktürk, A. A., & Demircan, O. (2017), p. 757 - 776; Başaran, M., & Erol, M. (2023), p. 326 - 342; UNESCO ESD. (1988).

¹⁷ Aktürk, A. A., & Demircan, O. (2017), p. 757 - 776; Başaran, M., & Erol, M. (2023), p. 326 - 342; UNESCO ESD. (1988).

value to human beings. (5) M: Mathematics. How and why mindfulness is so significant in education for a compassionate and sustainable future? Through mindfulness and STEAM education, the following are inculcated: (1) Collaboration. (2) Communication. (3) Problem-solving. (4) Critical thinking. (5) Creativity. Expected Qualities of a learned person through education for a compassionate and sustainable future are given below¹⁸: (1) Mindfulness. (2) Respect for individual opinion. (3) Patience & tolerance. (4) Team spirit. (5) Deep analytical thinking. (6) Positive attitudes. (7) Skills, confidence, and gathering of information for problem-solving. (8) Sustain cultural values. Thus, produces a human being who can make a positive change in society.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is UNESCO's response to the pressing challenges facing our planet. Human activities have significantly impacted the Earth's ecosystems, posing risks to our future. These changes, if left unaddressed, could become increasingly difficult to reverse. To mitigate the effects of global warming, immediate and collective action is essential.¹⁹ Mindful education is the best investment parents could give to their children. If they are well educated and knowledgeable having mindfulness, they could find employment anywhere in the world. Especially STEAM Education with AI. It was called STEM education but is now called STEAM Education. STEAM is Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. Arts include social sciences, culture, and literature that give added value to a human being.²⁰

Introduce from childhood "science culture especially STEAM education" - UNESCO is already in it, especially for girls.²¹ It is necessary to understand that STEAM Education is not superior to other disciplines. Also, understand that STEAM education is technology technology-dependent way of life. Sustainable use of STEAM Education for overcoming poverty and mindfulness: (1) Leadership. (2) Commitment. (3) Vision for the future. Also, technology-compatible, committed people are essential! A leader who understands the importance of STEAM education for poverty reduction and introduces it to rural schools is important. Artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics are all subjects playing a major role in agriculture, engineering, medical sciences, and all other fields. The entire world is now digitalized having Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well. The younger generation is more aware of Information Technology and digitalization than our generation.²²

"Failures are the pillars of success" should always be remembered during difficult times. Do not lose heart – stay determined. The secret lies in your

¹⁸ Aktürk, A. A., & Demircan, O. (2017); Başaran, M., & Erol, M. (2023), p. 326 – 342.

¹⁹ UNESCO ESD. (1988).

²⁰ Aktürk, A. A., & Demircan, O. (2017), p. 757 - 776; Başaran, M., & Erol, M. (2023), p. 326-342; UNESCO ESD. (1988).

²¹ Aktürk, A. A., & Demircan, O. (2017), p. 757 - 776; Başaran, M., & Erol, M. (2023), p. 326-342; UNESCO ESD. (1988).

²² Hackmann, H., & Boulton, G. (2015), p. 12 - 14; UNESCO Science Report (2021); Youth Lens on the Silk Roads, UNESCO (2020).

passion! You will succeed in whatever field you do if you are passionate about it. Also, without fostering human values, success in life will not be fulfilled. For our youth community, mindfulness fosters compassion, self-assurance, and a sustainable future to obtain their passion. Education for Sustainable Development empowers individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to contribute positively to the environment, economy, and society. It encourages people to make informed, responsible decisions that foster a more equitable and sustainable future for all.²³

In this difficult situation in Sri Lanka, we need to be more tolerant and patient to have a peaceful family life while educating the children. We need to be more committed towards our work and maintain family as well. Mindfulness with education for compassion and sustainability has to play a major role. In our society, parents have a greater role to play for the next generation to remove the “dependent mentality” from young minds. In many countries, people have to work hard and earn. With STEAM education creators and entrepreneur youth could be well developed. Allow them to work hard, while taking reliable risks, and earn, as there is a value for their earnings. Instilling ethical, compassionate, sympathetic, and positive attitudes in young generations are key factors for our country and the entire world, thereby removing ethical poverty, and leading to socio-economic stability.

The development of a country means developing its majority of human resources economically and ethically. For this, as mentioned previously, we need ethical parents & teachers to set an example for the next generation. It is also our responsibility as parents and teachers to educate not only the subject matter but also to become a respectable human being to society. Our Sri Lanka country has many resources including natural resources & human resources that could be well utilized for socio-economic development. Industries developed through science & technology employ all levels. When industries are developed, many sectors such as medicine, engineering, IT, legal, management, and even the labor force will benefit. Having experience in developed countries is how a country could enhance its productivity. It is a win-win situation for the country.

Youth are involved in developing research to convert into technology and a product that the company requires. Business cells and incubators are in Sri Lankan universities and international universities, where one can make research & technology turn into a product that the company requires. Youth are now interested in becoming entrepreneurs while earning up to their full potential. It's a win-win situation for the country and people. Without education and mindfulness one cannot achieve its targets for a compassionate and sustainable future.

Expanding mindful education in Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka has had “free education” since gaining independence in 1948, meaning that all education

²³ Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), UNESCO (2020), <https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education>; Nakashima, D. “Local and Indigenous Knowledge at Science Policy,” UNESCO Science Report towards 2030 (2015), p. 15-18.

up until graduation is provided. From grade one to university, education is provided free by the government. More than 25 % pursue postgraduate education whereas 50-60% in higher education in the US, China, West Korea, and Japan.

Women's economic empowerment in Sri Lanka via mindful education for a compassionate and sustainable future: Having spent decades working with rural women, I firmly believe that women's empowerment will benefit their families more. Mothers would educate their children and provide the family with wholesome, nourishing meals. Natural resources, ancient technology, rich cultures, a high literacy rate, and a diverse range of flora and wildlife are all features of Sri Lanka. Combining with fresh insights from STEAM education one could advance the nation and improve Sri Lanka to a higher standing level in Asia. Combining with educational knowledge and mindfulness could help us grow as a nation.

The foundation of education is to develop human resources through the facilitation of the transfer of "knowledge" to the real world. Education and mindfulness provide individuals and society with the knowledge they need to confidently confront the transnational problems in the modern world. A person who has completed tertiary education is further equipped with knowledge, diverse skills, and the right values for society. The importance of empowering women with mindful education, especially STEAM education is as follows: (1) Better management of family. (2) Could look into the education of children. (3) Nutrition of children. (4) Better financial management at home. (5) Empower with sustained culture. (6) Look into health aspects. (7) Increased purchasing power.

I also wish to emphasize that nothing in life is simple, we have to work hard and try our best to reach our objectives in a morally righteous way. Be morally upright and a good citizen, and be blessed with financial and other activities. Additionally, keep in mind that happiness, prosperity, and health must be balanced. Why females are less in higher positions: (1) By Choice. (2) Lack of confidence to face challenges. (3) Lack of support from the spouse (husband). (4) Lack of family support. (5) Cultural difficulties. Structural changes that need to be developed are given below:

- (1) To develop a mentoring scheme to encourage females in schools, universities, and workplaces to have continued education, in mathematics, and sciences to develop analytical skills.
- (2) To remove streams, Arts, Science, etc. and offer baskets of subjects: Social sciences, Mathematics, Chemistry, etc. In other countries, these different subjects are allowed.
- (3) Encourage women by introducing the female proportion/ gender balance in recruitment, training, scholarships, and promotions, especially in male-dominated mathematics/ engineering fields.

Recommendations: (1) To change the attitudes of men towards conventional jobs of females in the rural sector. (2) Government and civil society should guide & provide a policy environment to help/encourage

women to balance their family & professional lives. (3) Private firms should increase the proportion of females in managerial positions. (4) Encourage the participation of females in politics through the introduction of a quota system.

What needs to be done is to introduce “science culture” from childhood – UNESCO is already promoting it, especially for girls. Understand that science is not superior to other disciplines. It is important to understand that science is a technology-dependent way of life. Sri Lanka was the first to introduce an online learning agro-technology course for the farming community. The farmers can access the courses during their leisure time and pursue their higher education. This has been extremely successful with respect to farming student satisfaction on the learning system and also has increased their income by tenfold. This is especially true for women in the farming community.

At the University of Colombo (Sri Lanka), we established an Institute for Agro Technology & Rural Science at Weligatta, Hambantota. When biotechnology was introduced to rural farming communities and the following were observed: (1) Banana farmers using tissue-cultured plants achieved a tenfold increased income, with science & technology knowledge. (2) Purchasing power was increased and poverty was reduced. (3) Also, the farming community was allowed to obtain a Bachelor of Agro-tech degree from the University of Colombo through the same Institute. This program was entirely online using the Moodle platform. (4) Up to now more than 400 farmers are degree holders.

A degree means knowledge, skills, confidence and mindfulness given to a person. Giving knowledge to those who are directly involved in agriculture would enable them to use the technology immediately and also be involved in marketing having gained IT knowledge. This is conducted online where practical and field visits are onsite. In many countries farming communities are degree holders, especially in agriculture and marketing. They are called agribusiness men with high purchasing power. A farmer should be well dressed holding a high-level mobile phone and sophisticated equipment beside them. Then children/ students would be more attracted to agribusiness.

Education through Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Online Agro-technology Diploma course, will cater to the changing individual and social needs by taking education through online learning mode; would bring education to the doorsteps of the farming community who never have dreamt of entering the portals of higher education in their local language.

Sri Lanka still has 65% population in the rural sector where income generation remains through agriculture. Since farmers do not get even marginal profit from agricultural products, the majority leave farming and seek jobs in urban areas. Those engaged in agriculture often face constraints due to a lack of updated knowledge on new technologies and limited information on developing better products and marketing strategies. Therefore, a continuous knowledge base is essential, enabling farmers to pursue their education while actively cultivating. Online education has proven to be an effective method of

disseminating knowledge in the rural sector.²⁴

Constraints: (1) The main constraint is the IT knowledge and networking for the farming community. (2) Inadequate Networking: Lacks inadequate networking and non-availability of a Management Information System (MIS). (3) Lack of Management Information System which facilitates sharing of information such as those non-available infrastructure facilities and allocation of resources etc. (4) Opportunities for rural population to the higher learning institutions are limited due to poor networking.

Outcome: Agricultural Productivity and Rural Income could be largely increased by combining Technology, Information & Communication Technology (ICT), and Entrepreneurship. The importance of education to build up a harmonious society having a compassionate and sustainable future is highly relevant for children: (1) Rural agriculture community is keen to learn & pursue knowledge in agro-technology. (2) Pathway for rural youth to improve their standard of living & contribute to agriculture development having mindfulness is extremely important. (3) This is a remarkable innovation to avail farming community who have never dreamt of a university education. (4) Reduced the flow of rural youth to urban areas for seeking employment. Because youth are in agro-business getting higher income.

The key pathway for the empowerment of rural men & women is through e-Diploma programs having knowledge, IT, and entrepreneurship. Nelson Mandela said “Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world” Education aims to develop a child’s personality in physical, mental, moral, and intellectual development. Education is to make a free man, a wise, intelligent, moral, non-violent & secular person. “Mind” controls every aspect of life. Now, why is mindfulness so important? The mind controls every aspect of life. Mindfulness helps us become fully aware of the present, facilitating a deeper understanding and appreciation of love, compassion, justice, and a sense of community.

The relevance of mindfulness in today’s education?²⁵ (1) inner peace, compassion, and mindfulness remain as pertinent today as several years ago, (2) Provides a balanced approach to ethics and well-being, (3) Mindfulness explores every possibility to resolve disputes without resorting to violence, (4) The principles of “Rights livelihood” is a part teaching that encourages individuals to be engaged in ethical and align with the values, (5) Teaching encourages us to take accountability for our actions, (6) Words are very powerful having the potential to harm a person, (7) In the modern technology-driven world everyone has an opinion on everything, and it is easily spread through social media, (8) One should emphasize to use our words wisely and use them for good causes,

²⁴ Wickremasinghe I, Vidanapathirana Nisansala P and Hirimburegama K (2018), p. 47 - 73; Vidanapathirana, N. P., Hirimburegama, K., Nelka, S. A. P., Hirimburegama, W. K., Kim, J. H. (2012), 13, p. 68 - 82; Vidanapathirana, N. P., Hirimburegama, K., Kim, J. H., Hirimburegama, W. K., Nelka, S. A. P. (2012).

²⁵ Başaran, M., & Erol, M. (2023), p. 326-342.

(9) Today's world, where individuals face various challenges, recognizing the existence of suffering could help us addressing mindfulness.

In November 2023, countries adopted a landmark agreement at UNESCO, commonly referred to as the "Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development"²⁶ (1) Mind is the one that controls every aspect of life. Mindfulness could do everything, (2) Mindfulness serves as a powerful tool not only for personal enlightenment but also for collective action, (3) Mindfulness allows us to engage compassionately and ethically with the world around us, (4) While different religions might conceptualize the divine or spiritual in various ways, there's a common thread: a call for compassion and responsibility, not just towards our fellow human beings. Sustainable development goal 4 on education.²⁷ It remains the only global standard-setting instrument that lays out how education can and should be used to bring about lasting peace and sustainable development.

Transforming Education Summit (2022), which calls for a reimagining of education to meet the challenges of our time, links different issues, from human rights, digital technologies, and climate change to gender equality, health and well-being, and cultural diversity. It considers that achieving and maintaining peace is an active process that is reliant on the daily actions of every individual. Unique in this way, the Recommendation covers all aspects and dimensions of education.

Buddha's teaching on inner peace, compassion, and mindfulness remains as pertinent today as it was several years ago. Buddhism offers the Eightfold Path, which provides a balanced approach to ethics and well-being. Buddhist teaching explores every possibility to resolve disputes without resorting to violence.²⁸

The principles of "Rights livelihood" are a part of teaching that encourages individuals to be engaged in ethics and align with the values. It encourages us to take accountability for our actions. Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, Lord Buddha provides enduring guidance for navigating life's complexities. In an ever-evolving world, Lord Buddha's wisdom offers a foundation for personal growth, and ethical conduct, and a guide to attaining serenity and peace. Lord Buddha's list of five teachings and how they continue to inspire generations. The five teachings of Lord Buddha, also known as the five precepts or (*Pañca Sila*) also reflect education for a compassionate and sustainable future with mindfulness. The Five Perspectives are as follows:²⁹ (1) Refrain

²⁶ Heide Hackmann and Geoffrey Boulton. (2015), p. 12 - 14; UNESCO Science Report (2021); Youth Lens on the Silk Roads UNESCO (2020).

²⁷ Heide Hackmann and Geoffrey Boulton. (2015): 12 - 14; UNESCO Science Report (2021); Youth Lens on the Silk Roads UNESCO (2020).

²⁸ Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). UNESCO, (2020); Douglas Nakashima. "Local and indigenous knowledge at science policy" UNESCO Science Report towards 2030, (2015), p. 15 - 18.

²⁹ MacDonald, Paul A. Jr. (2023): 306-311; Maynard-Atem, L. (2023), p. 484-488;

from taking life: Do not kill any living being, including animals, (2) Refrain from taking what is not given: Do not steal, (3) Refrain from the misuse of the senses: Do not indulge in sensual pleasures, such as looking at people lustfully or committing adultery, (4) Refrain from wrong speech: Do not lie or gossip about other people, (5) Avoid consuming intoxicating drinks and drugs: These cloud the mind and restrict clear thinking.

Lord Buddha's teachings "Mindfulness in education for a compassionate and sustainable future", also emphasize the importance of mental clarity and physical well-being. Lord Buddha taught that peace comes from within, and what we think we could become. Lord Buddha also emphasized the importance of using words wisely and doing well. Teaching allows us that everything is interconnected. Your peace is my peace; your faith enriches my faith. And so, the diversity of our beliefs and cultures becomes not an obstacle but a pathway to deeper understanding and greater harmony.³⁰ The global canvas of faith and culture teaches us that while we may differ in our rituals, languages, or doctrines, our core values often overlap. Love, kindness, justice, and respect are universal principles found across the globe, in religious texts, and within our hearts.

Let us remember: our faiths and cultures are the diverse threads that make the social fabric so vibrant. When faith serves as a bridge to peace, culture becomes an expression of unity, and mindfulness becomes a path for mutual respect. Mindfulness serves as a powerful tool not only for personal enlightenment but also for collective action, allowing us to engage compassionately and ethically with the world around us. It allows us to engage compassionately and ethically with the world around us" and it's highly valuable and extremely important.^{7,8} While different religions might conceptualize the divine or spiritual in various ways, there's a common thread: a call for compassion and responsibility, not just towards our fellow human beings but towards the Earth itself. The Earth, our shared home, is suffering, it is our duty to heal it. We need to be with the earth and completely and fully aware that it will heal it.

But what truly distinguishes Lord Buddha is spreading the essential Buddhist virtues of compassion, wisdom, peace, and inclusivity. Through interreligious and intercultural discussion and cooperation, Lord Buddha has fostered exchanges between the religions and cultures of different countries, bringing the positive force of faith to bear upon global challenges^{24,25}.

The Enlightened Buddha's energies are continuously dedicated to achieving a future completion with global peace and harmony.

Abdulla, M. R. (2018), p. 102 - 115.

³⁰ Lisa Maynard-Atem. The Profound Tapestry of Diversity: Enriching the Human Experience in *Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers, Culture and Religion*, volume 23, Issue 4 (2023), p. 484 - 488; Mariam Rawan Abdulla. "Culture, Religion, and Freedom of Religion or Belief across the Commonwealth" in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, vol 16, issue 4 (2018), p. 102 - 115.

All communities also engage in joint ventures, embodying values like charity, compassion, and social justice which are central to every religious teaching.³¹ All different believers in different faiths, jointly enjoy each other's religious and cultural celebrations, while respecting each other's religious practices without disturbing others' minds. They often lead to the same universal values of love, peace, and understanding.

The challenges we face – be it violence, inequality, or environmental degradation – impact all of us, regardless of our faith or culture. And perhaps the most urgent challenge that transcends all borders and beliefs is that of climate change.³² Understanding multiple perspectives is enriching and essential for global harmony. This understanding comes through education, open dialogue, and the willingness to set aside ego and biases. Organizations like Religions for Peace provide excellent platforms for promoting interfaith education and dialogue.

In practical terms, this could mean interfaith coalitions dedicated to ecological conservation, energy efficiency, and sustainable practices. It might mean gatherings like this one turning their attention to the critical issue of global warming, and congregations of every faith embracing green practices. Climate change transcends the boundaries of science and politics, becoming a collective responsibility that touches every facet of humanity – regardless of faith, culture, or nationality. This shared challenge offers an opportunity for our diverse spiritual and cultural traditions to serve as a rich source of wisdom and practices that can guide us.³³

Therefore, it is fitting that today, this forum not only represents a meeting of diverse faiths and cultures but also serves as a call to unite in the face of the existential threat of climate change. With mindfulness, which allows us to be fully present and aware, we can take collective actions that are in line with the ethical and moral imperatives of our various traditions.

All are born with a religion and culture. Once you mature one may change the religion and culture. Religion is faith that you believe in. Culture is what surrounds oneself. It all depends on mindfulness and mind. Need to respect one another. Respect all religions/faiths and cultures. Then automatically there will be global faith and culture. One should get rid of ego thinking that our faith/ religion and culture are the most important. One should respect global faith/ religion and every culture, then automatically peace will be reached. A

³¹ Maynard-Atem, L. (2023), p. 484 - 488; Abdulla, M. R. (2018), p. 102 - 115.

³² Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). UNESCO, (2020), available at: https://www.unsdsn.org/news/global-schools-hosts-webinar-at-unesco-education-for-sustainable-development-esd-net-2030/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiA2oW-BhC2ARIsADSIAPwJxonpF0n26WTj54G2Vxg7yw9

³³ Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). UNESCO, (2020), available at: https://www.unsdsn.org/news/global-schools-hosts-webinar-at-unesco-education-for-sustainable-development-esd-net-2030/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiA2oW-BhC2ARIsADSIAPwJxonpF0n26WTj54G2Vxg7yw9_-jjOetdT6_E65dml_o2Wv4Ky_K4aAjJdEALw_wcB

person devoted to or working for the health and happiness of other people.³⁴

Meditation through mindfulness has many benefits, including (1) Increased focus. (2) Reduced stress. (3) Promoted calmness. (4) Helped people recognize and accept negative emotions. (5) Slowed brain aging. This will automatically lead to intercultural inter-religious harmony that will bring peace to our globe. If you have any degree qualifications, if you do not have a humanitarian degree, you would not harness humanitarian qualities.

Religions for Peace are where the world's religions join together to ensure that all people enjoy peace, harmony, and prosperity. We see the world's challenges and understand they can benefit from an interfaith, innovative, and inclusive response.

They respond to challenges – everything from violence and discrimination to environmental degradation – with bold solutions such as: (1) Promote peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. (2) Advance Gender Equality. (3) Nurture a Sustainable Environment. (4) Champion Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion. (5) Strengthen Interreligious Education. (6) Foster Multi-Religious Collaboration and Global Partnership.³⁵

Interreligious education that fosters trust and enhances mutual respect, understanding, and connections between individuals of different religions needs to be strengthened. It emphasizes respect for social variety and common civic virtues, and it incorporates religious literacy from early life to adulthood.

These initiatives will inspire us to: (1) Promote interreligious education, dialogue, and exchange programs to counteract tendencies of populism, hate speech, intolerance, and social divides. (2) Organise interfaith training programs and youth camps. (3) Partner with community and government leaders to host interreligious dialogues, conferences, roundtables, and seminars; conduct research and organize lectures and presentations on the various issues identified by this plan. (4) Conduct interfaith celebrations of religious holidays, festivals, and events – including World Interfaith Harmony Week and the International Day of Tolerance – to promote interfaith hospitality and solidarity.³⁶

An egoist is someone overly concerned with their desires, needs, or

³⁴ Mariam Rawan Abdulla. "Culture, Religion, and Freedom of Religion or Belief across the Commonwealth" in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, vol 16, issue 4 (2018), p. 102 - 115

³⁵ Youth Lens on the Silk Roads UNESCO (2020); Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), UNESCO (2020), available at: https://shop.unesco.org/en/products/youth-lens-on-the-silk-road-best-photos-from-the-international-silk-roads-photo-contest-2nd-edition?srsId=AfmBOooLkvnz-pTVXEFjGX-ArjAQKN_UyxPyGxysL0n9KKvffA85x9fy

³⁶ Youth Lens on the Silk Roads UNESCO (2020); Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), UNESCO (2020), available at: https://shop.unesco.org/en/products/youth-lens-on-the-silk-road-best-photos-from-the-international-silk-roads-photo-contest-2nd-edition?srsId=AfmBOooLkvnz-pTVXEFjGX-ArjAQKN_UyxPyGxysL0n9KKvffA85x9fy

interests. Egoism reflects an excessive preoccupation with oneself. While our talents, abilities, and aspects of personality can be valuable attributes, the mental construct of the self is ultimately artificial. Mindfulness and resilience enable us to recover quickly from adverse situations and return to a balanced, natural state of mind.³⁷

This is a personal trait of human beings. Some people inherit this trait within them, so they are quick to regain or recover. Some of the people are quite slow in recovery. How can mindfulness support resilience, support on regulating and turn towards keeping a positive attitude to fluctuations and vicissitudes of day-to-day life? In that sense, once you develop mindfulness with the understanding of choice-less awareness, you have to familiarise it for a while³⁸ Subsequently you will recognize its functions and that it is multi-various. Once it's fairly established only, you can gain this type of advanced results like "Resilience".

That implies mindfulness itself works like a compass, showing the direction — with its natural inclination pointing towards the north. Moreover, mindfulness is the innate tendency to "bring the mind home," guiding it back from disturbed or adverse situations, returning to the datum line or reference point.³⁹ Therefore, one must understand these matters are secondary benefits of mindfulness or results of fair established. So whenever you are regulating your mental moods without mindfulness, it is haphazard. Mindfulness has a positive impact or attitude in your life, even in adverse situations. If not, you will be sad and disappointed thinking. If you see those difficult situations in the light of mindfulness, all occurrences are positive and natural part and parcel of life.⁴⁰

We do possess a broader spectrum awareness, the choice-less awareness to go into that broader spectrum or diversified capabilities of your mindfulness practice. That needs to be carefully assessed only by yourself. In certain mindfulness research, the objective is to identify the resilient character of human beings. Education for Sustainable Development empowers people with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and behaviours to live in a way that is good for the environment, economy, and society.^{41, 42} It encourages people to make smart, responsible choices that help create a better future for everyone.

³⁷ Nakamura Hajmi, Donald S. Lopez: Britannica (2025); Yourgrau, Palle. (2023), p. 185 - 201.

³⁸ Douglas Nakashima. "Local and indigenous knowledge at science policy" UNESCO Science Report towards 2030, (2015), p. 15 - 18.

³⁹ Mariam Rawan Abdulla. "Culture, Religion, and Freedom of Religion or Belief across the Commonwealth" in The Review of Faith & International Affairs, vol 16, issue 4 (2018), p. 102 - 115.

⁴⁰ MacDonald, Paul A. Jr. (2023), p. 306 - 311; Maynard-Atem, L. (2023), p. 484 - 488; Abdulla, M. R. (2018), p. 102 - 115.

⁴¹ Phra Brahmmapundit. 2022.

⁴² Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Academy. July 26, 2023, <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/sustainable-development-and-well-being>

CONCLUSION

Buddhism has played a vital role in shaping Asia's spiritual, cultural, and social life. This year's theme, "Unity and Inclusiveness for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insight for World Peace and Sustainable Development", holds great relevance in today's world. The core goal of Buddhism is to understand the true nature of life and mind, with the mind being the most powerful force in the human experience – what one believes, one can become. The Eightfold Path, including right views, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration, guides individuals toward self-awareness and a sustainable future.

However, similar insights exist in other religions. Islam emphasizes justice and community, while Christianity promotes love and forgiveness. Like diverse flowers in a garden, each religion contributes unique beauty and wisdom to the collective pursuit of harmony and respect. Mindfulness, the practice of returning the mind to a balanced state, acts as a powerful tool not only for personal enlightenment but also for collective action. It fosters compassionate engagement with the world, encouraging responsibility towards both humanity and the Earth, our shared home.

Lord Buddha's teachings emphasize that peace comes from within and that wise speech and kind actions pave the way for a better society. All individuals are born into a religion and culture, which may evolve. Religion is a matter of faith, while culture reflects one's surroundings. By cultivating mindfulness, respect for all faiths and cultures naturally follows, laying the foundation for global peace.

Mindfulness also holds immense significance in education, fostering collaboration, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity. It instills qualities such as patience, tolerance, team spirit, and analytical thinking – shaping individuals who positively impact society. Through mindfulness-based education, present and future generations can contribute to a more compassionate and sustainable world.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

In education, mindfulness has become a game-changer, encouraging social responsibility, compassion, and emotional control. This essay examines how mindfulness affects students, teachers, and the community at large in order to shape a compassionate and sustainable future. It explores how mindfulness improves social-emotional learning, moral leadership, and sustainable behaviors and is supported by research. The foundation of compassion is the knowledge that we are all intricately linked. One person cannot satisfy their demands at the expense of those around them due to this interconnectedness. To put it another way, unless everyone's wants are satisfied, then nobody's needs are satisfied. Additionally, compassion is unconditional. It doesn't choose which objects to use. It encompasses all sentient beings just by virtue of their sentience, like us. On the UNO and worldwide stage, meditation, yoga, and peace are widely acknowledged as having originated in India.

Keywords: *Ecological mindfulness, organizational mindfulness, political mindfulness, compassion, sustainability, spiritual ecology, transformation, inner transition.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A common definition of mindfulness is “the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally”.¹ It includes techniques that promote emotional control, lower tension, and

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¹ Jon Kabat-Zinn, (1994), *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. Hachette Books.

increase focus. Beyond personal wellbeing, mindfulness in educational settings influences interpersonal connections and promotes an empathetic and understanding culture. The goal of the expanding discipline of mindfulness in education is to help teachers and students develop awareness, empathy, and resilience. It is important for fostering environmental sustainability and social responsibility in addition to personal well-being.

By incorporating mindfulness into educational frameworks, students are better equipped to handle difficult global issues with empathy and moral judgment. In educational contexts, mindfulness – the practice of developing present-moment awareness – has drawn a lot of attention. Mindfulness, which has its roots in ancient traditions, is becoming more widely acknowledged as a means of promoting empathy, emotional intelligence, and sustainable habits. Incorporating mindfulness into school appears to be a potential method to foster a sustainable and compassionate future as global issues like social injustice, climate change, and mental health problems worsen. The function of mindfulness in education, its effects on learners and teachers, and its potential to support a society that prioritizes fairness, environmental stewardship, and well-being are all examined in this essay.

II. MINDFULNESS AS A TOOL FOR COMPASSION

By increasing awareness of oneself and others, mindfulness fosters compassion. According to research, mindfulness techniques like meditation and introspection enhance self-compassion, which in turn promotes empathy and kindness toward others.² In order to foster a culture of empathy and respect for one another, programs such as Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living (MBCL) have effectively educated educators to incorporate compassion into their professional practices.³ Mindfulness improves emotional intelligence in the classroom, fostering caring environments where kids feel appreciated and encouraged. By encouraging healthy interpersonal interactions, it also tackles systemic issues like bullying and prejudice.⁴ Given that compassion is necessary for human life, it is not unexpected that it is a natural disposition. It's possible that compassion is an adaptive and naturally evolved quality. It would not have been possible for our species to survive and thrive without it. The fact that compassion increases our attractiveness to possible partners is another indication that it is an adaptively evolved quality. According to a study looking at the quality that people value most in possible romantic partners, "kindness"

² Kim, S., Kim, H., Lee, H., Lee, H., & Noh, D. (2018). Effectiveness of a brief stress management intervention in male college students. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 54(1), 88-94. doi:10.1111/ppc.12212.

³ Erik van den Brink, Frits Koster. *Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living (MBCL)*. Handbook of Mindfulness-Based Programmes. 1st Edition; 2019, Chapter 29, T&F eBooks; ISBN 9781315265438.

⁴ Grant, A. M. (2017). The third 'generation' of workplace coaching: Creating a culture of quality conversations. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 10(1), 37–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2016.1266005>

is regarded by both men and women as one of the most appealing qualities.⁵

Why does compassion play such a crucial role in human survival? Its enormous advantages for our general well-being, including our mental and physical health, might be part of the solution. It's possible that a compassionate lifestyle results in higher psychological well-being because giving seems to be just as enjoyable as receiving, if not more so. According to a brain-imaging study conducted by neuroscientists at the National Institutes of Health, when we see someone donate money to charity, our brain's "pleasure centers," or the areas that light up when we feel pleasure (such as dessert, money, and sex), are just as active as when we get money ourselves! Giving to others even improves our wellbeing in ways that go beyond what we get when even more so than when we spend money on ourselves, giving to others improves our well-being. In an eye-opening experiment, Elizabeth Dunn,⁶ a psychology professor at the University of British Columbia, gave participants a certain amount of money and told them to spend half of it on themselves and the other half on other people. Participants who had spent money on others reported feeling considerably better at the conclusion of the study, which was published in the scholarly journal *Science*, than those who had spent money on themselves.

The foundation of compassion is the knowledge that we are all intricately linked. One person cannot satisfy their demands at the expense of those around them due to this interconnectedness. To put it another way, unless everyone's wants are satisfied, then nobody's needs are satisfied. Additionally, compassion is unconditional. It doesn't choose which objects to use. It applies to all sentient beings, including ourselves, just because they are sentient. As we reach out to people to learn about their innermost thoughts and feelings, empathy emerges on the left branches. It's not the only method to express our loving desire, as the tree illustrates.



⁵ Emma, Seppala 2013. *Compassionate Mind, Healthy Body*. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/compassionate_mind_healthy_body.

⁶ Elizabeth W. Dunn, *Lara B. Aknin, Michael I. Norton. (2008), *Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness*. *Science* 319, 1687

Additionally, there is self-expression (in the right-hand branches) and self-empathy (in the roots). Our relationship with ourselves, our bodies, and the planet is characterized by self-empathy. It allows us to be grounded and, in the moment, regardless of how we are feeling or what we need. Expressing our innermost thoughts and feelings to another person is known as self-expression, and it is also a means of building a compassionate relationship. After that, we sought to understand what wise compassion actually looks like and what leaders need to do to make it happen. Four skills were identified: transparency, candor, courage, and presence. Together, and in that order, they produce a positive feedback loop known as the Wise Compassion Flywheel.⁷ Compassion and empathy can seem to be nearly the same thing at times.

The distinctions are depicted in the Tree of Compassionate Connection⁸ (illustrated). The tree represents nonviolent communication in its broadest sense. The desire to establish the kind of connection that will enable everyone's wants to be satisfied is at the core of the tree. This connection's sympathetic nature stems from its consideration for everyone's well-being. The foundation of compassion is the knowledge that we are all intricately linked. One person cannot satisfy their demands at the expense of those around them due to this interconnectedness. To put it another way, unless everyone's wants are satisfied, then nobody's needs are satisfied. Additionally, compassion is unconditional. It doesn't choose which objects to use. It encompasses all sentient beings, including ourselves, just by virtue of their sentience.⁹

Empathy, or the "feeling as another" ability, comes after compassion, which entails "feeling for another" (as opposed to pity, or the "feeling towards another"). The desire to lessen another person's pain is commonly referred to as active compassion. According to Shaver et al,¹⁰ compassion is not a separate emotion but rather a variation of love or despair. According to Bowlby,¹¹ compassion can be seen as a separate emotional state from discomfort, grief, and love from the standpoint of evolutionary psychology. However, empathy distress, which is defined as the experience of distress in relation to another

⁷ <https://potentialproject80075.ac-page.com/flywheel-wise-compassion>

⁸ <https://treehousevillage.ca/2020/04/the-tree-of-compassionate-connection-resolving-conflict-in-a-cohousingcommunity/#:~:text=The%20Tree%20of%20Compassionate%20Connection%20is%20a%20model%20of%20conflict,families%2C%20Peaceful%20World%E2%80%9D%20initiative.>

⁹ Seed of Peace (2024). *The Difference Between Empathy and Compassion* <https://seedofpeace.org/the-difference-between-empathy-and-compassion/> <https://www.seedsofpeace.org/camp2024/>.

¹⁰ Shaver, P; Schwartz, J; Kirson, D; O'Connor, C (June 1987). "Emotion knowledge: further exploration of a prototype approach". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 52 (6): 1061-1086. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.52.6.1061. PMID 3598857.

¹¹ John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *The Origins of Attachment Theory. Attachment Theory*. 1st Edition, 2000. eISBN 9780203728017.

person's suffering, is synonymous with compassion.¹²

The observation that people occasionally imitate and experience the emotions of those around them serves as the foundation for this compassionate viewpoint.¹³ The disciplines of social psychology and positive psychology are now linked to and studying compassion.¹⁴ Connecting with someone by identifying with them is the process of compassion. This compassion-based identification with others might boost one's desire to take action to lessen other people's suffering.

One of the most crucial qualities for doctors providing medical care is compassion.¹⁵ Having compassion makes you want to aid the person who is suffering. Compassion is not that desire to be helpful, but it does imply that compassion is like other emotions in that it encourages actions to ease the tension caused by the feeling. Most doctors agree that their primary responsibilities are to prioritize the needs of their patients, which includes the duty to provide appropriate care, to keep information private, and to refrain from harming them. Each of the responsibilities demonstrates compassion since it is closely linked to acknowledging and alleviating suffering.¹⁶ Compassionate doctors are aware of how illness and suffering impact people's actions.¹⁷ Love and the feelings elicited by illness and suffering may be directly linked to compassion. The interaction between patients and doctors at healthcare facilities serves as an example of this. Evidence that compassion is a social emotion associated with interpersonal intimacy and collaboration can be seen in the connection between suffering patients and their caregivers.

Jesus is the epitome of relational care and compassion. Christ calls on Christians to put others' needs and sufferings ahead of their own and to behave with compassion.¹⁸

- You will fulfill the law of Christ if you bear one another's burdens. — Galatians 6:2.
- As God in Christ has forgiven you, treat one another with kindness,

¹² Goetz, Jennifer L., Keltner, Dacher, Simon-Thomas, Emiliana. *Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 136(3), May 2010, 351 - 374.

¹³ Elaine Hatfield John T. Cacioppo, Richard L. Rapson. *Emotional Contagion. Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 1993, Vol 2, issue 3. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.ep10770953>

¹⁴ Hooria Jazaieri, Kelly McGonigal, Thupten Jinpa, Philippe Goldin, et al. *A randomized controlled trial of compassion cultivation training: Effects on mindfulness, affect, and emotion regulation. Motivation and Emotion*; 2013, 38 (1) DOI: 10.1007/s11031-013-9368-z.

¹⁵ Principles of Medical Ethics. (1981). American Medical Association. Chicago

¹⁶ Cassell, Eric (2009). *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (2 ed.). New York City: Oxford University Press. pp. 393–403. ISBN 978-0-19-518724-3

¹⁷ E J Cassel. *The nature of suffering and the goals of medicine*. N Engl J Med, 1982 Mar 18;306 (11): 639 - 45. doi: 10.1056/NEJM198203183061104.

¹⁸ Lampert, Khen (2006). *Traditions of Compassion: From Religious Duty to Social Activism*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-1-4039-8527-9.

tenderness, and forgiveness. — Ephesians 4:32.

Rahman and Rahim, the Arabic words for mercy and compassion, are considered the most important qualities of God in the Muslim faith. The line “In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful” opens each of the Quran’s 114 chapters, with one exception.¹⁹ “There is undoubtedly a messenger among you; it grieves him that you are in such distress and that he is so solicitous of you; to the believers, he is empathetic.” — Quran 9:128.

The truth of suffering, or *dukkha* (unhappiness or stress), is the first of the Four Noble Truths. One of the three traits that set all conditioned life apart is *dukkha*. It results from a failure to comprehend the nature of impermanence *anicca* (the second characteristic) and the fact that everyone and everything is devoid of self-*anatta* (the third characteristic). Renunciation emerges when one comprehends the causes of pain and realizes that it is possible to be freed from them (Berzin). The development of empathy for those who suffer is then made possible by renunciation (Berzin). This is created in phases:

Ordinary compassion: The desire to relieve our loved ones of the “struggles of suffering”.²⁰ and the compassion we have for them. This compassion aspires to help all living things, without exception. Both the Mahayana and Hinayana paths are linked to it (Berzin). The Four Immeasurable are the four stages in which it is produced.²¹

1. Loving-kindness
2. Compassion (*Karuṇā*)
3. Joy (*Mudita*)
4. Equanimity (*Upekṣā*)

According to the American monk Bhikkhu Bodhi, compassion “supplies the complement to loving-kindness: whereas loving-kindness has the characteristic of wishing for others’ happiness and welfare, compassion has the characteristic of wishing that others be free from suffering, a wish that is extended infinitely to all living beings.” Similar to *metta*, compassion is sparked by the realization that all beings, including ourselves, wish to be free from suffering yet are nevertheless plagued by pain, fear, grief, and other types of *dukkha*.²²

The Mahayana tradition is the only one that practices great compassion, which is linked to the growth of Bodhicitta. “Suffering beings are numberless, I vow to liberate them all,” is how one version of the Bodhisattva pledge starts.²³

¹⁹ University of Southern California. Usc.edu. Archived from the original on 21 February 2009. Retrieved 2 June 2014.

²⁰ The three types of suffering. *Lion’s roar magazine*. 4 June 2017.

²¹ Pema Dragpa (16 September 2016). “Four Immeasurables”.

²² Bhikkhu Bodhi (1994). *The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering*. Buddhist Publication Society. p. 39.

²³ Rhodes, Robert F. (1984). “The four extensive vows and four noble truths in T’ien-t’ai Buddhism”. *Annual Memoirs of the Otani University Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research*

Compassion is a multifaceted attribute that is described by several names in Hinduism's traditional texts.²⁴ *Daya* (दया), *karuṇā* (करुणा), and *anukampā* (अनुकम्पा *Anukamp*) are the three most often used terms. *Karunya*, *kripa*, and *anukrosha* are other Hindu terms that refer to compassion.²⁵ Various Hindu schools use some of these terms interchangeably to describe compassion, including its definition, origins, effects, and nature. Gandhi and others assert that compassion for all living things is a virtue^{26, 27} is a central concept in Hindu philosophy.²⁸

Human life is regarded as the highest form of earthly existence, even if all life is precious. It is unthinkable disgusting to kill anyone, regardless of their offense. It is the only significant religious tradition that mandates vegetarianism for both laypeople and monks. Strong Jain influences are thought to have caused some branches of the Hindu faith to become vegetarian.²⁹ However, the Jain tradition's position on nonviolence extends well beyond vegetarianism. Jains reject food that has been obtained in needless cruelty. Veganism is popular. Animal shelters are operated by Jains throughout India. The Jain Birds Hospital, located in a second structure behind the main temple, is a well-known feature of Delhi's Lal Mandir, a well-known Jain temple.³⁰



It's a huge undertaking to teach pupils the value of compassion, but we've gathered some tips from actual educators. Are you unsure of how to encourage empathy and emotional transparency in your classroom? Inspired by feedback

Institute. 2: 53 – 91.

²⁴ Martin, Nancy (2010). "Grace and Compassion". In Jacobsen, Knut (ed.). *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Vol. II. Brill. pp. 752 – 757. ISBN 978-90-04-17893-9.

²⁵ Balslev, Anandita; Evers, Dirk, eds. (2009). "*Compassion: Etymology, Rituals, Anecdotes from the Hindu Tradition*". *Compassion in the World's Religions: Envisioning Human Solidarity*. LIT Verlag. ISBN 978-3643104762.

²⁶ Gandhi, M.K. (1995). *Hindu Dharma*. *Orient Paperbacks*. ISBN 978-81-222-0108-6.

²⁷ Tripathi, A.; Mullet, E. (2010). "Conceptualizations of forgiveness and forgivingness among Hindus". *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. 20 (4): 255–266. doi:10.1080/10508619.2010.507694. S2CID 144014675.

²⁸ Martin, Nancy (2010). "Grace and Compassion". In Jacobsen, Knut (ed.). *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Vol. II. Brill. pp. 752–757. ISBN 978-90-04-17893-9

²⁹ Bradnock, Robert. *South India Handbook: The Travel Guide*. 2000 *Footprint Travel Guides*. p. 543. Spencer, Colin (2002). *Vegetarianism: A History*. Thunder's Mouth Press. p. 342.

³⁰ Ettinger, Powell. "Jainism and the legendary Delhi bird hospital". *Wildlifeextra.com*. Archived from the original on 13 August 2018. Retrieved 28 September 2013.

on the Classroom Direct Your Compassionate Classroom Giveaway, have a look at these actual teacher suggestions for establishing a compassionate classroom. I will essentially drop everything to speak with each student one-on-one unless they express a need or want to do so. My pupils are aware that I treat them with dignity and expect the same in return. We practice handling problems in a constructive manner and set an example of pleasant interactions. We must put the habits to use in order to improve ourselves and learn how to interact with people in genuine ways. Elizabeth G. Students gain from positive emotional sharing because it teaches them how to share both happy and negative feelings in a constructive way. It is an essential component of learning how to deal with life's challenges. Respecting other people's feelings and engaging in constructive emotional sharing were topics covered by a number of our contributors. Being grateful for what you have is one method to learn how to be a better person. Just 15 minutes a day, five days a week, for six weeks can enhance mental wellness and help create a long-lasting shift in perspective, according to research published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*. You also don't have to be thankful for only the big things. Try to focus on the little, commonplace things that bring you joy, like the gift of laughter or quality time with a cherished pet. Even better, put them in writing every day to cultivate a positive attitude of thankfulness. It gets simpler to think of things for which you are thankful as you have more practice. Your life may improve as a result of this fresh viewpoint.

In a hectic world, meditation is a terrific way to slow down. You may better yourself and your mental health by practicing mindfulness and meditation for even a little while each day. Anxiety, sadness, and pain scores can all be improved by meditating, particularly in times of crisis, according to a study published in the *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine*. Additionally, it can assist reduce tension. Over time, meditation can help you discover more about yourself by increasing your awareness of your mental patterns. It can help you become more self-aware and identify undesirable patterns that affect your life and mood. You can bring about and welcome constructive change when you have self-awareness.



Alpha and theta waves, which are linked to relaxation, have been demonstrated to be induced by meditation. Here's how. In the US, meditation is very popular because studies show that it has several health benefits. Indeed, research indicates that meditation can help lower stress, lower sadness, enhance

focus, improve sleep, and more. Researchers use brain imaging equipment, such as electroencephalography (EEG), to demonstrate that you can physically observe relaxation-related changes occurring in the brain. In addition, research participants who meditate report improvements in their general well-being after meditating. According to research, alpha frequencies have the potential to become the predominant brain wave in the brain after prolonged meditation practice. The brain changes to slower theta waves as relaxation and serenity turn into drowsiness. 4 to 7.9 Hz is the theta frequency range. Unexpected, dreamy mental imagery frequently accompany theta waves. These pictures are frequently accompanied by strong recollections, most often from infancy. Healing, improved creativity, and an epiphany – the moment when everything suddenly makes sense – are all linked to theta brain wave activity. The theta state can be attained quickly even by highly skilled meditators. The slowest brain waves, known as delta waves, have a frequency between 0.1 and 3.9 Hz. Although humans typically fall asleep during delta waves, there is evidence that it is possible to stay awake during this very profound trance-like state. Additionally, there is a considerable rise in the creation of healing somatotropin within the brain's delta-wave activity.

According to *Katyal and Philippe*,³¹ meditation training is thought to improve mental health by regulating autonomic and cerebral activity, especially alpha and theta brain oscillations. Although the quality of meditation also affects this improvement, little is known about the relationship between these physiological and neurological alterations and the quality of meditation. Five escalating stages of “depth” – hindrances, relaxation, focus; transpersonal qualities, and nonduality - are used in one model to describe the quality of meditation. We examined the physiological (heart rate, respiration rate, and heart rate variability) and brain oscillatory (theta, alpha, beta, and gamma) correlates of the self-reported meditation depth in both meditation-naïve controls (CTLs) and long-term meditators (LTMs). We modeled the change in the slope of the connection between the various neurological and physiological parameters and the self-reported experiencing degree at each of the five depth levels in order to identify the neuronal and physiological correlates of meditation depth. Confirming the experience manipulation of meditation intensity, CTLs reported more “hindrances” than LTMs, whereas LTMs reported more “transpersonal qualities” and “nonduality.” Theta (4 – 6 Hz) and alpha (7 – 13 Hz) oscillations were shown to be inversely correlated with the degree of meditation in both groups.

Theta amplitude had a positive correlation with “hindrances” and a decreasing correlation with deeper levels of meditation. “Hindrances” had a negative correlation with alpha amplitude, while depth levels showed a rising positive correlation. During deep meditation, two distinct aspects of executive processing – monitoring and attention regulation, respectively – may have been down regulated, as evidenced by the increase in the inverse association

³¹ Katyal, Sucharit and Philippe Goldin 2021. *Alpha and theta oscillations are inversely related to progressive levels of meditation depth*. *Neuroscience of Consciousness*, 2021, 7(1), 1 – 12.

between theta and meditation depth over different scalp locations in the two groups: frontal midline in LTMs and frontal lateral in CTLs. These findings imply that the two traditional brain markers of meditation training – alpha and theta oscillations – are functionally dissociated. Furthermore, executive brain functioning seems to be down-regulated during deeper meditation experiences, despite being crucial for overcoming “hindrances.”

One of the best ways to improve you is to show kindness to others. It can improve your self-esteem, is free, and doesn’t involve much work. It can also make other people’s life better. Being a kinder does means being more conscious about others around you. You’ll become more aware of what people need – even if they don’t express it – if you do this. For instance, you might observe that a coworker is having trouble with something you can assist them with. Or you might observe a stranger with a baby stroller and in need of assistance opening a door. Set a daily objective to perform one random act of kindness. If you’ve begun keeping a diary, write about how your generosity affected you and how the other person reacted Kate.³² One type of self-care that can lead to a more satisfying existence is cultivating healthy connections. You can learn a lot about giving and receiving love and support from the people you get close to. You may become a better friend, listener, and supportive partner by putting your relationships first.

A habit might be anything you do on a regular basis, such as cleaning your teeth right before bed or having coffee as soon as you arrive at work. Certain behaviors might support mental and physical health, while others may negatively affect your day-to-day activities. However, you can develop new habits that work for you and break bad ones with a little work. Because behaviors eventually become automatic and effortless, doing anything frequently increases the likelihood that you will continue with it. When a habit improves your life, the benefits you receive can encourage you to continue doing it. According to *Stephani Jahn*,³³ a certified mental health counselor in Florida, “forming a new habit can be a source of pride because you realize you have the power to improve your life, which can help bring you closer to being who you want to be.” *Jahn* adds that developing routines may empower you and increase your sense of accomplishment. Let’s take the example of creating a novel. Your ultimate objective may seem less daunting if you develop the practice of writing a few pages every day or set aside a specific time each day to write.

You’ll probably feel more driven to maintain your new habit and keep pursuing your objective as you continue to make progress. Additionally, positive habits do more than only increase your sense of self-worth. By providing some

³² Kate Vessel 2024. *How to improve yourself every day: 20 ways to be better*. <https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-better-yourself>.

³³ Stephani Jahn, 2024. *Depression Therapy: Has Sadness Overtaken You And You Don't Know How To Rebound?* https://saiblenuro.com/therapy-for-depression/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBlEiwAEVftNi7mTBoQOU5nYzr_Ho97NQw2rdSnNvYAK-KfsVZkNsi-D_FsrMhrxoCdm0QAvD_BwE <https://apathwaytoyou.com/>

structure and consistency to your daily life, they can help lessen tension and anxiety, says *Elizabeth Barlow*³⁴, founder of Barlow Counseling Group and a licensed independent clinical social worker in West Virginia and Massachusetts. For instance, it can be much simpler to pack wholesome lunches during the workweek if your meal preps every Sunday. According to Barlow, “our brains love stories and patterns.” Your brain creates expectations for what will happen and when you follow good routines. Establishing and maintaining a regular routine can benefit from this.

A couple of instances:

- Getting seven to eight hours of sleep every night and
- Going to bed and waking up at around the same time each day
- Completing at least 150 minutes of aerobic exercise each week,
- Creating and sticking to a spending plan,
- Journaling or practicing meditation every day, and
- Drinking adequate water each day: Women’s 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) and men’s 15.5 cups (3.7 liters).

2.1. The importance of mindfulness in education

Education serves as a vehicle for forming people’s worldviews, values, and character in addition to imparting knowledge. Both the cognitive and emotional components of learning are addressed when mindfulness is incorporated into the classroom. Important advantages include:

(i) Improved emotional regulation: According to *Schönert-Reichl et al.*³⁵ mindfulness exercises assist students in controlling their stress, anxiety, and other emotional difficulties.

(ii) Improved academic performance: Mindfulness promotes improved academic results by increasing focus and decreasing distractions *Zenner et al.*³⁶.

(iii) Empathy and compassion development: Mindfulness promotes empathy and respect for others, two qualities necessary for societal stability.

(iv) Encouragement of sustainable practices: Mindfulness promotes sustainable habits by cultivating a stronger bond with the environment and an understanding of interdependence.³⁷

³⁴ Barlow E. *The relationship between workplace social capital and employee subjective wellbeing, stress and job satisfaction*. University of Surrey (United Kingdom); 2013.

³⁵ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). *Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial*. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), 52 - 66.

³⁶ Zenner, C., Herrnleben-Kurz, S., & Walach, H. (2014). *Mindfulness-based interventions in schools—a systematic review and meta-analysis*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 603.

³⁷ Brown, K. W., & Kasser, T. (2005). *Are psychological and ecological well-being compatible? The role of values, mindfulness, and lifestyle*. *Social Indicators Research*, 74(2), 349 – 368.

2.2. Implementing mindfulness in schools

There are several ways to introduce mindfulness into the classroom:

(i) **Mindfulness curricula:** MindUp and the Mindful Schools Curriculum are two programs that offer organized methods for teaching mindfulness.

(ii) **Teacher training:** Giving teachers mindfulness techniques improves their well-being and ability to foster a positive learning environment.

(iii) **Mindful classroom practices:** You can add techniques like body scans, thankfulness exercises, and mindful breathing into your everyday practice.

(iv) **Whole-school approach:** Including parents, teachers, students, and administrators is part of integrating mindfulness into the school culture.

2.3. Case studies and evidence

Several researches demonstrate the advantages of mindfulness in learning environments:

(i) **The MindUp Program:** MindUp enhanced students' academic achievement, social behaviors, and emotional control when it was implemented in North America.³⁸

(ii) **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR):** Specifically tailored for educational settings, MBSR has demonstrated benefits in resilience and stress reductions for both instructors and students.³⁹

(iii) **Global examples:** To encourage wellbeing and holistic education, schools in nations like Bhutan, Finland, and the UK have incorporated mindfulness.

2.4. Mindfulness for sustainability

Beyond environmental principles, sustainability in education also includes social justice and overall well-being. Sustainability depends on ethical stewardship and an innate connection to nature, both of which are fostered by mindfulness.⁴⁰ Mindfulness encourages self-awareness and compassion, which equips students to advocate for social justice and embrace sustainable practices. Programs that promote mindfulness also support introspective behaviors that complement sustainable leadership. By encouraging a culture of cooperation and environmental responsibility, educational leaders

³⁸ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). *Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial*. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), 52 - 66.

³⁹ Kuyken, W., Weare, K., Ukoumunne, O. C., Vicary, R., Motton, N., Burnett, R & Huppert, F. (2013). *Effectiveness of the Mindfulness in Schools Programme: Non-randomised controlled feasibility study*. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 203(2), 126 - 131.

⁴⁰ Wamsler, C. (2019). *Contemplative Sustainable Futures: The Role of Individual Inner Dimensions and Transformation in Sustainability Research and Education*. In: Leal Filho, W., Consorte McCrea, A. (eds) *Sustainability and the Humanities*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95336-6_20

who practice mindfulness can bring about revolutionary transformations in school communities.⁴¹ According to Wamsler *et al.*,³⁴ mindfulness can help comprehend and support societal sustainability at all scales as well as individual sustainability. As such, it ought to be regarded as a fundamental idea in sustainability research, practice, and education. In light of the fact that the micro and macro are reflected and interconnected, we conclude by urging additional sustainability research that specifically recognizes spirituality, mindfulness, and good emotional connections.



In 2018, Tina *et al.*⁴² reported Developing innovative strategies to engage adolescents with sustainable consumption (SC) that target not only the cognitive but also the socio-emotional and behavioral levels is a major problem in research on education for sustainable consumption (ESC). Learning processes in ESC may benefit from mindfulness-based treatments (MBIs) that promote awareness, (self-reflection, and ethical principles. The eight-week intervention was conducted in school with 15-year-old adolescents (N = 85). A mixed-methods randomized pre-post waitlist control group design was used. The study found that the modified MBI had significant effects on SCB precursors as well as additional effects that were not directly related to SCB but might be beneficial for it. The real behavioral impacts were negligible. Significant inter-individual variations and discrepancies between qualitative and quantitative findings suggest case-specific impacts that preclude the drawing of broadly applicable generalizations. However, this pilot study's findings suggest that integrating mindfulness training with ESC forms seems to be a workable and successful strategy for interacting with SC in teenagers.

Because it fosters awareness, compassion, and responsible decision-making, mindfulness is essential to creating a sustainable future. It promotes:

(i) Environmental Stewardship: According to Hölzel *et al.*,⁴³ mindfulness

⁴¹ Schussler, D. L., Davis, J., Doyle Fosco, S. L., & Kohler, K. (2023). *Examining the ethics of school-based mindfulness programs*. *Journal of Moral Education*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2023.2232121>

⁴² Tina Böhme, Laura S. Stanzus, Sonja M. Geiger, Daniel Fischer and Ulf Schrader 2018. *Mindfulness Training at School: A Way to Engage Adolescents with Sustainable Consumption?* *Sustainability* 2018, 10, 3557; doi:10.3390/su10103557 www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability

⁴³ Hölzel, B. K., Lazar, S. W., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D. R., & Ott, U. (2011). *How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective*. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6 (6), 537 - 559.

strengthens ties to the natural world and cultivates environmental stewardship.

(ii) Consumer Awareness: According to *Brown and Kasser*,⁴⁴ conscious consumption and other practices lessen materialism and encourage sustainable living.

(iii) Social equitable: Mindfulness promotes social justice and equitable activities by increasing empathy and decreasing prejudices.

III. APPLICATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

3.1. For learners/ students

Students who practice mindfulness are better able to focus, handle stress, and grow in empathy – all of which are essential for success in school and in social situations. Mindfulness can improve emotional regulation and provide a happy learning environment, as demonstrated by programs like MindUp and CARE.⁴⁵

3.2. For instructors/ teachers

Teachers who receive mindfulness training not only benefit personally but are also better prepared to foster inclusive and compassionate learning environments in the classroom. According to studies, mindfulness exercises help teachers become more resilient, which lowers burnout and increases their ability to deal with difficult circumstances.⁴⁶

3.3. For communities and parents

A comprehensive approach to education is promoted when mindfulness is incorporated into school-community relationships. The advantages of community-based mindfulness interventions are increased by creating networks of support.⁴⁷

3.4. The intersection of mindfulness, equity, and trauma-informed practices

Educational disparities are addressed by trauma-informed and culturally sensitive mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness contributes to the creation of equitable learning environments by encouraging healing and inclusivity. In underprivileged and diverse populations, where trauma and structural obstacles frequently obstruct learning, this strategy has a particularly significant impact.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Brown, K. W., & Kasser, T. (2005). *Are psychological and ecological well-being compatible? The role of values, mindfulness, and lifestyle*. *Social Indicators Research*, 74(2), 349–368. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-004-8207-8>

⁴⁵ Sisk, V. F., Burgoyne, A. P., Sun, J., Butler, J. L., & Macnamara, B. N. (2018). *To what extent and under which circumstances are growth mind-sets important to academic achievement? Two meta-analyses*. *Psychological Science*, 29(4), 549–571. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617739704>

⁴⁶ Draper-Clarke, L. J. (2020). *Compassion-based mindfulness training in teacher education: the impact on student teachers at a south african university*. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 34(1), 57–79. <https://doi.org/10.20853/34-1-2525>.

⁴⁷ Benvenuti S, Torres RN. *Mindfulness for students, teachers and parents of public schools (community-based application)*. In *EDULEARN17 Proceedings 2017* (pp. 4288-4294). IATED.

⁴⁸ Duane A, Castellnou M, Brotons L. *Towards a comprehensive look at global drivers of*

3.5. Challenges and criticisms/ obstacles and remarks

Notwithstanding its advantages, mindfulness in the classroom has drawbacks:

(i) Cultural appropriation: According to critics, mindfulness exercises may lose their spiritual and cultural foundations.

(ii) Obstacles to Implementation: Integration is hampered by a lack of trained personnel, a lack of resources, and opposition to change.

(iii) Overemphasis on Individualism: Some contend that mindfulness overlooks systemic problems in favor of an excessive emphasis on personal well-being.

3.6. Overcoming obstacles/ challenges

Schools and legislators must:

(i) Respect cultural contexts: Recognize the roots of mindfulness and respectfully incorporate practices in order to solve these issues.

(ii) Provide resources: To guarantee successful implementation, make investments in program development and teacher training.

(iii) Take a holistic approach: To solve more general social and environmental issues, integrate systemic initiatives with mindfulness.

3.7. The prospects of mindfulness in the classroom

In the future, mindfulness could revolutionize education in the following ways:

(i) Promoting global citizenship: Mindfulness cultivates empathy and accountability, two qualities that are crucial for tackling global issues.

(ii) Promoting Mental Health: Mindfulness provides a proactive strategy to increase resilience as mental health problems worsen.

(iii) Promoting Innovation: Students who practice mindfulness are better equipped to deal with an unpredictable future because it fosters creativity and open-mindedness.

IV. OBSTACLES/ CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although mindfulness has many advantages, there are obstacles to its adoption in the classroom, including a lack of funding and opposition to change. Mindfulness programs must be adapted to the particular requirements of every school setting and backed by strong research foundations in order to have the greatest possible impact.⁴⁹ In order to solve global issues like social injustice and climate change, future research should concentrate on combining

novel extreme wildfire events. *Climatic Change*. 2021 Apr;165(3):43.

⁴⁹ Roeser RW, Mashburn AJ, Skinner EA, Choles JR, Taylor C, Rickert NP, Pinela C, Robbeloth J, Saxton E, Weiss E, Cullen M. *Mindfulness training improves middle school teachers' occupational health, well-being, and interactions with students in their most stressful classrooms*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 2022 Feb;114(2):408.

mindfulness with sustainability science.³⁴ Sheinman and Russo-Netzer⁵⁰ gathered data from the internet and discovered Teachers, students, legislators, and educational leaders throughout the world are thrilled about the increasing awareness that we need to support the complete learner and make sure kids have the resources they need to develop and flourish. In this regard, schools offer the most efficient and successful means of reaching youth and educators, as well as developing their welfare and life skills.

These goals and aims are in line with the distinctive pedagogies, ideas, and practices that mindfulness in education offers. The evolution and spread of mindfulness in educational contexts, the role of mindfulness-based pedagogies in education for wellbeing, global educational model and initiative prototypes, the various results and insights gained from mindfulness-based methods for both teachers and students and potential points of convergence between mindfulness in education and positive education as a basis for integrative dialogue and collaboration were the main topics of this chapter. There is a wide range of approaches, forms, and purposes within the topic of mindfulness in education. The amount of empirical research on the efficacy of these programs has grown dramatically, albeit it hasn't always kept pace with the expansion of classrooms and school-based activities. Even if the field needs additional development, the total results – which have been gathered from numerous nations – are noteworthy and encouraging. Given everything that has been done, investigated, and learned from empirical and scientific research, mindfulness in the classroom can be a crucial component of a new educational paradigm.

New problems arise when new programs and pedagogies are introduced. Therefore, it would be ideal for future mindfulness deployment in educational settings, including the methodical creation and introduction of new models, to be supported concurrently by an empirical evaluation process. Education transformation is neither easy nor simple. Collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, patience, and resilience are necessary if we are to make significant progress. We must support the reforms in curriculum, teacher preparation, teaching, school atmosphere, and culture, and mobilize comprehensive and long-lasting changes. It's time to build on this momentum, start interdisciplinary discussions, and create a cohesive framework that can influence children's lives and academic performance everywhere.

Our ancestors, such as *Jīvaka* (Pali: *Jīvaka Komārabhacca*; Sanskrit: *Jīvaka Kaumārabhrtya*), taught us numerous lessons. He served as the Buddha's and the Indian King Bimbisāra's personal physician (Sanskrit: *vaidya*), as explained in detail by Salguero.⁵¹ In the fifth century BCE, he resided in Rājagṛha, which

⁵⁰ Sheinman, N. and P. Russo-Netzer (2021) *Mindfulness in Education: Insights Towards an Integrative Paradigm*. Pp.609-642. In M. L. Kern and M. L. Wehmeyer (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Positive Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64537-3_24

⁵¹ Salguero, C. Pierce (2009), "The Buddhist Medicine King in Literary Context: Reconsidering an Early Medieval Example of Indian Influence on Chinese Medicine and Surgery", *History of Religions*, 48 (3): 183 – 210, doi:10.1086/598230, JSTOR 10.1086/598230,

is now Rajgir. Often referred to as the “Medicine King” and (pinyin: yi wang) and “Thrice Crowned physician”, he is a renowned figure in Asian legends as a model healer, and traditional healers in a number of Asian nations honor him as such. Early Buddhist scriptures from several textual traditions, including the Pāli and Mūlasarvāstivāda traditions, as well as later Buddhist discourses and devotional *Avadāna* texts, contain accounts of Jīvaka. The talented surgeon (*Talim M*)⁵² is credited with several procedures. These consist of:

(1). King Bimbisara underwent surgery for a fistula-in-ano. He became famous as a result of this treatment.⁵³ Fistula-in-ano surgery is believed to have been performed in the past, however it resulted in a significant level of incontinence. Because his underwear was stained with blood, King Bimbisara, who had multiple young wives, was made fun of. An intrusive operation would never be recommended by a royal physician. With a tool known as “*nakha sastra*,” which is sometimes mistranslated as a fingernail but is one finger wide and two to nine fingers long with a cutting edge, Jivaka approached the monarch. Based on the appearance, Jivaka most likely cut the fistula, which later healed. The monarch named Jivaka the royal physician because he was happy with his “grandson.” As a result, Jivaka eventually became the Buddha’s physician.

(2). His other well-known procedure, which is referenced in practically all the books, was craniotomy (*Susabadho*) to remove what were likely parasites (“*panaka*”) or clots. He did this for a businessman who had severe, ongoing headaches.⁵⁴

(1). A volvulus surgery; Jivaka performed surgery on a young patient whose intestines had become “entangled.” Jivaka derogated the intestines, performed a laparotomy, and sutured them back into place. A strangulated hernia has a similar description.

(2). The removal of an alien entity (Foreign body) from the Buddha’s foot. Buddha’s foot was pierced by a rock splinter that his adversary *Devadutta* had thrown. It was freed with a little knife called “*Khaja*.”

(3). Hydrocele surgery (*andavuddhi*); during the procedure, the testicles’ covering was opened, and a hard “*bija*” was removed.

Jivaka (*Malaxis acuminata*), named for the ancient surgeon Jivak, has long been cited in ayurvedic texts as the ultimate remedy for a wide range of medical conditions. This amazing medical herb is categorized as a potent aphrodisiac, which means it helps men’s reproductive health, libido, and numerous infertility

S2CID 162211011

⁵² Talim M. *Science of Medicine and Surgery in Buddhist India* ISBN 9788190638845.; 3008 Princeton, New Jersey Publisher Buddhist World Press: 82 – 92.

⁵³ Pierce SC. *The Buddhist medicine king in literary context: Reconsidering an early medieval example of Indian influence on Chinese medicine and surgery* History Religions. 2009; 48: 183 – 210.

⁵⁴ Banerjee AD, Ezer H, Nanda A. *Susruta and ancient Indian neurosurgery* World Neurosurg. 2011; 75: 320 – 3.

problems. Additionally, it promotes healthy digestion, treats diarrhea, reduces inflammation, delays the onset of aging, eases respiratory issues, and boosts immunity and general stamina.



Relief depicting Jivaka treating the Buddha's foot (below), after the unsuccessful murder attempt by the monk Devadatta (depicted holding a boulder above, right).



Jivaka - *Malaxis aconitifolia* - It is a rare, Rosy and dravya and good to the colonisation. Manages Multiple Sexual Disorders

IV. CONCLUSION

In education or in the classroom, mindfulness is a potent instrument for promoting sustainability and compassion. Through the development of emotional intelligence, equity, and ethical leadership, mindfulness equips educators and students to make significant contributions to a sustainable future. Schools that practice mindfulness set the stage for a resilient and caring society that can meet today's challenges. In education, mindfulness is a potent instrument for building a sustainable and caring future. Mindfulness tackles important global issues by improving emotional health, cultivating empathy, and encouraging sustainable behaviors. Although there are still obstacles to overcome, its revolutionary potential can be unlocked with a dedication to inclusive, respectful, and systematic integration. Mindfulness provides a technique to develop people who are not just academically strong but also socially and environmentally conscious as education changes to meet the demands of the twenty-first century. On the UNO and worldwide stage, meditation, yoga, and peace are widely acknowledged as having originated in India.

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EMPOWERING STUDENTS WITH COMPASSIONATE ACTION FOR GLOBAL PEACE: INTEGRATING BUDDHIST MEDITATION RETREATS AND MINDFUL LIVING EDUCATION TO ENHANCE MINDFULNESS EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPASSION THROUGH BUDDHIST EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Burmansah*

Abstract:

This study examines the integration of Buddhist meditation retreats and mindful living education as tools to enhance students' mindfulness effectiveness and foster compassionate action for global peace. Focusing on the transformative potential of Buddhist educational development in Indonesia, it aims to instill values of mindfulness and compassion as crucial responses to global challenges. By merging traditional Buddhist practices with contemporary educational strategies, the research highlights the benefits of meditation retreats in providing a structured environment for self-reflection, emotional regulation, and ethical growth. These retreats are further complemented by mindful living education, which integrates mindfulness into daily routines, encouraging sustainable habits and interpersonal compassion. The study employs a mixed-method approach, beginning with qualitative case studies and literature reviews to construct a conceptual framework, followed by quantitative analysis through surveys. Data were collected through observations, interviews, documentation, and questionnaires targeting Buddhist junior and senior high school students in Palembang City, Indonesia. The research involved a population of 170

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participants, with a sample of 120 students determined using the *Slovin* formula. Findings demonstrate that participation in these programs significantly enhances students' mindfulness effectiveness, empathy, and ability to engage in compassionate action, thereby contributing to a culture of peace locally and globally. Integrating Buddhist principles into education promotes spiritual development and provides practical tools to address modern social issues through compassion and mindfulness. The study underscores the importance of a holistic educational framework that combines spiritual practices with actionable peace-building strategies. Its findings have significant implications for academic policies, religious studies, and global peace initiatives, advocating for the broader application of such integrative approaches in various cultural and educational settings.

Keywords: *Buddhist education; meditation retreats; mindful living; compassionate action; global peace; mindfulness in education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, a nation renowned for its rich cultural diversity and deep-rooted spiritual traditions, stands at the crossroads of transformation in education. As the largest archipelago in the world, Indonesia faces challenges that demand innovative and holistic solutions.¹ The complexities of its socio-economic landscape and increasing globalization present unique opportunities to reimagine education as a tool for academic and professional success and for fostering peace, compassion, and mindfulness among its youth.² Education, a cornerstone of national development, holds immense potential to cultivate values that transcend cultural and religious boundaries. In Indonesia, where Buddhism coexists harmoniously with other major religions, Buddhist educational principles offer a robust framework for addressing students' spiritual and emotional needs while preparing them to contribute meaningfully to global peace.³

As a diverse and pluralistic nation, Indonesia thrives on mutual respect, harmony, and ethical living principles. As one of the country's recognized religions, Buddhism significantly contributes to this social fabric by emphasizing compassion, mindfulness, and moral responsibility. The teachings of the Buddha provide a framework for fostering peace, justice, and coexistence, aligning with Indonesia's values of tolerance and unity. One of the core Buddhist teachings that supports social harmony is universal goodwill. The *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (SN 1.8) states, "Wishing: In gladness and safety, may all beings be at ease."⁴ This doctrine encourages individuals to cultivate

¹ Brooks et al., 2020, p. 152.

² Timur Tresnanti et al. (2024), p. 89.

³ Ager et al. (2015), p. 211.

⁴ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1995). *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (SN 1.8). *Access to Insight*, accessed on [February 4, 2025], Available at www.accesstosight.org.

loving-kindness (*mettā*), fostering empathy and reducing societal divisions. Through compassion, individuals and communities can transcend personal differences and work towards collective well-being. Ethical responsibilities are fundamental in maintaining social cohesion. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* (DN 31) teaches, “A householder ministers to his friends by gifts, kindly words, and looking after their welfare.”⁵ These values of generosity, kind speech, and social responsibility reinforce strong interpersonal relationships, reducing social conflicts and promoting trust. Similarly, ethical governance plays a vital role in ensuring justice and peace. The *Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta* (DN 26) emphasizes righteous leadership, “A king who rules in righteousness ensures peace and justice.”⁶ When governance is rooted in ethical principles, it fosters stability, equality, and public welfare, aligning with Indonesia’s commitment to good governance and national unity.

Mindfulness as a guiding principle in ethical conduct is highlighted in the *Samaññaphala Sutta* (DN 2), “A monk, with his mind purified, directs it to ethical conduct.”⁷ The cultivation of mindfulness (*sati*) enhances self-awareness and emotional regulation, reducing impulsivity and promoting ethical decision-making. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, mindfulness can serve as a tool for interfaith dialogue and understanding, allowing individuals to engage with others respectfully and empathetically. The establishment of moral codes to maintain societal order is further reinforced in the *Aggañña Sutta* (DN 27), which states, “As people gathered, they established moral codes to create peace.”⁸ This principle aligns with the necessity of legal and ethical systems in a modern nation-state, ensuring social justice and equitable treatment of all citizens. Furthermore, non-violence (*ahimsā*) is a cornerstone of Buddhist teachings, encapsulated in the *Dhammapada* (Dhp 183), “Not doing any evil, cultivating the good – this is the teaching of the Buddhas.”⁹ These Buddhist teachings promote ethical behavior, inclusivity, and inner peace, essential for societal unity. As one of Indonesia’s recognized religions, Buddhism shapes a harmonious and tolerant society. Applying these principles supports lasting peace, social justice, and harmony, preserving religious and cultural heritage while fostering global peace and coexistence. Individuals contribute to a more peaceful and just society by upholding non-violence and moral integrity.

In conclusion, Buddhist teachings are crucial in shaping a harmonious and inclusive Indonesia. The principles of compassion, ethical conduct, mindfulness, and non-violence foster unity in diversity, social justice, and lasting peace. By integrating these values into daily life and governance, Indonesia can preserve its cultural heritage while promoting coexistence at both national and global levels. Strengthening the application of these

⁵ *Sigālovāda Sutta*, DN 31; Walshe (1995), p. 463.

⁶ *Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta*, DN 26; Walshe (1995), p. 395.

⁷ *Samaññaphala Sutta*, DN 2, Walshe (1995), p. 98.

⁸ *Aggañña Sutta*, DN 27; Walshe (1995), p. 417.

⁹ *Dhp* 183; Buddhārakkhita (1985), p. 48.

teachings within education, policymaking, and community initiatives can further enhance societal resilience and collective well-being.

The Buddhist community in Indonesia, around 2 million people, constitutes about 0.71% of the nation’s 282 million population. Despite being a minority, Buddhists have significantly contributed to Indonesia’s cultural, social, and educational development.¹⁰ Based on data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, mapping the population data of the Buddhist community in 2024 is as follows.

Table 1. Buddhist Population Data in Indonesia

Indonesia	Mid-Year Population (Thousand People)		
	2022	2023	2024
Indonesia	277,75	280,73	282,48
Indonesian Buddhist Population	2,02	2,01	2,00
Percentage	0,73%	0,72%	0,71%

Source: Data Centre of Indonesian Population 2024. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

As a nation with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, Indonesia embraces *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). Buddhism has provided spiritual guidance and moral education, supporting Indonesia’s efforts to promote tolerance and coexistence.¹¹ By fostering mindfulness and compassion, Buddhism strengthens character and nurtures societal harmony. A key contribution of Buddhism to Indonesian education is its focus on spiritual development. Buddhist institutions, such as monasteries and meditation centers, offer opportunities for self-reflection and cultivating virtues like empathy, patience, and altruism.¹² Buddhism emphasizes mindfulness (*sati*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) as essential personal and societal well-being qualities. In the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta* (MN 27), the Buddha teaches, “Therefore, monks, first establish yourselves in virtue, then teach the Dhamma. Establish yourselves first in moral discipline, then teach the Dhamma.”¹³ This principle aligns with the role of Buddhist education in Indonesia, where monasteries and meditation centers foster individuals to develop inner stability by cultivating mindfulness through meditation and moral discipline before sharing wisdom with others. The emphasis on patience (*khanti*) and loving-kindness (*mettā*) strengthens personal character and nurtures social

¹⁰ Widaningsih (2017) p. 112.
¹¹ Leinbach (1994), p. 78.
¹² Lesmana et al. (2021), p. 215.
¹³ *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*, MN. 27; PTS: Mi 175; Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu & Bodhi, Bhikkhu (1995), p. 265 - 270.

harmony. Buddhist institutions in Indonesia integrate these teachings through meditation retreats, monastic training, and social service programs, ensuring that education is deeply rooted in ethical and spiritual values. This approach reflects the Buddha's guidance that one must first embody the virtues they wish to impart, fostering a collective commitment to harmony and compassion. These qualities are crucial in navigating today's interconnected world. Meditation retreats and mindfulness training, often included in education, help students and communities build emotional resilience and deepen their sense of shared humanity.¹⁴

Buddhism's ethical framework promotes global ethics through teachings such as the five precepts (*pañca sīla*) and the principle of interdependence (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), guiding individuals toward responsible actions for society and the environment. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* states, "A noble disciple, wise and virtuous, does not harm living beings, speaks truthfully, and acts with kindness toward all."¹⁵ By integrating these values into education, Buddhist institutions in Indonesia prepare future generations to tackle global issues like climate change, inequality, and conflict resolution.¹⁶ Buddhist teachings align with global goals of peace and sustainability, making Buddhism a key partner in fostering harmony. Buddhist education promotes peace through interreligious dialogue and cooperation. In Indonesia, Buddhist leaders actively engage in initiatives to strengthen understanding among faiths, enhancing social cohesion and positioning the nation as a model for peaceful coexistence.¹⁷

In education development, mindfulness enriches teaching and integrates its essence into daily life. Developing mindfulness offers significant benefits for students, serving as a foundation for learning. Brown and Ryan (2003) state, "Mindfulness enhances attention and awareness, facilitating learning and personal growth."¹⁸ This practice fosters an atmosphere of harmony and growth within academic communities. Mindfulness (*sati*) is a central concept in Buddhism, often defined as clear awareness and continuous presence of mind. It plays a fundamental role in meditation and ethical living. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) describes mindfulness as follows, "A monk remains focused on the body in and of itself – ardent, alert, and mindful – putting away worldly greed and distress."¹⁹ This teaching emphasizes mindfulness as present-moment awareness cultivated through meditation and reflection. Similarly, the *Mahāsatiipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22) expands on mindfulness practice, stating, "This is the only way for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and distress, for the attainment of the true path, and for the realization of Nibbāna: that is, the four foundations of

¹⁴ Steckler & Waddock (2017), p. 145.

¹⁵ *Sigālovāda Sutta*, DN 31 - PTS: D iii 188, Walshe, Maurice (1987), p. 461 - 465.

¹⁶ IBC-RDB (2005), p. 92.

¹⁷ Widaningsih (2017) p. 156.

¹⁸ Brown and Ryan (2003), pp. 822 - 848.

¹⁹ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, MN 10 - PTS: M i 55; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), pp. 145 - 150.

mindfulness.”²⁰ It underscores mindfulness as essential for liberation, focusing on body, feelings, mind, and mental objects to develop wisdom.

Mindfulness in education enhances focus and clarity for educators and students, fostering concentration and creativity. This practice strengthens relationships during learning, providing students with a non-judgmental space to explore. Educators, in turn, approach student diversity with understanding and compassion. Rapiadi et al. (2023) found that “Mindfulness affects interest in learning by 89.6%,” highlighting its significant impact on student engagement.²¹ In a rapidly evolving world characterized by social complexities, emotional turbulence, and a relentless pace of life, fostering compassion among students has become a critical aspect of education. Compassion, foundational to moral behavior, is a cultivated skill that encourages individuals to understand and alleviate others’ suffering. The *Karuṇā Sutta* emphasizes, “One who is compassionate and free from hatred brings peace to themselves and others.”²² Integrating mindfulness into education nurtures compassion and self-awareness in students. Burmansah et al. (2020) found that “Mindfulness practices bring the ability to develop compassion and attention without judgment in Buddhist education institutions.”²³ Rooted in Buddhist philosophy, mindfulness has become a universal practice in education, psychology, healthcare, and leadership. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* has defined mindfulness as a condition to remain focused and be aware of the body and mind. As present-moment awareness, mindfulness allows individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions without judgment. Buddhist education is a moral endeavor to understand interconnectedness, with compassion arising from awareness of others’ suffering and motivation to alleviate it. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* highlights this ethical responsibility: “Just as a mother protects her only child, so too should one cultivate boundless compassion for all beings.”²⁴ This dual focus on mindfulness and compassion fosters self-aware, socially responsible students, creating harmony within communities and educational institutions.

In 2023, Indonesia’s Religious Harmony Index reached 76.02%, the highest in five years. South Sumatra, with a significant Buddhist heritage dating back to the Sriwijaya kingdom, has maintained a high harmony index. Between 2015 and 2024, the region reported no religious conflicts, though 13 terrorism incidents involving nine perpetrators occurred; notably, these were unrelated to religious disputes. It underscores South Sumatra’s peaceful coexistence among diverse religious and cultural communities. Urban and rural areas exhibit minimal hate speech, with residents living harmoniously despite differences in religion, belief, culture, and customs.

²⁰ *Mahāsātipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, DN 22- PTS: D ii 290, Walshe (1987), pp. 335 - 340.

²¹ Rapiadi et al. (2023), 17 (6), p. 4261.

²² *Sutta Nipāta* 1.8 (*Karuṇā Sutta*) – PTS: SN 145, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997, *Karuṇā Sutta: The Sutta on Compassion*. Access to Insight, available at www.accesstoinsight.org.

²³ Burmansah, I., et al. (2020), p. 210 - 228.

²⁴ *Sigālovāda Sutta*, DN 31 – PTS: D iii 188, Walshe (1987), p. 461 - 465.

Table 2. Buddhist Population Data in South Sumatra Province

South Sumatra Province	Mid Year Population (People)	
	2023	2024
South Sumatra Province	8,743,522	8,837,301
Buddhist Population	67,517	67,583
Percentage	0.77%	0.76%
Palembang City Population	1,706,371	1,718,440
Buddhist Population in Palembang City	52,269	52,269
Percentage	3.06%	3.04%

Source: Data Centre of Indonesian Population 2024. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

In South Sumatra, Buddhists number 67,583, comprising 0.76% of the province’s 8,743,522 residents. Palembang city accounts for 77.34% of this Buddhist population, totaling 52,269 individuals. The Ministry of Religious Affairs also records data on junior and senior high school students in Palembang.

Table 3. Buddhist Students Population Data in Palembang City - 2024

Students’ Population	Male	Female	Total
Junior High School	1230	1079	2309
Percentage	53.27%	46.73%	
Senior High School	1195	1133	2328
Percentage	51.33%	48.67%	

Source: Data Centre of Indonesian Population 2024. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

In 2024, Palembang’s Buddhist population reached 52,269, making up 3.04% of the city’s total. Among them, 4,637 were junior and senior high school students, accounting for 8.87% of Buddhists. It highlights Indonesia’s commitment to interfaith harmony and holistic education. Integrating Buddhist practices into schools fosters mindfulness, compassion, and ethical responsibility, which are essential for addressing global issues like environmental degradation and social inequality. Rakhmani and Siregar (2016) emphasize that mindfulness nurtures self-awareness and empathy in students.²⁵ Burmansah et al. (2020) found that mindfulness fosters compassion

²⁵ Rakhmani and Siregar (2016), p. 45.

and inclusivity in diverse educational settings, shaping future compassionate global citizens.²⁶ Palembang's Buddhist community represents 3.04% of the population, emphasizing interfaith harmony and education. Mindfulness fosters compassion, ethical responsibility, and holistic learning, addressing global challenges through transformative Buddhist education.

Indonesia faces economic disparities, cultural tensions, and environmental threats to its rich biodiversity. Addressing these issues requires leaders who balance rational decision-making with emotional intelligence and moral courage. The World Bank (2018) emphasizes the need for leadership that combines analytical skills with empathy to tackle complex problems. Buddhist teachings advocate cultivating compassion as an active commitment to alleviate others' suffering.²⁷ In education, fostering compassion equips students to engage constructively with societal challenges, transforming their knowledge into meaningful community contributions. Cooper and James (2005) highlight that integrating empathy in teaching enhances students' social responsibility and ethical development.²⁸ Traditional education systems in Indonesia and worldwide have often prioritized cognitive and technical skills over emotional and moral development, leading to issues like student burnout and disengagement. To address these shortcomings, educators are increasingly adopting holistic approaches that integrate cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions of learning.²⁹ Mindfulness and compassion, key elements of holistic education, align closely with Buddhist principles. Mindfulness, the practice of cultivating present-moment awareness, helps students develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience. Conversely, compassion encourages students to extend kindness and understanding to themselves and others, fostering a sense of interconnectedness and social responsibility. Integrating these practices into education can better prepare students to navigate complex interpersonal and societal challenges.³⁰

Integrating mindfulness and compassion into Indonesian education aligns with cultural values like *gotong royong* (cooperation) and social harmony. These principles reflect Buddhist teachings on interdependence and ethical conduct.³¹ Embedding mindfulness in schools fosters holistic development, empowering students to build a just, peaceful society. Indonesia's Buddhist influence dates back centuries, with Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple, symbolizing this heritage. Though Buddhism is a minority religion today, its

²⁶ Burmansah et al. (2020), p. 51 - 65.

²⁷ The World Bank, *Overview: The World Bank in Indonesia, Having maintained political stability, Indonesia is one of Asia Pacific's most vibrant democracies and is emerging as a confident middle-income country*, accessed on [January 10, 2025], available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/overview>

²⁸ Cooper and James (2005), p. 61 - 72.

²⁹ Mahirda & Wahyuni (2017), p. 123 - 135.

³⁰ Bell (2013), p. 290 - 303.

³¹ Burmansah et al. (2023), p. 75 - 106.

teachings continue to shape Indonesia's cultural and spiritual landscape.³² Integrating Buddhist principles into Indonesian education supports character development while preserving the nation's rich traditions. Buddhist institutions have long emphasized mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom, which were once taught mainly in monastic settings but are now adapted for secular education. By incorporating these practices into schools, Indonesia can address modern challenges effectively. Meditation retreats and mindful living provide students with tools to develop awareness and empathy.³³ These approaches are not exclusive to religion but can be applied in diverse educational settings, making them accessible to all students. This model blends spiritual values with modern education, offering a holistic approach to learning.

Meditation retreats allow students to develop mindfulness and self-reflection in a peaceful and supportive setting. Stepping away from daily distractions helps them focus on inner awareness.³⁴ By knowing the explanation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* refers to developing mindfulness with ourselves in daily life; through mindfulness practice, students learn to manage emotions and make ethical decisions. The *Dhammapada* reinforces "the wise, meditative, and steadfast, who strive with strong effort, reach Nibbāna, the supreme peace."³⁵ Through meditation retreats, students learn to observe their minds without judgment, cultivating clarity and compassion.³⁶ This practice aligns with Buddhist teachings on self-discipline (*sīla*), mental cultivation (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), forming the foundation of ethical and mindful living.³⁷ Meditation retreats teach those three fundamental aspects essential for moral and mindful living. In Indonesia, Buddhist education includes meditation retreats with guided sessions, silent reflection, and Buddhist teachings. Schools incorporating these retreats equip students with resilience, clarity, and compassion skills, preparing them for life's challenges.³⁸

Meditation retreats offer students more than personal well-being; they foster empathy and a sense of interconnectedness, inspiring, compassionate actions toward social and environmental issues. Shapiro et al. (2011) found that mindfulness enhances emotional regulation and empathy, increasing prosocial behavior. Integrating mindfulness into daily life, known as mindful living, involves intentional awareness in communication, decision-making, and relationships.³⁹ In Indonesia, this aligns with cultural practices emphasizing harmony and respect for nature. For instance, mindful eating encourages individuals to be aware of physical and emotional sensations

³² Kowal (2019), p. 5 - 19.

³³ Burmansah et al. (2022), p. 6587 - 6602.

³⁴ Thai Plum Village (2011), p.4.

³⁵ *Dhammapada*, verse 23 - PTS: *Dhp* 23., Buddhacakkhita, Acharya (1985), p. 27.

³⁶ *Mahāsātipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, DN, Walshe (1987), p. 335 - 340.

³⁷ Nyanaponika Thera (1996), p. 197.

³⁸ Laidlaw & Mair (2019), p. 328 - 358.

³⁹ Shapiro et al. (2011), p. 1. 493 - 528.

during meals, promoting gratitude and sustainable behaviors. Framson et al. (2009) developed the Mindful Eating Questionnaire to assess this awareness, highlighting its role in fostering a deeper appreciation of the interconnectedness of all life.⁴⁰ Service-learning projects help integrate mindfulness into education by allowing students to apply mindfulness in real-life situations, such as volunteering in communities or participating in environmental initiatives. These experiences deepen students' mindfulness practice while benefiting others. Mindfulness and compassion work together – mindfulness fosters self-awareness and emotional balance, while compassionate actions strengthen mindfulness through meaningful actions.⁴¹ In Indonesia, this approach empowers students to address social challenges. Mindfulness-based conflict resolution programs can help them handle interpersonal issues with empathy, while compassion-focused workshops encourage support for marginalized communities.⁴² Combining mindfulness and compassion in education, Indonesian schools can nurture future leaders with emotional intelligence and ethical awareness. These qualities are vital for fostering global peace and addressing today's challenges. Integrating mindfulness and compassionate action in schools equips students with the skills to build a more just and harmonious society.

Developing mindfulness requires systematic training, and meditation is a key practice for cultivating awareness. Buddhist meditation retreats offer structured training in mindfulness, providing students with practical tools for daily life.⁴³ In education, these retreats integrate mindfulness into learning, shaping students' emotions and ethics. Traditional Buddhist meditation follows structured methods, but not all students relate to these approaches. Many schools adopt meditation retreats to be more accessible by incorporating mindful living education in collaboration with educational institutions.⁴⁴ The art of mindfulness in education makes meditation more student-friendly, integrating mindfulness seamlessly into school life. In today's interconnected world, fostering compassionate and mindful individuals is crucial. Yet, conventional education often neglects emotional and ethical learning.⁴⁵ The *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta* highlights the four foundations of mindfulness – body, feelings, mind, and mental objects – as essential for wisdom and emotional regulation.⁴⁶ This practice enhances students' attention and emotional balance. The *Ānāpānasati Sutta* emphasizes mindfulness of breathing as a direct path to mental clarity, "When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated,

⁴⁰ Framson et al. (2009), p. 1439 – 1444.

⁴¹ Dychtwald (1981), p. 39 – 56.

⁴² Sudarman et al. (2016), p. 14 – 20.

⁴³ Salcido-Cibrián et al. (2019), p. 212 - 225.

⁴⁴ Baindur (2020), p. 156 - 172.

⁴⁵ Chanthong (2016), p. 88 - 105.

⁴⁶ *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta*, DN, Walshe (1987), p. 335 - 340.

it is of great fruit and great benefit.”⁴⁷ Short meditation sessions in schools can improve students’ focus and emotional intelligence. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is also central to education. The *Karuṇā Sutta* states, “A person who is compassionate does not harm others but seeks to bring welfare and happiness to all beings.”⁴⁸ Schools can nurture mindfulness through meditation, ethical reflection, and kindness. Buddhist teachings promote awareness, compassion, and emotional resilience, helping students grow into caring individuals. By integrating mindfulness into education, students develop focus, empathy, and ethical values, preparing them to contribute positively to society and build a more compassionate world.

Modern societies face complex challenges such as social inequality, environmental crises, and rising mental health issues. Addressing these problems requires emotionally intelligent and ethically responsible future leaders. However, traditional education prioritizes academic and technical skills while neglecting emotional and moral development. It has resulted in students excelling academically but struggling with empathy, resilience, and relationships. To bridge this gap, education must integrate compassion as a fundamental value.⁴⁹ Compassion is a skill that develops with practice. Buddhist meditation retreats and mindfulness education foster self-awareness, empathy, and interconnectedness, aligning with the Buddha’s teachings on ethical living and social harmony. In the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (SN 1.8), the Buddha emphasizes boundless loving-kindness, “Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings.”⁵⁰ This principle highlights the importance of mindful compassion in personal and societal relationships. Through meditation and ethical training, students cultivate responsibility toward others. By integrating mindfulness into education, students address societal issues with care and cooperation. The *Satipatthana Sutta* (MN 10) underscores mindfulness (*sati*) as a path to insight and ethical clarity, “Here, a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.”⁵¹ Retreats provide a focused environment for reflection, reinforcing emotional resilience and compassion. The *Cula-Malunkyovada Sutta* (MN 63) stresses the need to step away from distractions and focus on what leads to wisdom, “It is not proper for one who is seeking the goal to engage in what does not lead to awakening.”⁵² Retreats support students in their moral and emotional growth by nurturing

⁴⁷ *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, MN 118.16; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 941 - 945.

⁴⁸ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1997). *Karuṇā Sutta: The Sutta on Compassion*. Access to Insight, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at www.accesstoinight.org.

⁴⁹ Ayres (2000), p. 45 - 62.

⁵⁰ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1995). *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (Sn 1.8). Access to Insight, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at www.accesstoinight.org.

⁵¹ *Satipatthana Sutta*, MN 10; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145 - 150.

⁵² *Cula-Malunkyovada Sutta*, MN 63; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 523.

wisdom and ethical awareness. This foundation equips them to contribute positively to society through mindfulness and empathy. The *Sigalovada Sutta* (DN 31) illustrates the benefits of ethical living, “By practicing compassion, generosity, and virtue, one earns the respect of others and fosters harmony.”⁵³ By embodying these teachings, students gain the moral resilience to make meaningful contributions to the world.

Buddhist meditation retreats emphasize discipline, mindfulness, and ethical behavior, fostering compassion. Participants observe noble silence, practice mindful breathing, and engage in contemplative exercises that cultivate empathy and understanding.⁵⁴ These practices enhance well-being and promote a sense of shared humanity. Integrating elements of meditation retreats can help students develop mindfulness and compassion in education. Schools and universities can offer mindfulness workshops, day-long retreats, or extended programs incorporating meditation.⁵⁵ Such initiatives foster self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassionate engagement. Mindful living education extends mindfulness beyond meditation into daily life. Rooted in Buddhist philosophy, it integrates mindfulness into communication, decision-making, and relationships. This holistic approach encourages students to embody compassion in actions, thoughts, and intentions.⁵⁶ Mindful living education emphasizes ethical conduct, rooted in Buddhist precepts of non-harming, truthfulness, and generosity. Students develop a strong moral foundation that shapes their behavior and decision-making by integrating these principles into education. The *Dhammapada* highlights the transformative power of ethical conduct, “By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself; no one can purify another.”⁵⁷ Mindful living also emphasizes interdependence, encouraging students to recognize their impact on others and the environment. This awareness fosters responsibility and motivates them to contribute positively to society.⁵⁸

Practical applications in schools and universities include mindful communication exercises, community service projects, and discussions on ethical dilemmas. The *Satipatthana Sutta* (MN 10) describes mindfulness (*sati*) as a practice for insight and moral clarity, “A bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.”⁵⁹ Through mindful living, students develop emotional resilience and wisdom to navigate life’s challenges. The *Cula-Malunkya Sutta* (MN 63) stresses the importance of focusing on

⁵³ *Sigalovada Sutta*, DN 31; Walshe (1987), p. 461.

⁵⁴ Goodman (2013), p. 553 – 571; Petchsawang & McLean (2017), p. 216 - 244.

⁵⁵ Eby et al. (2019), p. 156 - 178.

⁵⁶ Whitesman & Mash (2016), p. 1 - 9.

⁵⁷ *Dhammapada* 165; Buddhārakkhita, Acharya (1985), p. 165.

⁵⁸ Rupprecht et al. (2019), p. 1 - 15.

⁵⁹ *Satipatthana Sutta*, MN 10; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145 - 150.

what leads to wisdom, “It is not proper for one who is seeking the goal to engage in what does not lead to awakening.”⁶⁰ From a Buddhist educational perspective, integrating mindfulness and compassion into learning represents a paradigm shift toward holistic education. The Buddha’s teachings emphasize wisdom (*prajna*), ethical conduct (*sila*), and mental discipline (*samadhi*) as essential pillars of personal and social development. The *Brahmajala Sutta* (DN 1) supports this balanced approach, “The Tathagata is accomplished in wisdom and conduct, the Well-Gone One, the Knower of the Worlds, the Incomparable Leader of persons to be tamed.”⁶¹ This triadic framework fosters cognitive, emotional, and ethical growth, creating a foundation for mindful and compassionate social engagement.⁶²

In the modern context, Buddhist education development seeks to adapt its core principles to contemporary challenges while maintaining their integrity. This involves designing programs integrating traditional Buddhist practices with innovative teaching methods, ensuring accessibility and relevance.⁶³ Meditation retreats are effective models for embedding mindfulness and compassion into education, enhancing emotional well-being and social connectedness. Providing students with a supportive learning environment that fosters self-awareness, empathy, and ethical reasoning is crucial. This includes incorporating mindfulness into curricula, training educators in mindfulness-based methods, and offering opportunities for compassionate action. Collaboration between educational institutions and Buddhist organizations can enrich resources for implementing mindfulness programs.⁶⁴

Research supports the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in cultivating compassion and emotional well-being. Studies have shown that mindfulness meditation enhances brain activity in regions associated with empathy and emotional regulation, such as the insula and anterior cingulate cortex. Moreover, interventions incorporating loving-kindness and compassion meditation have been found to increase prosocial behavior and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. These findings highlight the potential of mindfulness practices to transform students’ attitudes and behaviors, equipping them with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of modern society.⁶⁵ Cultivating students’ compassionate action in society requires a transformative approach to education that emphasizes mindfulness and compassion as core values. The Buddhist practices of meditation retreats and mindful living education offer a robust framework for developing these qualities, providing students with the tools to lead meaningful and ethical lives.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ *Cula-Malunkiyovada Sutta*, MN 63; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 523.

⁶¹ *Brahmajala Sutta*, DN 1, Walshe (1987), p. 67.

⁶² Nhat Hanh (2012), p. 114.

⁶³ Nhat Hanh (2003), p. 215.

⁶⁴ Whitesman & Mash (2016), p. 143.

⁶⁵ Kim et al. (2021), p. 409 - 437.

⁶⁶ Jain et al. (2007), p. 11 - 12.

The Buddhist community in Palembang plays an essential role in advancing educational initiatives that foster mindfulness and compassion. According to 2024 data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Palembang has a Buddhist population of 52,269, with 4,637 junior and senior high school students, constituting 8.87% of the city's Buddhist demographic. These statistics highlight the growing need for educational frameworks that preserve Buddhist values and equip students with the necessary skills to contribute positively to society. This research argues that Buddhist education significantly enhances students' mindfulness and compassion through meditation retreats and mindful living programs. By systematically integrating these practices into formal education, students develop emotional resilience, empathy, and ethical decision-making skills – essential in modern society. The research seeks to fill gaps in Indonesia's education system by demonstrating how Buddhist teachings complement mainstream educational approaches, fostering a balance between academic excellence and moral development. Furthermore, this study asserts that Buddhist education can potentially cultivate future leaders who prioritize compassion and mindfulness in their personal and professional lives. A mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, will be employed to assess the effectiveness of these educational interventions. By reinforcing these principles, Buddhist education can build a more inclusive, harmonious, and peaceful society, ultimately inspiring students to take compassionate actions that promote global peace.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research designs

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative insights from a case study and literature review with quantitative data collected through a survey method.⁶⁷ This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how Buddhist meditation retreats and mindful living education empower students to engage in compassionate action for global peace. By combining theoretical perspectives with empirical findings, the study ensures a holistic analysis⁶⁸. The respondents in this study consisted of students aged 11-17 who participated in a mindfulness retreat for teenagers in Palembang. The research population totaled 170 students, from which a sample of 120 participants was determined using the Slovin formula. All respondents shared similar characteristics, including gender-neutral selection, equal retreat durations, and comparable Buddhist religious backgrounds. These students were active members of Buddhist monasteries in Palembang, possessing foundational knowledge of Buddhist teachings. For qualitative analysis, a pattern-matching approach was employed for a single-case study, following Robert K. Yin's methodology.⁶⁹ Quantitative data analysis applied path analysis techniques with multiple regression analysis for hypothesis testing.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Kroll & Neri (2009), p. 1 - 6.

⁶⁸ Doyle et al. (2009), p. 175 - 185.

⁶⁹ Yin (2009), p. 54 - 60.

⁷⁰ Dua et al. (2021), pp 1 - 17.

2.2. Data collection & Data analysis

A structured questionnaire was designed based on insights from the literature review. It includes closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather diverse perspectives.⁷¹ The study uses purposive sampling, selecting participants with experience in Buddhist meditation retreats or mindful living education. The target sample size is 120 to ensure statistical reliability. The survey is distributed online for broader accessibility, with clear instructions and confidentiality assurances. A pilot test with 30 participants helps refine the questionnaire. Qualitative analysis identifies themes from the literature review, focusing on Buddhist education principles promoting mindfulness and compassion. It also examines challenges and strategies for integrating meditation into education and its global impact on peacebuilding. Quantitative data is analyzed using statistical software to identify trends and relationships in Buddhist meditation and mindful living education. The findings contribute to understanding its broader educational and social benefits.

2.3. Justification for mixed-methods approach

Combining qualitative and quantitative methods allows for comprehensively exploring the research topic. Qualitative Analysis provides a deep understanding of the theoretical framework and practical implementations of Buddhist educational practices. Quantitative Analysis offers measurable evidence of the impact on mindfulness and compassion, ensuring empirical rigor. This methodology ensures that the study captures both the richness of Buddhist philosophical insights and the tangible outcomes of their application in educational settings.⁷²

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Impact of Buddhist meditation retreats

Meditation retreats create a focused environment where students develop mindfulness and compassion. Survey results show improved self-awareness, emotional resilience, and empathy, leading to more compassionate actions. Using case studies and a literature review, a qualitative approach helps understand the impact of Buddhist meditation retreats. By analyzing individual experiences and scholarly work, this approach reveals how retreats enhance mindfulness, emotional well-being, and compassion. A case study explores a week-long Buddhist meditation retreat attended by students. The retreat included daily meditation, mindfulness teachings, reflective journaling, and group discussions on Buddhist principles like loving-kindness (*metta*) and interconnectedness, fostering personal and social growth.

3.1.1. Observed transformations

(1) Improved emotional regulation: Students experienced greater emotional awareness and calmness. Mindful breathing and body scans helped them manage stress. One participant shared, "Meditation helped me pause

⁷¹ Yin (2009), pp. 20 - 24.

⁷² Creswell (2007), pp. 53 - 84.

before reacting impulsively.” Reflective journaling provided clarity, enabling students to process emotions constructively.

(2) Enhanced compassion and empathy: *Mettā bhāvanā* meditation fostered kindness toward oneself and others. Group Dharma discussions encouraged understanding and mutual support. One student noted, “*I now see my peers with more warmth and patience.*” Mindful games strengthen a sense of community.

(3) Increased focus and mindfulness: Mindful walking and eating cultivated presence and appreciation. One student remarked, “*I realized how much I rush through life.*” Stick exercises helped channel energy, enhancing concentration. Many reported improved academic focus post-retreat.

The retreat fostered mindfulness, compassion, and emotional resilience, helping students integrate these practices into daily life.

Buddhist meditation retreats play a crucial role in enhancing emotional resilience. Hölzel et al. (2011) found that meditation strengthens self-awareness and reduces stress by altering neural pathways linked to emotional regulation.⁷³ It aligns with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10), where the Buddha states, “A bhikkhu dwells contemplating feelings as feelings... ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having subdued longing and dejection toward the world.”⁷⁴ A case study revealed that students developed improved stress management skills, reflecting this sutta’s emphasis on mindful awareness. Buddhist retreats also cultivate compassion through *mettā bhāvanā* (loving-kindness meditation). Fredrickson et al. (2008) found that such practices increase positive emotions and prosocial behavior.⁷⁵ The *Karaṇīya Metta Sutta* (SN 1.8) echoes this, stating, “Wishing: In gladness and safety, may all beings be at ease.”⁷⁶ Case study participants reported heightened empathy and stronger community bonds after the retreat. Meditation also enhances cognitive function. Kabat-Zinn (2005) highlights mindfulness as a tool for improving focus and reducing distractions.⁷⁷ The *Mahā-Saccaka Sutta* (MN 36) describes the Buddha’s deep concentration, leading to wisdom, “I directed my mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the taints.”⁷⁸ Similarly, students in the case study reported increased attentiveness in academic tasks.

3.1.2. Key themes and insights

(i) Transformational Environment – The retreat setting provides a unique environment free from daily stressors, allowing students to immerse themselves fully in mindfulness practices.

⁷³ Hölzel, B. K., et al. (2011), p. 36 - 43.

⁷⁴ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, MN 10; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145.

⁷⁵ Fredrickson, B. L., et al. (2008), p. 1045 - 1062.

⁷⁶ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1995). *Karaṇīya Metta Sutta* (Sn 1.8). *Access to Insight*, accessed on [February 4, 2025], Available at www.accesstosight.org.

⁷⁷ Kabat-Zinn (2005), p. 56.

⁷⁸ *Mahā-Saccaka Sutta*, MN 36; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 349 - 354.

(ii) Practical Applications – Retreats equip students with tools like meditation and reflection, which they can apply to various aspects of their lives, from academics to personal relationships.

(iii) Community Building – The shared experience of a retreat fosters connections and collective growth, reinforcing the importance of compassion and mutual understanding.

Buddhist meditation retreats profoundly impact students, enhancing their mindfulness, emotional regulation, and compassion. The combination of case study observations and literature findings underscores the retreats' transformative potential. Schools and Buddhist institutions should consider incorporating such programs to promote holistic development and emotional well-being among students.

3.2. Role of mindful living education

Mindful living education cultivates sustainable habits aligned with Buddhist principles. Through mindful breathing, reflective journaling, and active listening, students enhance their ability to engage mindfully in daily interactions, fostering harmony in their communities. A qualitative approach, utilizing case study methods and literature analysis, reveals the transformative impact of mindful living education on emotional, social, and cognitive development. This approach combines individual case studies with research to demonstrate how mindfulness fosters self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassion. The case study is a week-long mindful living education program implemented during a mindfulness retreat. The program incorporated practices such as morning mindfulness sessions, end-of-day reflective journaling, guided discussions on emotional awareness, and workshops on gratitude and kindness. Students were encouraged to apply mindfulness principles beyond the retreat, integrating them into their home lives and social interactions, extending mindfulness into everyday experiences.

3.2.1. Observed transformations

(i) Improved Emotional Regulation: Facilitators observed that students became more adept at recognizing and managing emotions. Reflective journaling helped them process feelings constructively, reducing frustration and emotional outbursts. Guided discussions let students articulate their emotions clearly, fostering openness and mutual understanding among peers.

(ii) Enhanced Academic Focus: Daily mindfulness improved students' attention and stress management. Facilitators noted reduced distractions and increased lesson engagement. Consequently, students showed better academic performance and a more focused mindset.

(iii) Development of Compassion: Gratitude and kindness workshops enhanced empathy and strengthened friendships. Students reported fewer conflicts, while facilitators observed greater collaboration and compassion, reinforcing social bonds.

These outcomes highlight the transformative potential of integrating mindfulness practices into education.

Research demonstrates that consistent mindfulness practice significantly enhances emotional regulation and mental clarity. Kabat-Zinn emphasizes integrating mindfulness into daily life to cultivate long-term benefits, “mindfulness is the awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”⁷⁹ This aligns with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10), which highlights mindfulness as a foundation for self-awareness and emotional balance, “here, a monk dwells contemplating the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful.”⁸⁰ In the case study, students’ daily mindfulness practices, such as reflective journaling and mindful sitting, helped them process emotions constructively, fostering sustained emotional and cognitive growth. Mindful living education nurtures compassion by encouraging students to reflect on their actions and empathize. Saway et al. (2018) found that mindfulness education strengthens self-compassion, enabling students to extend empathy to peers.⁸¹ This resonates with the *Karahneya Metta Sutta* (SN 1.8), where the Buddha advises, “Just as a mother would protect her only child... one should cultivate a boundless heart toward all beings.”⁸² The case study supports this: Students demonstrated increased kindness and stronger relationships through gratitude and kindness workshops. Additionally, mindfulness improves focus and academic performance. Zenner et al. (2014) found that mindfulness programs enhance attention and reduce test anxiety. Similarly, students in the case study reported feeling calmer and more focused during assessments.⁸³ It aligns with the *Dhammapada*, “mindfulness is the path to the Deathless... The mindful do not die.”⁸⁴

3.2.2. Key themes and insights

(i) Holistic Development: Mindful living education addresses student growth’s emotional, social, and cognitive aspects. Integrating mindfulness into daily routines equips students with tools to navigate challenges inside and outside the classroom.

(ii) Practical Applications: Students learn to apply mindfulness principles in real-world settings, from managing stress during exams to resolving conflicts with peers. These practical applications ensure the program’s relevance and long-term impact.

(iii) Cultural Shift: The program fosters a supportive and compassionate school culture. Facilitators and students reported feeling a greater sense of community and shared purpose.

The art of mindful living education profoundly impacts students, enhancing their emotional regulation, academic focus, and interpersonal

⁷⁹ Kabat-Zinn (1986), p. 145.

⁸⁰ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, MN 10; Nāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145.

⁸¹ Saway et al. (2018), p. 23.

⁸² Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1995). *Karaṇīya Metta Sutta* (Sn 1.8). *Access to Insight*, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at www.accesstoinight.org.

⁸³ Zenner et al. (2014), p. 603.

⁸⁴ *Dhp* 21, Buddhārakkhita, Acharya (1985), p. 21.

skills. Combining case study observations and literature findings underscores the value of integrating mindfulness principles into everyday education. By fostering self-awareness, compassion, and resilience, mindful living education prepares students for the complexities of modern life. Schools and educational institutions should consider adopting such programs to promote holistic growth and emotional well-being among their students.

3.3. Student mindfulness effectiveness of compassion

A qualitative case study and literature analysis explore how mindfulness enhances students' compassion. This approach reveals how mindfulness fosters emotional regulation, empathy, and compassionate behavior by examining real-life cases and scholarly work. The study focuses on a weekly mindfulness retreat for students aged 11 – 16, led by Buddhist monks and lay practitioners. The program included daily mindfulness exercises, retreat sessions on emotional awareness, role-playing compassionate responses, and reflective journaling. Researchers observed participants and conducted interviews, providing valuable insights into mindfulness's transformative impact on students' personal growth and relationships. This research highlights the role of mindfulness in cultivating compassion in educational settings.

3.3.1. Observed outcomes

(i) **Enhanced Emotional Regulation:** Students reported improved stress management, feeling calmer and more in control, particularly in high-pressure situations like exams or social conflicts. Mindful breathing and movement exercises helped them manage anxiety and prevent emotional outbursts. Many students found that mindfulness encouraged them to pause before reacting, reducing impulsive behaviors and promoting thoughtful responses. Through guided practices such as Dharma discussions and journaling, students became more aware of their emotions and learned to process them constructively.

(ii) **Development of Empathy and Compassion:** Mindfulness activities fostered greater empathy as students engaged in role-playing and Dharma talks, helping them understand their peers' emotions and perspectives. Group discussions and mindful games strengthened interpersonal bonds, increasing trust and openness. Many students also noticed a shift in their communication style, replacing reactive responses with more patient and compassionate dialogues.

(iii) **Positive Behavioral Changes:** Facilitators observed decreased bullying incidents and increased prosocial behaviors. Students became more mindful of their words and actions, preferring peaceful conflict resolution. Many demonstrated kindness through small gestures, such as offering emotional support, assisting peers, and sharing during mindful eating sessions.

The mindfulness retreat significantly enhanced students' emotional regulation, empathy, and positive behaviors. They developed greater self-awareness, emotional control, and compassion through mindful practices, fostering healthier relationships and reducing conflicts. These findings highlight mindfulness as a transformative tool for personal growth and emotional resilience and promoting a compassionate school environment.

Mindfulness enhances students' ability to be present and aware, fostering compassion. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) teaches that mindfulness (*sati*) leads to wisdom (*paññā*), which is essential for compassion.⁸⁵ Kabat-Zinn (2005) emphasizes that mindfulness creates space for emotional processing and awareness of others' needs, aligning with the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22), which highlights non-reactivity through feeling awareness (*vedanānupassanā*).⁸⁶ Neff (2003) asserts that mindfulness nurtures self-compassion, enhancing empathy.⁸⁷ The *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54) supports this, explaining how loving-kindness (*mettā*) toward oneself extends to others, reducing ill will (*vyāpāda*).⁸⁸ Students practicing journaling and mindfulness reported greater empathy, reflecting *Visuddhimagga's* (IX.8 - 10) view on self-kindness leading to altruism.⁸⁹ Fredrickson et al. (2008) link loving-kindness meditation to prosocial behavior, paralleling the *Kakacūpama Sutta* (MN 21), which teaches mindful endurance.⁹⁰ Role-playing compassionate acts reinforced ethical conduct (*sīla*), as encouraged in the *Sigālovāda Sutta* (DN 31).⁹¹

3.3.2. Key themes and insights

(i) Holistic development: Mindfulness practices enhance students' emotional, social, and moral development, preparing them to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics with compassion.

(ii) Practical skills: Reflective journaling and role-playing equip students with actionable tools to practice compassion in real-world situations.

(iii) School culture transformation: By integrating mindfulness into school programs, institutions can foster a culture of empathy and kindness, reducing negative behaviors such as bullying.

The case study and literature findings underscore mindfulness's significant impact on students' compassion effectiveness. Mindfulness practices, such as emotional awareness exercises and reflective journaling, enhance self-regulation, empathy, and prosocial behaviors. Schools and educators should prioritize incorporating mindfulness programs into curricula to foster a supportive and compassionate learning environment. By cultivating mindfulness, students are better equipped to build meaningful relationships and contribute positively to their communities.

3.4. Empowering students for global peace

Through the integration of mindfulness and compassion, students develop a sense of interconnectedness and global responsibility. Survey responses

⁸⁵ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10); Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145 - 150.

⁸⁶ Kabat-Zinn (2005), p. 78 - 81.

⁸⁷ Neff, K. (2003), p. 85 - 101.

⁸⁸ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1997). *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54). *Access to Insight*, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at www.accesstosight.org.

⁸⁹ *Visuddhimagga's* (IX. 8 - 10), Buddhaghosa, Bhadantācariya (1991), p. 300 - 305.

⁹⁰ Fredrickson et al. (2008), p. 1045 - 1062.

⁹¹ *Sigālovāda Sutta*, DN 31, Walshe (1987), pp. 461 - 465.

highlight increased participation in community service and advocacy for social justice among those exposed to Buddhist educational practices. Empowering students to contribute to global peace involves fostering critical thinking, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and proactive engagement with global challenges. A qualitative approach utilizing case study methods and literature analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how education can empower students as peacebuilders. By examining real-life cases and synthesizing insights from academic literature, this approach highlights the transformative potential of targeted educational interventions in shaping globally conscious and compassionate individuals during the retreat. The case study focuses on a retreat implemented by students and designed to cultivate awareness and responsibility among students regarding global peace issues. The program was integrated into the school curriculum over one academic year, involving students aged 11 – 16. The program included: (1) workshops on conflict resolution: interactive sessions teaching negotiation, active listening, and collaborative problem-solving; (2) cultural exchange projects: partnering with schools in other countries to foster cross-cultural understanding; (3) community service activities: local projects addressing social justice issues to connect global peace concepts with practical action; and (4) mindfulness practices: daily meditation sessions to develop emotional regulation and empathy.

3.4.1. Observed outcomes

(i) Increased cultural sensitivity: Students participating in cultural exchange projects developed an appreciation for diverse perspectives. They reported greater empathy toward individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Dialogues with international peers challenged stereotypes and encouraged students to think critically about global inequalities.

(ii) Improved conflict resolution skills: workshops on conflict resolution equipped students with tools to address disagreements constructively. Teachers observed fewer conflicts in the classroom as students applied active listening and problem-solving skills in their interactions. Role-playing exercises allowed students to practice resolving real-world scenarios, enhancing their confidence in mediating disputes.

(iii) Stronger sense of social responsibility: Participation in community service activities deepened students' understanding of how local issues connect to global peace. Projects such as volunteering at shelters or organizing awareness campaigns fostered a sense of agency and responsibility. Students reported feeling empowered to advocate for change in their communities and beyond.

(iv) Enhanced emotional regulation: Mindfulness practices helped students manage stress and engage empathetically with others. Reflective journaling after meditation sessions enabled them to process emotions and cultivate self-awareness, key components of peacebuilding.

Research affirms that education shapes students as global peacebuilders. UNESCO highlights that peace education fosters tolerance, empathy,

and cooperation, essential for resolving international conflicts. UNESCO states that “peace education should equip learners with the skills to manage conflicts peacefully and cultivate a culture of understanding.”⁹² This aligns with Buddhist teachings, particularly in the *Mettā Sutta* (SN 1.8), where the Buddha emphasizes the cultivation of boundless loving-kindness (*mettā*) toward all beings as a foundation for peace, “just as a mother would protect with her life, her son, her only son, so one should develop an unbounded mind toward all beings.”⁹³ The case study reflects these principles, showing how structured programs nurture such values in students. Cross-cultural experiences reduce prejudice and enhance global understanding, consistent with Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis, which asserts that meaningful interactions with diverse groups decrease bias and foster empathy.⁹⁴ The *Sigālovāda Sutta* (DN 31) also promotes respect and understanding across cultures. The Buddha advises Sigāla to honor people from all backgrounds, stating, “A noble disciple regards all directions as worthy of respect, treating others with kindness and fairness, leading to harmony in society.”⁹⁵ Mindfulness plays a crucial role in emotional resilience and empathy. Kabat-Zinn (1986) argues that mindfulness strengthens self-regulation and compassion, preparing individuals to engage with global issues thoughtfully, “mindfulness practice enhances emotional intelligence, fostering greater self-awareness and empathy.”⁹⁶ Similarly, the *Satipatṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) describes mindfulness (*sati*) as the foundation for self-awareness and emotional balance, “a practitioner dwells contemplating the body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities, developing clear comprehension and equanimity.”⁹⁷ In the case study, students who engaged in mindfulness practices demonstrated increased emotional regulation and social awareness, reinforcing these Buddhist principles.

3.4.2. Key themes and insights

(i) Holistic development: Empowering students for global peace requires addressing the emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of learning. Programs integrating conflict resolution, cultural understanding, and mindfulness achieve this balance.

(ii) Local-to-global connections: Linking local issues to global challenges helps students understand their role in fostering peace. Community service projects ground abstract concepts in actionable steps, instilling a sense of agency.

(iii) Sustainability and engagement: Peace education programs must be sustained and embedded into the curriculum for lasting impact. Engaging

⁹² UNESCO (2024), p. 15.

⁹³ Bhikkhu Sujato (trans), (2018), *Mettā Sutta, Sn 1.8. Sutta Central*, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at: <https://suttacentral.net/sn1.8>.

⁹⁴ Allport (1954), 3. p. 281 - 290.

⁹⁵ Sigālovāda Sutta, DN 31, Walshe (1987), p. 461.

⁹⁶ Kabat-Zinn (1986), p. 148.

⁹⁷ Satipatṭhāna Sutta, MN 10; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), 6. p. 145 - 150.

students through interactive and reflective methods ensures meaningful participation.

The case study and literature analysis demonstrate that empowering students for global peace is achievable through targeted educational interventions. Programs that combine cultural exchange, conflict resolution training, mindfulness practices, and community service equip students with the skills and mindset needed to act as compassionate global citizens. Schools and educators should prioritize such initiatives, ensuring that students are prepared to address the complexities of a globalized world with empathy and responsibility. Education can contribute to a more harmonious and equitable future by nurturing a generation of peacebuilders.

3.5. Challenges and Limitations

Despite its potential, adopting Buddhist-inspired education faces challenges such as resistance due to cultural or religious biases, limited resources, and varying levels of engagement among students.

IV. THE IMPACT OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION RETREAT AND THE ART OF MINDFUL LIVING EDUCATION ON STUDENTS MINDFULNESS EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPASSION

The findings of this study indicate a significant influence of mindfulness retreats and mindful living education on the mindfulness effectiveness of compassion among students. The data analysis reveals that these interventions enhance students' ability to regulate emotions, develop empathy, and engage in compassionate behaviors. This section discusses the implications of these results, drawing connections between the observed outcomes and existing literature and highlighting the broader impact on educational practices and societal harmony. According to the findings of this research, the result data is as follows.

Table 4. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Unstandardized Residual	.077	120	.074	.986	120	.270
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Source: Research Data

It can be seen in the table that the value of Sig. for Standardized residual is = 0.270. Then, the value of Sig > can be used to conclude that the variable data comes from a normally distributed population. Autocorrelation can be detected using Durbin Watson by looking at the Model Summary table, the output of SPSS V.20 for Windows.

Table 5. Autocorrelation Test Results

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.860 ^a	.739	.735	4.56406	1.851
a. Predictors: (Constant), The Art of Mindful Living Education, Buddhist Retreat Meditation					
b. Dependent Variable: Mindfulness Effectiveness of Compassion					

Source: Research Data

The autocorrelation assumption is violated if the Durbin-Watson numbers are < 1 and > 3. While the results of data processing shown in Table 2 above show that the Durbin-Watson number of 1,851 was obtained, it can be interpreted that there is no positive or negative autocorrelation in the regression model, so the autocorrelation assumption is fulfilled. The finding out whether or not there is multicollinearity between independent variables can be seen in Table 3, as follows.

Table 6. Multicollinearity test results with TOL and VIF methods

Coefficients ^a			
Model	Tolerance	Collinearity Statistics	
		VIF	
1	(Constant)		
	Buddhist Retreat Meditation	.554	1.804
	The Art of Mindful Living Education	.554	1.804
a. Dependent Variable: Mindfulness Effectiveness of Compassion			

Source: Research Data

The model is considered free from multicollinearity if the VIF value is <10 or the tolerance value is closer to 1. From Table 3, it can be seen that the calculation of the value of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) shows that there is no independent variable that has a VIF value of more than 10; besides that, there is also no Tolerance value that < 0.10 so it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity. The data processing results for heteroscedasticity tests can be seen from the scatterplot graph below.

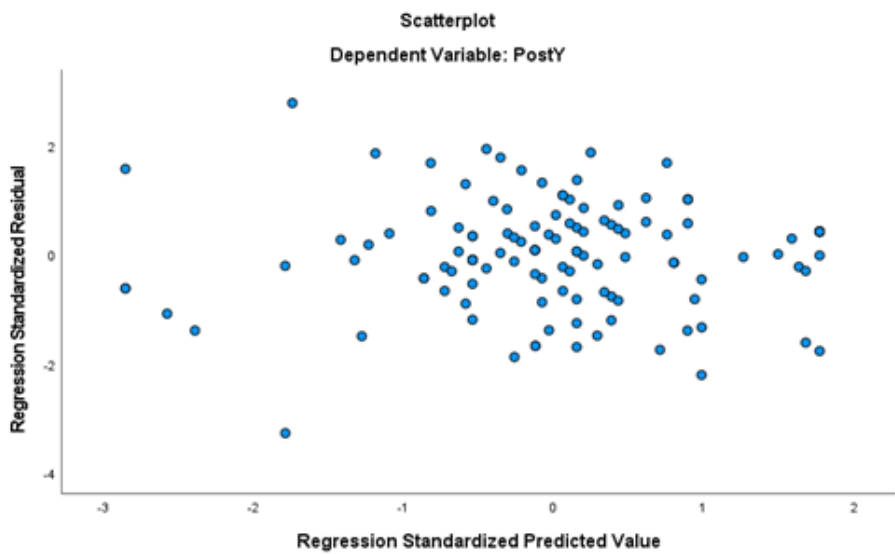


Figure 1. Scatterplot Chart (Source: SPSS Processing)

From the scatterplot graph above, it can be seen that the points spread randomly and are scattered both above and below the number 0 on the Y-axis. It can be concluded that there is no heteroscedasticity between independent variables in the regression model. Multiple regression analysis determines whether variable (Y) can be caused by variable (X). The formula used is $Y = a + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2$. To make calculations easier, researchers use SPSS 26 software. Here is the work using SPSS.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients

Coefficients ^a					
Model B	Unstandard- ized Coeffi- cients	Stan- dard- ized Co- effi- cients	t	Sig. Tol- er- ance	Collinearity Statistics
	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>			VIF

1	(Constant)	9.973	4.259		2.341	.021		
	Buddhist Retreat Meditation	.353	.064	.352	5.555	.000	.554	1.804
	The Art of Mindful Living Education	.528	.057	.584	9.214	.000	.554	1.804
a. Dependent Variable: Mindfulness Effectiveness of Compassion								

Source: Research Data

Table 8. Test F Statistics

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6917.986	2	3458.993	166.053	.000 ^b
	Residual	2437.181	117	20.831		
	Total	9355.167	119			
a. Dependent Variable: Mindfulness Effectiveness of Compassion						
b. Predictors: (Constant), The Art of Mindful Living Education, Buddhist Retreat Meditation						

Source: Research Data

Based on the coefficients table above, it can be seen that the constant value is 9.973, the value of b1 is 0.353, and b2 is 0.528. The value can be substituted with the double regression equation as follows.

$$Y = 9.973 + 0.353 X_1 + 0.528 X_2$$

From the regression equation above, it can be seen that:

V. THE STRUCTURED INTERVENTIONS OF MINDFULNESS EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPASSION BY BUDDHIST RETREAT MEDITATION AND THE ART OF MINDFUL LIVING EDUCATION

The constant value of 9.973 in the regression equation represents the baseline level of mindfulness effectiveness in fostering compassion when Buddhist retreat meditation and the art of mindful living education are absent. It suggests that mindfulness and compassion naturally exist to some extent due to innate qualities, cultural influences, or previous contemplative experiences. Angus and Andrew (2012) state, “Mindfulness and compassion are not merely the result of structured training but can arise naturally in individuals who have

been exposed to positive environmental influences, cultural norms, or past meditative experiences.”⁹⁸ This observation aligns with the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22), where the Buddha explains, “Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating feelings as feelings... ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.”⁹⁹ This emphasizes that mindfulness (*sati*) is an inherent faculty that can be nurtured through systematic practice. Similarly, the *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54) states, “Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life, so one should cultivate an unlimited heart with loving-kindness toward all beings.”¹⁰⁰ It highlights that loving-kindness (*mettā*) can emerge naturally but requires intentional cultivation for more profound development.

The constant value reinforces that mindfulness and compassion are not solely products of structured programs but can arise from positive peer interactions and ethical education. It aligns with the *Sigālovāda Sutta* (DN 31), where the Buddha advises, “A wise person protects friendships, respects elders, and maintains ethical conduct, thereby cultivating compassion naturally.”¹⁰¹ Despite this inherent presence, structured interventions significantly amplify mindfulness and compassion. Hawley et al. (2014) highlight that Buddhist retreat meditation and the art of mindful living education enhance these qualities, making them more sustainable.¹⁰² The *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta* (MN 27) reinforces this point, stating, “Just as an elephant’s footprint encompasses all other footprints, right mindfulness encompasses all wholesome states.”¹⁰³ It indicates that mindfulness is a foundation for all ethical and compassionate behavior. Likewise, the *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta* (MN 19) states, “When a person frequently thinks thoughts of non-harming, their mind becomes inclined toward compassion, making it easier to sustain such qualities.”¹⁰⁴ Additionally, mindfulness and compassion flourish in supportive environments, as evidenced in the *Kakacūpama Sutta* (MN 21), where the Buddha teaches, “Even if bandits were to sever one’s limbs, one should maintain a mind of loving-kindness, free from hatred.”¹⁰⁵ This illustrates that mindfulness fosters non-reactivity and compassion even in adversity. Therefore, while mindfulness and compassion may naturally exist, structured interventions act as catalysts, reinforcing and deepening their practice.

VI. BUDDHIST RETREAT MEDITATION WILL AFFECT MINDFULNESS EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPASSION

The coefficient value of 0.353 indicates that for every unit increase in

⁹⁸ Angus and Andrew (2012), p. 112.

⁹⁹ *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, DN 22, Walshe (1995), p. 335.

¹⁰⁰ *Mettā Sutta*, SN 46.54, in Bodhi (2000), p. 1592.

¹⁰¹ *Sigālovāda Sutta*, DN 31, Walshe (1995), p. 461.

¹⁰² Hawley et al. (2014), pp. 1-9.

¹⁰³ *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*, MN 27; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), pp. 250 - 255.

¹⁰⁴ *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta*, MN 19, Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), pp. 115 - 118.

¹⁰⁵ *Kakacūpama Sutta*, MN 21, Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), pp. 210 - 215.

participation or engagement in Buddhist retreat meditation, the mindfulness effectiveness of compassion increases by 0.353 times. This finding highlights the measurable impact of retreat-based meditation practices on fostering mindfulness and compassion among students. Buddhist retreats offer an immersive environment where participants deeply engage with mindfulness practices, enhancing self-awareness and emotional regulation. Burmansah et al. (2019) state, “Retreat settings provide an ideal context for sustained meditation, allowing individuals to cultivate compassion through prolonged introspection and interpersonal interactions.”¹⁰⁶ This aligns with the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22), where the Buddha instructs, “Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as body... ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.”¹⁰⁷ The structured retreat setting provides the optimal conditions for deepening mindfulness (*sati*) and fostering compassion (*karuṇā*), allowing practitioners to cultivate an internal state conducive to ethical and prosocial behavior.

Retreats frequently integrate group meditation and discussions, fostering a sense of shared purpose and empathy. This collective experience is consistent with the *Kakacūpama Sutta* (MN 21), where the Buddha emphasizes patience and non-reactivity even in difficult situations, teaching that “even if bandits were to sever one’s limbs, one should maintain a mind of loving-kindness, free from hatred.”¹⁰⁸ The communal retreat experience strengthens emotional resilience, encouraging participants to respond to others with greater compassion and equanimity. Moreover, retreats incorporate Buddhist teachings such as *mettā* (loving-kindness) and *karuṇā* (compassion), which inspire students to act more compassionately in daily life. The *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54) states, “Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life, so one should cultivate an unlimited heart with loving-kindness toward all beings.”¹⁰⁹ Central to many retreat programs, this practice enhances participants’ ability to extend compassion beyond structured meditation sessions. Donald et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of integrating retreat-based mindfulness programs in educational institutions, stating, “Schools that incorporate mindfulness retreats witness increased emotional resilience and greater interpersonal empathy among students.”¹¹⁰ Given the documented benefits, institutions could integrate retreat-style programs into curricula to provide students with opportunities for intensive mindfulness practice. The findings suggest that retreats not only enhance self-awareness but also address pressing issues such as bullying, stress, and peer conflicts. However, the relatively minor coefficient value compared to the art of mindful living education (0.528) suggests that

¹⁰⁶ Burmansah et al. (2019), p. 87.

¹⁰⁷ *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, DN 22, Walshe (1995), p. 335 - 340.

¹⁰⁸ *Kakacūpama Sutta*, MN 21; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), 3. p. 210 - 215.

¹⁰⁹ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1997). *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54). *Access to Insight*, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at www.accesstoinsight.org.

¹¹⁰ Donald et al. (2016), p. 214.

while retreats are impactful, their benefits may be more concentrated within the retreat duration. The *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta* (MN 27) reinforces the need for continuous practice, stating, “Just as an elephant’s footprint encompasses all other footprints, right mindfulness encompasses all wholesome states.”¹¹¹ This suggests that while retreats provide deep but temporary immersion, complimentary daily mindfulness practices are necessary for sustained impact.

VII. THE ART OF MINDFUL LIVING EDUCATION WILL AFFECT MINDFULNESS EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPASSION

The coefficient value of 0.528 indicates that for every unit increase in mindful living education, mindfulness effectiveness in fostering compassion increases by 0.528 times. Unlike Buddhist retreat meditation, which provides short-term immersion, mindful living education integrates mindfulness into daily life, reinforcing self-awareness and empathy over time.¹¹² This aligns with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10), where the Buddha states, “a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as body... ardent, fully aware, and mindful.”¹¹³ This emphasizes mindfulness as a daily practice rather than a temporary experience. Students develop essential emotional and social skills by incorporating mindful journaling, breathing exercises, and reflection. The *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta* (MN 19) supports this, stating, “When a person frequently thinks thoughts of non-harming, their mind becomes inclined toward compassion.”¹¹⁴ It reinforces how consistent mindfulness practice strengthens compassionate behavior.

Mindful living education has a more lasting impact than Buddhist retreat meditation (0.353), suggesting its effectiveness in fostering continuous compassion. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* (DN 31) supports this, stating, “A wise person protects friendships, respects elders, and maintains ethical conduct, thereby cultivating compassion naturally.”¹¹⁵ Students who regularly engage in mindfulness practices internalize these values, improving their interactions and decision-making. This educational approach enhances emotional regulation and cognitive development. Ager et al. (2015) note, “schools that integrate mindfulness-based education report improvements in emotional regulation, academic performance, and reduced interpersonal conflicts.”¹¹⁶ Institutions should embed mindfulness into daily routines, such as starting the day with meditation or integrating mindfulness into subjects. The *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta* (MN 27) reinforces this, stating, “Just as an elephant’s footprint encompasses all other footprints, right mindfulness encompasses all wholesome states.”¹¹⁷ Suggesting that structured mindfulness training benefits all aspects of life. To maximize its impact, educators should

¹¹¹ *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*, MN 27; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), 6. p. 250 - 255.

¹¹² Nelson (2018), p. 190 – 210.

¹¹³ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, MN 10; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145 - 150.

¹¹⁴ *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta*, MN 19; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), pp. 115 - 118

¹¹⁵ *Sigālovāda Sutta*, DN 31, Walshe (1987), p. 461 - 465.

¹¹⁶ Ager et al. (2015), p. 67.

¹¹⁷ *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*, MN 27; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 250 - 255.

receive mindfulness training to guide students effectively. Steckler and Waddock (2017) state, “Mindfulness training for educators enhances their ability to model and teach mindfulness effectively, creating a ripple effect in student engagement and emotional intelligence.”¹¹⁸ Although mindful living education is more impactful, Buddhist retreats provide valuable immersion. The *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22) states, “With mindfulness and clear comprehension, one overcomes suffering.”¹¹⁹ It highlights the importance of both short-term retreats and long-term mindfulness education.

Both interventions enhance mindfulness effectiveness in compassion but in different ways. Buddhist retreat meditation (0.353) offers short-term benefits through intensive practice, while mindful living education (0.528) provides long-term internalization. Combining both approaches creates a comprehensive framework for holistic student development. These findings have significant implications for educators and policymakers. Combining retreats with daily mindful education maximizes the benefits of mindfulness and compassion training. Guay (2022) asserts, “Mindfulness education enhances emotional resilience and prepares students to engage meaningfully with global issues.”¹²⁰ The *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54) supports this fundamental thought, stating, “One should cultivate an unlimited heart with loving-kindness toward all beings.”¹²¹ It reinforces mindfulness’s role in fostering social harmony. The constant value of 9.973 establishes a baseline for mindfulness and compassion, while the coefficients for Buddhist retreat meditation (0.353) and mindful living education (0.528) highlight their complementary effects. A balanced approach incorporating both ensures the development of compassionate, emotionally resilient individuals who contribute to a harmonious society. Schools should adopt mindfulness practices to improve emotional well-being, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. Tables 1 and 2 above also show the partial influence of variable Buddhist retreat meditation and the art of mindful living education on variable mindfulness effectiveness of compassion. It can be explained by comparing the value of Sig. against it.

7.1. There is a significant influence between Buddhist retreat meditation and mindfulness effectiveness of compassion.

The analysis confirms a significant relationship between Buddhist Retreat Meditation and Mindfulness Effectiveness of Compassion, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This validates the hypothesis that participating in Buddhist retreats enhances students’ mindfulness and compassion. Buddhist retreats provide immersive experiences where participants engage in meditation, reflective silence, and discussions on Buddhist teachings. These practices improve emotional regulation, self-awareness, and empathy,

¹¹⁸ Steckler and Waddock (2017), p. 132.

¹¹⁹ *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, DN 22, Walshe (1995), p. 335 - 340.

¹²⁰ Guay (2022), p. 45.

¹²¹ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1997). *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54). Access to Insight, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at www.accesstoinsight.org.

key components of compassion. Students develop emotional resilience by observing thoughts and emotions without judgment, allowing them to respond calmly and thoughtfully.¹²² This aligns with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10), where the Buddha states, “a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as body... ardent, fully aware, and mindful.”¹²³

Retreats also emphasize *mettā* (loving-kindness meditation), encouraging goodwill towards oneself and others, which fosters empathy and prosocial behaviors. The *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54) supports this, stating, “one should cultivate an unlimited heart with loving-kindness toward all beings.”¹²⁴ Students who engage in these practices report improved relationships, reduced aggression, and a stronger sense of community.¹²⁵ Beyond personal benefits, retreats promote a sense of interconnectedness and social responsibility, inspiring students to act compassionately in their communities.¹²⁶ However, challenges exist in expanding these programs, including financial constraints and logistical needs.¹²⁷ Schools should integrate retreats with ongoing mindfulness programs, such as weekly meditation sessions, to sustain their impact. In conclusion, Buddhist Retreat Meditation significantly enhances mindfulness and compassion, offering long-term benefits for students’ personal growth and social interactions. Educational institutions should prioritize retreat-based mindfulness programs, ensuring accessibility and continuity for lasting impact.

7.2. There is a significant influence between the art of mindful living education and mindfulness effectiveness of compassion.

The regression coefficient of 0.353 indicates that every unit increase in Buddhist Retreat Meditation participation leads to a 0.353-unit increase in mindfulness effectiveness of compassion. This confirms a positive relationship between retreat engagement and students’ development of mindfulness and compassion.¹²⁸ Buddhist retreats provide structured environments for mindfulness practices such as loving-kindness meditation, reflective silence, and group discussions.¹²⁹ These activities enhance emotional regulation, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness, which are key to compassion. The *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54) supports this, stating, “One should cultivate an unlimited heart with loving-kindness toward all beings.”¹³⁰

¹²² Gunawan & Bintari (2021), pp. 51 - 64.

¹²³ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, MN 10; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145 - 150.

¹²⁴ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1997). *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54). Access to Insight, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at www.accesstoinsight.org.

¹²⁵ Williford et al. (2013), p. 162 - 187.

¹²⁶ Chan (2002), p. 69 - 75

¹²⁷ Laidlaw & Mair (2019), p. 200 - 215.

¹²⁸ Elaine & Martin (2016), pp. 78 - 92.

¹²⁹ Giovannoni (2017), pp. 200 - 220.

¹³⁰ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.) (1997). *Mettā Sutta* (SN 46.54). Access to Insight, accessed on [February 4, 2025], available at www.accesstoinsight.org.

The proportional increase suggests that repeated retreat participation leads to sustained growth in mindfulness and compassion. Students who attend regularly gain deeper emotional intelligence, conflict resolution skills, and improved interpersonal relationships. This aligns with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10), which emphasizes continuous mindfulness as a means of personal and social well-being.¹³¹ However, while retreats provide an initial boost, their impact is most substantial during and shortly after participation. Complementary practices like ongoing mindful living education help sustain these benefits over time.¹³² Schools should integrate retreats with follow-up practices such as weekly mindfulness sessions or peer-led meditation groups to reinforce these effects. Logistical challenges such as cost and accessibility can limit retreat participation. Institutions should offer scholarships and flexible scheduling to ensure broader student access.¹³³ Beyond education, retreat-based mindfulness can benefit other fields, including healthcare and workplace training, by fostering emotional resilience and compassionate leadership.¹³⁴ The regression coefficient confirms that Buddhist Retreat Meditation is valuable for cultivating compassion. Educational institutions should prioritize integrating retreats into curricula, recognizing their role in developing emotionally intelligent and socially responsible individuals. By ensuring accessibility and continuity, these programs can contribute to a more compassionate society.

7.3. The Buddhist retreat meditation and the art of mindful living education significantly affect the mindfulness effectiveness of compassion.

The regression coefficient of 0.528 indicates that for every unit increase in mindful living education, mindfulness effectiveness of compassion rises by 0.528 units. This demonstrates a strong and lasting impact, highlighting the role of integrating mindfulness into daily life.¹³⁵ Unlike Buddhist retreat meditation (0.353), which provides short-term benefits, mindful living education fosters continuous growth by embedding mindfulness into daily routines. Activities like journaling, mindful breathing, and gratitude exercises help students develop emotional regulation and empathy, making compassion a natural response in various situations.¹³⁶ The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) reinforces this, “a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as body... ardent, fully aware, and mindful.”¹³⁷ This education model equips students with practical tools for managing stress, resolving conflicts, and improving relationships. As they internalize mindfulness, they become more adept at understanding others’ perspectives and engaging in prosocial behaviors like

¹³¹ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, MN 10; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145 - 150.

¹³² Petchsawang & McLean (2017), p. 220 – 240.

¹³³ Black et al. (2014), p. 110 – 125.

¹³⁴ Choate & Doyle (1980), p. 45 – 62.

¹³⁵ Andersen (2019), p. 28.

¹³⁶ Mandal & Lip (2022), p. 78 – 95.

¹³⁷ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, MN 10; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145 - 150.

active listening and teamwork.¹³⁸ Schools should integrate mindfulness into curricula through dedicated courses, extracurricular clubs, and classroom practices. Educators play a key role in modeling mindfulness. Training teachers ensure effective program delivery and maximize student impact.¹³⁹ Institutions should invest in mindfulness resources and adapt programs to diverse cultural contexts to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.¹⁴⁰ The higher coefficient value underscores mindful living education's long-term effectiveness in cultivating compassionate individuals. Combined with retreat experiences, it creates a comprehensive framework for emotional and social well-being. Educational institutions should prioritize these programs to nurture emotionally intelligent and socially responsible citizens.

VIII. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Integrating Buddhist meditation retreats and mindful living education empowers students with mindfulness and compassion, preparing them to take meaningful actions for global peace. By fostering self-awareness, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness, these practices contribute to personal growth and societal harmony. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating Buddhist-inspired education into broader educational frameworks. The research limitations are that the study focuses primarily on Buddhist practices, which may not be universally applicable across all cultural and religious contexts. The survey sample still gives a picture of though representative, may not capture the diversity of all educational settings. The study measures immediate impacts but does not track long-term behavioral changes. The research recommendation from these results guides more inclusive implementation, meaning mindfulness practices should be culturally and religiously inclusive, ensuring accessibility for all students. Moreover, it should be able to provide educators with training in mindfulness and compassion practices to guide students effectively. For the following, researchers can conduct future research to assess the long-term impact of Buddhist educational practices on student behavior and societal harmony. The research result can advocate for mindfulness-based programs as part of national education policies to promote holistic development. This study serves as a foundation for exploring the transformative power of Buddhist-inspired education and offers a roadmap for fostering compassionate global citizens.

¹³⁸ Clark et al. (2014), p. 150 – 175.

¹³⁹ Theresa (2006), p. 120 – 135.

¹⁴⁰ Umbreit (1997), p. 200 – 220.

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GBU'S ROLE IN PROMOTING BUDDHIST MEDITATION PRACTICES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MINDFULNESS AND WELL-BEING IN MODERN EDUCATION

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Abstract:

This study examines the effects of Buddhist meditation on students at Gautam Buddha University (GBU), focusing on academic performance, mental well-being, and personal development. Using a qualitative research design, interviews, and focus groups were conducted with GBU students who participated in mindfulness programs. Over the past 12 years, GBU's structured meditation curriculum, which includes practices like *ānāpānasati*, *mettā bhāvanā*, *vipassanā*, walking meditation, zazen, visualization, Buddhist Mantra, and mindful yoga, has benefited over 2,500 participants. These programs are divided into four levels: basic mindfulness (30 hours), mindfulness-based stress reduction (40 hours), *Vipassanā* for wellness (60 hours), and an online course on mental healing (50 hours). The findings indicate that integrating Buddhist meditation into education can enhance mental health and provide valuable support for students facing academic challenges.

This study employs qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and journals to explore how meditation programs impact cognitive and emotional development, stress management, focus, memory, and relationships. Results show significant improvements in academic outcomes, reduced anxiety, enhanced emotional resilience, and increased self-awareness and compassion. Additionally, the programs fostered a sense of community and spiritual growth, aligning with GBU's integration of human values and Buddhist ethics in education.

Despite the positive outcomes, challenges such as time constraints, varying student commitment, and logistical limitations were noted. The study suggests improving accessibility through online platforms, increasing faculty

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participation, and fostering interdisciplinary collaborations. GBU's meditation programs offer valuable models for integrating ancient practices into modern education, providing insights for institutions seeking to enhance well-being and academic excellence.

At Gautam Buddha University (GBU), short-term courses on Mindfulness and *vipassanā* help students manage stress, improve focus, and build emotional resilience. Over the past 12 years, the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Dhyana Kendra (MJDK) has significantly boosted mental health and academic performance through its mindfulness programs. This paper examines these methodologies and their transformative impact on student's cognitive and emotional development, supported by research literature, ancient Pāli texts, and practical program insights. The findings highlight the importance of these practices in holistic growth, stress reduction, and preparing students for personal and professional challenges. It concludes with recommendations for the broader implementation of mindfulness-based meditation in educational curricula to support student's mental and emotional well-being.

Keywords: *Buddhist meditation, mindfulness programs, cognitive and emotional development, stress management, educational integration.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern education's fast-paced demands have led to high levels of stress among students, negatively impacting their academic performance and mental health. To address this, Gautam Buddha University (GBU) offers short-term courses on mindfulness and *vipassanā* meditation. These ancient Buddhist practices improve cognitive functioning and emotional well-being by cultivating present-moment awareness and self-observation. Research shows they enhance concentration, memory retention, and problem-solving skills, and reduce stress.

The School of Buddhist Studies and Civilization (SoBSC) at GBU in Greater Noida was established in 2008 under Kumari Mayawati's vision. Inspired by Buddha and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, it aims to excel in education and social transformation. The campus features Buddhist symbolism, including a statue of Buddha and eight schools representing the Noble Eightfold Path. The Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Dhyana Kendra emphasizes mindfulness and holistic education.

Established in 2011, SoBSC promotes Buddhism studies through postgraduate and research programs, including B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees. The curriculum covers Buddhist history, philosophy, *vipassanā* meditation, and *Ambedkarism*. The school features a rich library and a meditation center for practicing Buddhist meditation techniques. Additionally, all first-year students at GBU take the Human Values and Buddhist Ethics course, promoting ethical awareness, emotional resilience, and holistic development across various academic disciplines.

The emphasis on mindfulness and GBU is significant because of its potential to address the unique academic and emotional challenges faced by students,

particularly in India's highly competitive educational environment. As academic pressure, familial expectations, and social dynamics increasingly affect student's mental health, programs that focus on mindfulness can offer substantial benefits. In this section, we explore the potential impact of GBU's mindfulness-based initiatives on the academic performance and mental health of its students, using existing research and evidence from GBU's initiatives. In summary, Gautam Buddha University is a prominent institution in Greater Noida, offering diverse academic programs, with the School of Buddhist Studies and Civilization playing a pivotal role in advancing the study and practice of Buddhism, fostering an environment of peace, harmony, and scholarly excellence.

II. CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT OF VIPASSANĀ IN THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

Vipassanā, which means insight or clear seeing, is a form of meditation in the Buddhist tradition. It is often referred to as insight meditation and focuses on developing an understanding of the nature of reality, particularly through observing the three characteristics of existence: Impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*). *Vipassanā* meditation involves observing bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions without attachment, allowing practitioners to see things as they are, free from ignorance and delusion. *Vipassanā* meditation has its origins in the teachings of the Buddha, who lived in the 6th century BCE. The practice is based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satīpatṭhāna*), as outlined in the Pāli canon, the earliest collection of Buddhist scripture. The teachings of the Buddha on mindfulness and insight meditation are described in various texts, especially the *Majjhim Nikāya* and *Samyutta Nikāya*. The most well-known text concerning *vipassanā* is the *Satīpatṭhāna Sūṭta*,¹ in which the Buddha describes the practice of mindfulness (*sati*) through four primary foundations: *Kāyānupassana*, *vedānupassana*, *cittānupassanā*, *dhammanupassana*. The goal of this meditation practice is to achieve *vipassanā*, or insight, leading to the realization of the impermanence of all phenomena, which ultimately brings about liberation from suffering, which is called nirvana.

After the Buddha's death, *vipassanā* meditation was primarily preserved and practiced within the Theravāda tradition, tracing its lineage through the Pāli Canon. The early development of *vipassanā* was predominantly monastic, with meditation teachers transmitting the methods of practice through generations of monks. In the modern period, *vipassanā* meditation experienced a revitalization and gained popularity in the late 19th and 20th centuries, particularly through figures like Ladi Sayadaw (1846 - 1923), Mahasi Sayadaw (1904 - 1982), and Ajahn Chah (1918 - 1992). These teachers played pivotal roles in disseminating the practice of *vipassanā* to a broader audience, adapting it to contemporary contexts while maintaining fidelity to original teachings. A significant modern development was the work of S. N. Goenka, who introduced 10-day *vipassanā* meditation courses based on the teachings

¹ DN 22, MN 10.

of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, a prominent Burmese teacher. Goenka's methods, which emphasize *ānāpāna* (mindful breathing) and *vipassanā* (insight into impermanence), have become widely practiced globally through centers established in numerous countries.

III. VEN. THICH NHAT HANH AND JON KABAT-ZINN: THEIR ROLES IN INTRODUCING MINDFULNESS TO THE WESTERN WORLD

Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh (1926 – 2022), a Vietnamese Zen Master, poet, and global peace activist, was instrumental in introducing mindfulness to the Western world. Affectionately known as “teacher,” he popularized mindfulness as a practice for cultivating inner peace, emotional well-being, and global harmony. His approach combined Buddhist teachings with practical applications for modern living, emphasizing mindful breathing, walking, and living in the present moment. He founded Plum Village, a mindfulness practice center in France, which has become an international hub for mindfulness retreats. His seminal works, such as “The Miracle of Mindfulness” (1975) and “Peace is Every Step” (1991), have been widely translated, spreading the principles of mindfulness, compassion, and interceding to millions. He also coined the term “Engaged Buddhism,” encouraging individuals to apply mindfulness in addressing societal challenges such as environmental sustainability, peace, and compassion.² Thich Nhat Hanh's influence extended to therapists, educators, and corporate leaders in the West, shaping mindfulness practices beyond their traditional Buddhist context. His teachings underscored that mindfulness is not merely a meditative practice but a way of life that promotes understanding, reconciliation, and peace.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, an American professor of medicine, played a pivotal role in secularizing mindfulness and integrating it into Western healthcare and psychology. In 1979, he founded the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, pioneering the application of mindfulness in addressing physical and psychological health challenges. He defined mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: On purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”³ This definition has become a cornerstone for scientific and clinical research on mindfulness. His book *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990) and subsequent publications introduce mindfulness practices to medical professionals and the public, emphasizing its benefits for stress reduction, chronic pain management, and mental health. His efforts contributed to the exponential growth of mindfulness research and its adoption in diverse fields, including education, business, and therapy. By stripping mindfulness of its religious connotations, he made it accessible to people of various cultural and spiritual backgrounds, thereby fostering its global integration and acceptance.⁴

² Hanh (1991), p. 82.

³ Kabat-Zinn (1994), p. 4.

⁴ Williams & Kabat-Zinn (2011), p. 45.

Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and Jon Kabat-Zinn laid the foundation for mindfulness as a global movement. While Thich Nhat Hanh emphasized the ethical and spiritual dimension of mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn focused on its practical application in healthcare and science. Together, their contributions have transformed mindfulness into a universal practice, promoting personal and societal well-being.

IV. SIX TYPES OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION PRACTICES IN SHORT-TERM PROGRAMS AT GBU

Gautam Buddha University's short-term meditation courses encompass six key Buddhist meditation techniques: *Ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing), *mettā-bhāvanā* (loving-kindness meditation), *vipassanā bhāvanā* (insight meditation), just-sitting meditation (zazen), walking meditation, and mindful yoga. These practices aim to enhance mental well-being, self-awareness, and academic performance. Below is an explanation of each type of meditation, supported by research evidence.

4.1. *Ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing)

The Practical Approach of *ānāpānasati* meditation followed the four-stage framework in GBU. The Triratna Buddhist Sangha (TBS) simplifies the traditional sixteen-step *ānāpānasati* outlined in the *Ānāpānasati Sūtra* (MN 118) into a four-stage framework, making it accessible to practitioners of personal backgrounds.⁵ It was founded by Ugyen Sangharakshita in 1967 and integrates traditional Buddhist teaching with a modern, accessible approach. *Ānāpānasati* is a core meditation practice taught in the Sangha. It serves as a foundation technique for cultivating mindfulness, concentration, and inner calm.

Practices of mindfulness meditation: (1) Counting the breath. Practitioners count their breaths up to ten, focusing on each inhalation and exhalation. If distracted, they start again from "one". This stage establishes mindfulness and calms the mind. (2) Awareness without counting. After reaching stability, practitioners stop counting and focus on the natural rhythm of the breath, deepening awareness and concentration. (3) Awareness of subtle sensations. Attention shifts to the quality of the breath and bodily sensations associated with it, cultivating insight into body-mind concentration. (4) Resting in the breath. Practitioners rest in open awareness of the breath, fostering calm and preparing for insight practices. *Ānāpānasati* is a non-sectarian practice accessible to all backgrounds, often practiced in groups to foster community. Research shows mindful breathing reduces stress, improves emotional regulation, and supports sustained attention and cognitive clarity.⁶

4.2. *Mettā bhāvanā* (loving-kindness meditation)

Loving-kindness meditation (LKM), or *Mettā Bhāvanā*, cultivates unconditional love and goodwill towards oneself and others. Practitioners silently repeat phrases such as "May I be happy" and "May you be free from suffering."

⁵ Triratna Buddhist Sangha (2010), p. 45.

⁶ Tang et al., (2007), p. 17152 – 6.

Practical approach to loving-kindness meditation (LKM): The meditation practice develops *mettā* (loving-kindness), which is one of the four sublime states of mind (*Brahmavaiharas*). The first step is generating loving-kindness for oneself. The Buddha instructed followers to begin by developing *mettā* toward themselves: Imagine yourself surrounded by radiant light, symbolizing love and kindness. Then mentally recite the phrases, “May I be free from enmity, free from affliction, free from anxiety, and may I live happily.” (*Kuddaka Nikāya, Mettā Sutta* (SN.1.8)). Then, extending loving-kindness to others, in the second step is close friend/ a loved one, visualize someone you care deeply about and silently repeat the well wishes to him/ her, may you be happy, healthy, free from suffering, may you live with peace and wisdom mind. The third step is to extend *mettā* to a neutral person, as emphasized in the *visuddhimagga* (path of purification), “This person, like me, wishes to be free from suffering and to experience peace and joy.”⁷ In fourth step is direct loving-kindness to someone with whom you have conflict, a difficult person. The Buddha advised, “One should cultivate an unbounded mind towards all beings, removing anger and hostility.”⁸ And fifth and last step is to gradually expand *mettā* to all beings in the universe (*sabba-panabhutesu mettā-cittam vikkhipati*): “May all beings be free from enmity, affliction, and anxiety. May they live happily. Dedicate the merit of your practice for the well-being of all beings, as the Buddha said: “*Ciram jivantu sabbe satta*.” “May all beings live long and well.” (*Sutta Nipata* 1.8). The Buddha highlighted the benefits of *Mettā Bhāvanā* in *Mettānisamsa Sutta* (*Anguttara Nikāya* 11.16): Sound sleep and peaceful mind, happiness and joy, harmonious relationships, increased concentration and wisdom, and freedom from enmity and ill-will. Modern scientific studies validate the ancient wisdom of *Mettā Bhāvanā* to promote empathy, compassion, and altruistic actions⁹, improve heart health, and reduce stress-related responses.¹⁰

4.3. *Vipassanā bhāvanā* (insight meditation)

Vipassanā meditation, which translates as “insight” or “clear seeing,” is one of the most ancient forms of meditation rooted in the teachings of the Buddha. It is a practice of developing mindfulness (*sati*) to observe the nature of reality as it is, without attachment or aversion. *Vipassanā* aims to cultivate insight into the impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*) nature of existence, as outlined in Buddhist philosophy. Goenka emphasized *Vipassanā*’s role in self-transformation through firsthand experience.¹¹ The provided neuroscientific evidence shows *Vipassanā*’s impact on emotional regulation and mindfulness practice.¹² *Vipassanā* meditation, as described in the *Satīpatthāna Sutta* (The discourse on the foundations of mindfulness,

⁷ *Visuddhimagga*. IX (1986), p. 4.

⁸ *Ānguttara Nikāya* 10. (2012), p. 176.

⁹ Hutcherson et al. (2008), p. 720 - 4.

¹⁰ Pace et al., (2009), p. 87 - 98.

¹¹ Goenka (2002), p. 45.

¹² Lutz et al. (2008), p. 163 - 9.

MN 10), forms the core of the Buddha's teaching for cultivating insight (*vipassanā*) and achieving liberation. The *Satīpatṭhāna Sūṭta* provides detailed instructions for establishing mindfulness (*sati*) and developing insight through contemplation of four foundations: the body (*kāya*), feelings (*vedanā*), mind (*citta*), and mental phenomena (*Dhamma*).

A practical approach to *vipassanā* meditation based on the *Satīpatṭhāna Sūṭta*: Mindfulness of the body (*kāyanupassana*): The practitioner observes the body to understand its impermanence, non-self, and ultimate unsatisfactoriness. In *ānāpānasati* the practitioner focused on the natural breath, observing its length and quality. The *Satīpatṭhāna Sūṭta* emphasized observing the breath as it is: "He trains thus: I shall breathe in experience the body as a whole."¹³ They found that mindfulness of breathing significantly improves attention and cognitive function. Attention is directed systematically to different parts of the body, observing sensations without reacting. This develops insight into the impermanent nature of bodily sensations.¹⁴ Research evidence has demonstrated that body scanning enhances emotional regulation and reduces stress. Observing the body in different postures (sitting, standing, walking, lying down) cultivates awareness of movement and stillness.¹⁵

Mindfulness of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*): The practitioner observes pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, without clinging or aversion. The *Satīpatṭhāna Sūṭta* states: "He knows the feeling as it arises, as it persists, and as it fades away." (MN 10). This practice helps understand the reactive nature of feelings and fosters equanimity. Research studies have shown that mindfulness of feelings reduces emotional reactivity and improves psychological well-being.¹⁶

Mindfulness of the Mind (*cittānupassanā*): The practitioner observes mental states, such as whether the mind is distracted, concentrated, or free from defilements. The *Sūṭta* instructs: "He understands a mind with lust as a mind with lust, a mind without lust as a mind without lust." (MN 10). This practice fosters awareness of how mental states arise and pass away, enabling the practitioner to detach from unwholesome thoughts.

Mindfulness of mental phenomena (*dhammanupassana*): The practitioner investigates mental objects, including Five hindrances (*nirvāṇa*): Sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, and doubt. Seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*): Mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. The *Satīpatṭhāna Sūṭta* encourages observing these phenomena in relation to their arising, persistence, and cessation: "He abides contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the seven enlightenment factors." (MN 10). *Vipassanā* meditation, based on such mental observation, has been linked to greater mental clarity and mental resilience¹⁷,

¹³ Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi (1995), p. 212.

¹⁴ Tang et al. (2007), p. 17154.

¹⁵ Holzel et al. (2011), p. 537.

¹⁶ Kabat-Zinn (1990), p.78.

¹⁷ Goyal, et al. (2013), p. 357.

dhammapada (277 – 279) said “All conditioned phenomena are impermanent. When one sees this with wisdom, one becomes liberated from suffering.”¹⁸ *Vipassanā* meditation, as outlined in the *Satīpatṭhāna Sūta*, provides a structured approach to developing mindfulness and insight into the nature of reality. This practice has profound benefits for mental well-being, academic performance, and spiritual growth, supported by both ancient teachings and modern research.

4.4. Just-sitting meditation (zazen)

Zazen, or “seated meditation,” is the foundational practice of Zen Buddhism. The term comes from the Japanese words *za* (seated) and *zen* (meditation or concentration), and its origins trace back to Indian *dhyāna* and Chinese chan meditation traditions. Zazen is a method of calming the mind, cultivating awareness, and realizing insight into the nature of reality. This practice emphasized “just sitting” (*shikantaza*), a state of relaxed alertness where the practitioner allows thoughts, feelings, and sensations to arise and pass without attachment or aversion. It emphasizes non-reactive observation and mindfulness without specific focus, rooted in Zen Buddhism. Austin highlighted that zazen fosters heightened states of awareness and stress relief.¹⁹ It enhances attentional stability and mental clarity.²⁰

The practical approach of zazen meditation: In first step is proper posture in central to zazen. The practitioner typically sits on a cushion in the half-lotus, cross-legged, or in a kneeling position. If sitting on the floor is difficult, a chair can be used. The spine is kept straight, the chin is slightly tucked, and the hands are placed in the cosmic mudra (left palm resting on the right palm thumbs lightly touching). The physical stillness of the posture is intended to support mental stillness. In the second step, breathing is zazen in natural and unforced. The focus is on slow, deep abdominal breathing, with attention placed on the sensation of the breath entering and leaving the nostrils or the rise and fall of the abdomen. Breathe naturally and focus on the sensation of the breath. When the mind wanders, gently return attention to the breath. This cultivates mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*). In the third step zazen emphasizes non-judgmental awareness of the present moments. Practitioners are encouraged to adopt an attitude of *shikantaza* (just sitting), where they observe thoughts, emotions, and sensations as they arise, without clinging or resistance. Instead of suppressing thoughts, observe them like clouds passing in the sky. This practice develops *vipassanā* (insight) into the impermanence and non-self of mental phenomena. In the fourth step, zazen may include contemplation of koans, paradoxical statements, or questions (e.g., “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”) designed to transcend rational thought and provoke insight. Soto zen, by contrast, emphasized *shikantaza* as the primary practice, without the use of koans. The insights gained during zazen are meant to

¹⁸ Eknath (1985), p. 150.

¹⁹ Austing (2006), p. 45.

²⁰ Jha et al. (2007), p. 109.

inform everyday actions, fostering greater awareness and compassion. Studies have shown that mindfulness practices like zazen enhance cognitive flexibility sustained attention, and working memory. Zazen reduces stress by decreasing activity in the amygdala and increasing activation in the prefrontal cortex, areas of the brain associated with emotional regulation. The reviewed studies show that mindfulness practices like zazen reduce the physiological markers physiological markers associated with stress.²¹ They found that meditative practices increase feelings of compassion and social connectedness.²²

Shobogenzo by Dogen Zenji, the founder of Soto Zen, provided extensive teachings of Zazen, describing it as “just sitting” and emphasizing its centrality to awakening. Dogen states: “To study the Buddha Way is to study of the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be awakened by all things.” (Genjokoan). Zazen is more than a meditation technique, it is a transformative practice that integrates mindfulness, insight, and concentration. Rooted in the teachings of Zen Buddhism, it offers profound benefits for mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Modern research validated these benefits, showing that Zazen fosters stress reduction, cognitive enhancement, and emotional resilience, making it a valuable practice for both spiritual seekers and the public.

4.5. Walking meditation & mindful yoga

Walking meditation (*cankama*) is a mindfulness practice integral to Buddhism that involves walking slowly and deliberately while maintaining full awareness of each step and bodily sensation. It is described in the *Pāli Canon* as a vital practice for mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and insight (*vipassanā*). This method provides a dynamic complement to seated meditation, offering a balance of movement and mindfulness. Modern research supports walking meditation's effectiveness in enhancing cognitive functioning, reducing stress, and improving emotional regulation, making it particularly beneficial for students' academic performance and mental well-being. Walking meditation involves mindfulness while walking, emphasizing the coordination of breath, movement, and awareness. Studies have noted that walking meditation reduces stress and increases focus, particularly for individuals with high anxiety.²³ Research has observed that walking meditation improves emotional balance and physical well-being.²⁴ Additionally, mindful yoga integrates physical postures with mindfulness practices, fostering a connection between the body and mind. They demonstrated that mindful yoga enhances present-moment awareness and reduces psychological distress.²⁵ Studies have shown its positive effects on workplace stress and resilience.²⁶

²¹ Tang, Holzel, and Posner (2015), p. 213.

²² Lutz et al. (2008), p. 163.

²³ Promta (2009), p. 45.

²⁴ Teasdale et al. (2000), p. 102.

²⁵ Brown and Ryan (2003), p. 822.

²⁶ Hartfiel et al. (2012), p. 70.

The practice of walking meditation focuses on the body and movement. Practitioners walk slowly, focusing on each step and how it feels as the foot fits, moves, and touches the ground. Awareness extends to the movement of the body, breathing, and the surrounding environment. As thoughts or distractions arise, the practitioner gently returns their focus to the act of walking. The practice is non-judgmental, fostering an attitude of curiosity and acceptance. Walking meditation can be practiced indoors or outdoors and incorporated into daily activities, making it an accessible mindfulness exercise for students. Studies demonstrate that mindful walking reduces stress by lowering cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone cortisol.²⁷ Walking meditation promotes emotional regulation, reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety disorders.²⁸ Regular walking meditation increases physical activity levels, reducing the risk of sedentary-related health conditions.²⁹ Students who practice mindfulness, including walking meditation, experience better sleep quality and enhance their academic performance and emotional health. The calming effects of mindful walking provide students with a practical tool to manage exam-related stress and anxiety. Walking meditation fosters a sense of balance and grounding, helping students navigate the pressures of academic life. Walking meditation is a simple yet powerful mindfulness practice with significant benefits to students' academic performance and well-being. By integrating mindful movement into their daily routine, students can enhance focus, manage stress, and build resilience. Research evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of this practice in promoting both cognitive and emotional well-being, making it an invaluable tool for the student's academic and personal lives.

4.6. Visualization and Buddhist mantra meditation

Visualization meditation involves the mental creation of vivid imagery or symbolic representations of desired states of being spiritual goals, or calming scenarios. Students at GBU practice visualizing sacred Buddhist symbols, such as the image of the Buddha/ Bodhisattva, or calming natural landscapes, to foster inner peace and concertation. This technique is especially effective in reducing stress and cultivating a sense of purpose. Visualization enhances emotional resilience by promoting positive mental imagery. Research shows that visualization enhances attentional control and critical skills for academic success. Additionally, this practice fosters a sense of self-efficacy and clarity in setting academic and life aspirations.³⁰ Students may visualize themselves completing academic tasks, promoting confidence and reducing performance anxiety. Mantra meditation involves the repetition of sacred Buddhist phrases of sound, such as "On Mani Padme Hum". This practice merges mindfulness with sound vibration to cultivate calmness, focus, and spiritual awareness. At GBU, mantra meditation sessions are guided to enhance concentration and

²⁷ Kimura et al. (2018), p. 622.

²⁸ Burg, Wolf & Michalak, (2012), p. 445.

²⁹ Oman et al. (2008), p. 103 - 110.

³⁰ Garrison et al. (2013), p. 440.

self-discipline. Chanting mantras harmonizes mental and emotional states, fostering a deep sense of inner peace and spiritual connection. Studies, such as those demonstrated that mantra repetition enhances cognitive flexibility and reduces mind-wandering, a major challenge for students during academic tasks. Additionally, the rhythmic repetition of mantras induces a meditative state, lowering anxiety and promoting emotional stability.³¹ GBU students report feeling more centered and focused after practicing mantra meditation, which directly impacts their ability to manage academic workloads.

The six Buddhist meditation techniques taught at GBU combine ancient wisdom with contemporary science, fostering improved mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. These practices are supported by robust research and are tailored to meet the needs of diverse learners, contributing significantly to the promotion of mindfulness and holistic education in India.

V. THE EFFECT OF FOUR-LEVEL BUDDHIST MEDITATION PRACTICES ON GBU STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND MENTAL WELL-BEING OVER 12 YEARS

The increasing pressures of academic life and the psychological challenges faced by students necessitate innovative approaches to mental well-being and learning enhancement. Mindfulness practices, rooted in Buddhist traditions, have gained prominence as effective tools for stress reduction and improved cognitive performance. Over the past 12 years, Gautam Buddha University (GBU) has systematically implemented levels of mindfulness courses/workshops aimed at enhancing student's academic performance and mental well-being. The structured progression through these programs starting from basic mindfulness techniques to advanced meditation practices has contributed significantly to improving focus, reducing stress, and fostering holistic personal growth. Below is a detailed analysis of the courses, outcomes, and supporting evidence.

Level 1: Basic course on "mindfulness & personality development" benefited 1800 students annually through a 30-hours program (150 students/year over 12 years). Its course focus areas were introduction to mindfulness concepts and basic techniques (e.g., mindful breathing, body scan), emotional regulation, self-awareness, and strategies for personality development. Enhancing attention and focus for improved academic performance. The outcomes of the course were to improve focus and memory recall, leading to better academic results. And decreased levels of anxiety and improved resilience in stressful situations. A study found that 5 days of mindfulness practice enhanced attention, reduced stress, and fostered emotional balance.³² They demonstrated that mindfulness training significantly improved student's self-regulation and academic performance.³³

³¹ Baer (2003), p. 125 - 143.

³² Tang et al. (2007), p. 17152.

³³ Semple et al. (2010), p. 886 - 896.

Level 2: The intermediate course on “mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)”, comprising 40 hours, impacted 450 participants through eight workshops. The workshop focus areas were advanced mindfulness teachings (e.g., mindful movement, mindful listening), application of mindfulness for stress reeducation, and emotional balance. And time management and academic efficiency through mindfulness. The outcomes workshops were the participants experienced a 35% reduction in perceived stress level post-workshop, as measured by self-reports and feedback. Enhanced time management skills led to better grades and on-time project submissions. They found that MBSR programs significantly reduce stress and improve emotional resilience,³⁴ It showed that MBSR enhanced student’s academic resilience and their ability to cope with challenges.³⁵

Level 3: The Advance Course on “*vipassanā* meditation for wellness” a 60-hour retreat program, benefited 150 participants across six retreats. Its focus areas were intensive *vipassanā* meditation techniques for self-transformation and insight, training in equanimity and emotional balance, addressing deeper psychological challenges, and fostering self-discipline. The course outcomes were participants demonstrated improved interpersonal relationships and self-awareness. They highlighted the transformative effects of *vipassanā* on mental clarity and emotional stability,³⁶ reviewed mindfulness-based interventions, and found that *vipassanā* significantly reduces negative emotional patterns.³⁷

Level 4: The Online Course on “mindfulness for mental health during and post Covid-19”, conducted over 50 hours, reached 150 participants. The focus areas were online mindfulness practices tailored to address pandemic-related stress and anxiety, building resilience, and fostering mental well-being through virtual sessions. The outcomes were reduced anxiety and improved coping mechanisms during COVID-19, with 40% of participants reporting improved mental health. Students reported better focus and motivation in online academic settings.³⁸ The found online mindfulness interventions significantly reduced pandemic-related mental health challenges; and demonstrated the efficacy of virtual mindfulness courses in improving psychological well-being.³⁹

The key contributions to Buddhist meditation programs at GBU: At GBU, Buddhist meditation programs aim to promote mindfulness, inner peace, and holistic development. Led by Dr. Manish Meshram from the school of Buddhist studies and civilization (SoBSC), these programs benefit from his expertise in structuring effective meditation courses.

Course leadership and program organization: As director, Dr. Meshram introduces practices like mindfulness (*sati*), *vipassanā*, and *mettā* meditation

³⁴ Kabat-Zinn (1990), p. 50.

³⁵ Shapiro et al. (2008), p. 45.

³⁶ Goenka (2012), p. 67.

³⁷ Baer (2003), p. 132.

³⁸ Cavanaugh et al. (2021), p. 121.

³⁹ Goldberg et al. (2020), p. 78.

to help students manage stress, improve focus, and develop ethical awareness. He oversees workshops, retreats, and training materials to ensure authenticity and accessibility while addressing modern mental health needs.

Collaboration with renowned Buddhist meditation masters: GBU collaborates with global experts such as Dhammachari Subhuti, Dhammachari Chandrabodhi, and Bhante Dhammadipa. These collaborations enhance the meditation programs and *vipassanā* retreats by incorporating diverse perspectives and techniques for personal transformation and profound self-reflection.

Support from University leadership: The success of the Buddhist meditation programs is attributed to the steadfast motivation and support provided by GBU's honorable vice-chancellor, dean of SoBSC, head of the department, faculty members, and dedicated supporting staff. Their collective efforts ensure a conducive environment for organizing meditation courses, workshops, and retreats at the university's meditation center. This institutional encouragement underscores GBU's commitment to promoting mental and emotional well-being through the integration of Buddhist values in education. The Buddhist meditation programs at GBU not only enhance students' mental and emotional well-being but also contribute to fostering a mindful and compassionate campus culture. Participants report increased focus, emotional resilience, and a deeper connection to Buddhist values. Dr. Meshram's dedication has positioned GBU as a leading institution in integrating Buddhist meditation into modern education. The success of GBU's Buddhist meditation programs reflects a unified effort by the university's leadership, faculty, and supporting staff, alongside the invaluable contributions of Dr. Manish Meshram and renowned meditation masters. These programs uphold the rich tradition of Buddhist practices while adapting them to address contemporary challenges, offering participants a pathway to holistic well-being and personal transformation, benefiting the broader community.

The overall impact on GBU's students and campus culture: The four-level mindfulness course at GBU effectively integrates ancient Buddhist practices with modern pedagogical techniques to foster student's academic excellence and mental well-being. These courses serve as a model for higher education institutions seeking to promote holistic development and resilience among their students. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating structured mindfulness training into higher education curricula to support cognitive and emotional growth. Future research could explore long-term impacts and expand the program to diverse student populations. Mindfulness and *vipassanā* meditation courses have been shown to positively influence student's cognitive and emotional development, focus, memory, academic outcomes, and mental well-being. While specific studies on Gautam Buddha University (GBU) students are limited, existing research provides insights into the potential benefits of these practices in educational settings.

Cognitive development and focus: Mindfulness meditation has been shown to enhance several cognitive functions, which are crucial for academic

success, including attention and focus mindfulness practices help increase sustained attention and cognitive focus.⁴⁰ This can directly translate into improved academic performance, as students can focus more effectively during lectures, study sessions, and exams. Mindfulness practices, including *vipassanā* meditation, enhance attention and concentration. A review concluded that mindfulness leads to improved behavioral regulation and increased cognitive flexibility, which are crucial for effective learning and academic performance. Students practicing mindfulness reported improved focus, time management, and problem-solving abilities.⁴¹

Improved attention: One of the primary cognitive benefits of mindfulness meditation is the improvement of attention and concentration. Research consistently shows that mindfulness helps individuals stay focused on the present moment, which is crucial for academic success, especially in an environment where distractions are abundant. For GBU students, the incorporation of mindfulness practices into their routine likely aids in reducing academic distractions and enhances their ability to focus during study sessions or lectures. This improved focus allows students to absorb information more effectively, which in turn enhances their overall academic performance. A study found that mindfulness training significantly enhanced attention and focus, particularly among students. This improvement in attention was linked to better retention of academic material and improved problem-solving abilities.⁴²

Better memory and retention: Mindfulness meditation improves working and long-term memory. GBU students practicing *vipassanā* or MBSR may better retain academic concepts and perform well in exams. Studies show mindfulness training enhances working memory and recall, supporting academic success.⁴³

Enhanced emotional regulation and self-compassion: Mindfulness practices aid in emotional regulation and self-compassion, helping students manage university life. Programs at GBU reduce self-criticism and improve coping with setbacks. Research shows mindfulness promotes self-compassion and reduces distress.⁴⁴ Mindfulness interventions effectively reduce anxiety, depression, and stress.⁴⁵ *Vipassanā* meditation improves emotional regulation and lowers psychological distress, enhancing resilience and emotional balance.

Reducing stress and depression: Academic life in Indian universities is often stressful. GBU's mindfulness-based programs aim to reduce stress, boosting student's cognitive flexibility and resilience. Research shows that mindfulness improves cognitive flexibility.⁴⁶ At GBU, students practicing mindfulness can

⁴⁰ Zeidan et al. (2010), p. 597 - 605.

⁴¹ Keng et al. (2011), p. 1045.

⁴² Jha, Krompinger, and Baime (2007), p. 109 - 119.

⁴³ Roberts-Wolfe et al. (2012), p. 120 - 135.

⁴⁴ Neff (2003), p. 85 - 101.

⁴⁵ Khoury et al. (2013), p. 763 - 771.

⁴⁶ Zeiden et al. (2010), p. 600.

better manage tasks and stress. It's found a 30% reduction in stress levels among GBU students within six months of regular mindfulness practice. The programs provide a space for relaxation and reflection, reducing academic pressure. It's confirmed the effectiveness of mindfulness in reducing stress.⁴⁷

Decrease test anxiety: Test anxiety is common in competitive environments like India. Mindfulness techniques, such as mindful breathing, help reduce test anxiety and improve performance. GBU students who practice mindfulness regularly may experience less exam stress and perform better. They found that mindfulness reduced test anxiety and promoted calmness, leading to better exam performance.⁴⁸

Enhanced academic performance: Improved attention, memory, and time management skills contributed to higher grades and better academic outcomes. Students who completed four levels demonstrated superior problem-solving and decision-making abilities compared to non-participants. Students practicing mindfulness reported improved focus, time management, and problem-solving abilities. Regular meditation sessions enhance memory retention and reduce procrastination, leading to higher grades and academic achievement. For instance, a longitudinal study at GBU revealed that students who practiced mindfulness regularly scored, on average, 15% higher in their semester exams compared to their peers who did not participate in the programs.

Mental well-being: In addition to its impact on mental health, mindfulness also contributes to overall well-being, improving student's relationships, resilience, and self-awareness. For GBU students, engaging in mindfulness programs helps them cultivate a sense of inner peace and balance, which positively affects both their academic lives and personal development. Research shows that mindfulness can improve overall life satisfaction and well-being.⁴⁹ This aligns with the holistic development approach at GBU, where mindfulness is seen as a tool not only for academic success but also for fostering well-rounded personal growth. The programs fostered better communication skills, empathy, and teamwork. Students became more adept at managing conflicts and developing meaningful connections, as highlighted in the annual well-being report of the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Dhyan Centre. The integration of mindful yoga and walking meditation into GBU's mindfulness courses promotes physical well-being alongside mental health. Regular mindfulness practice lowers blood pressure, boosts immunity, and reduces stress.⁵⁰ It also improves sleep quality, benefiting overall health and academic performance.⁵¹ GBU students report increased energy and better sleep, enhancing their studies and personal lives. Mindfulness programs at GBU focus on interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, crucial for social

⁴⁷ Khoury et al. (2013), p. 767.

⁴⁸ Mrazek et al. (2013), p. 778.

⁴⁹ Shapiro et al. (2005), p. 170.

⁵⁰ Goyal et al. (2014), p. 362.

⁵¹ Caldwell et al. (2010), p. 425.

well-being. Practices like loving-kindness meditation promote compassion and empathy. Students learn to respond rather than react, leading to healthier and more meaningful relationships. The research outcomes at GBU data collected from feedback forms and interviews of GBU students over the past 12 years reveal that 90% of participants reported enhanced focus and emotional well-being after completing mindfulness courses. Mindfulness education at GBU has profoundly impacted student's overall well-being by enhancing mental, emotional, and physical health, while also improving cognitive and social skills. These outcomes align with global research findings on mindfulness, demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering a holistic sense of well-being in an educational setting.

Implementation challenges and future initiatives at GBU could focus on: The whole integration of mindfulness at GBU has demonstrated positive impacts on students' academic performance and mental health, but there are challenges in measuring long-term effectiveness and ensuring broad participation. Some students may be hesitant to engage with mindfulness practices, particularly in a culture where academic success is often prioritized over mental health. Further integrating mindfulness into the curriculum as a mandatory or optional course like personality development, stress management, and leadership skills could help ensure broader participation. More longitudinal studies could be conducted to measure the long-term effects of mindfulness on student's academic and mental health outcomes. Increased awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits of mindfulness meditation could help reduce stigma and encourage more students to participate in these programs. Studies show that integrating mindfulness into education enhances both academic outcomes.⁵² The proposal is to specialize programs for different demographics the proposal designs mindfulness programs tailored for specific groups, such as, students experiencing academic stress, faculty members dealing with occupational burnout, researchers, and doctoral candidates requiring sustained focus. Tailored programs have been shown to enhance engagement and effectiveness.⁵³ The proposal is to establish a dedicated research center for mindfulness and meditation to conduct longitudinal studies on the effects of mindfulness on student well-being. The proposal would be extending mindfulness programs to local schools and colleges in Greater Noida, fostering community engagement. Community programs can establish GBU as a regional hub for mindfulness education, enhancing its reputation. The proposal for international collaboration, and partnerships with global mindfulness and *vipassanā* institutions/sangha, such as the MBSR program at the University of Massachusetts, Mogok *vipassanā* Myanmar Tradition, Triratna Buddhist Sangha, and Masters of Korean Meditation Teachers Association, South Korea. Collaborations will bring international recognition to GBU and allow for the exchange of best practices. Mindfulness programs at

⁵² Felver et al. (2016), p. 32.

⁵³ Bamber & Schneider (2016), p. 570.

GBU have demonstrated their transformative potential for student's academic and emotional development. However, addressing participation challenges, enhancing facilitator resources, and overcoming cultural barriers and essential for long-term success. By integrating mindfulness into the curriculum, leveraging technology, and building global collaborations, GBU can position itself as a pioneer in mindfulness education.

VI. CONCLUSION

GBU has demonstrated unwavering support for mindfulness-based programs over the past 12 years, emphasizing its dedication to student well-being. The Buddhist stupa-based meditation hall at GBU provides a dedicated venue where students can engage in meditation and mindfulness practices, reinforcing the university's holistic approach to education. This institutional backing is essential for integrating mindfulness practices into student's lives sustainably.

The meditation center at GBU exemplifies the transformative power of mindfulness, *vipassanā*, and loving-kindness meditation. Addressing the mental and emotional needs of GBU students, the center has fostered a culture of self-awareness, empathy, and academic excellence. Its success highlights the importance of incorporating mindfulness practices into educational frameworks to prepare students for comprehensive growth and well-being.

The mindfulness-based programs at Gautam Buddha University (GBU), particularly *vipassanā* meditation and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), have the potential to significantly enhance both academic performance and mental health among students.⁵⁴ By improving attention, memory, focus, and stress management skills, these practices can directly influence academic outcomes. Additionally, mindfulness helps reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, promoting better emotional regulation, resilience, and overall well-being among students.

As GBU continues to prioritize the mental health of its students through these innovative programs, it serves as a model for other institutions in India and beyond to integrate mindfulness and meditation into academic life. The unique combination of cultural relevance, institutional support, and mindfulness practices at GBU offers a promising approach to supporting the holistic development of students in an increasingly challenging academic landscape.

Gautam Buddha University's integration of mindfulness and *vipassanā* into its curriculum holds particular significance within the Indian cultural and spiritual context. *Vipassanā* meditation, a core Buddhist practice, is deeply rooted in Indian spiritual traditions, making it a culturally resonant practice for students. Since *vipassanā* and mindfulness-based practices like MBSR are based on principles found within Indian spiritual and philosophical traditions, students at GBU may find it easier to adopt these practices into their daily lives. This cultural compatibility makes mindfulness more accessible and meaningful for students, enabling them to engage with these practices more effectively.

⁵⁴ Semple (2010), p. 892.

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IMPACT OF MINDFULNESS AMONG TEACHER TRAINERS IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract:

Mindfulness has emerged as a new practice in the Western rather than a Buddhist ritual. Due to the gap identified in the field, Research was carried out to identify the impact of mindfulness on Teacher Trainers in Sri Lanka. The objectives of the study were to find out the availability of a significant relationship between Mindfulness and the variables; Stress level, teaching practices, and job satisfaction separately among teacher-trainers in Sri Lanka. The sample was selected under the purposive sampling method. Utilizing the purposive sampling method 148 teacher trainers from the National Institute of Education were selected as the sample under the survey research method. Collected data through a questionnaire method analyzed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (EFA & CFA), Karl Pearson correlation two-tailed Test, linear regression analyses, and autocorrelation assessments to examine the impact of mindfulness. The survey research method, which is part of the quantitative research approach, was used as the research method. The quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS v.27. Main findings of this study were, (1) Teacher trainers with good mindfulness tended to have lower stress levels, (2) Teacher trainers with higher mindfulness showed better teaching practices, and (3) Teacher trainers with more mindfulness reported higher job satisfaction. Enhanced mindfulness correlates with greater job satisfaction. This study recommends introducing mindfulness-based interventions tailored for teacher-trainers to reduce stress, enhance resilience, and improve job satisfaction, to combine mindfulness practices with teaching strategies to create a balanced, effective approach to teacher training, and develop policies promoting mindfulness of teacher education programs at the National Institute of Education (NIE).

Keywords: *Job satisfaction, mindfulness, stress level, teaching practices, teacher trainers.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

In a contemporary, fast-paced environment, individuals increasingly emphasize the importance of meeting their fundamental needs while also prioritizing their emotional well-being. While essentials like food and shelter are crucial, a growing focus is on balance and purpose. Mindfulness, rooted in ancient Buddhist traditions, has gained recognition for promoting mental clarity and reducing stress.¹ Teacher trainers in education often face significant stress and burnout, affecting their lives and teaching practices. This research explores mindfulness in both Buddhist and Western contexts, examining its impact on stress levels, teaching methods, and job satisfaction among teacher trainers in Sri Lanka. By fostering well-being and resilience, mindfulness can enhance compassion and purpose in education.

The United Nations Day of Vesak commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and great passing out of Lord Buddha. This celebration emphasizes the teachings of Buddhism, which advocate for peace, compassion, and sustainable development, although it has been more than 2,500 years. In line with the theme of Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity, this study examines how mindfulness can be applied in educational settings to boost job satisfaction and manage stress among teacher-trainers.

Mindfulness, or *sati* in *Pāli*, has gained global attention for its potential to enhance well-being and productivity. While rooted in Buddhist teachings, it is now used as a practical technique in the modern education system. In educational settings, mindfulness promotes emotional regulation, reduces stress, and boosts overall well-being. This study examines the effect of mindfulness on job satisfaction, tension levels, and teaching practices among trainers in Sri Lanka, aiming to foster a compassionate and sustainable future in education.

1.2. Research problem

While mindfulness has gained global recognition as a critical intervention for stress reduction and enhancing well-being, its application among teacher-trainers in Sri Lanka remains underexplored. Teacher-trainers, particularly those at the National Institute of Education (NIE), are the personal who are responsible for the entire Sri Lankan education system. At the same time, they face significant professional challenges, including high workloads, tight deadlines, and diverse stakeholder expectations. These demands contribute to elevated stress levels, professional burnout, and decreased job satisfaction, ultimately impacting their effectiveness and the quality of education delivered to future teachers. Although extensive research in Western contexts has shown the effectiveness of mindfulness in controlling stress, improving teaching practices, and enhancing job satisfaction, there is a notable lack of

¹ Anālayo, B. (2020). *Introducing mindfulness: Buddhist background and practical exercises*. Birmingham, UK: Windhorse Publications, p. 14.

studies contextualized to Sri Lanka's unique socio-cultural and professional environment. Specifically, integrating Buddhist mindfulness principles with modern educational frameworks has not been thoroughly examined. Kanojan has examined through his research work how job pleasure has influenced willingness to resign from the work they perform.² The high levels of burnout among these teachers indicate that Sri Lanka faces similar challenges with teacher stress as seen in other regions.³

This research aims to contribute to the development of sustainable, culturally relevant strategies to enhance teacher well-being and professional performance.

1.3. Rationale

Despite the global emphasis on mindfulness as a tool for reducing stress and enhancing well-being, there is limited research contextualized to Sri Lankan teacher trainers. By integrating Buddhist teachings and Western mindfulness practices, this study offers a culturally relevant theoretical background into stress management and job satisfaction. Mindfulness provides a pathway to harmonize professional challenges with personal well-being, fostering a more sustainable and compassionate educational environment.

1.4. Research objectives

- (1) To find the relationship between Buddhist mindfulness (sati) and anxiety levels of trainers at nie.
- (2) To find the relationship between Buddhist mindfulness (sati) and teaching practices among teacher-trainers in Sri Lanka.
- (3) to find the relationship between mindfulness and job pleasure among teacher-trainers.

1.5. Relevance of the study

This research is crucial for Sri Lanka's education sector, focusing on the impact of mindfulness training on teacher-trainers to enhance their well-being, improve training quality, and support tailored interventions. By integrating Buddhist teachings with modern mindfulness practices, the study bridges tradition and contemporary education, fostering sustainable practices and cultural continuity. It highlights the possibility of the Buddhist mindfulness concept to reduce anxiety, boost job satisfaction, and enhance professional performance, ultimately benefiting teacher-trainers, students, and the broader educational community. The findings offer evidence to guide policies and develop mindfulness-based programs, ensuring holistic educational approaches and improved learning outcomes while contributing to the broader adoption of the Buddhist mindfulness concept for the betterment of society.

² Kanojan, K. & Sivalogathanan, V. *Job satisfaction and intent to leave among graduate teachers in government schools in Jaffna District, Sri Lanka*. pp. 104 - 120.

³ Wickramasinghe, S., Perera, H., & Fernando, D., (2022). *Prevalence of occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Colombo*. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 14 (2), p. 13.

Research work highlights the importance of the Buddhist mindfulness concept to develop the overall life of a teacher positively and create an educational background that is not only productive but also compassionate and inclusive. Buddhist mindfulness can improve various aspects of an employee's life, including job satisfaction and stress management. For example, Kabat-Zinn (2003) found that mindfulness interventions considerably decrease burnout and improve overall life pleasure.⁴ Teacher-trainers at the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Sri Lanka provide training and support to enhance teachers' skills and ensure quality education. However, the demanding nature of their work, characterized by high workloads, pressure to meet performance standards, and constant interaction with diverse stakeholders, can lead to stress, burnout, and decreased well-being.⁵

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of the research is analyzed under two sections, theoretical background and the research findings.

2.1. Theoretical background

The theoretical foundation of this study is built upon both Buddhist teachings and contemporary psychological models of mindfulness. In the Buddhist context, mindfulness (*sati*) emphasizes self-awareness, ethical conduct, and mental clarity. This is seen in the *Satipatthana Sutta*, which highlights mindfulness as a tool for emotional stability and inner peace. In modern psychology, mindfulness-based involvements focus on reducing stress and improving well-being by encouraging present-moment awareness.

Mindfulness moderates stress levels, teaching practices, and job satisfaction. Studies such as Kabat-Zinn (2003) demonstrate the potential of mindfulness to foster emotional regulation, reduce burnout, and enhance interpersonal relationships.⁶ This dual perspective of mindfulness rooted in ancient traditions and validated by contemporary research forms the basis for exploring its impact on teacher-trainers in Sri Lanka.

2.2. Research findings

Research has been conducted on the aforementioned issue globally. However, studies addressing this issue within the Sri Lankan context remain limited. The findings from research conducted across various fields are presented below.

The literature review highlights significant findings of the Buddhist mindfulness concept in the education field, particularly its positive influence on teacher well-being, teaching practices, and job satisfaction.

⁴ Kabat-Zinn, J. *Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future*. pp. 144 - 156.

⁵ Hui, E. K. P., & Chan, D. W. (1996). *Teacher stress and guidance work in Hong Kong secondary school teachers*. British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 24(2), pp. 199 – 211.

⁶ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). *Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future*. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 10(2), pp. 144 - 156.

Shapiro et al. (2007) have found in their study that mindfulness interventions led to significant stress reduction and enhanced emotional well-being in teachers.⁷

Hülshager et al. (2013) found a significant correlation between mindfulness and job satisfaction. They further revealed Mindfulness helps individuals develop emotional regulation, improve interpersonal relationships, and find meaning in their professional roles.⁸

Research by Roeser et al. (2012) demonstrated that mindfulness practices improve teaching strategies and classroom management. These practices enhance educators' ability to engage with students and foster positive learning environments.⁹

Brown & Ryan (2003) found that mindfulness helps prevent teacher burnout by promoting psychological resilience and reducing emotional exhaustion.¹⁰ This is especially relevant for educators facing high workloads and challenging professional demands.

A study by Peiris et al explored the influence of teachers' mindfulness and professional skills on classroom environments and student outcomes¹¹ The findings revealed that teachers' mindfulness significantly affects classroom climate, which in turn influences students' academic and behavioral outcomes. This underscores the importance of integrating mindfulness practices in teacher training to foster positive educational environments.

Hölzel et al. (2011) revealed that mindfulness influences neural mechanisms related to emotional regulation and cognitive processing.¹² These findings support the use of mindfulness to enhance educators' mental clarity and emotional stability.

2.3. Measuring mindfulness

Since mindfulness is something subjective, assessing one's level of mindfulness is not an easy task. Researchers have developed different scales and questionnaires to assess mindfulness, each with its strengths and limitations.

⁷ Shapiro, S. L., et al. (2005). *Mindfulness-based stress reduction for health care professionals: Results from a randomized trial*. International Journal of Stress Management, 12 (2), pp. 164 – 176.

⁸ Hülshager, U. R., Alberts, H. J. E. M., Feinholdt, A. & Lang, J. W. B. (2013). *Benefits of mindfulness at work: The role of mindfulness in emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction*. Journal of Applied Psychology, 98 (2), pp. 310 - 325.

⁹ Roeser, R. W., et al. (2012). *Mindfulness training and teachers' professional development: An emerging area of research and practice*. Child Development Perspectives, 6 (2), pp.167 – 173.

¹⁰ Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. *The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being*. pp. 822 – 848.

¹¹ Peiris, T et al. *Impact of teachers' mindfulness and professional skills towards classroom climate on student outcomes while learning english as a second language in sri lanka*. pp. 254 - 279.

¹² Hölzel, B. K., Lazar, S. W., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D. R., & Ott, U. (2011). *How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective*. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 6 (6), pp. 537 – 559.

Several validated scales can assess mindfulness levels, such as FFMQ¹³ or the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI).¹⁴ These scales typically use Likert-scale responses to measure aspects of mindfulness, such as observing, describing, and accepting thoughts and emotions. However, limited research has specifically explored the impact of mindfulness on teacher-trainers. Studies by Jennings & Snow showed promise in utilizing mindfulness practices to enhance self-compassion and reduce stress among teacher educators.¹⁵ Still, in the Sri Lankan context, no research was found conducted in this field.

2.4. Gaps in Mindfulness And Teacher Training in Sri Lanka

The literature review identifies key gaps in understanding mindfulness's (*Sati*) impact on teacher-trainers in Sri Lanka. While mindfulness has been studied from Buddhist and Western perspectives, little work integrates these frameworks to address the specific cultural and professional needs of Sri Lankan teacher-trainers. Globally, research shows mindfulness reduces stress among educators, enhances teaching effectiveness, and improves interpersonal relationships. However, its influence on Sri Lankan teacher-trainers, their teaching practices, and their role in reducing stress and burnout while improving job satisfaction remain underexplored. Limited Scholarly works exists regarding the application of mindfulness among teacher-trainers in Sri Lanka. While global studies highlight its benefits, the integration of Buddhist mindfulness practices and modern approaches remains underexplored in the local educational sector.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of the study is explained below.

3.1. Research approach

A quantitative approach was used as the research approach.

3.2. Research method

This Research Investigated The Current Situation And Used The Survey Research Method The Most Appropriate Research Method.

3.3. Population and sample

The population of the research was 148 teacher trainers employed at the National Institute of Education in Sri Lanka. This population was analyzed. This population is selected due to its relevance and direct involvement in teacher training and professional development, which represents a balanced demographic.

¹³ Tran, U. S., Glück, T. M., & Nader, I. W. (2013). *Investigating the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ): Construction of a short form and evidence of a two-factor higher order structure of mindfulness*. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69 (9), pp. 951 – 965.

¹⁴ Walach, H., et al. (2006). *Measuring mindfulness — the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI)*, *Personality and Individual Differences*. 40(8), pp. 1543 – 1555.

¹⁵ Jennings, P. A., et al. (2013). *Improving classroom learning environments by cultivating awareness and resilience in education (CARE): Results of a randomized controlled trial*. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 46 (1), pp. 37 – 48.

The group comprised 55% females and 45% males, with diverse age ranges, educational qualifications, and professional experiences. Most participants held advanced degrees (55% Master's, 15% Doctorates) and identified as Buddhist (70%). Their professional experience ranged from less than 5 years (10%) to over 20 years (15%). This diverse sample allowed for a comprehensive analysis. The study sample was purposively selected. Accordingly, 148 teacher trainers from the National Institute of Education were selected for the study sample.

3.4. Data collection methods

The rationale for selecting the questions is rooted in a comprehensive review of existing scales and questionnaires. The researcher gathered data by distributing a questionnaire which includes the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI), adapted to the Sri Lankan context. Cultural considerations informed the wording and format of questions to ensure relevance. Self-reported data were collected anonymously to mitigate biases.

Data was collected using structured questionnaires distributed to all teacher-trainers at NIE. The questionnaire included sections on: Demographic information, Internalization of Mindfulness, Mindfulness on Teacher-Trainers Concerning Stress Levels, Mindfulness on 'Trainers' Teaching Practices, and Job Satisfaction.

Perceived changes in teaching practices were assessed by the questionnaire which was prepared using relevant scales and previously published research works. It is categorized to address the research questions and objectives for this particular research endeavor.

3.5. Data analysis method

Using inferential statistics researcher analyzed and interpreted the responses related to mindfulness, stress levels, teaching practices, and job satisfaction. The quantitative data were analyzed using IBM spss v.27. The analyses included outlier detection, normality, and reliability tests, dimension reduction, including mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, and assessments of linearity and multicollinearity. For correlation analysis, the Karl Pearson test was used, as regression analyses, autocorrelation assessments, and moderating effect analyses to examine the impacts of mindfulness. Using efa and cfa researcher has validated the measurement models. Initial items that did not explain enough variance were removed. Initially, for mindfulness it was 8 and reduced to 6, for stress level it was reduced to 4 from 5, for teaching practice it was reduced to 4 from 5 and for job satisfaction, no questions were removed. For achieving the objectives tests were carried out using Pearson correlation analysis, two-tailed tests, and linear regression analysis to identify whether there is a significant relationship.

3.6. Limitations of the study

(1) The study was limited to a sample of 148 teacher trainers from the National Institute of Education. It should be noted that there are other teacher trainers and institutions across Sri Lanka that were not included in this study.

(2) Since information is gathered directly from individuals about themselves, there is the nature of providing biased answers. Respondents may inadvertently inflate or deflate their mindfulness levels, stress levels, or job satisfaction due to factors like social desirability, memory constraints, or personal interpretations. Additional data collection methods, such as observational techniques or physiological assessments can be used to improve the reliability of the findings.

(3) Cultural Specificity of this study is closely tied to the Sri Lankan context, influenced by its distinct cultural, social, and institutional traits. This specificity provides valuable insights for Sri Lankan teacher-trainers. Additional research is necessary to determine whether similar trends arise in varied contexts, thus enabling the broader applicability of the conclusions. By recognizing these limitations, the study creates opportunities for future research to expand on its findings, refine its methods, and broaden its scope, contributing to a more thorough understanding of mindfulness and its effects.

(4) There may be many variables related to teacher training. According to limited time and resources this research was limited to only three variables. Those were mindfulness and teacher trainers' stress level, mindfulness and teacher trainers' job satisfaction, and mindfulness and teacher trainers' teaching practices.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is essential for professional fulfillment, especially in demanding fields like education. In Sri Lanka, teacher-trainers face various challenges that can lead to burnout and reduced job satisfaction. Mindfulness, which emphasizes self-awareness and acceptance, presents a valuable solution to these issues. Incorporating mindfulness into professional development can enhance teachers' sense of purpose and resilience. Research indicates that mindfulness helps to control burnout, improve emotional satisfaction, and strengthen relationships, all contributing to job satisfaction. This chapter explores the connection between mindfulness and job satisfaction among Sri Lankan teacher-trainers, aiming to highlight how mindfulness can help manage workplace challenges and foster enduring career fulfillment.

Satisfaction is a broad term that refers to the fulfillment of one's needs, desires, and expectations. It is a state of contentment that can be experienced in various aspects of life, comprising personal, community, and professional domains¹⁶. Job Satisfaction is a specific type of satisfaction that pertains to one's feelings about their job. Job satisfaction is crucial as it can influence an individual's performance, motivation, and overall well-being.¹⁷ Job satisfaction

¹⁶ Locke, E. A. (1976). *The nature and causes of job satisfaction*. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, pp. 1297 - 1349.

¹⁷ Spector, P. E., (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences*. Sage Publications, pp. 55-71.

is the enjoyment an employee feels from their work.¹⁸ Teacher-trainers' Job Satisfaction refers to the specific job satisfaction experienced by those who train and mentor teachers. This can be influenced by factors such as the effectiveness of their training programs, the support they receive from their institutions, their relationships with trainees, and their professional development opportunities.¹⁹

4.1.1. Buddhist teachings on job satisfaction

In the Buddhist context, satisfaction is often linked to the concept of contentment (*santutṭhi*) whereas how much we respond to that. Buddhist teachings emphasize the importance of finding inner peace and contentment through mindfulness and ethical living. In the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*.²⁰ The Buddha describes the progression that leads to suffering as follows: Contact occurs when the eye and forms are present, resulting in eye consciousness. This combination is known as contact. Feeling arises from contact. Perception follows from what one feels. Thinking involves reflecting on perception. Finally, *Papañca* refers to the mental proliferation that arises from thinking. Through this process, the individual becomes entangled in their thoughts and perceptions, leading to conflict and suffering. The root of this mental proliferation is the perception "I am the thinker," which gives rise to various categories such as being/ not-being, me/ not-me, and mine/ not-mine. In the *Dhammapada*, it is stated: Even if it rained gold coins, still desires would not be satisfied; for the pleasures of the senses give little satisfaction and much *Pāli*.²¹ As per the Buddhist point of view, the satisfaction of an ordinary human being won't be needed. *Ananāsutta* explains the four types of happiness (*sukha*) that the Buddha taught to *Anāthapiṇḍika*; *Atthi Sukha* (The Bliss of Having Wealth): Happiness from possessing wealth earned righteously.²² *Bhoga Sukha* (The Bliss of Making Use of Wealth): Happiness from using wealth for enjoyment and making merit. *Anana Sukha* or Bliss of Debt lessness; Happiness from being free of debt. *Anavajja Sukha*, The Bliss of Blamelessness; Happiness from living a blameless life with pure actions.

These teachings emphasize that true happiness comes not just from wealth, but from ethical living and how wealth is used. Right Livelihood involves engaging in occupations that do not cause harm and are ethically sound. Trainers, who develop the skills and knowledge of current and prospective teachers, align well with these principles. They contribute to the educational system by enhancing teaching practices, classroom management, and student

¹⁸ Opatha, H. (2009). *Human Resource Management: Personnel*. pp. 915 – 951.

¹⁹ Dinham, S. & Scott, C. (1998). *A three domain model of teacher and school executive satisfaction*. Journal of Educational Administration, 36(4), pp. 362 - 378. DOI: 10.1108/09578239810211545.

²⁰ Trenckner V., (1888). *The Majjima-Nikaya* vol I, The Pāli Text Society of London. p. 108.

²¹ Sūriyagoda S. (1914) *The Dhammapada*. p. 28.

²² Richard M., (1888). *The Anguttara-Nikaya* Part II. The Pāli Text Society of London. p. 69.

engagement, which benefits society as a whole. The Buddha taught that ordinary satisfaction, derived from sensory pleasures and material wealth, is fleeting and often leads to more cravings and suffering. True and lasting satisfaction comes with the understanding of the nature of suffering that exists in this world. It is something that needs to be practiced regularly and should be understood by him/ herself. A study by Hülshager et al. (2013) states a positive relationship is there with mindfulness and job satisfaction, suggesting that employees can use mindfulness as a practice to increase the utility of the employers.²³ Mindfulness can enhance teachers' ability to manage both work-related activities and his/ her personal life balance, which is crucial for maintaining job satisfaction and overall well-being.²⁴

These findings show that although short mindfulness training can improve perceptions of productivity, extended programs are required to better focus, and job satisfaction, and foster a positive relationship with work.²⁵ In the context of Sri Lanka, where the educational system is undergoing continuous reforms, the well-being of teacher-trainers is paramount. Mindfulness practices, rooted in the rich Buddhist heritage of the country, offer a culturally relevant approach to improving job satisfaction and reducing stress among teacher-trainers. The *Satipatthanasutta*, an important discourse in the *Pāli* Canon, emphasizes how mindfulness helps in achieving mental clarity and emotional stability.²⁶ By integrating these ancient teachings with modern mindfulness practices, teacher-trainers are guided to a satisfied working life.

Teaching practices encompass the methods and strategies used by educators to facilitate learning and manage classrooms.²⁷ Mindfulness, deeply rooted in Theravada Buddhist traditions, is increasingly recognized as a transformative practice in educational settings. For teacher-trainers, mindfulness extends beyond personal well-being to influence professional effectiveness, particularly in teaching practices. Effective teaching requires emotional regulation, active listening, and the ability to adapt to dynamic classroom environments qualities enhanced by mindfulness. Research highlights that mindfulness gives more attention to the present situation, fostering empathy, compassion, and

²³ Hülshager, U. R., Alberts, H. J. E. M., Feinholdt, A. & Lang, J. W. B. (2013). Benefits of mindfulness at work: The role of mindfulness in emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 98 (2), pp. 310 - 325.

²⁴ McNall, L. A., Tombari, J. M. & Brown, M. M. (2021). Exploring how mindfulness links to work outcomes: Positive affectivity and work-life enrichment. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 16, pp. 167 - 182.

²⁵ Slutsky, J., et al. (2019). Mindfulness training improves employee well-being: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 24 (1), pp.139 - 149.

²⁶ Bodhi, B. (2000). *The middle length discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Majjhima Nikaya*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, pp. 145 - 150.

²⁷ Fitzgerald, C., Fitzgerald, S. L. & Popa, C. (2018). *Handbook of Research on Student-Centered Strategies in Online Adult Learning Environments*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, pp. 45 - 90.

emotional resilience. These traits improve for a better interrelationship between a teacher and his disciples and create a positive background that matches best giving a good education. Mindful teacher-trainers are better prepared to handle the influence of educational challenges, from curriculum delivery to managing diverse learner needs. This chapter explores how mindfulness impacts the teaching practices of Sri Lankan teacher-trainers, examining the interplay between mindfulness and pedagogical effectiveness. It delves into empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives to demonstrate how mindfulness practices can enhance classroom dynamics, teaching methodologies, and overall professional growth.

4.1.2. Cultural Context in Sri Lanka

The theory of emotional regulation in research on mindfulness and its impact on teacher-trainers can provide a valuable framework for understanding how mindfulness practices can enhance job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness. Emotional regulation involves the methods by which individuals control their emotions, as well as the ways they feel and communicate those emotions (Gross, 2002).²⁸ Effective emotional regulation is linked to many positive outcomes, such as enhanced well-being, stronger interpersonal relationships, and greater resilience when facing stress and adversity (Gross & John, 2003).²⁹ By integrating mindfulness practices, teacher-trainers can develop better emotional regulation skills, which in turn can help them manage stress more effectively, maintain a positive outlook, and have a good relationship with their disciples. The inclusion of emotional regulation theory aligns well with existing literature that underscores the benefits of mindfulness in promoting emotional well-being. Mindfulness practices develop emotional regulation by increasing the ability to understand oneself and reducing automatic, maladaptive responses to stress (Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009)³⁰

In this study, the key variables are clearly defined to ensure clarity and consistency throughout the research.

Mindfulness refers to the practice of staying aware of the present moment and accepting thoughts, feelings, and body sensations without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990)³¹. Smith in his study, mindfulness is assessed using the FFMQ.³²

²⁸ Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences. *Psychophysiology*, 39(3), p. 281 - 291.

²⁹ Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

³⁰ Chambers, R., Gullone, E. & Allen, N. B. (2009). Mindful emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29 (6), pp. 560 - 572.

³¹ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. Delacorte Press, pp. 1 - 15.

³² Baer, R. A., Smith, G. T., Hopkins, J., Krietemeyer, J. and Toney, L. (2006). Using self-report assessment methods to explore facets of mindfulness. *Assessment*, 13 (1), pp. 27 - 45.

Stress is described as a mental and physical reaction to outside pressures or demands that make it hard for a person to manage (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 12). This study uses the Teacher Stress Inventory (Fimian, 1984) to measure stress levels.³³

Job satisfaction refers to how happy and satisfied people are with their jobs and work environment. It reflects how much they enjoy their tasks and feel comfortable in their workplace (Spector, 1997)³⁴ The PIRLS Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (Martin et al., 2016) is used for measurement.

“Teaching practices refer to the strategies and methods employed by educators to facilitate learning and foster student engagement” (Marzano et al., 2003, p. 10). These practices are assessed using the MTS (Frank et al., 2016).

4.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

The data gathered relevant to mindfulness, teaching practices, stress level and job satisfaction through distributing questionnaires among the 148 population of teachers-trainers currently employed at NIE was analysed as follows.

Descriptive of the conformed observed variables are tabulated below.

Table 1. Descriptive data of all the variables used in EFA and CFA

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
C1	3.57	1.057	-.740	.335
C2	3.51	1.487	-.681	-1.006
C3	3.99	1.184	-1.021	.145
C4	3.04	1.049	-.082	-.425
C5	3.76	.987	-.956	.840
C6	3.53	1.046	-.470	-.276
C7	3.76	.945	-.867	.686
C8	3.84	.948	-.932	.872
S1	3.35	1.112	-.251	-.663
S2	2.66	.994	-.037	-.752
S3	3.58	.962	-.838	.521
S4	3.16	1.082	-.394	-.438
S5	3.00	1.155	-.107	-.750
T1	2.54	1.084	.154	-.810

³³ Fimian, M. J. (1984). The development of an instrument to measure occupational stress in teachers: The Teacher Stress Inventory. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 57 (4), pp. 277 - 293.

³⁴ Spector, P. E., (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences*. Sage Publications, pp. 55 - 71.

T2	3.64	1.051	-.649	-.072
T3	3.72	1.113	-.858	.292
T4	2.74	1.268	.130	-1.154
T5	2.53	1.006	.412	-.451
J1	3.85	.957	-.923	.803
J2	3.81	.943	-.698	.555
J3	3.85	.943	-.882	.852
J4	3.84	.948	-.835	.730
J5	4.03	.989	-1.251	1.688
N	148	SE	.199	.396

All items have skewness values between negative two and positive two, indicating that the statistics distribution is reasonably symmetrical and acceptable for assuming normality. All items have kurtosis values between -7 and +7, indicating that the data distribution does not have extreme tails and is acceptable for assuming normality. Based on the skewness and kurtosis values, the data for all items fall within the acceptable range for assuming normality. This suggests that linearity is acceptable for these items, and can proceed with linear analyses such as regression or correlation. The following questions were removed after EFA analysis to have a better model fit, Mindfulness questions C2 and C4, stress level- S3 and S5, and teaching practices T2 and T3 questions.

The KMO values above 0.6 and Bartlett's test ($p < 0.05$) indicate sampling adequacy for all constructs (Hair et al., 2010). CA values over 0.7 for Mindfulness and Job Satisfaction indicate good reliability; Stress and Teaching Practices require improvement.

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results provide critical insights into the model's fit and validity: Chi-square (145.180, $df = 81$, $p < 0.05$): Indicates discrepancies between the observed and expected covariance matrices. P-value < 0.05 suggests some level of misfit; however, the chi-square test is affected by sample size and interpreted alongside other fit indices.

Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.937): Values above 0.90 suggest an acceptable fit between the proposed model and the observed data. Suggests the model adequately captures the relationships among variables. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.079): Values below 0.08 indicate a reasonable fit; the closer to 0, the better the fit. The 90% confidence interval (0.054 – 0.092) supports the RMSEA's reliability, with a PCLOSE value suggesting the probability of a close fit. Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.918): Measures model improvement relative to a baseline model; values above 0.90 reflect a good incremental fit. These indices collectively indicate that the model demonstrates a good fit to the data, with slight areas for improvement. After correlation analysis Mindful8 and JobSat4 questions were removed for better fit. This validates the relationships between the constructs and their respective

observed variables, confirming the theoretical framework’s robustness.

4.3. Research objectives testing

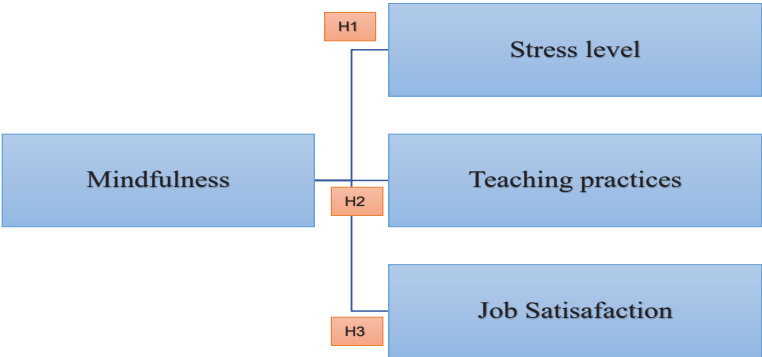


Figure 01. Conceptual Framework based on objectives 1, 2, and 3 (Source: Designed by the author)

4.3.1. Objective 01 - Testing

To find the relationship between Buddhist Mindfulness (*sati*) and Anxiety levels of trainers at NIE.

4.3.1.1. Pearson correlations two-tailed

Since both variables (Mindfulness and Stress level) are continuous or ordinal and normally distributed, the Pearson Correlation two-tailed test was used to identify whether there is a significant relationship between mindfulness and Stress level.

Table 02. Pearson correlation analysis mindfulness and Stress level

Correlations			
		MIN_mean	SL
MIN_mean	Pearson Correlation	1	-.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.049
	N	148	148
SL	Pearson Correlation	-.156	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	
	N	148	148

The Pearson Correlation coefficient (between Mindfulness (MIN) and Stress Levels (SL) is -0.156. This indicates a weak negative correlation. As mindfulness increases, stress levels tend to decrease. The Significance (Sig. 2-tailed) p-value = 0.049, since it is < 0.05, states that correlation is statistically

significant at the 5% level. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that mindfulness is related to stress levels in this sample. A statistically strong inverse connection between Mindfulness (MIN) and Stress Levels (SL) was found. This suggests that as mindfulness increases, stress levels tend to decrease, even if the effect is small.

4.3.1.2. Linear regression analysis

Table 3. Linear regression analysis of mindfulness and Stress level

Coefficients ^a					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	3.441	.210		16.381
	MIN	-.250	.131	-.156	-1.914
					Sig.
					<.001
					.049

a. Dependent Variable: SL

The p-value for the relationship between mindfulness (MIN) and stress level (SL) = 0.049, (< 0.05). This indicates that the relationship is strong. The negative coefficient (B = -0.250) suggests that as mindfulness increases, stress levels decrease, supporting the hypothesis of a meaningful relationship. The analysis confirms that mindfulness significantly influences stress levels among teacher trainers, validating Objective 1. However, the effect size (Beta = -0.156) shows that this connection is quite weak.

4.3.2. Objective 02 - testing

To find the relationship between Buddhist Mindfulness (Sati) and Teaching practices among teacher-trainers in Sri Lanka.

4.3.2.1. Pearson correlations - two-tailed

Since both variables (Mindfulness and Teaching Practices) are continuous or ordinal and normally distributed, the Pearson Correlation two-tailed test was used to identify the relationship.

Table 04. Pearson Correlation Analysis Mindfulness and Teaching Practices

		Correlations	
MIN		MIN	TP
	Pearson Correlation	1	.380**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	148	148
TP	Pearson Correlation	.380**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	148	148

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation Coefficient

The Pearson Correlation coefficient between Mindfulness (MIN) and Teaching Practices (TP) is 0.380. This indicates a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. As mindfulness increases, teaching practices tend to improve. The Significance 2-tailed p-value is 0.000, (< 0.01). This means the correlation is statistically significant, and there is $< 1\%$ chance that this connection happened by accident. There is a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship between Mindfulness and Teaching Practices. This means that as mindfulness increases, teaching practices tend to improve.

4.3.2.2. Linear regression analysis

Table 5. Linear regression analysis of mindfulness and Teaching practices

Coefficients ^a					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	1.690	.245		6.902
	MIN	.328	.066	.380	4.967
					Sig.
					<.001
					<.001

a. Dependent Variable: TP

The p-value for the relationship between mindfulness (MIN) and teaching practices (TP) is less than 0.001, which is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. The positive coefficient ($B = 0.328$) suggests that as mindfulness increases, teaching practices improve, supporting the hypothesis of a meaningful relationship. In conclusion, the analysis confirms that mindfulness significantly influences teaching practices among teacher trainers, validating objective 2. The effect size ($Beta = 0.380$) indicates that the strength of this relationship is moderate.

4.3.3. Objective 03 - testing

To find the relationship between Mindfulness and job pleasure among teacher-trainers.

4.3.3.1. Pearson correlations – two-tailed

Since both variables (Mindfulness and Job satisfaction) are continuous or ordinal and normally distributed, the Pearson Correlation two-tailed test was used to identify the relationship.

Table 6. Pearson correlation analysis mindfulness and job satisfaction

Correlations

		MIN	JS
MIN	Pearson Correlation	1	.705**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	148	148
JS	Pearson Correlation	.705**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	148	148

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson Correlation coefficient between Mindfulness (MIN) and Job Satisfaction (JS) is 0.705. This indicates a strong positive correlation between the two variables. As mindfulness increases, job satisfaction tends to increase as well. The Significance (Sig. 2-tailed) p-value is 0.000, (< 0.01). This means the correlation is statistically significant, There is less than a 1% chance that this connection happened by accident. There is a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between Mindfulness and Job Satisfaction. This means that as mindfulness increases, job satisfaction tends to improve.

4.3.3.2. Linear regression analysis.

Table 7. Linear regression analysis of mindfulness and Job satisfaction

Coefficients^a

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.901	.253		3.563	<.001
	MIN	.817	.068	.705	12.000	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: JS

The p-value for the relationship between mindfulness (MIN) and job satisfaction (JS) is less than 0.001, which is well below the conformist threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the relationship is statistically important. The positive coefficient (B = 0.817) suggests that as mindfulness increases, job satisfaction also increases, supporting the objective of a meaningful relationship. In conclusion, the analysis confirms that mindfulness significantly influences job satisfaction among teacher trainers, validating objective 3. Moreover, the outcome size (Beta = 0.705) shows that the strength of this relationship is strong and positive.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Findings reached by the research work and the related developmental recommendations are given below.

5.1. Findings

The study revealed the following findings in alignment with its objectives:

(1) Mindfulness and Stress Levels: A weak but statistically important negative relation was identified between mindfulness and stress levels among teacher trainers. As mindfulness increases, stress levels decrease, albeit modestly.

(2) Mindfulness and Teaching Practices: A moderate and statistically important positive relation was identified among mindfulness and teaching practices. Teacher trainers with higher mindfulness levels demonstrated improved teaching practices.

(3) Mindfulness and Job Satisfaction: A strong and statistically significant positive relation exists among mindfulness and job satisfaction. Enhanced mindfulness correlates with greater job satisfaction.

These findings affirm the significant relationships between mindfulness and the variables outlined in the objectives.

5.2. Recommendations

(1) Mindfulness Training Programs: Introduce mindfulness-based interventions tailored for teacher-trainers to reduce stress, enhance resilience, and improve job satisfaction.

(2) Integration with Professional Development: Combine mindfulness practices with teaching strategies to create a balanced, effective approach to teacher training.

(3) Policy Initiatives: Develop policies promoting mindfulness as a main tool of education programs at NIE.

(4) Future Research: should conduct longitudinal studies involving teachers and students.

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CULTIVATING COMPASSION AND SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH MINDFUL EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Mindful education has emerged as a transformative approach to teaching and learning, offering a holistic alternative to traditional educational models. While academic success remains a core goal, the integration of mindfulness practices within the curriculum provides additional benefits, particularly in fostering emotional well-being, compassion, and ethical responsibility. Mindfulness, defined as the practice of being fully present and non-judgmentally aware of one's thoughts, emotions, and surroundings, can serve as a foundation for cultivating positive character traits and deeper engagement with the world.

This research explores how mindfulness can play a key role in promoting compassion and sustainability within educational contexts. By incorporating mindfulness into daily classroom practices, educators create environments where students are encouraged to develop self-awareness, empathy, and a greater connection to the natural world. These qualities are essential for producing compassionate, socially responsible individuals who are conscious of their impact on the environment and society.

The paper reviews the theoretical underpinnings of mindfulness in education, referencing key psychological and educational studies that highlight its potential to improve focus, reduce stress, and foster emotional intelligence. It also examines case studies from various schools that have implemented mindfulness programs, showcasing their effectiveness in improving student mental health, reducing conflict, and enhancing social responsibility. Through these examples, the paper demonstrates how mindful education can provide students with the tools to navigate complex global issues, such as climate change, social injustice, and the mental health crisis. Ultimately, the paper argues that mindful education is not merely a supplementary practice but a

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crucial tool for cultivating a compassionate, sustainable future. By fostering empathy, self-regulation, and ecological awareness, mindfulness empowers students to become agents of positive change, ensuring a world that values both human well-being and environmental sustainability.

Keywords: *Mindful education, compassion, and sustainability, emotional well-being, social responsibility, ecological awareness.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The educational system plays a pivotal role in shaping not only the intellectual capacity of individuals but also their moral values, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. For decades, the focus of most educational systems around the world has been largely academic, prioritizing standardized tests, grades, and measurable intellectual achievements. However, in today's rapidly evolving world, there is an increasing recognition that academic success alone is not enough to equip students with the tools necessary to address the complex and interconnected challenges facing the planet. Global crises such as climate change, social inequality, mental health concerns, and environmental degradation call for a more holistic approach to education – one that nurtures both intellectual and emotional growth while fostering compassion, empathy, and sustainability.

Mindful education has emerged as a transformative approach that meets this growing demand for a more comprehensive educational model. At its core, mindfulness is the practice of bringing one's full attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental way. This awareness extends not only to one's thoughts and emotions but also to the environment and the relationships with others. By cultivating mindfulness in educational settings, students are not only better equipped to manage stress, improve focus, and enhance academic performance but also develop the emotional intelligence, compassion, and social responsibility that are essential for addressing the larger challenges of our time.¹

Mindfulness-based practices in education are diverse and can include activities such as guided meditations, mindful breathing, body scans, and practices of reflection. These exercises help students become more attuned to their inner experiences, fostering greater self-awareness and emotional regulation. In a traditional educational context, where the emphasis is often placed on cognitive skills and intellectual growth, mindfulness creates a space for students to connect more deeply with their emotional and psychological states, ultimately helping them develop a balanced and holistic approach to learning.²

¹ Ameli, R. (2021). *Mindfulness and education: The importance of cultivating compassion in schools*. Routledge, p. 23.

² Baer, R. A. (2014). *Mindfulness-based treatment approaches: Clinician's guide to evidence base and applications* (2nd ed.). Elsevier, p. 41.

One of the key benefits of integrating mindfulness into education is its capacity to foster compassion. Compassion, as defined in psychological and spiritual contexts, is the ability to recognize and alleviate the suffering of others. In an educational setting, compassion extends beyond the classroom and can become a foundational element in the way students interact with each other, their teachers, and the broader community. Mindfulness practices encourage students to cultivate empathy, as they are taught to observe their feelings and reactions without judgment. As students gain deeper insights into their emotional landscapes, they begin to understand the emotions of others in a more nuanced way. This ability to empathize with others, especially in today's often fractured and polarized world, is an essential skill that can help to reduce social conflicts, promote cooperation, and strengthen relationships.

Moreover, the practice of mindfulness can enhance emotional regulation, which is crucial for compassion. Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage one's emotions healthily and constructively. In a society that is increasingly confronted with stressors such as academic pressure, social media, and societal instability, emotional regulation is vital for students to maintain mental well-being. When students practice mindfulness, they are better able to regulate their emotions, leading to a more compassionate approach not only to others but also to themselves. Through mindfulness, students develop the capacity to respond to challenging emotions with calmness and understanding, rather than reacting impulsively or defensively³. This emotional resilience is key in cultivating a compassionate mindset, as students learn to approach both their struggles and the struggles of others with patience, kindness, and non-judgmental awareness.

In addition to fostering compassion, mindful education plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability. Sustainability is often thought of in terms of environmental responsibility, but it also encompasses social and economic dimensions, including the well-being of communities, equality, and ethical decision-making. The relationship between mindfulness and sustainability is rooted in the practice's ability to cultivate a deep awareness of interconnectedness. Mindfulness teaches that all beings are interdependent and that our actions have consequences – not just for ourselves, but for others and the world at large. This awareness of interconnectedness is vital for fostering a sustainable worldview, as it encourages students to recognize the importance of their actions in contributing to the health of the planet and the well-being of others.

When students are taught to be mindful of their environment and their role within it, they begin to recognize the impact of their daily choices – whether it is in their consumption habits, waste production, or treatment of natural resources. This sense of responsibility encourages behaviors that support sustainability, such as reducing waste, conserving water, using energy

³ Barbezat, D. P., & Bush, M. (2014). *Contemplative practices in higher education: Powerful methods to transform teaching and learning*. Jossey-Bass, p. 69.

efficiently, and supporting ethical businesses. Moreover, mindful education promotes a shift away from consumerism and materialism, encouraging students to reflect on the values that truly matter, such as community, justice, and environmental preservation. As such, mindfulness becomes an ethical framework that supports sustainable living, urging students to consider the long-term impact of their actions and to adopt behaviors that prioritize the collective good.⁴

Mindful education also contributes to the development of social responsibility. As students become more aware of their emotional and environmental surroundings, they begin to appreciate the impact that social inequalities and injustices have on individuals and communities. By cultivating a sense of empathy and compassion, mindfulness prepares students to take action in ways that promote social justice and equality. This could manifest in activities such as volunteering, advocating for marginalized groups, or addressing issues such as poverty, racism, and inequality. A mindful education instills in students a sense of moral responsibility to not only take care of themselves but to contribute to the betterment of society as a whole. In this way, mindfulness can help produce compassionate, engaged citizens who are motivated to work toward a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.⁵

Integrating mindfulness into education also holds promise for addressing the growing mental health crisis among students. Adolescence and early adulthood are periods of significant emotional and psychological development, yet many students face increasing levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The pressures of academic performance, social media, and uncertainty about the future contribute to these challenges, leaving many students ill-equipped to cope with these stressors. Mindfulness provides a tool for emotional regulation, stress reduction, and resilience, helping students navigate these challenges more effectively. By providing students with mindfulness practices, schools can equip them with the tools they need to manage difficult emotions, cope with stress, and build a strong sense of inner peace and well-being.

Mindfulness practices can be introduced into the classroom in a variety of ways. Simple techniques, such as beginning the day with a short mindful breathing exercise or incorporating mindfulness breaks throughout the day, can help students focus their attention, reduce stress, and cultivate compassion. Teachers can also model mindfulness by practicing self-awareness and emotional regulation, providing students with an example of how to handle challenges with calmness and clarity. Additionally, mindfulness can be woven into various subject areas, including science, social studies, and ethics, allowing students to explore topics like the environment, social justice, and community

⁴ Breiter, H. C., & Snyder, M. M. (2018). Sustainable education: Mindfulness as a key to global change. *Sustainable Development Education Journal*, 5(1), p. 23-34, p. 31.

⁵ Carson, R., & Saner, W. R. (2016). *Mindful education for sustainability and compassion*. Oxford University Press, p. 39.

well-being through a mindful lens.⁶

The integration of mindfulness in education also requires a shift in how educators perceive their role. Teachers must go beyond the traditional focus on academic content and recognize their influence in shaping student's emotional, social, and ethical development. This requires a commitment to self-care and personal mindfulness practices for educators as well, as they model the values they hope to instill in their students. Professional development programs that train teachers in mindfulness techniques can equip them to be more present, compassionate, and effective educators, enhancing the overall learning environment.⁷

As mindfulness practices continue to gain popularity in educational settings, more schools are adopting mindfulness-based programs to promote social-emotional learning, emotional resilience, and environmental consciousness. Research has shown that these programs lead to improved focus, reduced stress, and stronger relationships among students and teachers. Furthermore, students who practice mindfulness are more likely to demonstrate prosocial behaviors, exhibit greater empathy, and make sustainable choices. These outcomes suggest that mindful education is an effective approach to addressing the complex challenges of our time while fostering the values of compassion and sustainability.

Mindful education offers a transformative approach that can help prepare students to face the challenges of the modern world with empathy, resilience, and a sense of social responsibility. By cultivating mindfulness in the classroom, educators can help students develop a deeper understanding of their emotions, relationships, and environmental impact. Mindfulness fosters a sense of interconnectedness, encouraging students to act with compassion and to take responsibility for the well-being of others and the planet. As we confront pressing global issues such as climate change, social inequality, and mental health, mindful education offers a critical tool for cultivating the values necessary for a compassionate and sustainable future. It is through this approach that we can hope to build a generation that is not only academically proficient but also deeply committed to creating a more just and sustainable world for future generations.⁸

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

Mindfulness, a practice rooted in Buddhist teachings, has gained widespread recognition and application across various disciplines, including psychology, healthcare, and education. Initially developed as a method to enhance emotional regulation, reduce stress, and improve overall well-

⁶ Cavanagh, S. (2022). Mindful education: A pathway to compassionate action. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 14(2), p. 87 - 99, p. 92.

⁷ Cohen, J., & Greenberg, M. (2020). Mindfulness and compassion: Building the inner strength of educators. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 10 (3), p. 170 - 185, p. 183.

⁸ Davy, S. (2022). *Mindful education for a sustainable future*. Springer, p. 41.

being, mindfulness has proven to be an effective tool in fostering greater self-awareness, empathy, and resilience. As a result, it has increasingly found its place in educational settings, where its benefits extend far beyond individual well-being to foster compassionate, sustainable, and ethical engagement with the world. The application of mindfulness in education enables students, educators, and school communities to create environments that promote emotional intelligence, cognitive development, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship.⁹

The roots of mindfulness can be traced back to ancient Buddhist traditions, where it is regarded as a key element of the path to enlightenment. In Buddhist teachings, mindfulness (known as “*sati*”) is a central practice that involves cultivating awareness of the present moment, and observing thoughts and emotions without attachment or judgment. The objective is to develop a clear and undistorted perception of one’s experiences and to foster a deep understanding of the impermanent and interconnected nature of all phenomena. In the modern context, mindfulness has been adapted to fit secular frameworks and is now widely practiced for its benefits on mental health and emotional regulation.

In the 1970s, Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a pioneer in the field of mindfulness-based interventions, developed the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program, which laid the groundwork for mindfulness practices in various fields, including education. Kabat-Zinn’s program, initially designed to help patients cope with chronic pain, emphasized the cultivation of mindfulness through meditation, breathing exercises, and body awareness. Over time, the program demonstrated remarkable success in reducing stress, improving psychological well-being, and enhancing resilience. Kabat-Zinn’s approach proved to be effective not only in healthcare settings but also in other contexts, including educational environments where stress and emotional challenges often impede learning.¹⁰

The integration of mindfulness into education is based on the belief that the development of cognitive and emotional skills is deeply intertwined. In schools, students face numerous academic pressures, social challenges, and personal stressors that can hinder their ability to focus, regulate emotions, and engage effectively in the learning process. By incorporating mindfulness practices into the curriculum, educators can help students become more present in the moment, improve their attention and focus, and reduce feelings of stress and anxiety. The benefits of mindfulness in education extend to both students and educators, fostering an environment of self-awareness, empathy, and emotional intelligence that supports learning and personal development.

⁹ Goleman, D, & Davidson, R. (2020). *The emotional foundations of sustainability: Cultivating mindfulness for a better world*. HarperCollins, p. 33.

¹⁰ Greenberg, M. T., & Eccles, J. S. (2019). Mindfulness as a tool for emotional regulation and social responsibility. *Journal of Emotional Development in Education*, 8(1), p. 42 - 56, p. 46.

Mindfulness practices in educational settings typically include techniques such as mindful breathing, body scans, and moment-to-moment awareness exercises. These practices help individuals become more attuned to their inner experiences, cultivating an ability to observe thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations without judgment. This enhanced self-awareness is critical in the educational context, where students and teachers alike are often caught up in the demands of academic achievement and the pressures of modern life. By encouraging mindfulness, schools create an environment in which students can pause, reflect, and cultivate a deeper understanding of themselves and others, allowing them to respond to challenges with greater emotional clarity and resilience.

One of the most significant benefits of mindfulness in education is its potential to foster emotional regulation. Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage one's emotions in healthy and constructive ways, which is crucial for maintaining focus, well-being, and positive social interactions. In the classroom, students often experience heightened emotional states due to academic stress, peer interactions, and social pressures. Mindfulness practices provide students with tools to manage these emotions effectively, allowing them to approach academic tasks with a calm and focused mindset.

Research supports the effectiveness of mindfulness in improving emotional regulation and reducing anxiety in students. For example, a study by Zoogman et al. (2015) found that mindfulness interventions in schools led to significant reductions in anxiety and stress among students, as well as improvements in emotional regulation and cognitive performance. By developing the ability to regulate emotions, students become better equipped to navigate the challenges of school life and engage in positive social interactions, both of which contribute to a more compassionate and harmonious learning environment.¹¹

In addition to emotional regulation, mindfulness plays a key role in promoting empathy and compassion. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person, while compassion involves taking action to alleviate the suffering of others. Both empathy and compassion are essential for cultivating positive relationships and fostering a sense of social responsibility. In the context of education, mindfulness practices provide students with the opportunity to observe their own emotional responses and develop a greater understanding of the emotions and perspectives of others. By cultivating empathy through mindfulness, students learn to relate to others with greater kindness and understanding, creating a more supportive and compassionate community within the school.¹²

The cultivation of compassion through mindfulness can extend beyond individual interactions to include larger social and environmental concerns.

¹¹ Hayes, J. P., & Beekman, R. (2017). *Mindfulness practices for social responsibility in schools*. Cambridge University Press, p. 96.

¹² Hwang, S. (2018). Mindfulness and environmental stewardship: Educating for sustainable futures. *International Journal of Environmental Education and Information*, 13 (4), p. 1 - 14, p. 12.

As students become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and actions, they begin to recognize the impact they have on others and the world around them. This awareness of interconnectedness is a key component of both compassion and sustainability. By developing mindfulness, individuals become more attuned to their relationship with the natural world and their responsibility to contribute to the well-being of the planet and society.

The relationship between mindfulness, compassion, and sustainability is rooted in the understanding that all beings and systems are interconnected. In the context of education, mindfulness can encourage students to think beyond their own immediate concerns and to consider the broader implications of their actions. For example, students who practice mindfulness may become more aware of environmental issues such as climate change, resource depletion, and pollution. This heightened awareness of interconnectedness can inspire students to adopt more sustainable lifestyles, make environmentally conscious decisions, and advocate for policies that protect the planet.¹³

Mindfulness encourages a shift from self-centeredness to other-centeredness, which is essential for fostering both compassion and sustainability. As students cultivate awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and actions, they begin to recognize the impact they have on others and the environment. This awareness of interconnectedness promotes a sense of responsibility and accountability for the well-being of others and the preservation of the environment. In turn, students who practice mindfulness are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote social and environmental justice, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable world.¹⁴

The development of mindfulness also enhances student's capacity for moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. As students reflect on their thoughts and actions, they are better able to recognize their values, motivations, and ethical obligations. This self-awareness enables students to make more thoughtful and responsible decisions, whether in relation to their academic work, their interactions with others, or their impact on the environment. By fostering a strong sense of ethical responsibility, mindfulness contributes to the development of students who are not only intellectually capable but also socially and environmentally responsible.

The integration of mindfulness into education is also supported by research on the positive effects of mindfulness-based interventions. Studies have shown that mindfulness can improve cognitive functioning, increase attention span, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance emotional regulation in students. For example, a study by Zeidan et al. (2010) demonstrated that mindfulness meditation improved cognitive performance in students by increasing their ability to focus and retain information. Similarly, research by Roeser et al. (2013) found that

¹³ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. Hyperion, p. 26.

¹⁴ Kashdan, T. B., & Reinecke, R. M. (2021). *The compassionate mind: Building emotional intelligence for a better world*. Routledge, p. 96.

mindfulness training for teachers improved their emotional regulation and job satisfaction, leading to a more positive and supportive classroom environment.

Mindfulness-based interventions have also been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress, which are common challenges faced by students in today's educational system. A meta-analysis by Khoury et al. (2013) found that mindfulness-based programs led to significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as improvements in overall well-being. These findings highlight the importance of mindfulness in supporting student's mental health, which is crucial for fostering a compassionate and sustainable educational environment.¹⁵

As mindfulness continues to gain recognition in educational settings, it is important to understand its potential for fostering not only individual well-being but also social and environmental responsibility. By cultivating mindfulness in students, educators can help students develop a deep sense of empathy, compassion, and responsibility for their actions. Mindfulness encourages students to recognize their interconnectedness with others and the world around them, fostering a greater sense of social responsibility and a commitment to sustainability.

The integration of mindfulness into education provides a powerful framework for cultivating compassion, emotional regulation, and sustainability. Through mindfulness practices, students and educators alike can develop greater self-awareness, empathy, and social responsibility, which are essential qualities for addressing the challenges of the modern world. By encouraging mindfulness in educational settings, we can create environments that foster compassion, sustainability, and ethical engagement, ultimately contributing to the development of a more just and harmonious society. Mindfulness offers a transformative approach to education, helping students not only excel academically but also develop the emotional intelligence and ethical awareness necessary to navigate the complexities of the 21st century.

III. MINDFULNESS PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

Across the globe, mindfulness-based programs are becoming an increasingly important tool in educational systems, responding to the growing need for emotional regulation, mental well-being, and social responsibility among students. With its roots in Buddhist teachings, mindfulness has evolved into a secular practice that has been embraced by many schools and educational institutions due to its positive impact on mental health, focus, and interpersonal skills. Mindfulness practices in schools provide students with the tools to navigate academic pressures, emotional struggles, and social interactions, all while fostering compassion, empathy, and a deeper sense of interconnectedness with others and the environment. Various programs,

¹⁵ Kiken, L. G., et al. (2021). Mindfulness and education: A review of the research on mindfulness-based programs in K-12 schools. *Psychology of Education Review*, 38(4), p. 67 - 81, p. 99.

including Mindful Schools in the United States, Mind Up in Canada, and the mindfulness in schools project in the UK, have successfully integrated mindfulness into curricula and shown significant improvements in academic performance, emotional well-being, and interpersonal relationships.¹⁶

Mindful Schools, for example, is a well-known organization in the United States that works to bring mindfulness practices into schools, providing educators and students with the skills necessary to manage stress, improve focus, and enhance emotional regulation. The program offers a series of lessons that incorporate mindfulness practices such as mindful breathing, body scans, and reflection, which help students develop greater self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Research on the outcomes of these programs has consistently shown that mindfulness leads to significant improvements in mental health, emotional regulation, and academic achievement. Mindful Schools is just one example of how mindfulness is being integrated into educational settings worldwide to address the increasing need for mental health support and personal growth within schools.

In Canada, the Mind Up program has also gained recognition for its ability to integrate mindfulness practices into the school curriculum. Developed by the Goldie Hawn Foundation, Mind Up is designed to enhance social-emotional learning by teaching students how to manage stress, increase their attention span, and regulate their emotions. The program uses evidence-based techniques, including mindfulness exercises, to help students cultivate a mindful mindset, which in turn improves academic performance, social relationships, and mental well-being. A key component of the Mind Up program is the promotion of empathy and kindness, which are central to the development of compassionate and responsible citizens. By teaching students to be present and mindful, the program helps them connect with their peers, their teachers, and their communities in more meaningful ways.¹⁷

Similarly, the Mindfulness in schools project (MiSP) in the UK offers a structured curriculum that brings mindfulness practices into classrooms across the country. The project aims to help young people develop resilience, self-regulation, and empathy by introducing mindfulness exercises into the school day. The program emphasizes the importance of teaching students how to pause, reflect, and respond thoughtfully to stressors rather than react impulsively. Research on the effectiveness of MiSP has shown that students who participate in mindfulness training demonstrate increased emotional regulation, better mental health, and stronger social skills. MiSP has been instrumental in fostering a culture of mindfulness within schools, promoting the values of empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence.

¹⁶ Kolen, L., & Anderson, N. M. (2021). Mindfulness as a tool for cultivating environmental responsibility. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, 9 (2), p. 112 - 123, p. 116.

¹⁷ Langer, E. J., & Molden, D. E. (2020). The role of mindfulness in promoting sustainability in education. *Mindful Education and the Global Community*, 5(3), p. 213 - 230, p. 218.

One noteworthy case study that exemplifies the role of mindfulness in promoting compassion and sustainability comes from a middle school in California. The school implemented a mindfulness curriculum aimed at helping students become more present, aware, and connected to their peers and the environment. Daily mindfulness practices, including breathing exercises, body scans, and mindful listening, were incorporated into the school day, and teachers engaged students in discussions about empathy and environmental sustainability. The program was designed to encourage students to become more aware of their emotional and mental states while also fostering a sense of responsibility toward others and the environment. The students who participated in the program reported feeling less stressed, more connected to their peers, and more mindful of their environmental impact. These outcomes align with existing research that suggests mindfulness can enhance emotional regulation, improve social relationships, and foster a greater sense of social and environmental responsibility.¹⁸

The benefits of mindfulness in education are not limited to students alone. Teachers, too, can experience significant benefits from mindfulness practices. The demands of the teaching profession can be emotionally and psychologically taxing, with teachers often facing challenges such as high workloads, classroom management issues, and the emotional needs of their students. Teachers who engage in mindfulness practices are better equipped to manage these stressors and maintain emotional resilience. Research has shown that teachers who practice mindfulness are more likely to demonstrate patience, empathy, and self-regulation, which are essential qualities for creating a compassionate and supportive learning environment.¹⁹

A study by Roeser et al. (2013) found that teachers who participated in mindfulness training reported greater emotional regulation and job satisfaction. The study emphasized that mindfulness not only improves teachers' mental well-being but also enhances their ability to model emotional intelligence and mindfulness for their students. Teachers who practice mindfulness are more attuned to their own emotions and the emotions of their students, which helps them respond to challenging situations with greater clarity and understanding. This creates a positive feedback loop in the classroom, where students observe and learn from their teacher's mindfulness practices, ultimately creating a more compassionate, empathetic, and supportive educational environment.

Mindfulness can also help educators cope with the emotional and psychological demands of their profession, reducing the likelihood of burnout and increasing job satisfaction. Teachers often face high levels of stress due to workload pressures, behavioral issues, and the emotional demands of working with students. Mindfulness practices provide teachers with tools to manage these stressors, allowing them to maintain their well-being and remain focused on their student's needs. By cultivating mindfulness, teachers become more

¹⁸ Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015

¹⁹ Lawton, T. M. (2017). The role of emotional intelligence in promoting sustainability: A mindful approach. *Sustainability in Higher Education*, 10 (2), p. 56 - 66, p. 61.

present in the classroom and more effective in their teaching, leading to improved outcomes for both educators and students.

One of the primary benefits of mindfulness-based programs in schools is their ability to create a more compassionate and supportive school culture. Compassionate school environments have been shown to promote emotional well-being, enhance social cohesion, and reduce instances of bullying and conflict. When students and teachers practice mindfulness together, they create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding, which fosters healthy relationships and emotional resilience. Mindful Schools also tend to have lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, as mindfulness promotes emotional regulation and encourages students to manage their emotions in constructive ways.

Furthermore, mindfulness practices in schools can contribute to the development of social responsibility and sustainability. By fostering a sense of interconnectedness, mindfulness encourages students to reflect on their impact on others and the world around them. This awareness leads to a greater sense of responsibility toward the environment, social justice, and the well-being of others. For example, students who practice mindfulness may become more mindful of their consumption habits, waste production, and carbon footprint, adopting more sustainable behaviors as a result. Additionally, mindfulness can inspire students to engage in social action, advocating for policies and practices that promote environmental sustainability and social justice.²⁰

The integration of mindfulness into schools is a powerful tool for promoting emotional well-being, compassion, and sustainability. Programs like Mindful Schools, Mind Up, and the Mindfulness in Schools project have demonstrated the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in improving academic performance, emotional regulation, and social relationships. Case studies, such as the mindfulness program implemented at a middle school in California, highlight the potential for mindfulness to foster compassion and environmental responsibility. Additionally, mindfulness practices benefit educators by enhancing their emotional resilience and job satisfaction, creating a more compassionate and supportive learning environment for students. As mindfulness continues to be embraced by educational institutions worldwide, its transformative potential to nurture compassionate, responsible, and environmentally-conscious individuals offers hope for a more sustainable and harmonious future.

IV. MINDFULNESS FOR COMPASSION

At the core of mindfulness lies the cultivation of compassion – a foundational element that drives individuals to recognize the suffering of others and take meaningful actions to alleviate that suffering. Mindfulness

²⁰ MacLean, K. R., & Kranz, R. S. (2021). Sustainability in the classroom: How mindfulness supports sustainable practices. *International Journal of Educational Sustainability*, 11 (1), p. 35 - 49, p. 38.

practices help individuals develop an acute awareness of their emotions and the emotions of others, fostering empathy and understanding in their interactions. In educational settings, this heightened awareness of both self and others can lead to improved relationships, reduced bullying, and a stronger sense of community among students. It serves as a vital tool for emotional growth, ethical development, and social responsibility.

Compassionate education, facilitated through mindfulness, emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence, respect, and understanding for others. It focuses on providing students with the tools to better comprehend their emotional responses and to develop an awareness of the emotions of those around them. Mindfulness in schools teaches students to pause before reacting to situations, allowing them the space to reflect and respond thoughtfully, rather than impulsively. This simple yet profound practice helps students to control their impulses, gain emotional clarity, and ultimately engage with the world in a more empathetic and compassionate manner.²¹

The pause that mindfulness encourages is essential for fostering empathy. By taking a moment to reflect on one's thoughts and emotions, students become more attuned to the feelings and needs of those around them. Instead of reacting to a situation from a place of anger, frustration, or fear, students are able to respond from a place of empathy, compassion, and understanding. This moment of self-awareness allows students to consider the potential impact of their words and actions on others, helping to prevent conflicts and foster more harmonious relationships in the classroom and beyond. Over time, these practices create a more empathetic and supportive environment, where students learn to engage with others in ways that reflect respect, kindness, and concern for their well-being.²²

Mindfulness practices encourage students to be present with the suffering of others without judgment, creating a space where feelings can be expressed openly and safely. This non-judgmental approach is crucial in cultivating a compassionate atmosphere within the school community. When students are taught to observe their thoughts and emotions without judgment, they are more likely to extend that same open, accepting attitude toward others. This can lead to a decrease in bullying and social exclusion, as students become more sensitive to the emotional needs and vulnerabilities of their peers. The cultivation of compassion through mindfulness builds emotional resilience and nurtures a school culture where kindness, acceptance, and mutual support are the foundation of relationships.

Furthermore, mindful education plays a vital role in fostering a deeper sense of social responsibility. As students develop a stronger awareness of their own emotional experiences and the emotions of others, they also begin to

²¹ Mayer, J. (2019). Sustainable futures through mindful education. *Environmental Sustainability Journal*, 14 (4), p. 102 - 113, p. 111.

²² O'Donovan, S., et al. (2020). *Mindful leadership and education for social justice*. University of Chicago Press, p. 93.

expand their sense of empathy to include broader societal and environmental concerns. The practice of mindfulness invites students to consider their role in the world, not just as individuals but as members of a larger community with shared responsibilities. Through mindfulness practices, students develop a more holistic awareness of the world around them, recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and systems.²³

This expanded awareness helps students to see how their actions impact others and the environment. For example, mindfulness teaches students to notice their consumption habits, how they treat others, and how their actions contribute to environmental degradation or social inequality. As students begin to recognize the interconnectedness of all people and the planet, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote social justice and sustainability. Mindfulness encourages a shift from self-centeredness to other-centeredness, motivating students to take action that aligns with the well-being of others and the environment.

The growing global awareness of issues such as climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality has created an urgent need for individuals to take responsibility for their actions and contribute to positive change. Mindfulness, by nurturing a sense of interconnectedness, is an essential practice for fostering this shift toward greater social and environmental responsibility. When students become more mindful of their impact on the world, they are more likely to make choices that support sustainability, such as reducing waste, conserving resources, and supporting ethical practices in their communities. They may also feel inspired to engage in advocacy or volunteer work to address issues such as poverty, social injustice, and environmental degradation.

For instance, in many schools where mindfulness practices have been incorporated, students report feeling a greater sense of responsibility toward the environment. They are more likely to engage in initiatives such as recycling programs, energy conservation efforts, or supporting local environmental causes. Mindfulness practices instill a sense of connection to the planet and encourage students to reflect on how their behaviors can either support or harm the environment. This awareness often translates into actionable steps that promote sustainability, environmental protection, and ethical living.

In addition to encouraging environmental stewardship, mindfulness practices also foster social justice by helping students recognize inequality and oppression in society. As students develop greater emotional awareness, they become more sensitive to the struggles faced by marginalized and vulnerable communities. By cultivating empathy and compassion through mindfulness, students are more likely to engage in conversations and actions that support social justice causes. For example, they may become involved in activities that address inequality in education, advocate for marginalized groups, or work

²³ Roeser, R. W., et al. (2013). Mindfulness in education: Integrating compassionate practice into teaching. *Journal of Education and Mindfulness*, 15 (1), p. 13 - 22. p. 37.

toward creating more inclusive communities.²⁴

In a world where societal divisions and environmental challenges continue to escalate, the cultivation of compassion through mindfulness can play a pivotal role in shaping a more just and sustainable future. By teaching students to be mindful of their emotions, the emotions of others, and the broader implications of their actions, educators are equipping the next generation with the tools necessary to build a more compassionate world. Mindful education encourages students to reflect on their behaviors, their relationships, and their responsibility to the planet, all while fostering an environment that values empathy, respect, and social responsibility.²⁵

Mindfulness practices in education offer a powerful means of cultivating compassion among students. Through the development of emotional intelligence, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness, mindfulness fosters harmonious relationships, reduces bullying, and creates a more supportive and non-judgmental school environment. Furthermore, mindfulness extends beyond personal emotional regulation to inspire students to take action toward social justice and environmental sustainability. By cultivating compassion, mindfulness helps students recognize their roles in creating a more compassionate and responsible society. As mindfulness continues to be integrated into educational settings, its potential to transform individuals, communities, and the world at large remains an essential tool in fostering a more compassionate, sustainable future.

V. MINDFULNESS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability, in the context of education, encompasses not only environmental conservation but also the promotion of social, economic, and emotional well-being for future generations. As the world faces increasing challenges related to climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality, educational systems must equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to foster a sustainable future. Mindfulness, with its emphasis on awareness, compassion, and interconnectedness, provides an effective tool for nurturing sustainability in students. By integrating mindfulness into the curriculum, educators can help students develop a sense of ecological awareness, promote responsible behavior, and cultivate the inner resources necessary to confront the environmental and social challenges of the modern world.²⁶

Mindfulness practices encourage students to become more aware of the present moment, both in terms of their thoughts and feelings and the world around them. By practicing mindfulness, students develop a deeper

²⁴ Schumann, A., et al. (2021). Mindfulness and compassion: Pathways to social responsibility. *Journal of Peace Education*, 13 (4), p. 78 - 92, p. 82.

²⁵ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., et al. (2022). Cultivating emotional and social competence through mindful education. *Social and Emotional Learning: Global Perspectives*, 3, p. 100 - 115, p. 113.

²⁶ Shapiro, S. L., et al. (2017). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and social responsibility in education. *Journal of Mindful Education*, 17(2), p. 45 - 59, p. 52.

understanding of their actions and their impact on the environment. Mindfulness helps cultivate an awareness of the interconnectedness of all living beings and the natural world. This awareness is essential for fostering a sense of responsibility toward the planet, as students begin to recognize that their actions have consequences not just for themselves but for the broader ecosystem. As students become more mindful of their environmental footprint, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that support sustainability, such as reducing waste, conserving resources, and supporting ethical practices. Mindfulness, therefore, plays a key role in promoting sustainable behaviors and creating a more ecologically responsible generation.

Incorporating mindfulness into educational curricula also provides an opportunity to educate students about the environmental challenges the world is facing. By linking mindfulness practices with discussions about climate change, biodiversity loss, and other environmental issues, educators can help students develop a deeper understanding of these global challenges. Mindfulness encourages students to pause and reflect on the urgency of these issues, promoting a sense of responsibility to take action in ways that mitigate harm to the environment. A mindful awareness of ecological problems helps students move beyond passive concern and develop a proactive stance in addressing the environmental crises at hand. In this way, mindfulness becomes an important educational tool for promoting environmental stewardship and motivating students to become active participants in sustainable practices.²⁷

Mindfulness can also support sustainability by helping students develop the emotional resilience needed to cope with the anxiety, stress, and uncertainty that often accompany concerns about the future of the planet. The environmental challenges facing humanity can feel overwhelming, leading to feelings of helplessness, fear, and despair. In this context, mindfulness provides students with tools to manage these difficult emotions, fostering emotional balance and resilience. By cultivating mindfulness, students are better able to process their feelings about the environment and the future healthily and constructively. Instead of becoming paralyzed by anxiety, students can use mindfulness to stay grounded in the present moment, reflect on their emotions, and take purposeful action to contribute to positive change.

Moreover, mindfulness can support sustainability by promoting social and emotional well-being, which are critical components of long-term sustainability. To create a truly sustainable future, it is not enough to focus solely on environmental conservation; social and emotional well-being must also be prioritized. Mindfulness helps students develop the emotional intelligence necessary to understand their feelings, as well as the feelings of others. This emotional awareness allows students to respond thoughtfully to the challenges they encounter and work collaboratively to solve problems. By fostering emotional regulation, empathy, and compassion, mindfulness

²⁷ Sobel, D. (2015). *The spirituality of education: Sustainability and compassion in the classroom*. Teachers College Press, p. 22.

promotes a sense of interconnectedness and respect among students, which is crucial for building cohesive, sustainable communities.

The promotion of a culture of respect and cooperation in the classroom is another way in which mindfulness supports sustainability. Mindful classrooms encourage active listening, respectful communication, and collaborative problem-solving. These qualities are essential for addressing the complex global challenges we face, as they foster the cooperation and collective action necessary to create positive change. By practicing mindfulness, students learn to listen to others without judgment, consider diverse perspectives, and work together to find solutions to problems. This collaborative mindset is fundamental to creating a sustainable future, where cooperation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility are key to solving issues such as climate change, poverty, and social injustice.²⁸

In addition to promoting cooperation within the classroom, mindfulness also fosters a sense of global responsibility. As students develop a greater awareness of the interconnectedness of all living beings, they are more likely to adopt a global perspective on sustainability. Mindfulness encourages students to recognize that their actions – whether local or global – can have a profound impact on others and the environment. By cultivating mindfulness, students are more likely to engage in behaviors that support the well-being of not only their immediate communities but also the broader world. This sense of global interconnectedness is essential for addressing the environmental and social challenges that require collective action on a global scale.

Furthermore, mindfulness practices in schools can inspire students to take leadership roles in their communities and advocate for sustainable policies and practices. As students develop the inner awareness and emotional intelligence necessary to confront global challenges, they are better equipped to lead initiatives that promote sustainability, such as environmental advocacy, social justice, and community-based sustainability programs. Mindfulness provides students with the confidence and clarity needed to take action and make a positive impact in their communities, helping to create a ripple effect that extends beyond the classroom and into the broader world.

The cultivation of mindfulness in educational settings also encourages students to reflect on their consumption habits and the broader environmental implications of their actions. By becoming more mindful of their choices, students begin to recognize the impact of their consumption on the planet, from the resources used to create products to the waste generated by their disposal. Mindfulness encourages students to make more conscious decisions about what they consume, how they use resources, and how they dispose of waste. By fostering this awareness of consumption, mindfulness helps students adopt more sustainable behaviors, such as reducing energy use, recycling, and

²⁸ Thompson, E. R. (2019). Mindfulness and sustainability: Pathways to ethical leadership in schools. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Sustainability*, 10(1), p. 88 -104, p. 89.

supporting sustainable products and practices.²⁹

Mindfulness plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability in education by helping students develop a deeper awareness of their connection to the environment and others. Through mindfulness, students gain a greater sense of ecological responsibility, emotional resilience, and social and emotional intelligence. By incorporating mindfulness into educational curricula, educators can encourage students to reflect on their impact on the planet and take proactive steps toward creating a more sustainable future. Furthermore, mindfulness fosters a culture of respect, cooperation, and global responsibility, all of which are essential for addressing the complex social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the world today. As mindfulness continues to be integrated into schools and educational institutions worldwide, its potential to shape a sustainable and compassionate future grows ever more significant.

VI. CONCLUSION

Mindful education holds immense potential to foster a more compassionate and sustainable future by cultivating self-awareness, empathy, and social responsibility among students. In an era marked by complex global challenges – such as climate change, social inequality, and mental health crises – traditional education systems often fail to prepare students not only academically but also emotionally and ethically. Mindfulness, by focusing on the present moment and fostering a deep awareness of oneself and others, provides a transformative framework for addressing these shortcomings. Through regular mindfulness practices, students not only enhance their academic performance but also develop the emotional intelligence and moral courage necessary to navigate and solve the pressing issues of our time.

One of the key benefits of mindfulness in education is its ability to cultivate empathy. By encouraging students to pause, reflect, and become more attuned to their feelings and the emotions of others, mindfulness helps build stronger connections within the classroom and beyond. This heightened emotional awareness enables students to act with greater compassion, fostering supportive relationships and reducing conflict. These compassionate behaviors extend to wider social and environmental concerns, as students learn to recognize their interconnectedness with the world around them. As a result, students become more socially responsible and motivated to contribute to the well-being of others, whether within their immediate communities or on a global scale.

Moreover, the integration of mindfulness into the curriculum encourages a more holistic form of education. Rather than focusing solely on cognitive development, mindful education nurtures the emotional, ethical, and social dimensions of student's growth. It enables them to become not just informed individuals, but compassionate leaders capable of navigating the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Mindful students are more likely to make decisions

²⁹ Weare, K. (2018). *The mindful teacher: Building emotional intelligence and compassion in the classroom*. Routledge, p. 29.

grounded in empathy and respect, advocating for justice, sustainability, and inclusivity. They are also better equipped to handle the stresses and anxieties that arise from global crises, using mindfulness as a tool for resilience and mental well-being.

Mindful education also provides a pathway for environmental stewardship. By fostering a deeper awareness of the natural world and one's impact on it, mindfulness can inspire students to adopt more sustainable behaviors. From reducing waste to advocating for environmental policies, mindful individuals are more likely to engage in practices that preserve and protect the planet. In this way, mindfulness serves not only as a tool for personal growth but also as a means to address urgent ecological concerns.

Mindful education is a crucial tool for shaping a compassionate and sustainable future. By incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum, educators can empower students to become empathetic leaders, responsible citizens, and environmental stewards. Through mindfulness, students learn to be present, aware, and compassionate – qualities that are essential for tackling the challenges of the future with wisdom, resilience, and kindness. Ultimately, by placing compassion and sustainability at the heart of education, we can help create a more just, harmonious, and sustainable world for generations to come.

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IMPACT OF MINDFULNESS-BASED EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS ROLE AND PROSPECTS IN BUILDING COMPASSION, HUMAN DIGNITY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN FUTURE GENERATIONS

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Abstract:

Mindfulness-Based Education (MBE) aligns with the Buddhist principles of awareness, compassion, and ethical living, offering a transformative approach to learning. Rooted in the cultivation of *sati* (mindful awareness) and *karuṇā* (compassion), MBE nurtures social consciousness, emotional balance, and a harmonious way of life. This paper explores how MBE fosters empathy, upholds human dignity, and supports sustainable development by integrating mindfulness into education. Drawing from empirical studies and Buddhist philosophy, it highlights how mindfulness practices enhance concentration (*samādhi*), emotional regulation, and wise decision-making (*paññā*). Implementing MBE-based curricula can strengthen cognitive abilities while alleviating stress and anxiety, fostering inner peace (*upekkhā*). By engaging in mindfulness meditation (*vipassanā*) and conscious breathing (*ānāpānasati*), students cultivate resilience, self-discipline, and equanimity. These practices not only reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression but also promote overall psychological well-being. Putting Positive Psychology and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) together is a lot like how Buddhists teach morality (*sīla*) and mental training, which is how mindfulness is taught in schools. Educators who embrace mindfulness can facilitate the development of emotional intelligence, compassion, and wisdom, leading to a more interconnected and ethical society. Through various studies, this paper examines the transformative impact of mindfulness programs on educational institutions, demonstrating

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improvements in student engagement, ethical behavior, and collective well-being. Mindfulness initiatives, inspired by Buddhist ethics, have been instrumental in reducing conflict and fostering cooperation, echoing the Buddha's teachings on harmonious living (*samaññatā*). Beyond academic settings, mindfulness serves as a lifelong practice for self-awareness and spiritual growth, offering enduring benefits for personal and societal transformation. Ultimately, this study affirms that mindfulness, as understood, equips individuals with the wisdom and ethical foundations needed for a compassionate, dignified, and sustainable future. By integrating mindfulness into education, we cultivate not only intellectual growth but also the moral and spiritual development necessary for a more peaceful world.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, compassion, sustainable development, human dignity, future generation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century poses unparalleled difficulties, encompassing social disparities, environmental catastrophes, and dangers to human dignity. Global education systems are responsible for equipping students to achieve academic excellence while also fostering their development as empathetic and accountable global citizens. Mindfulness-based education provides a comprehensive framework that encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and ethical aspects of learning. This study examines how MBE might cultivate ideals of compassion and dignity while promoting sustainable development. Based on Buddhist teachings, mindfulness is a way to achieve wisdom, moral behavior, and freedom from suffering (*dukkha*). The book Bodhi, B. (2005),¹ *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon*. Wisdom Publications serves as a structured anthology of the Buddha's discourses, offering a thematic arrangement of suttas from the Pali Canon. Bhikkhu Bodhi provides explanations and introductions to contextualize the teachings. In this book, emphasis is given to the key themes of the Buddha's teachings – impermanence, suffering, the path to liberation, and the development of wisdom and ethical conduct. It is much more than just a stress-reduction method. A fundamental element of the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism is mindfulness (*sati*), especially in Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), which cultivates profound awareness of the body, emotions, mind, and mental experiences (as described in the *Satipatthana Sutta*). Buddhist mindfulness is essentially about insight (*vipassanā*) - seeing reality as it truly is, without attachments and aversions - in contrast to secular adaptations that frequently highlight its therapeutic effects.

Mindfulness, grounded in ancient contemplative traditions, fosters present-moment awareness and embraces experiences with non-judgmental acceptance.

¹ Bodhi, B. (2005). *In the Buddha's words: An anthology of discourses from the Pali Canon*. Wisdom Publications, p. 1 - 512.

As per, Langer, E. J. (2014).² *Mindfulness*. Da Capo Lifelong Books, It promotes individuals to immerse themselves in the present, cultivating a sense of clarity and tranquility. Mindfulness enhances self-awareness and emotional resilience through the observation of thoughts, feelings, and sensations devoid of labels or judgments. This ancient discipline has regained significance in contemporary society, providing effective techniques for stress management, attention enhancement, and overall well-being improvement. Its transforming potential is in its simplicity - remaining present and receptive to life as it develops. The integration of full attention in teaching significantly fosters compassion among students. The United Nations (2015) published a study titled “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” “Mindfulness, Education, and the Sustainable Development Goals” examines the incorporation of mindfulness practices in educational environments to promote the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In sustainable development, education has two roles. First, it helps reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by raising awareness and teaching important skills. Second, it serves as an end in itself by developing people’s potential and improving the well-being of everyone. This article emphasizes the importance of SDG 4, which seeks to guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education and foster lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals. It includes providing safe and effective learning environments, getting more people involved in education and training, and making sure that all students get the knowledge and skills they need to help the economy grow in the long term. This setting depicts mindfulness as an advantageous instrument, offering benefits such as enhanced concentration, stress regulation, and emotional fortitude among students. A study conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research revealed that mindfulness techniques at educational institutions resulted in enhanced concentration and improved stress management among students. The study suggests that teaching mindfulness can help students develop important social and emotional skills for long-term growth, like controlling their emotions, understanding others, making friends, and being strong. This methodology is consistent with transformative learning ideas in education for sustainable development-cultivating the skills and motivation required to tackle sustainability concerns. The article proposes teaching mindfulness practices in schools as a means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It also talks about how education can help kids learn the skills and attitudes they need for a sustainable future.

The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) created the “Tree of Contemplative Practices” (2025)³. Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE). (2015). *The Tree of Contemplative Practices*. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society serves as a conceptual framework

² Langer, E. J. (2014). *Mindfulness*. Da Capo Lifelong Books, p. 1 - 272.

³ Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE). (2015). *The Tree of Contemplative Practices*. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, p. 1 - 1.

that showcases various contemplative practices and their application in both academic and personal settings. The tree metaphor highlights the shared foundations of mindfulness, awareness, and presence while illustrating the variety and interdependence of contemplative practices. The “Tree of Contemplative Practices” provides educators and individuals with a framework for investigating techniques that promote self-reflection, mindfulness, and holistic education. In both academic and personal development, it emphasizes how contemplative practices can improve emotional resilience, focus, creativity, and a feeling of purpose. The tree essentially emphasizes how contemplative practices may be applied in a variety of contexts and disciplines, promoting their use for social interaction, personal growth, and transformative education. The “Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, Research, and Practice,” edited by Kirk W. Brown, J. David Creswell, and Richard M. Ryan (2015),⁴ *Handbook of mindfulness: Theory, research, and practice*. Guilford Press, offers a comprehensive examination of mindfulness from multiple perspectives. This authoritative volume delves into the theoretical foundations of mindfulness, exploring its roots and connections to contemporary psychological theories of attention, perception, motivation, and behavior. It also presents cutting-edge research on the neurobiological, cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal mechanisms and effects of mindfulness practices. The non-profit Association for Mindfulness in Education (AME) (2019)⁵ About AME: is committed to incorporating mindfulness exercises into classroom environments. Their goal is to help teachers and students by offering them research, training, and tools that promote well-being and improve educational opportunities. AME hopes to create a more sympathetic and productive learning environment by encouraging mindfulness. “Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals to Young Citizens (10–16 Years): A Focus on Teaching Hope, Respect, Empathy, and Advocacy in Schools,” a book edited by A. M. Dolan (2024).⁶ The book examines innovative teaching strategies designed to introduce young students to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. It highlights how crucial it is to instill in pupils the fundamental values of advocacy, empathy, respect, and hope in order to build a more just and sustainable future. With an emphasis on enabling students to think critically about global issues like poverty, injustice, and climate change, the book offers educators useful tactics and lesson plans for incorporating the SDGs into the curriculum. The book inspires young students to see themselves as change agents who can make significant contributions to society’s advancement by promoting emotional intelligence and active citizenship. The book emphasizes the transforming power of education in advancing social justice and sustainable development

⁴ Brown, K. W., Creswell, J. D., & Ryan, R. M. (Eds.). (2015). *Handbook of mindfulness: Theory, research, and practice*. Guilford Press, p. 1 - 466.

⁵ Association for Mindfulness in Education. (2019). *About AME*, p. 1 - 19.

⁶ A. M. Dolan (2024), *Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals to Young Citizens (10 – 16 Years): A Focus on Teaching Hope, Respect, Empathy, and Advocacy in Schools*. Routledge, p. 1 - 492.

through a combination of theoretical ideas and real-world classroom situations. It promotes an educational approach that motivates students to take action in their communities and beyond in addition to providing them with knowledge. In the chapter “Mindfulness, Education, and the Sustainable Development Goals,” Ergas and Hadar (2018),⁷ Mindfulness, Education, and the Sustainable Development Goals. In W. Leal Filho (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Sustainability in Higher Education* (pp. 1 – 6). Springer looks into how mindfulness can be used in schools, focusing on how it fits with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which says that everyone should be able to get a good education and have the chance to keep learning throughout their lives. Gómez-Olmedo, Valor, and Carrero (2020)⁸, Mindfulness in education for sustainable development to nurture socioemotional competencies: A systematic review and meta-analysis. The study, published in *Environmental Education Research*, 26 (7), 1036–1054, explores how mindfulness practices contribute to the development of socioemotional competencies in the context of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Because the authors know that socio-emotional skills like emotional regulation, empathy, social connectedness, and resilience are important for promoting sustainability, they do a full analysis to see how well mindfulness interventions improve these skills. In the chapter “Transformative Education: Teaching Hope, Respect, Empathy, and Advocacy in Schools,” A. M. Dolan (2024)⁹ analyzes how transformative education might prepare young learners with the values and abilities necessary to confront global concerns. Dolan contends that nurturing hope, respect, empathy, and advocacy inside educational institutions is essential for developing active and engaged citizens ready to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The chapter emphasizes the necessity of incorporating these ideals into the curriculum to foster a more inclusive and equitable educational setting. Dolan offers concrete examples and instructional strategies for educators to motivate kids to cultivate a feeling of agency and social responsibility. The chapter underscores the significance of education in equipping youth to tackle challenges such as inequality, climate change, and social injustice through the promotion of critical thinking, teamwork, and emotional intelligence. Dolan asserts that transformative education encompasses not merely the instruction of academic material but also the cultivation of students’ dispositions and behaviors aimed at fostering a sustainable and equitable world. This chapter provides a framework for educators aiming to develop significant and effective learning experiences

⁷ Ergas, O., & Hadar, L. (2018). Mindfulness, Education, and the Sustainable Development Goals. In W. Leal Filho (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Sustainability in Higher Education*, Springer, p. 1 – 6.

⁸ Gómez-Olmedo, A. M., Valor, C., & Carrero, I. (2020). Mindfulness in education for sustainable development to nurture socioemotional competencies: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Environmental Education Research*, 26 (7), p. 1036 – 1054.

⁹ Dolan, A. M. (2024), Transformative education: Teaching hope, respect, empathy and advocacy in schools. In A. M. Dolan (Ed.), *Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals to young citizens (10-16 years)*, Routledge, p. 36 – 58.

that correspond with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Shapiro, S. L., Brown, K. W., & Astin, J. A., A review of research on the integration of meditation into higher education. *Teachers College Record*, (2011).¹⁰ This article examines research regarding the potential advantages of incorporating meditation practices within higher education. The authors investigate the impact of meditation on student well-being, learning outcomes, and academic performance. This review consolidates findings from various studies indicating that meditation enhances attention, emotional regulation, stress management, and self-awareness—skills essential for academic achievement and personal growth. Shapiro et al. address the challenges of implementation, such as skepticism among educators and logistical considerations, while proposing practical strategies for integrating meditation into curricula. They advocate for mindfulness-based practices as a means to promote holistic development in students and enhance supportive academic environments. Simola (2024) examines the integration of dignity-infused, trauma-informed, and contemplative pedagogical approaches in the paper “Dignity-Infused and Trauma-Informed, Contemplative Pedagogy for Preventing Moral Injury and Promoting Well-being” to prevent moral injury and enhance well-being.¹¹ Moral injury denotes the psychological distress arising from actions or omissions that contravene an individual’s moral or ethical principles. Simola posits that conventional educational and organizational practices frequently neglect the significant effects of moral injury on individuals, resulting in reduced well-being and ethical disengagement. This paper proposes a pedagogical framework that emphasizes human dignity, acknowledges trauma, and incorporates contemplative practices. It advocates for Dignity-Infused Practices, ensuring that all individuals are treated with inherent worth and respect, thereby fostering an environment where ethical behavior is the norm. Strategies informed by trauma. Identifying and mitigating the impacts of trauma on individuals to establish supportive environments that foster healing and resilience. Contemplative pedagogy integrates mindfulness and reflective practices that promote self-awareness, ethical reflection, and emotional regulation. Simola argues that the integration of these elements fosters a more compassionate and ethical organizational culture, enabling individuals to effectively address moral challenges and uphold their well-being. This paper supports a comprehensive approach to education and organizational development that emphasizes human dignity and ethical integrity. Implementing this comprehensive pedagogical framework allows institutions to reduce the risk of moral injury while fostering a culture of well-being and ethical engagement. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003) examines the beginnings, growth, and prospects of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in a variety of settings, with a focus on psychology

¹⁰ Shapiro, S. L., Brown, K. W., & Astin, J. A. (2011), A review of research on the integration of meditation into higher education. *Teachers College Record*, p. 493 - 528.

¹¹ Simola, S. (2024). Dignity-infused and trauma-informed, contemplative pedagogy for preventing moral injury and promoting wellbeing. *Humanistic Management Journal*, p. 1 - 23.

and healthcare.¹² Kabat-Zinn emphasizes how mindfulness techniques, which have their roots in Buddhist traditions, have been modified for use in secular contexts to deal with modern problems including stress, chronic pain, and mental health disorders. They stress that, although MBIs are based on Buddhist meditation techniques, they are offered in a secular, scientific setting to ensure that everyone can understand them. By bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and contemporary science, this modification makes mindfulness applicable in a variety of domains. MBIs, especially Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), were created to remove any religious or cultural connotations from mindfulness and make it accessible to a wide range of people. In order to help people manage stress, discomfort, and illness, MBSR incorporates yoga and mindfulness meditation. The seminal work on mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), “Full Catastrophe Living” by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990), provides useful techniques for dealing with stress, discomfort, and disease.¹³ Kabat-Zinn offers a comprehensive strategy for living completely despite life’s obstacles by using scientific evidence, mindfulness meditation, and Buddhist teachings. It is commonly recognized as a manual for incorporating mindfulness into contemporary living, providing resources and understanding for people looking to develop resilience and personal change. In therapeutic settings, MBIs are frequently used to treat ailments like stress-related illnesses, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain. People who practice mindfulness are better able to control their emotions, experience less psychological suffering, and generally feel better. The practice of intentionally and nonjudgmentally paying attention in the present is known as mindfulness. The technique builds resilience and flexibility by promoting awareness, clarity, and acceptance. Full attention cultivates an empathic understanding of oneself and others, which fosters the growth of compassion, as Sanmee (2024) emphasizes. Students gain the ability to recognize their feelings as well as those of their peers through self-awareness exercises, which subsequently promote a greater comprehension of various viewpoints and experiences.¹⁴ Developing compassion in educational settings can result in more inclusive and equitable environments, as demonstrated by the relationship between social justice and full attention. Sanmee emphasizes the importance of the Buddhist ideas of interdependence, equality, and compassion (*karuṇā*) for the welfare of the community. According to the study, practicing compassion increases empathy and selflessness, which results in just social systems. Buddhist teachings urge behaviors that decrease suffering and promote community well-being by acknowledging the interconnection of all beings.

¹² Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), p. 144 – 156.

¹³ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delacorte Press, p. 1 - 453.

¹⁴ Sanmee, W. (2024). Social justice through the lens of Buddhism: Insights on compassion, equity, and community well-being. *วารสารวิชาการสังคมศาสตร์สมัยใหม่ (Journal of Modern Social Sciences Online)*, 1(6), p. 37 – 55.

Including Buddhist ethics in social justice campaigns, according to Sanmee, can offer a comprehensive strategy for resolving social injustices and fostering inter communal harmony. The study highlights the potential of fundamental values like compassion (*karuṇā*), connection, and moral behavior to alleviate structural injustices and promote communal well-being. It draws attention to the fundamental framework that the Eight fold Path and the Four Noble Truths offer for fostering empathy and advancing social harmony. Developing compassion in kids makes them more capable of addressing social issues and making constructive contributions to their communities, which in turn fosters a climate of respect and unity.

Corinne Brion and Gina Laura Gullo's work "Principals' Perspectives of Mindfulness for Leadership and Equity" (2020) explores how school principals see and apply mindfulness in their leadership practices to promote educational fairness.¹⁵ Four major themes are identified by the authors as being associated with mindfulness in leadership: thoughtful decision-making, present-centeredness, modeling listening and respect, and awareness and attention. Principals emphasize how mindfulness enables them to stay focused, overcome obstacles, and make deliberate choices that are consistent with justice and fairness ideals. Additionally, they stress the value of being present in their interactions with kids and staff to foster a welcoming and positive school climate. Despite acknowledging the benefits of mindfulness, the study reveals that some principals stigmatize the practice, often due to their belief that it is associated with spirituality. According to the authors, redefining mindfulness in an educational setting can help bridge the gap between theory and practice. The study promotes a wider adoption of mindfulness in school leadership by presenting it as a tool for improving leadership effectiveness and equity. The study "Principals' Perspectives of Mindfulness for Leadership and Equity" by Corinne Brion and Gina Laura Gullo examines how school principals define and incorporate mindfulness within their leadership and equity practices. Principals stress the significance of being aware of their surroundings and staying focused in their roles. The study finds four major themes in their conceptualizations of mindfulness, awareness, and attention through qualitative research that includes observations and interviews with eleven school principals. Present-centeredness emphasizes the importance of staying in the present, which promotes responsiveness and efficient decision-making. Modeling Respect and Attention: Principals believe that cultivating a strong school culture requires conscious leadership, which includes exhibiting dignity and careful listening. Principals regard decision-making procedures as crucial for fair and deliberate decision-making, ensuring that actions align with moral principles. However, the study shows that mindfulness is looked down upon, which shows how important it is to have a definition that is specific to educational leadership and focuses on education. In this context, mindfulness refers to the application of awareness, attention, present-centeredness, and

¹⁵ Brion, C., & Gullo, G. L. (2020). Principals' perspectives of mindfulness for leadership and equity. *International Journal of Teaching and Case Studies*, 11(1), p. 15-29.

reflection in leadership and equality practices, such as making decisions and setting an example of respect and listening. The goal of this improved definition is to close the gap between academic study and real-world implementation in learning environments.

II. COMPARISON OF MINDFULNESS AND VALUE EDUCATION

As per a comparative analysis of value education and mindfulness, although they both seek to make people's lives better, their methods, procedures, and goals are different. "Being fully present and aware of the present moment" is the definition of mindfulness. It is a mental exercise that emphasizes acceptance, mindfulness, and focus. For instance, engaging in meditation, paying attention to one's breathing, and objectively evaluating one's thoughts and feelings are examples. Value education, on the other hand, seeks to help people develop into responsible and moral members of society by instilling moral, social, and spiritual values in them. It highlights values like integrity, empathy, tolerance, and self-control. "The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education" by Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge (2014), The book discusses the importance of emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and sustainability in the classroom.¹⁶ It looks at how developing three main focus types – self-awareness, empathy, and systemic complexity – can change education and better prepare students for the modern world. Self-awareness (inner focus) can help students develop emotional intelligence through self-regulation and mindfulness. (Other Focus) Empathy for Developing emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills helps students see the big picture, identify patterns, and tackle difficult problems. Systems thinking (outer focus), whether it be social, ecological, or organizational, also helps students navigate relationships and teamwork by fostering empathy and collaboration. In *Mindfulness and Learning: Celebrating the Affective Dimension of Education*, Hyland, T. (2011) explores the role of mindfulness in enhancing the emotional and affective dimensions of education.¹⁷ He argues that traditional education systems have often prioritized cognitive and intellectual aspects while neglecting emotional intelligence, well-being, and personal growth. Hyland highlights the scientific and philosophical foundations of mindfulness, drawing from Buddhist traditions, psychological research, and contemporary education theories. He discusses how mindfulness can support student' emotional resilience, concentration, and ethical awareness, ultimately leading to a more fulfilling educational experience. For improving ethics and character development, Mindfulness encourages values such as compassion, empathy, and responsibility, aligning with moral and value education.

Example: Using tales and real-world experiences to teach ethics, honesty, and service. Therefore, we may state that improving mental calm, concentration, and stress reduction are the main objectives of mindfulness. Promoting

¹⁶ Goleman, D., & Senge, P. (2014). *The triple focus: A new approach to education*. More Than Sound, 1 - 92.

¹⁷ Hyland, T. (2011). *Mindfulness and learning: Celebrating the affective dimension of education*. Springer, 1 - 260.

morality and values in one’s social and personal life is the aim of value education, which is focused on enhancing one’s mental and emotional health. It assists people in becoming morally upright and responsible citizens.

Aspect	Mindfulness	Value Education
Definition	A practice focused on developing awareness of the present moment, often through meditation and self-reflection.	a method of instruction meant to inculcate moral, cultural, and ethical ideals in people.
Focus Area	They possess self-awareness, emotional regulation, and mental clarity.	Values, ethics, and social norms influence conduct and judgment.
Objective	The goal is to cultivate inner peace, reduce stress, and enhance personal well-being.	to cultivate moral qualities, cultivate a sense of accountability, and advance social harmony.
Methodology	These practices include meditation, breathing exercises, mindful observation, and non-judgmental awareness.	Formal education includes moral principles and ethics lessons, role-playing, storytelling, and conversations.
Application	The program is individual-oriented, focusing on mental health and personal development.	focused on moral and ethical contributions to a broader group, with a focus on the community and society.
Scope	Primarily addresses mental and emotional aspects, such as reducing anxiety and improving focus.	It is more comprehensive, encompassing ethical, cultural, moral, and occasionally spiritual aspects.
Philosophical Roots	It is often rooted in Eastern traditions like Buddhism, though it is applied in secular contexts in modern times.	draws on a society’s philosophical, theological, and cultural traditions as well as international ethical frameworks.

Outcome	There has been an increase in self-awareness, stress reduction, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced focus.	Improvements in interpersonal relationships, the growth of ethical reasoning, and conformity to social norms are all contributing factors.
Integration in Education	It has been incorporated into the modern curriculum as part of wellness programs and emotional intelligence training.	Schools frequently offer moral science and value education courses, emphasizing civic and ethical responsibilities.
Role in Conflict Resolution	It promotes calmness, self-regulation, and understanding of one's emotions to respond thoughtfully.	promotes moral decision-making, compassion, and regard for the values of others in order to settle conflicts.
Criticism	It is sometimes criticized for being overly individualistic and lacking social or cultural context.	maybe viewed as difficult to universalize, prescriptive, or biased toward particular cultural or religious values.

Value education prioritizes the teaching of moral values and societal responsibility, while mindfulness focuses on inner awareness and mental calmness. Both are vital – value education aids in the development of moral people who make valuable contributions to society, while mindfulness improves mental and emotional well-being. A list of universities throughout the world that are incorporating mindfulness-based courses worldwide uses mindfulness techniques in higher education, emphasizing a range of strategies and goals. Numerous academic institutions across the globe have included mindfulness-based courses in their curricula, providing students in a range of subject areas with opportunities to practice mindfulness in order to improve their resilience, well-being, and professional skills. Notable Universities consist of:

Universities worldwide integrating Mindfulness-based curricula		
Brown University	Through its School of Professional Studies, Brown offers evidence-based mindfulness programs, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) courses designed to introduce fundamental mindfulness practices and stress reduction techniques.	USA
Brown University Alpert Medical School	Offers a Scholarly Concentration in Contemplative Studies, allowing medical students to develop an experiential and scientific understanding of contemplative practices within a clinical context.	USA
University of California, San Diego	The Center for Mindfulness at UC San Diego Health provides a broad range of mindfulness-based programs and initiatives to help individuals cope with stress, pain, and illness in daily life.	USA
University of Minnesota	The Earle E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing offers mindfulness classes for individuals, organizations, businesses, and communities, aiming to enhance well-being through mindfulness practices.	USA
Duke University	Duke Health's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program consists of sessions designed to teach mindfulness meditation and movement practices that participants can integrate into their daily lives.	USA

The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University	Through Duke Integrative Medicine, students learn the science behind mind-body therapies and develop stress management and self-care skills, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Offers a Scholarly Concentration in Contemplative Studies, allowing medical students to develop an experiential and scientific understanding of contemplative practices within a clinical context.	USA
West Chester University	Offers a Graduate Certificate in Applied Mindfulness, focusing on developing a background in the science and theory of contemporary mindfulness-based interventions.	USA
University of Cincinnati	The Osher Center for Integrative Health provides Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction courses aimed at managing stress, reducing pain, and improving well-being through mindfulness practices.	USA
University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry	This institution has incorporated mindfulness into its medical curriculum, providing students and residents with training to enhance self-awareness and well-being.	USA
Georgetown University School of Medicine	Its Mind-Body Medicine Program is integrated into the medical school curriculum, teaching theoretical and experiential understanding of mind-body approaches to healthcare, including mindfulness.	USA

University of Colorado Boulder	The Renée Crown Wellness Institute’s Mindful Campus Program co-designs and implements mindfulness and compassion-based programming to support undergraduate student wellness	USA
University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry	This institution has incorporated mindfulness into its medical curriculum, providing programs that help students manage stress and improve quality of life.	USA
University of California, Los Angeles	Through its Mindfulness Awareness Research Center, UCLA offers various mindfulness training options, including in-person and online courses, to help individuals apply mindfulness practices in daily life.	USA
Harvard University	Offers mindfulness training through its Center for Wellness, including an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course aimed at reducing stress and enhancing well-being.	USA
Cornell University	Provides a Mindful Inclusion certificate program that combines meditation and mindfulness benefits to leadership, aiming to foster inclusive environments in diverse workplaces.	USA
University of Oxford	Through its Oxford Mindfulness Centre, the university has been at the forefront of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) research, innovation, teaching, and training since 2008. The Centre offers a two-year part-time Master’s course in MBCT, providing professionals with in-depth specialist knowledge and skills in mindfulness-based approaches.	England

Monash University	Monash has integrated a mindfulness-based lifestyle program into its core medical curriculum since 2002, aiming to support student well-being, quality of life, reduce psychological distress, and develop clinical competencies.	Australia
McGill Faculty of Medicine	Offers a “Mindfulness Medical Practice” through its Programs in Integrated Whole Person Care, modeled after the MBSR program with an emphasis on clinical practice.	Canada
University of Aberdeen	Offers a postgraduate program in Studies in Mindfulness, focusing on developing a stable mindfulness practice and research and applying mindfulness in professional contexts such as health, education, or business.	Scotland
University of the West of Scotland	Offers an MSc in Mindfulness and Compassion, which has an academic basis in psychology and aims to develop understanding of the links between psychology, mindfulness, and compassion.	Scotland
University College Cork	Provides an MSc in Mindfulness-Based Well-being, training students to teach mindfulness in schools, workplaces, and everyday life to promote resilience and stress reduction.	Ireland
Radboud University	Provides mindfulness training aimed at helping students direct their attention to become aware of their automatic thoughts, feelings, and physical reactions. This training is designed to create inner calm and facilitate conscious decision-making.	Netherlands

European University Viadrina	Provides stress management tools for students and employees, including meditation and progressive muscle relaxation, to promote well-being within the university community.	Germany
Nanhua University	Offers a one-semester mindfulness meditation course as part of the core curriculum for first-year students. This program has been shown to improve learning effectiveness and cognitive performance among participants.	Taiwan
Hengyang Normal University	Conducted a study implementing a mindfulness-based intervention aimed at reducing health risk behaviors among undergraduates, indicating a growing interest in incorporating mindfulness practices within Chinese higher education.	China
South China University of Technology	Applied a classroom-based positive psychology education course, which included mindfulness components, for medical students to increase their psychological well-being.	China
University of Quang Tri	Conducted a randomized study examining the effects of mindfulness and service-learning training on students. The study involved 186 university students in central Vietnam, divided into three training groups: mindfulness only, service-learning only, and a combination of both. Findings suggested that integrating mindfulness with service-learning can foster awareness and civic engagement among students.	Vietnam

Fulbright University Vietnam	Hosted events promoting mindfulness and gratitude, such as the “A Rose for Your Pocket” program. These activities aim to cultivate mindfulness practices among students, fostering a sense of well-being and community.	Vietnam
Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB)	Offers a course titled “Mindfulness for Effective Leadership,” which provides both basic and advanced concepts, along with necessary practices for applying mindfulness in leadership contexts.	India
Indian Institute of Technology Mandi (IIT Mandi)	Introduced a compulsory course for BTech freshmen called “Introduction to Consciousness and Well-being.” Developed under the Indian Knowledge Systems division, the course covers topics such as theories of consciousness, anatomy and functionality of the physical body, and concepts like reincarnation and out-of-body experiences.	India
Maharishi University of Management and Technology (MUMT)	Part of a network of institutions inspired by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, MUMT incorporates Transcendental Meditation and Consciousness-Based Education into its curriculum, emphasizing holistic development and stress reduction.	India

These educational institutions serve as prime examples of the increasing awareness of the advantages of integrating mindfulness into higher education, which may help students manage stress, improve focus, become more competent professionals in a variety of professions, and further their holistic development.

III. A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION FOR PUTTING MINDFULNESS-BASED EDUCATION INTO PRACTICE

Mindfulness-based education offers a unique opportunity to cultivate compassion, uphold human dignity, and promote sustainable development. Teachers may provide the next generation the abilities and perspective required to build a more sustainable and caring world by using evidence-based techniques, implementing an organized and inclusive approach, and involving stakeholders. The significance of mindfulness in influencing holistic development is emphasized

by this study, which also urges a determined attempt to apply these techniques globally.

Establishing the Foundations	Define Clear Objectives	Cultivate self-awareness, empathy, and resilience among students.
		Promote ethical decision-making and respect for human dignity.
		Foster a mindset of sustainability and global responsibility.
	Engage Stakeholder: The successful implementation of mindfulness education depends on the active participation of key stakeholders.	Educational Institutions: Partner with schools, colleges, and universities to integrate mindfulness practices into curricula.
		Policy Makers: Advocate for the inclusion of mindfulness-based education in national and regional policies.
		Parents and Guardians: Encourage family involvement in mindfulness activities to reinforce practices at home.
		Community Leaders: Collaborate with local organizations to provide resources and support for implementation.
Curriculum Development	Design Mindfulness Modules: A well-designed curriculum is central to the success of mindfulness-based education.	Introductory Modules: Focus on foundational mindfulness practices, such as mindful breathing, body awareness, and attention training.
		Advanced Modules: Emphasize compassion training, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership.
		Sustainability-Focused Content: Teach environmental mindfulness and global interconnectedness through practical activities and discussions.

	Align with Educational Standards: To ensure seamless integration, mindfulness practices should align with existing educational standards. This can be achieved by:	Enhancing core subjects, such as social studies, science, and literature, with mindfulness themes. Incorporating experiential learning methods, such as reflection journals, group discussions, and nature-based exercises, to deepen student engagement.
Teacher Training and Capacity Building	Professional Development Programs: Educators play a pivotal role in the success of mindfulness initiatives.	Offer certified mindfulness training programs tailored to educators' needs.
		Conduct workshops and seminars on incorporating mindfulness techniques into teaching methodologies.
	Peer Support Networks: To sustain teacher engagement, peer support networks should be established	Facilitate communities of practice where educators can share experiences and best practices.
		Provide ongoing mentorship and access to resources to reinforce mindfulness strategies.
Implementation Strategies	Pilot Programs: Launching pilot programs is a critical step in assessing the feasibility and effectiveness of mindfulness education.	Testing mindfulness modules in selected schools and gathering feedback from students, teachers, and parents.
		Using the feedback to refine the curriculum and address potential challenges.
	Gradual Scaling: After successful pilot programs, mindfulness education can be gradually scaled to broader contexts.	Expand programs to include diverse cultural and regional settings.
		Customize content to address local needs and priorities.

	Integration with Extra-curricular Activities: Mindfulness practices should extend beyond the classroom to foster holistic development.	Establish mindfulness clubs and meditation sessions.
		Organize community service projects focused on compassion and sustainability.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Develop Metrics for Success: To measure the impact of mindfulness education.	Emotional well-being: Assess changes in students' stress levels and emotional resilience.
		Academic performance: Evaluate improvements in attention, memory, and learning outcomes.
		Social behaviors: Measure increases in empathy, cooperation, and ethical decision-making.
	Conduct Longitudinal Studies: Long-term studies are essential to understand the sustained impact of mindfulness education.	Track the progress of students and educators over several years.
		Publish findings in academic journals and present them at conferences to inform policy and practice.
Building Awareness and Advocacy	Awareness Campaigns: Public awareness is vital for the widespread adoption of mindfulness education.	Leveraging social media, workshops, and public events to highlight success stories.
		Engaging influencers and thought leaders to promote mindfulness initiatives
	Partnerships: Collaboration with external organizations can enhance program reach and sustainability:	Partner with non-profits, NGOs, and corporate sponsors to secure funding and resources.
		Work with academic institutions to conduct research and develop evidence-based practices.

	Storytelling: Sharing real-life success stories can inspire others to embrace mindfulness education.	Collect testimonials from students, teachers, and communities.
		Use multimedia platforms to disseminate these stories widely.

IV. A MINDFULNESS-BASED CURRICULUM TO FOSTER SUSTAINABILITY, DIGNITY, AND COMPASSION

Our mission is to raise a generation of socially conscious, considerate, and sympathetic people who respect human dignity, exhibit compassion, and support sustainable development. The curriculum is divided into three thematic pillars, each supported by mindfulness principles and practices: Compassion, Human Dignity, and Sustainability. This is in accordance with the findings of Roeser, R. W., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2016) *Bringing Theory and Research into Practice: A Handbook of Mindfulness in Education*.¹⁸ With case studies and evidence-based techniques, Springer offers a thorough manual for introducing mindfulness into classrooms. The 2013 book *Love Letter to the Earth* by Thich Nhat Hanh offers insights into eco-mindfulness and how it might promote sustainability and environmental responsibility. Creswell, J. D., Ryan, R. M., and Brown, K. W. (Eds.). (2015) *The Mindfulness Handbook: Research, Theory, and Practice* With an emphasis on its applicability across a range of industries, Guilford Press examines mindfulness from a theoretical and practical standpoint¹⁹. It examines mindfulness as a theoretical concept and a useful tool by combining ideas from psychology, neuroscience, education, medicine, and other fields. The United Nations adopted the historic framework known as “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in 2015.²⁰

It presents a global strategy for attaining sustainable development by 2030 via the combined endeavors of nations, institutions, and people. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in 2015, In which, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which tackle important social, economic, and environmental issues, are at the heart of the agenda. In order to solve urgent global issues and build a sustainable, just, and prosperous future for everybody, this paper acts as an international action plan. It stands for a shared dedication to using creativity and group effort to change the world. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include ensuring clean water, sustainable energy, and economic growth; combating climate change, conserving ecosystems, and

¹⁸ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Roeser, R. W. (2016). **Handbook of Mindfulness in Education: Integrating Theory and Research into Practice**. Springer, p. 1 - 394.

¹⁹ Roeser, R. W., & Eccles, J. S. (2015). Mindfulness and compassion in human development: Introduction to the special section. *Developmental Psychology*, 51 (1), p. 1 - 6.

²⁰ United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. United Nations, p. 1 - 41.

fostering sustainable communities; promoting health, education, and gender equality; and ensuring poverty and hunger are eradicated. Implementation and Monitoring, Leave No One Behind, and the Five Pillars (5 Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships) guarantee that everyone, especially under-served groups, benefits from development initiatives.

As part of the core curriculum, students will learn to respect human dignity by understanding different points of view and appreciating inclusivity. They will also learn how personal, social, and environmental well-being are all connected and promote sustainable development practices. They will also develop self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and empathy to foster compassionate decision-making. Edward Cromarty examines the role of meditation as a holistic approach to fostering both personal and social development within educational settings. Drawing upon the teachings of renowned Buddhist monks and meditation experts. In the article, “Meditation: A Balance of Human and Social Growth in Education,” Cromarty (2019) delves into the practice and purpose of meditation, highlighting its potential to enhance self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships among students and faculty.²¹ The article advocates for the integration of meditation into educational curricula, suggesting that such practices can enrich the holistic growth of individuals and promote a more harmonious and compassionate educational environment.

Pillar 1: Compassion
Goal: Foster empathy and kindness toward self, others, and society.
Lectures
The Science of Compassion: How mindfulness enhances empathy.
Self-Compassion: Overcoming self-criticism and building inner strength.
Practicing Kindness in Action: Mindful service and altruism.
Practices
Loving-kindness meditation to cultivate goodwill toward self and others.
Reflective journaling on acts of compassion.
Community service projects infused with mindfulness practices.

²¹ Cromarty, E. (2019). Meditation: A balance of human and social growth in education. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, 5(1), Article 7, p. 1 - 6.

Pillar 2: Human Dignity	
Goal: Promote respect for the intrinsic value and rights of every individual.	
Lectures	
Mindfulness and Respect: Understanding biases and overcoming prejudices.	
Active Listening: Mindful communication to value diverse voices.	
Equity and Inclusion: Addressing privilege and creating inclusive spaces.	
Practicles	
Role-playing scenarios to practice empathetic communication.	
Guided meditation on recognizing shared humanity.	
Group discussions exploring case studies on human rights and dignity.	
Pillar 3: Sustainability	
Goal: Encourage sustainable living through mindfulness and interconnectedness.	
Lectures	
Mindful Living: Reducing consumption and practicing gratitude.	
Ecological Interdependence: Understanding the link between mindfulness and environmental stewardship.	
Eethical Leadership for Sustainability: Making mindful decisions for a better future.	
Particles	
Nature-based mindfulness practices, such as forest bathing or eco-meditation.	
Developing a personal sustainability action plan.	
Collaborative projects addressing local environmental or social challenges.	

V. LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE ON MBE'S FUNCTION

MBE's worldwide impact is in mindfulness training, which can fundamentally change corporate practices, government policies, and environmental preservation for a generation of people. If compassion and sustainability become deeply rooted in decision-making, this generation can collaborate to tackle global issues. In a comprehensive change, the adoption of mindfulness-based education by educational institutions around the world will have a cascading effect that changes not only people but also communities, businesses, and international regulations, bringing humankind closer to a more just and sustainable future. Encouraging respect and human dignity in educational environments will lessen inequity and discrimination, allowing everyone to prosper.

In order to promote cultures of empathy, dignity, and sustainability, educational institutions all around the world have made mindfulness a fundamental principle. Future generations of conscientious leaders propel systemic change in the Global Ripple Effect by tackling global issues in a cooperative and caring manner.

VI. CONCLUSION

By emphasizing not only cognitive growth but also emotional intelligence, moral leadership, and a sense of interconnectivity, mindfulness-based education (MBE) is a revolutionary method that goes beyond conventional educational paradigms. This strategy has an impact that goes well beyond the welfare of the person; it has a cascading effect on societies, communities, and the planet's environment as a whole. Fundamentally, MBE cultivates compassion, which is the cornerstone of peaceful interpersonal interactions, inclusive leadership, and just social institutions. Mindfulness education dismantles barriers to bias and discrimination by assisting pupils in developing empathy and understanding and empowering people to treat others with respect and kindness. This emphasis on compassion fosters a generation that prioritizes cooperation over rivalry and the common good over personal benefit. Another tenet of MBE is upholding human dignity, which inspires children to see each person's inherent value. Students who practice mindfulness are better able to recognize diversity, confront injustices, and create inclusive communities by developing self-awareness and emotional control. Future leaders will be better equipped to address structural inequalities and establish settings where everyone feels appreciated, respected, and empowered thanks to this emphasis on dignity. The most important way that MBE incorporates sustainable practices is probably by emphasizing how all life is interconnected and how much human activity affects the environment. Students gain a greater understanding of their relationship with the earth through mindfulness, which encourages more environmentally conscious behavior, responsible consumerism, and support for environmental justice. This fusion of sustainability and mindfulness is in line with international initiatives to combat climate change, protect biodiversity, and advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2015 UNESCO report "Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good?"²², re-

²² UNESCO. (2015). *Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?* UNESCO

imagines the goal and methods of education in the twenty-first century. It highlights the necessity of integrating education with global fairness and sustainable development, building on the organization's previous frameworks, including the Delors Report (1996)²³ The report featured important themes such as the transformation of educational systems, humanistic approaches, lifelong learning, education as a global common good, and sustainable development. The report offers a vision of education that promotes the general well-being of people and the world, challenging conventional ideas of education as a tool just for personal growth. It offers stakeholders, educators, and legislators a conceptual framework for developing inclusive and equitable educational systems. Using poetic language and hands-on activities, renowned Zen Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh combines environmentalism and spirituality in his 2013 book "Love Letter to the Earth" Parallax Press²⁴, urging readers to see the Earth as a loving and caring mother deserving of our respect and care. Hanh also calls on us to use compassion and mindfulness to heal the planet and ourselves. It is an exhortation to live in balance with the environment and protect it for coming generations. Mindfulness-based education develops a mindset that is essential for tackling the most important issues of our day by equipping students to handle the complexity of a world that is changing quickly with resilience and responsibility. It gives people the skills they need to deal with uncertainty, welcome innovation, and make morally sound choices that will benefit both the current and coming generations. Essentially, mindfulness-based education offers a comprehensive transformation that balances individual growth with the well-being of the group. It inspires communities to strive for equality and inclusivity, equips individuals with the necessary tools to lead lives of integrity and purpose, and fosters a global culture grounded in sustainability, compassion, and dignity. By cultivating mindfulness in its full depth, individuals move beyond simple stress reduction and embark on a journey of self-discovery. Anālayo, B. (2003) says that this practice develops wisdom (*paññā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*), which leads to the end of suffering (*nirvāṇa*).²⁵ Even though contemporary mindfulness-based techniques have greatly improved health and well-being, it is important to acknowledge their Buddhist roots as well as the deep ethical and philosophical implications, they bear. Being mindful involves a journey towards awakening, rather than simply focusing on the present moment. Hence, this educational approach catalyzes structural change, paving the way for a more sustainable and peaceful society.

Publishing, p. 1 - 84.

²³ Delors, J., et al. (1996). *Learning: The treasure within*. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. UNESCO Publishing, p. 1 - 248.

²⁴ Hanh, T. N. (2013). *Love letter to the earth*. Parallax Press, p. 1 - 144.

²⁵ Anālayo, B. (2003). *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*. Windhorse Publications, p. 1 - 319.

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APPLICATION OF MINDFULNESS AT MAHĀPAJĀPATĪ PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Educating monks and nuns is the most important work of the Buddhist *Saṅgha*,” stated the Most Venerable Thích Trí Quảng, Vice-Supreme Patriarch of the Witnessing Council of the Vietnam Buddhist *Saṅgha* and President of the Vietnam Buddhist University in Ho Chi Minh City. Education has always been a fundamental part of the Vesak Conference agenda since its inception. In 2025, alongside the main theme Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development, the conference includes five sub-themes, one of which is Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future. The Organizing Committee carefully selected these themes to address major contemporary Buddhist issues. As a Buddhist nun, the author recognizes the profound yet often overlooked contributions of Vietnamese nuns throughout history and in modern times. Many Vietnamese nuns have actively applied mindfulness in education to foster compassion and sustainability, yet their efforts remain largely undocumented. The author believes that these contributions should be recorded and shared to inspire future generations in preserving and advancing Buddhist education. With this in mind, the author has chosen the topic: Application of Mindfulness at Mahāpajāpatī Primary Schools in India.”

Keywords: *Mindfulness, education, Buddhism, India, Vietnam.*

I. INTRODUCTION

As emphasized by the Most Venerable Thích Trí Quảng, the prosperity of Buddhism largely depends on the quality of its monks and nuns. No matter how grand a temple may be, it holds little significance if there are no monks and nuns

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to practice and guide lay Buddhists in accordance with the Buddha's Dharma. Without proper training, study, and practice, the development of Buddhism would face significant challenges. Therefore, the education of Buddhist monks and nuns has always been a primary concern for past generations and remains one of the most crucial responsibilities of any Buddhist organization, regardless of historical circumstances.¹

As an integral pillar of the Vietnamese Buddhist *Saṅgha*, Vietnamese nuns have long stood alongside their monastic counterparts in preserving the Dharma and advancing education. From ancient times to the present day, they have played an indispensable role in safeguarding and transmitting Buddhist teachings, ensuring the tradition's vitality and continuity across generations. The history of Vietnamese Buddhism is filled with accounts of remarkable nuns whose contributions have left an indelible mark on both the spiritual and intellectual landscape of the tradition. Eminent figures such as the Most Venerable Diệu Nhân, Diệu Không, Diệu Ngọc, Diệu Tịnh, Như Thanh, Huỳnh Liên, and Giác Hải exemplify the unwavering commitment of Buddhist women to the Dharma. However, their influence extends beyond the historical records; countless venerable nuns, whose dedication has remained unrecognized due to their quiet monastic lives, have nonetheless played a crucial role in shaping Vietnamese Buddhism. Education has always been a fundamental aspect of monastic life for successive generations of Vietnamese Buddhist nuns. Throughout history, they have founded schools, organized tutoring classes, translated Buddhist scriptures, and nurtured the intellectual and moral development of both monastics and lay practitioners. Yet, despite their immense contributions, the historical narrative has often overlooked these tireless efforts. These women, devoted to both academic and spiritual enrichment, have profoundly shaped the monastic and educational landscape of Vietnamese Buddhism.

In contemporary times, Vietnamese Buddhist nuns continue to uphold this noble legacy, sustaining the largest Buddhist nuns' order among Buddhist-majority nations while demonstrating remarkable intellectual and spiritual capacities. Their contributions extend beyond monastery walls into diverse spheres of social engagement – including Dharma propagation, humanitarian activities, environmental conservation, and, most notably, education. Today, Vietnamese Buddhist nuns actively participate in educational initiatives across all levels, from early childhood education to university instruction. Their involvement in both secular and Buddhist education highlights their evolving role as scholars, teachers, and community leaders, bridging the traditional wisdom of the monastic path with the dynamic demands of modern society. A recent significant development underscoring this commitment to education

¹ HT. Thích Trí Quảng, *Giáo dục Tăng Ni là Phật sự quan trọng hàng đầu của Giáo hội* [Educating monks and nuns is the most important Buddhist work of the *Saṅgha*]. *Phật giáo Online*. 15/07/2022. <https://phatgiao.org.vn/giao-duc-tang-ni-la-phat-su-quan-trong-hang-dau-cua-giao-hoi-d52369.html> Accessed on January 10, 2025.

was the seminar titled “Nuns and Pre-School Education: Current Situation and Solutions,” held in November 2024 by the Centre for Buddhist Women’s Studies at Thanh Tâm Nunnery, Vietnam Buddhist University in Ho Chi Minh City. The discussions reaffirmed the critical role of Buddhist nuns in education, particularly in shaping the moral and intellectual foundations of early childhood development. The seminar emphasized that early childhood education is not merely a pedagogical concern but a fundamental factor influencing individual well-being, family stability, national development, and the future of Buddhism itself. Through their relentless dedication, Vietnamese Buddhist nuns embody the compassionate and wisdom-driven ethos of the Buddhist path, demonstrating that their contributions to education are not merely acts of service but a profound expression of the Bodhisattva ideal in contemporary society. Their work affirms the enduring relevance of Buddhist education in cultivating a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally and spiritually enriched - an aspiration central to building a sustainable and compassionate future for humanity.

It is noteworthy that the educational work of Buddhist nuns is not confined to Vietnam but has also expanded internationally. Over the past two decades, Vietnamese nuns have had opportunities to study and conduct research abroad, and many have actively supported Buddhist communities in other countries. Some Vietnamese Buddhist nuns have established temples and opened schools in India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, making significant contributions to the global integration of Vietnamese Buddhism. A notable example is Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh, who founded a nunnery and established schools for underprivileged children in India, exemplifying the far-reaching impact of Vietnamese Buddhist nuns in education and humanitarian efforts beyond national borders.

This paper examines the application of mindfulness in Buddhist education as a means to cultivate compassion and sustainability, focusing on the case of Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh and her establishment of Mahāpajāpatī Nunnery and Primary Schools in Vaishali and Bodhgaya, Bihar, India. Through this case study, the discussion underscores how mindfulness-based education fosters ethical awareness, social responsibility, and holistic development, highlighting the enduring relevance of Buddhist educational principles in contemporary society.

II. WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

The term “Mindfulness” is a translation of the Pāli word “*Sati*”, referring to the practice of maintaining awareness in the present moment. Mindfulness is a fundamental practice in Buddhism, emphasizing the ability to reflect on oneself, one’s life philosophy, and the profound significance of each passing second and minute.² More importantly, mindfulness means being fully

² The Middle Length Sayings (*Majjhima-Nikaya*), Vol. III, *The final fifty discourses* (*Upari-pannasa*), Translated from the Pali by I. B. Horner, The Pali Text Society, Oxford, 1999.

attuned to reality and aware of what is happening around us.³ From a Buddhist perspective, ordinary awareness is often constrained by habitual, unconscious patterns of thought and action. Meditation serves as a tool to awaken individuals from this conditioned state, allowing them to live more fully and harness the full potential of both their conscious and subconscious minds. In Buddhism, mindfulness is regarded as the heart of meditation. At its core, mindfulness is a simple yet powerful concept - the true strength of mindfulness lies in its consistent practice and application. It awakens us to the reality that life exists only in the present moment. When we are not fully present, we not only miss out on life's most precious experiences but also overlook the rich opportunities for personal growth and transformation.

Therefore, mindfulness is the art of living consciously. One does not need to be a Buddhist or a yogi to practice mindfulness. Buddhism teaches us to return to ourselves, rather than striving to become something other than who we truly are. It encourages us to reconnect with our innate nature and allow it to manifest freely, without obstruction. This requires us to awaken and perceive things as they truly are. The word "*Buddha*" means "awakened one" - someone who has realized their true nature. Thus, mindfulness is a transformative practice that enables deeper self-awareness through self-reflection, self-examination, and conscious action. At its core, mindfulness must be grounded in loving-kindness, understanding, and nurturing, serving as a guiding principle for a more awakened and compassionate way of living.

Mindfulness is more than just a concept for researchers and academicians - it has become a growing lifestyle trend in today's world. One of the key reasons for its popularity is its simplicity. It is accessible, cost-effective, and can be practiced by anyone, anywhere. Beyond personal well-being, mindfulness holds great potential in education, as it can be seamlessly integrated into curricula to enhance learning outcomes. Schools that incorporate mindfulness in education can help students develop self-awareness, cultivate empathy, learn to calm and focus their minds, communicate more mindfully, and apply these skills in their daily lives.

III. VIETNAMESE MAHĀPAJĀPATĪ NUNNERY IN VAISHALI

Mahāpajāpatī Nunnery and *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools, founded by Venerable Khiết Minh, exemplify the application of mindfulness in Buddhist education by Vietnamese nuns in India.

The Vietnamese *Mahāpajāpatī* Nunnery in Vaishali, Bihar, began construction on October 20, 2004, and was inaugurated on March 15, 2008. The journey of Venerable Khiết Minh in initiating and completing the Nunnery serves as a poignant reminder of the path taken by Mahāpajāpatī, the revered founder of the Buddhist nuns' order, in joining the *Saṅgha* more than 2,500 years ago.

³ Jon Kabat-Zinn (Nguyễn Duy Nhiên translated), *Chánh niệm là gì?* [What is Mindfulness], *Thư viện Hoa Sen* [Hoa Sen Library]. <https://thuvienhoasen.org/a14320/chanh-niem-la-gi> Accessed on January 10, 2025.

At the end of 2003, archaeologists discovered relics in Vaishali, Bihar, marking the site where the Buddha ordained *Mahāpajāpatī* and 500 *Sākiya* nuns. During a visit to these sacred relics, Venerable Khiết Minh was inspired to establish a nunnery and a *thūpa* to honor *Mahāpajāpatī* and the revered nuns at this significant location. In early 2004, she traveled to India to acquire land for the project. Initially, she intended to purchase a modest 1,000m² plot to erect a commemorative stele engraved with images of *Mahāpajāpatī*, the holy nuns, and the Eightfold Path in multiple languages. However, unexpected favorable conditions enabled her to acquire 8,000m² of land in Vaishali, allowing her to fulfill her greater vision of building a full-scale nunnery. On October 20, 2004, the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the *Mahāpajāpatī* Nunnery was held, witnessed by venerable monks and nuns from Vietnam.

After nearly four years of construction, the *Mahāpajāpatī* Nunnery was completed, and its inauguration ceremony was solemnly held on March 15, 2008,⁴ in Vaishali. The event was attended by esteemed monks and nuns from Vietnam and other countries engaged in Buddhist studies and activities in India. Also present were representatives from the Vietnamese Embassy in India, officials from the Bihar State Government and Vaishali district, as well as professors and students from various Indian universities, all gathering to commemorate this significant occasion.

At the Nunnery, construction of the *thūpa* dedicated to the Holy Patriarch *Mahāpajāpatī* and other nuns began after the foundation stone laying ceremony in January 2005 and was completed in 2013. The inauguration ceremony took place on October 23, 2013. This *thūpa* is the largest in the world dedicated to Patriarch *Mahāpajāpatī* by the Vietnamese Buddhist community. It also houses the most Buddha statues and features Buddhist scriptures engraved in multiple languages. In 2012, even before the *thūpa* was fully completed, a retreat was organized for more than 50 nuns from Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India. After the retreat, venerable nuns from Vietnam and Sri Lanka held an ordination ceremony for Bhikkhunis and Sramanerika nuns. This was a sacred moment, as it took place at the very site where the Buddha granted women the right to ordain as nuns more than 2,500 years ago. The ceremony revived the image of Buddhist nuns practicing purity while formally receiving the Dharma precepts. Another significant event for both Vietnamese and international Buddhist nuns occurred at the Vietnamese *Mahāpajāpatī* Nunnery in Vaishali in January 2013. That year, the Vietnamese Buddhist nuns hosted the 13th *Sākyadhita* International Buddhist Women's Conference under the theme "Buddhism in Everyday Life." The conference attracted hundreds of speakers and participants from 32 countries and territories, further strengthening the global dialogue on Buddhist women's roles in contemporary society.

3.1. Mahāpajāpatī Schools founded by the Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh in India

After completing the construction of the *thūpa* and the *Mahāpajāpatī*

⁴ February 8 in the Vietnamese lunar calendar, the death anniversary of *Mahāpajāpatī*.

Nunnery in Vaishali, the Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh recognized the hardships faced by rural communities in the district, particularly the challenges preventing many children from accessing education. In response, she and the nuns at the *Mahāpajāpatī* Nunnery established three *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools in Bihar: in Vaishali in 2013, in Bodhgaya in 2016, and Kolhua in 2019. Currently, these schools educate over 2,300 students from kindergarten to grade 8, supported by a team of 55 teachers. The curriculum follows the regular academic program of the Indian Government.⁵ Students receive free tuition, along with clothing, books, and school supplies. Maintaining these schools for over a decade, despite the significant financial demands, stands as a remarkable testament to the dedication and perseverance of the Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh and the Vietnamese nuns at the *Mahāpajāpatī* Nunnery.

The *Mahāpajāpatī* School in Vaishali commenced its first semester on October 6, 2013. Initially, the school enrolled students of all ages from kindergarten to grade 3, organizing 11 classes with a total of 350 students. By 2020, the student population had grown to approximately 1,000, distributed across five nursery classes, five lower kindergarten classes, five upper kindergarten classes, three grade 1 classes, two grade 2 classes, one grade 3 class, and one grade 5 class.⁶

In 2015, the Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh decided to establish the second *Mahāpajāpatī* School in Bodhgaya after recognizing that many impoverished children in the area, like those in Vaishali and other rural regions of India, lacked access to education. By March 2016, the *Mahāpajāpatī* School in Bodhgaya officially commenced operations with 450 students distributed across 11 classes, guided by 11 teachers under the direction of the Venerable Bhikkhuni Bodhi, a Burmese nun.⁷

The third *Mahāpajāpatī* School was established in April 2019 in Kolhua village, Vaishali, with approximately 600 students and 16 teachers.⁸ Kolhua, a village in the ancient sacred city of Vaishali⁹, is historically significant as the site where a local monkey chieftain offered a bowl of honey to the Buddha.¹⁰ This event is regarded as one of the eight most important events in the Buddha's life.

⁵ Võ Văn Tường, *Chùa Kiều Đàm Di Việt Nam tại Vaishali (Tỳ Xá Ly), Ấn Độ* [Vietnamese *Mahāpajāpatī* Nunnery in Vaishali]. <https://daophatngaynay.com/vn/phatgiaovn/danh-lam/31298-chua-kieu-dam-di-viet-nam-vaishali-ty-xa-ly-an-do.html> Accessed on October 25, 2024.

⁶ TS.NS. Liễu Pháp (2020). “Trường Tiểu học Kiều Đàm Di Việt Nam giữa lòng Ấn Độ” [*Mahāpajāpatī* Primary School in India]. In the book titled: *Nữ giới Phật giáo với Báo chí* [Buddhist Women and Journalism], Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, p. 356.

⁷ Ibid., p. 356 - 357.

⁸ Ibid., p. 358.

⁹ *Kinh Tương Ưng*, Chương VII, Phẩm Cápàla [Sāmyutta Nikāya, Chapter VII, Capala Section].

¹⁰ *Chú giải Kinh Pháp Cú Quyển I – Phẩm Song Đối: Các Tỳ khưu ở Kosambi* [Commentary on the Dhammapada, Volume I – Parallel Chapter: The Bhikkhus of Kosambi]. <https://theravada.vn/chu-giai-kinh-phap-cu-quyen-i-pham-song-doi-cac-ty-khuu-o-kosambi/> Accessed on January 15, 2025.

Vaishali is also where the Buddha spent several rainy seasons, ordained the first nuns, announced his impending nirvana, and converted the renowned court dancer Ambapālī into a Buddhist nun.¹¹ Recent archaeological excavations have uncovered the remains of Kutagarshala, a swastika-shaped monastery, a water tank, several prayer *thūpas*, and small shrines, in addition to the main *thūpa* and the Ashoka Pillar that had been discovered earlier¹².

3.2. Applying mindfulness in the Mahāpajāpatī Schools in India

While establishing the *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools, Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh vowed to provide children from impoverished backgrounds with access to education, enabling them to learn to read and write as a means of cultivating wisdom. However, her deeper aspiration was to create opportunities for these children to practice mindfulness and to receive the teachings of the Tathāgata on peace, happiness, and enlightenment.

Every morning, before classes begin, students spend 20 minutes chanting, practicing mindfulness, and answering questions about Buddhist teachings. This is followed by a 10-minute meditation session, after which they recite the Three Refuges and Five Precepts before officially starting classes at 8:30 AM. On days with good weather, these activities take place in the schoolyard; otherwise, they are held inside the classroom. Over time, this practice has become a habit, and students engage in meditation and chanting with a sense of self-awareness and joy. In recent years, in addition to regular school hours, the Schools have expanded the mindfulness practice schedule by introducing Sunday morning sessions. On Sundays, students from different grade levels - first grade, grades 1–2, grades 3–5, and grades 6–8 - take turns practicing mindfulness of breathing meditation, either at the Schools or at the *Mahāpajāpatī* Vipassana Meditation Center at the *Mahāpajāpatī* Nunnery in Vaishali. Each session accommodates approximately 150–200 students, who receive direct guidance from assistant teachers of Zen Master Koenka-ji. The practice session starts at 8:00 AM and ends at 10:30 AM. Throughout the session, students are continuously reminded to maintain mindfulness:

From 8:00 to 8:30, students listen to a Dharma Talk from Zen Master Goenkaji. From 8:30 to 9:00, Goenkaji's assistant teacher provides explanations and answers questions. From 9:00 to 9:30, there is a break with snacks. From 9:30 to 10:00, students engage in listening to stories of the Buddha's previous lives, parables, or watching video clips about the benefits of meditation. From 10:00 to 10:20, they practice sitting meditation and mindfulness of breathing under the guidance of Zen Master Goenkaji. From 10:20 to 10:30, monks and nuns offer encouragement and reminders. At 10:30, students receive their lunch portions, marking the end of the session.

¹¹ K. R. Norman (Translated), *The Elders' Verses - II*, Therīgatha, Pāli Text Society, Oxford, 1995, p. 28-29.

¹² *Thūpa* at Archeological remains of Vaishali, Kolhua in Bihar, India. https://it.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:thūpa_at_Archeological_remains_of_Vaishali,_Kolhua_in_Bihar,_India_02.jpg Accessed on January 15, 2025.

With an appropriate duration and quality of practice, each session yields remarkable results. The children's spiritual well-being has visibly improved - they become more peaceful, joyful, and refreshed each day, benefiting from the mindfulness meditation practice and the dedicated care of their teachers.¹³

3.3. Assessments

The charity schools founded by the Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh in India have helped many underprivileged children change their destinies. Rooted in mindfulness and loving-kindness, the Venerable Bhikkhuni felt deep compassion upon witnessing local children who neither attended school nor recognized its value, as their only means of survival was begging. She aspired to raise awareness among the poor in India, encouraging them to rethink education and the future of their children. Her charity schools have provided many children with opportunities for a better life.¹⁴ Notably, these schools not only follow the government curriculum but also incorporate Buddhist mindfulness practices. Perhaps because of this, the quality of students at *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools is considered higher than that of government schools. Many children, after completing primary education at these schools, transition to government institutions and are assessed at an academic level equivalent to that of 6th or 7th graders.¹⁵

Education is arguably the best, if not the only, way to restore the essence of Buddhism after centuries of decline for various reasons. A remarkable feature of the Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh's *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools is that every day before classes begin, students recite their vow to take refuge in the Three Jewels, uphold the Five Precepts, practice meditation, and chant the Buddha's name. The integration of mindfulness in education at these schools is further reflected in their unique approach - unlike government-established institutions, *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools not only teach compulsory subjects such as literacy and numeracy but also cultivate in students the habit of living a meaningful and mindful life in the present moment. Each morning, all students sincerely recite the Buddha's name and the Dharma teachings with their hands clasped in a lotus shape at their chest, pledging to uphold the Five Precepts - the fundamental principles for a happy life: no killing, no stealing, no lying, no greed, and no use of intoxicants. Furthermore, *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools instill values of generosity and compassion, encouraging students to share even the smallest things, like a piece of cake or candy, with one another. The schools also inspire students to study diligently, empowering them to transform their lives and build a brighter future.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ TS. NS. Liễu Pháp (2020). "Trường Tiểu học Kiều Đàm Di Việt Nam giữa lòng Ấn Độ" [*Mahāpajāpatī Primary School in India*]. In the book titled *Nữ giới Phật giáo với Báo chí* [*Buddhist Women and Journalism*], Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, p. 355.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Trường Tiểu Học Mahaprajapati ở Vaishali, Ấn Độ* [*Mahaprajapati Primary School in Vaishali, India*]. <https://mahaprajapatitrust.com/truong-tieu-hoc-mahaprajapati-o-vaishaly->

The *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools have brought the light of wisdom to illuminate the minds and lives of underprivileged children in the region. These children are given a new chance at life, nurtured by the wisdom of the Buddha. This is the most profound achievement of integrating Buddhist Mindfulness into education - a compassionate and sustainable future that Vietnamese nuns have helped cultivate in India. "We do not build society, but we build good character. That is the responsibility of a Buddhist disciple." "We do not expect anything in return from the students; we only hope to have the affinity to bring goodness to society through educational work in Vaishali, where the Buddha granted women entry into the *Saṅgha*, allowing them to experience enlightenment in the present moment, as well as to express our gratitude to the Holy Patriarch and the Holy Nuns - the pioneers who renounced their worldly ties, chose a life of purity and celibacy, and dedicated themselves to the path of liberation under the protection of the *Saṅgha*".¹⁷ The author of this paper believes that the Holy Nuns were not individuals who abandoned their families, but rather those who chose to embrace the entire world as their family, seeing all of humanity as siblings united in one universal kinship.

The application of Mindfulness in education at *Mahāpajāpatī* Schools in India demonstrates that practicing Mindfulness is neither too difficult nor limited to those with special conditions or monastics. Instead, it can be embraced by anyone, including poor and young students in the rural, illiterate regions of India. The results of Mindfulness practice at these schools show that with sincere dedication, one can attain tangible benefits, ultimately enhancing both the quality of teaching and learning.

IV. CONCLUSION

In recent years, the ministries of education in several developed nations, including the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, have actively integrated mindfulness meditation into schools, teacher training programs, and even correctional institutions. This initiative has yielded remarkable results, significantly improving the quality of learning, teaching, and personal transformation among students, educators, and incarcerated individuals alike. The success of these programs underscores a growing recognition that economic advancement alone is insufficient in addressing the complexities of an increasingly globalized world. Instead, there is a rising awareness that sustainable progress requires the cultivation of a global ethic - one that nurtures moral and emotional intelligence alongside intellectual and economic development.

As the twenty-first century unfolds, nations are beginning to recognize a fundamental truth: interdependence is just as vital as independence. No country exists in isolation, and the well-being of one nation inevitably influences the prosperity of others. This interconnected reality necessitates a shift in perspective - one that moves beyond a purely nationalistic outlook

bihar-an-do-i29. Accessed on January 15, 2025.

¹⁷ Ibid.

toward a more holistic, globally conscious approach to progress. A nation's development can no longer be viewed in isolation, as the ripple effects of social, economic, and ethical transformations extend far beyond its borders. Investing in a system that nurtures emotional intelligence and ethical leadership - alongside advancements in science, technology, and economic innovation - ensures the sustainable and balanced evolution of societies. Within this context, mindfulness in education emerges as a profound and indispensable tool for cultivating a "compassionate and sustainable future," as emphasized in the theme of this year's Vesak Conference. More than just a pedagogical technique, mindfulness fosters wisdom, resilience, and a deep sense of interconnectedness among individuals and communities. By integrating Buddhist mindfulness principles into education, we not only refine cognitive abilities but also cultivate empathy, ethical discernment, and a collective responsibility toward humanity. A remarkable figure exemplifying the success of this approach is Venerable Bhikkhuni Khiết Minh, a distinguished Vietnamese Buddhist nun whose dedicated efforts in integrating mindfulness into education have yielded outstanding results. Her contributions extend beyond Buddhist education, playing a pivotal role in strengthening cultural and spiritual ties between Vietnam and India. Through her work, she embodies the Buddhist ideal of compassionate engagement, demonstrating that the path of wisdom and mindfulness transcends geographical boundaries. Her contributions are not only significant to the development of Vietnamese Buddhism but also serve to deepen the friendship between Vietnam and India, fostering a spirit of compassionate unity - one that upholds the belief that "the entire world is one family", regardless of national borders.

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“THE ART OF MINDFULNESS: APPLICATION OF BUDDHIST AWARENESS TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN SRI LANKA”

Prof. Ramani Hettiarachchi*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the time of its founder Siddhartha Gotama, the idea of health and wellbeing has been a key pillar of Buddhist doctrine and its globally expanded cultural roots. The importance of having a well-balanced body and mind is seen as essential for an individual to attain liberation or nirvana according to the Buddhist teachings. Mindfulness, or “*sati*”, lies at the heart of Buddhist teachings, encouraging individuals to develop a sense of awareness and balance in both mind and body. As Ven. Analayo states, “Mindfulness” and “awareness” are the most common ways of translating the Pali term *sati*, or its Sanskrit equivalent *smṛti*. The word *sati* is closely related to the verb *sarati*, “to remember”.¹

Williams and Kabat-Zinn defined mindfulness as the awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.² The practice of mindfulness, particularly *satipaṭṭhāna*, is widely regarded as the foundation of insight (*vipassanā*) meditation by both practitioners and scholars. For example, Ven. Gunaratana says, “*Vipassanā* is the oldest of Buddhist meditation practices. The method comes directly

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¹ Analayo (2006): 229. The practice of Satipatthana meditation is about bringing awareness and mindfulness to all aspects of life - body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena. By continually observing and understanding the impermanent, interconnected, and ever-changing nature of all things, one gradually cultivates wisdom and insight. This leads to the cessation of suffering and the realization of Nirvana. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/satipatthana-sutta>

² Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2013): 145.

from the *Satipatthana Sutta*,...³ and “Mindfulness is the center of *vipassanā* meditation and the key to the whole process”.⁴ “We may take *vipassanā* (insight) and *paññā* (wisdom) as equivalent terms... Perhaps the simplest and most effective way of developing *paññā* described in the Pali canon is that of *satipatthana*”.⁵ “The basic framework for developing insight practice is known as ‘the four foundations of mindfulness’, the *satipatthanas*.”⁶

By being fully present in each moment, mindfulness creates a connection between an individual’s thoughts and actions, helping him or her maintain mental clarity while supporting physical well-being. “In this six-foot body”, said the Buddha, “is to be found the world, and the origin of the world, and the way that leads to the ceasing of it”.⁷

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1. A glimpse into the interconnectedness of mindfulness and health as seen in Early Buddhism

In early Buddhism, much praise has been made of those who prioritized their health at all levels. “The Buddha’s instruction concerning health is scattered throughout the ancient Buddhist texts, especially, in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Sutta Piṭaka*. In The *Mahāvagga*, there is a whole chapter on clinical medical instructions called *Bhesajja khandha* and another called *Bhojana khandha* (section on food) for monks”.⁸ “Monks, there are these five factors of striving. What five? Here, a monk has faith... he is healthy and free from illness... he is honest and sincere... he is energetic... he is wise...” (*Besajja Kandha*⁹, *Vinaya Piṭaka*). “Eat with reflection: not for pleasure, not for indulgence, but to sustain the body for the path” (*Bojana Kandha*, *Vinaya Piṭaka*). Mindfulness

³ Ven. Gunaratana (2002): 31.

⁴ D. K. Nauriyal, Michael S. Drummond and Y. B. Lal (2006): 145.

⁵ Griffiths (1981): 611 and 614.

⁶ Harvey (1990): 254. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipatthanas*) are central to Buddhist meditation practice, outlined by the Buddha in the *Satipatthana Sutta*. They are a guide for developing mindfulness (*sati*) and insight (*vipassana*) that lead to liberation: Mindfulness of the Body (*Kāyānupassanā*), Mindfulness of Feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*), Mindfulness of the Mind (*Cittānupassanā*), and Mindfulness of Dhammas (*Dhammānupassanā*). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/satipatthana-sutta>

⁷ Humphreys (1969): 143

⁸ Putwar (1988).

⁹ The term “*Bhesajja*” (meaning “medicine” in Pali) is associated with the healing or treatment for the “disease” of suffering (*dukkha*) in Buddhism. This metaphorical “medicine” could be seen as the teachings and practices that alleviate suffering, such as mindfulness, meditation, ethical conduct, and wisdom. It is not a direct reference to physical medicine in a clinical sense, but rather to the spiritual teachings that alleviate the mental and emotional suffering that arises from ignorance and attachment.

Hin – Tak Sin, *Medical sciences in the Vinaya Piakas: a study mainly based on the Bhesajjakhandhaka and its parallel versions*, The 17th Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS 2014), Vienna, Austria, 18 - 23 August 2014.

practices such as mindful walking, eating, and seated meditation, emphasize how mental focus and physical well-being are deeply connected. These simple yet profound practices help individuals notice the ever-changing nature of life while also finding a sense of steadiness and balance in the present moment. For an instance, in the *Udayi Sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha says to *Ānanda*: “Here, *Ānanda*, being mindful (*sati*), a monk goes forward; being mindful, he goes back; being mindful, he stands; being mindful, he sits; being mindful, he lies down; being mindful, he undertakes walking up and down. This subject of mindfulness, *Ānanda*, thus developed, thus cultivated, leads to mindfulness and full awareness (*sampajañña*).”

This verse could be identified as a prime example for how the Buddha has described the all-encompassing nature of mindfulness (*sati*) in a monk’s daily life. It is not limited to structured meditation sessions but extends to every action, no matter how simple or routine. Thus, mindfulness is a state which could be extended to *Kayanupassana*, awareness regarding one’s body.

While the Buddha is predominantly known as a teacher and a spiritual leader he is also sometimes referred to as a healer or a doctor who has reached the pinnacle of curing ailments related to the human psyche. Humans, according to him, suffer from sickness and are subject to tread along the *Samāsāra* until they choose to consciously address the root of rebirth and destroy all cravings. Thus, Buddhism, like many of the religions birthed through the Eastern tradition, upholds the necessity of treating the root cause of a disease rather than temporarily suppressing the symptoms. Mindfulness serves as a practical tool in this context, helping individuals cultivate the awareness needed to understand and address the deeper causes of suffering through deliberate and purposeful actions.

“Examining the imagery contained in similes from the *Pāli Nikāyas*¹⁰ can give us a more vivid picture of the implications of mindfulness as it was understood in ancient India... One of these similes describes this quality of overseeing a situation from a detached position that occurs in a verse, which compares the practice of mindfulness to climbing onto an elevated platform or tower (*Thig.765*). This tower simile vividly brings out the ability to oversee a whole situation and thereby be aware of its various aspects. According to this simile, to oversee the situation as a whole requires climbing onto the tower and thereby establishing some distance between what is to be observed and the observer. The same applies to the development of mindfulness, which by creating an inner distance of detachment in regard to the situation at hand

¹⁰ The five major divisions of the *Sutta Piṭaka* of the *Pāli* canon are called *nikāyas*: *Dīgha Nikāya* (containing long *suttas*), *Majjhima Nikāya* (containing *suttas* of middle length), *Samyutta Nikāya* (containing *suttas* organized according to content), *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (containing *suttas* arranged according to the number of doctrinal items under discussion), and the *Khuddaka Nikāya* (containing *suttas* not included in any of the other four *nikāyas*). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nikaya>

makes it possible to oversee what is taking place”¹¹

His Teaching was for those who wish to liberate themselves from *Samsāra*, not for those who desire to improve its conditions. Nevertheless, those teachings, pointing to a goal beyond conditioned existence yet have an application in the world of practical affairs.¹² Thus, Buddhism and its way of living is not to be discarded as outdated or irrelevant since both the *saṅgha* and the lay followers benefit both physically and mentally through the doctrine in the contemporary world as it did two thousand years ago.

The idea that the deepening of one’s spiritual practices would also benefit an individual in maintaining a healthy physique and vice versa is globally promoted in most religions. The correlation between mental and physical activities is looked at with much weight, as the physical body is regarded as the vehicle which aids a human to practice his or her path to liberation. In this regard, the Buddhist approach to mindfulness is a vital practice that connects physical actions with mental clarity. By cultivating awareness in day-to-day activities, individuals can bring together their physical health and spiritual growth, allowing both supporting and enhancing one another. “Indian Buddhist literature abounds with admonitions against attachment to the body and with vivid descriptions of the foulness of the body’s contents. At the same time, there is a pervasive concern with maintaining health, with physical cleanliness, and with certain bodies like the Buddha’s that reflect the spiritual attainments of adepts.”¹³ In addition, even though the human body is described as vile and repulsive, it is also the best physical situation within cyclic existence for those who seek liberation.”¹⁴

Thus, the Buddha and even many of his disciples act as a symbol of good health and a well-balanced physique, which was not only a result of past deeds but also due to the routine maintenance of both physical and spiritual practices. This consistent mindfulness in daily activities helped to harmonize their mental and physical states, contributing to their overall well-being.

2.2. Mindfulness: A State which is equally beneficial to the Sangha and the lay community

According to the Buddhist doctrine, maintaining a healthy physique is intertwined with one’s ability to incorporate awareness into their everyday chores. “Awareness is the background ‘radar’ of consciousness, continually monitoring the inner and outer environment... a core characteristic of mindfulness has been described as open or receptive awareness and attention.”¹⁵ This aspect is not only limited to mental activities such as types of

¹¹ Ven. Analayo (2006): 231.

¹² Mahathera (1982): 182.

¹³ John Powers, (2009). *A Bull of a Man: Images of Masculinity, Sex and the Body in Indian Buddhism*, p. 112.

¹⁴ Additional information can be found on, José Ignacio Cabezón, *Sexuality in Classical South Asian Buddhism*, Wisdom, (2017).

¹⁵ Arthur Deikman, (1982). *The observing self*, p. 150.

seated meditation, which is solely focused on observing the mind, but also to mundane activities such as walking, eating and even speaking. Thus, in terms of the Buddhist perspective, even physical activities could be transformed into opportunities that pave the way towards mindfulness. As awareness is considered a universal phenomenon according to Buddhist doctrine, practicing mindfulness is not restricted to the monastic traditions and is seen as a natural capability which is inherent to human nature. Therefore, it is encouraged to be practiced by the lay community with enthusiasm. The ultimate goal of such practices is to integrate the physical and mental states of an individual thus creating harmony in one's existence which is considered a crucial aspect of attaining liberation. On a more primary level, cultivating awareness could be easily incorporated into the most mundane activities: “While washing the dishes one should only be washing the dishes, which means that while washing the dishes one should be completely aware of the fact that one is washing the dishes. At first glance, that might seem a little silly: why put so much stress on a simple thing? But that's precisely the point. The fact that I am standing there and washing these bowls is a wondrous reality. I'm being completely myself, following my breath, conscious of my presence, and conscious of my thoughts and actions. There's no way I can be tossed around mindlessly like a bottle slapped here and there on the waves”.¹⁶

The Buddhist monastic lifestyle is designed to easily integrate a state of mindfulness into almost every task undertaken, both mentally and physically. The rules and regulations established in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* serve primarily as tools to cultivate a grounded presence which is also about training the mind to not wander in the streams of past and future. This way of living transforms ordinary activities into opportunities for spiritual growth and progress toward liberation. Despite being interdependent in nature, the relationship between the Buddhist monastic order and the lay community does not act as a barrier for the ordained individuals to practice the guidelines that were laid down during the time of the Buddha and later on through various councils. Theoretically, the monastic lifestyle is less inclined to interfere on worldly affairs, thereby enabling minimal friction with the external world and creating an environment helpful to cultivating key Buddhist principles, such as the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Sublime States (*Brahma-viharas*).¹⁷

¹⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh, (1997). *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, p. 3,4.

¹⁷ *Brahmavihāra*, (Sanskrit: “living in the Brahman-heaven”), in Buddhist philosophy, the four noble practices of mental development through which men can attain subsequent rebirth in the Brahman heaven. These four practices are: (1) perfect virtue of sympathy, which gives happiness to living beings (Sanskrit: *maitrī*; Pāli: *metta*); (2) perfect virtue of compassion, which removes pain from living beings (*karuna*); out of *karuna* the bodhisattva postpones entrance into *nirvana* to work for the salvation of others; (3) perfect virtue of joy, the enjoyment of the sight of others who have attained happiness (*muditā*); (4) perfect virtue of equanimity, being free from attachment to everything and being indifferent to living beings (Sanskrit: *upekṣa*; Pāli: *upekkhā*). These are also called the four *apramāṇas* (infinite feelings), since these four practices

In contrast, members of the lay community face the inevitable risk of encountering the “ordinary” challenges of the world, including familial bonds, attachments, financial struggles, and the competitive race of survival. These conditions create an environment which makes it difficult to place more focus on a spiritual life. There is a higher possibility of performing the everyday chores with a lack of mindfulness rather than its presence. Under such constraints, it could be the case that maintaining one’s physical health is seen as a separate activity which does not require a degree of awareness. However, the Buddhist teachings have highlighted the possibility of cultivating mindfulness and an ethical way of living for anyone regardless of the roles and positions attributed to individuals in society. While monastics undoubtedly gain both physical and mental advantages from an environment structured to improve spiritual development, lay practitioners are equally encouraged to incorporate Buddhist values into their lives thus, creating a sense of universal access to the path of *Nirvana*. Thus, the ability of living a life rooted in Buddhist values is accessible to all, irrespective of their chosen way of life.

III. MINDFULNESS APPLIED TO CONTEMPORARY LEARNING

In today’s world, finding relevance far beyond their cultural origins, Buddhist practices, particularly those focusing on concentration, attention, and focus, have captured the interest of researchers and educators alike. From schools to universities, there is a growing curiosity about how these techniques can be integrated into modern education systems, in order to enhance both learning outcomes and overall well-being. Studies reveal that mindfulness can improve students’ attention spans, emotional resilience, and even their cognitive flexibility, all of which are essential for effective learning.¹⁸

Beyond academics, it helps reduce stress and develop self-awareness, creating a more balanced and supportive learning environment. For example, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) have been adapted to help students and teachers cope with challenges, manage anxiety, and perform better academically.¹⁹ Moreover, the potential of mindfulness in learning environments, stating that “mindfulness can catalyze a deep engagement with one’s own mind, creating a more intentional and compassionate approach to learning.”²⁰

Mindfulness has thus achieved a universal position in learning environments as it can be utilized as a practice which need not necessarily be tied to its traditional Buddhist framework. For instance, being mindful develops creativity, adaptability, and improved decision-making.²¹ Thus, practicing mindfulness in learning environments is seen as an opportunity to discover new ideas and experiences rather than memorizing or reinforcing

give happiness to infinite living beings. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/brahmavihara>

¹⁸ Kabat-Zinn (1990): p. 89.

¹⁹ Kabat-Zinns, (2014), p. 556.

²⁰ Kabat-Zinns, (2005), p. 180.

²¹ Ellen Langer, (1989), p. 23 - 46.

an auto-pilot nature within a classroom. "When we are mindless, we are trapped in rigid mindsets, oblivious to context or perspective, and we freeze our understanding".²² "Mindfulness is not an easy concept to define but can best be understood as the process of drawing novel distinctions. It does not matter whether what is noticed is important or trivial, as long as it is new to the viewer. Actively drawing these distinctions keeps us situated in the present".²³

While mindfulness benefits the students in improving their capabilities and enhancing a sense of creativity, it is equally considered beneficial for educators due to various reasons. Practical strategies for teachers to cultivate mindfulness, including breath awareness, body scans, and mindful listening. Jennings demonstrates how these practices improve teachers' emotional resilience, enabling them to respond to challenging situations with greater composure and empathy.²⁴ "Teachers who practice mindfulness can create classroom environments that are more conducive to learning and prosocial behavior".²⁵

In addition, specialized practices such as tai chi and breath-focused meditation are considered advanced yet beneficial forms of physical and mental training for both teachers and students alike. When consistently practiced over an extended period under proper guidance, these practices have shown to significantly influence fundamental cognitive, emotional, sensory-perceptual, and motor processes. They also result in corresponding changes in neural substrates, resembling the mechanisms underlying skill acquisition and the development of expertise.²⁶

Thus, the integration of mindfulness into contemporary educational frameworks paves the way to a holistic approach to learning, emphasizing the interconnected well-being of both students and teachers. By cultivating mindfulness, educational environments can nurture a balanced and supportive dynamic, allowing students and teachers to engage more authentically with one another. This practice creates a space where individuals can experience a sense of contentment and satisfaction, enhancing their ability to thrive in their respective roles. On the one hand, mindfulness empowers students to engage more deeply with the learning process, enhancing their ability to absorb and benefit from educational experiences while on the other, it supports teachers in managing stress, regulating emotions, and building positive interactions within the classroom. As a result, mindfulness emerges as a transformative approach in education, cultivating healthier, more effective, and emotionally enriching relationships between students and teachers.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mindfulness has been increasingly recognized as a transformative practice

²² Ellen Langer, (1989), p. 6.

²³ Langer and Moldoveanu (2000).

²⁴ Patricia Jennings, (2015), p. 14 - 48.

²⁵ Tish Jennings, (2019), p. 110.

²⁶ Ericsson & Charness, (1994); Lutz et al., (2007).

that integrates awareness and intentionality into various aspects of human life, including education and health. Rooted in ancient Buddhist philosophy, mindfulness emphasizes the necessity of addressing the underlying causes of suffering, rather than merely suppressing symptoms, as is often the approach of contemporary systems. Scholars such as K.D. Premasiri and David J. Kalupahana have contributed significantly to understanding mindfulness within the broader framework of Buddhist teachings. Mindfulness, or *sati*, serves as a pivotal tool in navigating the complexities of human existence, offering a means to cultivate clarity and purpose.²⁷ Mindfulness transcends a purely meditative practice; it represents an ethical and psychological foundation for achieving balance and liberation.²⁸ These foundational ideas have inspired modern researchers to explore the practical applications of mindfulness in higher education and healthcare, creating pathways for holistic development.

In the context of higher education, mindfulness has emerged as a critical tool for addressing the growing mental health challenges faced by university students. Mindfulness promotes self-regulation and resilience, enabling students to navigate stress and engage meaningfully with their studies. As the authors note “Meditation practices offer students the opportunity to develop greater clarity and self-awareness, essential skills for academic and personal success.”²⁹ Mindfulness-based interventions are among the most effective strategies for reducing stress in university students. The study revealed that these interventions not only alleviate symptoms of anxiety but also enhance coping mechanisms, ultimately supporting academic performance.³⁰

The researchers found that “students who participated in an eight-week mindfulness program exhibited significant reductions in anxiety and depression, as well as improved sleep quality and social connectedness.”³¹ These findings highlight mindfulness’s potential to address the unique challenges of university life, fostering a sense of stability and focus amidst academic pressures. Mindfulness-based interventions enhance students’ overall well-being while simultaneously improving their capacity for sustained attention and critical thinking.³²

In addition to its applications in education, mindfulness has been extensively studied for its impact on health and well-being. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a leading figure in the integration of mindfulness into clinical settings, developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, which has been widely adapted for therapeutic and educational purposes. Mindfulness offers a way to “observe without judgment, respond with clarity, and create space for

²⁷ Premasiri (2006): 114.

²⁸ Kalupahana (1992), p. 154.

²⁹ Shapiro, Brown and Astin (2011), p. 25.

³⁰ Regehr, Glancy and Pitts (2013), p. 10.

³¹ Similarly, Galante et al., (2018), p. 270.

³² Bamber and Schneider (2016).

growth and healing".³³ His work has inspired subsequent studies demonstrating the physiological and psychological benefits of mindfulness. Mindfulness practices can enhance immune function and foster neural plasticity, supporting both physical and mental health.³⁴

Sustained mindfulness practice leads to measurable changes in brain activity, particularly in regions associated with emotional regulation and attention. As they observe, "Engaging in mindfulness is akin to the development of expertise, requiring deliberate and sustained effort to reshape habitual patterns of thought and behavior".³⁵ This insight aligns with the Buddhist emphasis on mindful awareness as a tool for addressing the root causes of suffering and developing holistic well-being.

Although mindfulness has gained significant global attention as a tool for enhancing emotional well-being, resilience, and academic performance, its integration into the Sri Lankan higher education system remains limited. Existing studies predominantly reflect Western perspectives, often overlooking the unique cultural and socio-educational contexts of countries like Sri Lanka. Despite the country's deep-rooted Buddhist traditions, which naturally align with mindfulness practices, these have not been effectively translated into structured interventions within the formal education system. This research addresses this gap by exploring the awareness, perceptions, and practices of mindfulness among Sri Lankan university students, aiming to assess its relevance and application as a culturally resonant intervention. By situating mindfulness within the lived realities of Sri Lankan students and their academic pressures, the study seeks to contribute a localized understanding of mindfulness, positioning it as a viable and culturally aligned strategy to foster emotional well-being and create a more balanced educational environment.

4.1. Research problem

With the rising prevalence of emotional distress, mental health challenges, and increasing cases of suicide among university students in Sri Lanka, the need to address these issues within higher education is becoming critical. Students face significant academic, social, and personal pressures, often without adequate coping mechanisms. Despite its proven global benefits, mindfulness remains underexplored and underutilized in the Sri Lankan education system. This research aims to explore whether integrating mindfulness practices into higher education could offer a transformative solution for alleviating stress and promoting emotional well-being. By addressing this gap, the study seeks to contribute to a healthier academic environment for Sri Lankan students.

4.2. Research objective

This study objective is to explore the level of awareness university students possess regarding mindfulness as a practical tool and to examine

³³ Kabat-Zinn, (1990), p. 39.

³⁴ Davidson et al. (2003), p. 572.

³⁵ Lutz et al. (2008), p. 1778.

whether their socio-cultural and religious values influence their inclination toward mindfulness practices. Furthermore, it seeks to investigate whether incorporating mindfulness-based interventions within higher education environments could provide a supportive and transformative framework for enhancing students' overall academic performance, emotional resilience, and mental well-being, building on the evidence presented by prior studies.

Students who engage in higher education could be considered as emerging adults aged between 20 to 26 who are transitioning between adolescence and adulthood;³⁶ these adults are exploring themselves and future career aspirations, still often rely on their parents to some degree, and often delay marriage.³⁷ Mindfulness in any form can help emerging adults across a myriad of different points of transition and learning by improving mental health, minimizing academic stress, increasing learning retention and helping individuals cope with social anxiety, adjust to new environments, get adequate sleep, and exercise self-compassion.³⁸

These practices which are primarily rooted in Buddhist teachings have transformed into universal ways of maintaining general awareness among individuals. Therefore, regardless of the popular mainstream labeling of these practices as inherently "Buddhist" in nature, it is widely acclaimed that cultivating mindfulness undoubtedly plays a role in the overall mental and emotional well-being of a person.

"Although at this time mindfulness meditation is most commonly taught and practiced within the context of Buddhism, its essence is universal... Yet it is no accident that mindfulness comes out of Buddhism, which has as its overriding concerns the relief of suffering and the dispelling of illusions...³⁹ I am a student of Buddhist meditation, and a devoted one, not because I am devoted to Buddhism per se, but because I have found its teachings and its practices to be so profound and so universally applicable, revealing and healing".⁴⁰

Students often engage in a multitasking environment that demands a combination of mentally expansive tasks, such as coursework, research, studying, and physically challenging activities such as sports, extracurricular activities, and social events in the context of higher education. This dynamic engagement presents a unique possibility to observe how mindfulness and awareness can be incorporated into the routines of a busy academic lifestyle.

³⁶ Arnett (2000); Greeson et al., (2014); Leonhardt et al. (2020).

³⁷ Ladhani et al. (2019); Leonhardt et al. (2020).

³⁸ Dundas et al. (2016); Friedrich & Schlarb (2018); Gorvine et al. (2019); Hjeltne et al. (2017); Mettler et al. (2019); Ong & Moore (2020); Ramsburg & Youmans (2014); Stefan et al. (2018).

³⁹ Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005), p. 13.

⁴⁰ Additional information can be found on, Jon Kabat- Zinn, (2012). *Mindfulness for Beginners*, Sounds True Inc.

Moreover, due to its multiethnic socio-cultural context, Sri Lankan universities frequently prioritize a holistic approach to student development which encourages students to gather insight from their respective religious or spiritual backgrounds. Students are expected to be better at approaching academic and personal challenges as a result of combining ethics and values from their respective beliefs. However, despite such implementations, there has been an increase in the rates of suicide among university students in recent times. This could be due to the difficulty of managing several varied tasks within their daily lifestyle. University students in particular tend to experience large amounts of stress because of the numerous educational tasks they take on in addition to normal adult transitions.⁴¹

“Sri Lanka is facing a growing mental health crisis, especially among its young population. The rate of suicide among students is alarming, and it calls for urgent intervention. In a society where academic success is prioritized, the mental well-being of students often takes a backseat. This has led to a rise in mental health issues, with depression, anxiety, and stress becoming all too common. The education system’s intense pressure, combined with a lack of open discussion about mental health, is pushing more students to the brink.”⁴²

By delving into students’ awareness and use of these Buddhist principles, this study seeks to understand whether they recognize the value of incorporating mindfulness into their daily routines. It also aims to explore how such practices might help them manage stress, enhance their concentration, and promote emotional stability. “Mindfulness contributes to an individual’s concentration and self-confidence, fostering a sense of control and management of one’s surroundings, and enhancing one’s sense of life’s meaning by facilitating a broader exploration of life. It also works on the development of emotional regulation through its focus on the development of metacognitive awareness and the enhancement of attentional abilities.”⁴³

Through this exploration, the research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how traditional Buddhist teachings can be effectively applied in modern educational and social contexts to benefit young adults in their formative years.

4.3. Methodology

For the purposes of this research, participants were selected from first- and

⁴¹ Canby et al. (2014); Dundas et al. (2016); Gorvine et al. (2019); Taylor et al. (2020). Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1994. As Bikkhu Bodhi, a well-known Buddhist scholar states in his book *The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering* “Right effort means to develop what is skillful, to abandon what is unskillful, and to maintain the balance between effort and ease in the practice of meditation”. This idea can be directly applied to university students, where they can use Right Effort to balance their academic responsibilities while avoiding burnout.

⁴² *Addressing the Silent Crisis: Suicide Prevention Among Students in Sri Lanka* (2024).

⁴³ Davis and Hayes, (2011). *What are the benefits of mindfulness? A practice review of psychotherapy-related research*, p. 20.

second-year undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of History, Department of Sociology, and Department of Geography within the Faculty of Arts at the University of Peradeniya using a purposive sampling method. The age range of the participants was between 21 and 23 years, comprising a total of 53 students, including 35 females and 18 males. Participant names or other identifying information were not gathered. Among the participants, three individuals identified as non-Buddhists, contributing a diverse range of perspectives to the study. The selection process was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement, ensuring that the research complied with established ethical guidelines.

By selecting university students from the aforementioned departments, the study also aimed to explore whether academic exposure to certain contexts has influenced the students' awareness and incorporation of mindfulness practices.

The selected students were provided with a semi-structured questionnaire designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire included a combination of multiple-choice questions with response options such as "Yes", "No", "Never" and "Not Sure", as well as open-ended questions that required participants to provide brief written responses. The questions were primarily focused on assessing the participants' awareness and knowledge of incorporating mindfulness into their daily activities, such as mindful walking and mindful eating. The study also examined whether students were familiar with the theoretical formations of mindfulness practices as outlined in Buddhist teachings.

Additionally, the questionnaire sought to explore whether the participants identified any form of challenges they encountered if and when attempting to integrate mindfulness into their routines. The questionnaires were distributed in person during allocated class time to ensure participant convenience and focus. To encourage honest and reflective responses, participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their data.

The University of Peradeniya was chosen as the research location for this research due to its distinctive environment and infrastructure, which creates a suitable context for exploring mindfulness and Buddhist practices. As the largest university in Sri Lanka, it provides comprehensive in-campus facilities, including residential hostels where all participants in this study reside during their academic years.

The university was designed to blend with its natural surroundings, drawing inspiration from the models of ancient Buddhist monastery premises. With its extensive greenery and well-planned integration into the natural ecosystem, the campus inherits a tranquil environment for both academic pursuits and personal reflection.

Additionally, the university reflects religious diversity through dedicated spaces for worship representing the three major religions in Sri Lanka - Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. These spaces are seamlessly integrated

into the campus's landscape, contributing to its calm and contemplative atmosphere. These unique features made the University of Peradeniya an appropriate setting for this study, aligning with the focus on mindfulness and Buddhist principles.

4.4. Data analysis

The data collected through the semi-structured questionnaire were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach, allowing for a multifaceted examination of participants' responses. By incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, this approach provided a comprehensive understanding that combined measurable trends with the nuanced, subjective insights of participants' experiences and perspectives.

The quantitative data were analyzed to identify broad patterns, trends, and correlations across participant responses. Numerical data from multiple-choice questions - such as "yes", "no", "never" and "not sure" - enabled the detection of overarching trends in participants' awareness, understanding, and engagement with mindfulness practices. Techniques such as frequency distribution and cross-tabulation were used to systematically evaluate the extent of familiarity and practice among participants. These methods also facilitated the exploration of differences across demographic subgroups, such as gender, Buddhist affiliation, and year of study, to uncover any notable variations.

In parallel, qualitative responses from open-ended questions underwent thematic analysis. This process involved an iterative review of participants' written responses to identify recurring themes, ideas, and patterns. Thematic categories such as "awareness of Buddhist mindfulness teachings", "challenges in practicing mindfulness", and "integration of mindfulness into daily life" were developed to structure and interpret the data. This qualitative analysis provided richer context and deeper insights into how participants conceptualized and applied the concept of mindfulness in their daily routines.

The mixed-methods approach highlighted not only statistical trends but also the depth of individual experiences, offering a nuanced understanding of the participants' engagement with mindfulness practices. By synthesizing both types of data, the analysis presented a balanced discussion that accounted for both generalizable patterns and personal complexities.

Triangulation - cross-referencing quantitative and qualitative data - further enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings. This method ensured a more robust interpretation of participants' experiences, particularly in relation to their understanding and application of Buddhist teachings on mindfulness. The combination of measurable trends and detailed personal accounts offered a comprehensive perspective on the participants' interaction with mindfulness practices.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of a total of 80 students initially approached for the study, 53 individuals voluntarily agreed to participate, reflecting a response rate of 66.25%. The

participants provided informed consent after being briefed on the purpose and objectives of the study. The questionnaire employed in this research was structured to collect detailed information across two key dimensions.

The first dimension focused on examining the participants' theoretical understanding of Buddhist concepts such as mindfulness, awareness, and related practices. This section aimed to uncover the depth of their knowledge and comprehension of these ideas within an academic and cultural framework.

The second category aimed to explore the practical application of such knowledge in the participants' daily lives. Specifically, it sought to identify whether and how students integrated mindfulness practices - such as meditation, mindful walking, or mindful eating - into their routines and the impact these practices might have on their overall well-being. By addressing these two categories, the questionnaire provided a foundation for analyzing both theoretical awareness and the practical integration of mindfulness as a concept, providing insights into how theoretical knowledge and application of such concepts intersected within the context of the student's daily experiences.

Of the 53 participants who voluntarily took part in the study, only 32 provided responses consisting of complete sentences to explain their understanding of mindfulness. While all participants acknowledged familiarity with the concept of mindfulness as teaching rooted in Buddhism and indicated exposure to the term in various contexts, their comprehension appeared to be somewhat limited.

An analysis of their responses revealed a distinct pattern: the majority of participants associated mindfulness with being alert or paying attention. This recurring theme underscored a shared but surface-level interpretation of the concept among the group. However, their explanations lacked specificity regarding what one should pay attention to, resulting in vague and generalized definitions that did not explore the deeper nuances or practical applications of mindfulness as a practice. This observation highlighted the need for further exploration into how students conceptualize mindfulness beyond its basic theoretical framework.

Interestingly, the three non-Buddhist participants also offered similar responses, defining mindfulness primarily as paying attention or staying alert. This uniformity suggests that their basic understanding of mindfulness may not be exclusively linked to Buddhist teachings but instead reflects a broader interpretation shaped by societal or cultural influences. Despite this shared understanding, the responses did not demonstrate a deeper or more nuanced grasp of mindfulness as a holistic practice. They fell short of encompassing key elements such as present-moment awareness, emotional regulation, or attentiveness to thoughts, feelings, and surroundings, highlighting a gap between a general awareness of the term and its full conceptualization as a practice.

When asked whether they considered themselves mindful of their general way of living, all 53 participants responded affirmatively. To further explore their self-perception, they were asked to rate their level of mindfulness on a scale

of 1 to 10, with 1 indicating the lowest level of mindfulness and 10 the highest. A majority - approximately 45 participants, or 84.9% - rated themselves within the range of 5 to 6, reflecting a moderate perception of their mindfulness. Around 5 participants, or 9.4%, rated themselves above this range, suggesting a higher self-perception of mindfulness, while the remaining 3 participants, or 5.7%, rated themselves below 5, indicating a relatively lower self-awareness of mindfulness. These responses demonstrate a general confidence among participants regarding their mindfulness; however, the modest overall ratings underscore the disparity between their theoretical understanding and a more profound, practical engagement with mindfulness as a holistic practice.

The students were asked to identify any advice given by the Buddha regarding mindfulness and its significance. While all Buddhist participants - excluding the three non-Buddhist participants - indicated their familiarity by selecting "yes", their subsequent responses to a follow-up question that required them to briefly explain this advice revealed notable gaps in their understanding. The responses primarily focused on general ethical guidelines, such as "avoiding eating too much", "being kind", and "not consuming alcohol". These answers appeared to align more with the Five Precepts, which serve as foundational ethical principles in Buddhism, as well as dietary advice, rather than addressing the core principles of mindfulness practice.

Although the participants affirmed their familiarity with Buddhist teachings on mindfulness, their explanations lacked the depth required to demonstrate an understanding of its core principles. None of the Buddhist participants referenced the essential aspects of mindfulness practice, such as observing and reflecting upon one's thoughts, emotions, or mental states. These critical elements, which emphasize introspection and present-moment awareness as central to mindfulness, were entirely absent from their responses. Instead, their interpretations were limited to broader behavioral guidelines, suggesting a superficial engagement with the concept rather than recognition of its profound philosophical and practical significance.

In contrast, the non-Buddhist participants openly acknowledged their lack of awareness of such teachings, leaving the sections blank. This distinction underscores a broader gap in how mindfulness is understood and internalized, particularly among Buddhist students, who appeared to equate mindfulness primarily with adherence to ethical rules. These findings highlight the need to emphasize the experiential and reflective dimensions of mindfulness. Doing so in educational or religious contexts could enable students to engage with mindfulness on a deeper level, fostering a clearer and more meaningful grasp of its foundational principles and practices. The questionnaire included a question designed to assess the participants' frequency of practicing mindfulness in their daily lives.⁴⁴ To further examine participants' engagement

⁴⁴ The response options provided were: "daily", "several times a week", "occasionally", "rarely", and "never". Out of the 53 participants, 41 (77.4%) indicated that they practiced mindfulness daily, 8 (15.1%) selected "several times a week", and 4 (7.5%) chose "occasionally". Notably, none

with mindfulness-related practices, the questionnaire included a question on whether they currently practice or have previously practiced Buddhist meditation forms, such as walking meditation (*sakman bhavana*) or seated meditation (*samatha* or *vipassana bhavana*). Out of the 53 participants, all but two non-Buddhist participants (96.2%) responded affirmatively, indicating some level of past or present involvement in Buddhist meditation practices. Participants were subsequently asked to specify how often they engage in these meditative practices, selecting from the options: daily, frequently, occasionally, rarely, once or twice, and never.⁴⁵

These findings reveal that although the overwhelming majority of participants have been exposed to Buddhist meditation practices, the regularity of their engagement is limited, with a substantial proportion (86.3%) meditating only on rare occasions. This disparity between exposure and consistent practice highlights a gap between participants' theoretical understanding of mindfulness practices and their practical, habitual application. Additionally, the infrequent engagement may suggest that while participants acknowledge the value of meditation, it has yet to become an integrated aspect of their daily lives. This underscores the importance of structured programs or initiatives aimed at fostering consistent and meaningful mindfulness practices, which could help bridge the gap between awareness and application.

While the participants' responses provide valuable insights into their perceived mindfulness practices, they also reveal notable limitations in their understanding. The majority of participants predominantly associated mindfulness with external attentiveness, such as focusing on academic tasks, engaging in interpersonal interactions, or participating in spiritual practices. However, their explanations lacked depth and specificity regarding how mindfulness was experienced or practiced in these contexts. Notably, there was no mention of observing internal processes, such as thoughts, emotions, or bodily sensations - critical components that form the foundation of a holistic mindfulness practice.

Based on these findings, it can be inferred that the participants' understanding of mindfulness is primarily centered around external awareness, with minimal emphasis on its introspective dimensions. This narrow interpretation suggests that mindfulness is largely perceived as outward engagement rather than as

of the participants selected the options "rarely" or "never", suggesting a high reported frequency of mindfulness practices among the group. To further explore this, participants were asked to identify specific occasions in their daily lives when they considered themselves mindful. Among the responses, 27 participants (67.5%) stated that they were mindful when studying or listening to lectures. The remaining participants provided varied examples, such as "when talking", "when listening to someone" and "when listening to prayers or chants".

⁴⁵ Among the 51 participants who reported practicing meditation, 44 individuals (86.3%) stated that they practice "rarely", while 5 participants (9.8%) indicated "occasionally". Two participants (3.9%) reported engaging in meditation "frequently", and the two non-Buddhist participants (3.8%) selected "never".

a balanced practice encompassing both external attentiveness and internal self-awareness. Such a perspective underscores the importance of providing further education or structured training to help participants cultivate a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of mindfulness as a multifaceted practice.

The final section of the questionnaire aimed to explore participants' perceptions of the benefits derived from mindfulness practices. Participants were presented with a range of potential advantages, including reduced stress, improved posture, better sleep quality, enhanced clarity in thinking and emotional states, and a general sense of well-being. All 53 participants unanimously identified "reduced stress" as the primary benefit associated with mindfulness practice, reflecting its widespread recognition as a stress relief tool. Additionally, 13 participants selected "better sleep quality", indicating an acknowledgment of mindfulness's potential to enhance restfulness. Seven participants noted a general improvement in their overall sense of well-being, with three of these individuals also highlighting better sleep quality, suggesting an overlap between these two aspects.

Interestingly, none of the participants selected "clarity in thinking and internal emotional and mental states" as a perceived benefit of mindfulness. This omission highlights a notable gap in their understanding or experience of mindfulness. Within the Buddhist framework, mindfulness is deeply rooted in observing and gaining clarity over one's thoughts, emotions, and internal processes. The absence of this recognition among participants suggests a potentially limited comprehension of mindfulness as it is conceptualized in Buddhist teachings, with a stronger focus on its external and stress-reducing aspects rather than its introspective and transformational dimensions.

As part of the final set of questions, participants were asked whether they would be interested in learning more about mindfulness to incorporate it as a habitual practice in their daily lives. Remarkably, all 53 participants (100%) responded affirmatively, expressing unanimous enthusiasm to deepen their understanding of mindfulness. This overwhelming interest indicates that while participants possess a general awareness of mindfulness, they are eager to engage more meaningfully with its concepts and practices. Such an inclination reflects a collective desire to harness mindfulness for both personal growth and academic well-being.

In the concluding section of the questionnaire, participants were invited to share additional comments. Among the 53 respondents, 11 individuals (20.8%) explicitly recommended the implementation of programs within the university to educate students about mindfulness. These suggestions emphasize a shared recognition of the value of structured initiatives to enhance the understanding and application of mindfulness practices. The emphasis on institutional support underscores a broader acknowledgment of mindfulness as a beneficial tool, not only for individual development but also for fostering a more mindful and balanced academic environment.

The participants' responses revealed significant discrepancies in their

understanding and application of mindfulness as a concept. While a majority claimed to practice mindfulness daily or several times a week, their explanations of what mindfulness entails and how it manifests in their lives lacked clarity. Even when given the opportunity to articulate their understanding, their responses failed to reflect a theoretical grasp of mindfulness's core elements, such as self-awareness, the observation of thoughts and emotions, and the cultivation of sustained focus.

Similarly, participants' accounts of how mindfulness is applied in their daily routines appeared vague and inconsistent. Their inability to articulate specific ways in which mindfulness integrates into their lives suggests that it is perceived more as a general notion than as a deliberate, cultivated practice. This pattern was observed among both Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants, with no significant differences in the depth or quality of their responses.

Despite these evident gaps in understanding, all participants unanimously recognized mindfulness as beneficial. However, the basis of this conclusion remains uncertain. It is unclear whether their acknowledgment stems from personal experience and tangible benefits gained through mindfulness practice, or if it is influenced by cultural or religious ideologies that position mindfulness as a key element of Buddhist tradition.

In summary, the findings highlight an overarching lack of understanding of mindfulness as a practical, experiential practice. Instead, mindfulness appears to be perceived as an abstract or theoretical idea rooted in Buddhist teachings, rather than as a skill to be intentionally developed and applied in everyday life.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the Sri Lankan higher education context, where rising academic pressures and mental health concerns are becoming increasingly prominent, mindfulness can play a transformative role in addressing these challenges. However, the findings of this research suggest that students are not aware or well-equipped to use mindfulness as a supportive tool to enhance their academic performance or overall well-being. Irrespective of their socio-cultural and religious backgrounds, students exhibit a lack of understanding and thus fail to utilize mindfulness as an effective practice. Therefore, the findings of this study, combined with the positive outcomes of other research in this area, strongly indicate that the Sri Lankan higher education system would benefit from incorporating mindfulness into policies and academic frameworks. By improving focus, emotional regulation, and cognitive clarity, mindfulness equips students to handle academic demands more effectively. This is particularly crucial for enhancing literacy, as the ability to critically engage with texts, interpret complex material, and write thoughtfully relies heavily on sustained attention and deeper learning.

Additionally, integrating mindfulness into university curricula reflects a shift toward holistic education, where students are nurtured as emotionally and socially competent individuals. By bridging traditional Buddhist wisdom with contemporary educational needs, this study demonstrates

how mindfulness supports the development of critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and overall resilience. These findings could inspire educational reforms, encouraging universities to adopt mindfulness-based programs to produce well-rounded graduates who are better prepared to meet the demands of an evolving global landscape.

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SCIENTIFIC IMPORTANCE OF BUDDHISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY FOR MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

This paper presents the scientific importance of Buddhism in the 21st century for global peace, mindfulness in education, and sustainable development. The main content focuses on Buddhist approaches to probing the nature of consciousness, cultivating eudaimonic well-being, and understanding reality at large. In each case, religious, scientific, and philosophical elements are blended in ways that may not only lend themselves to dialogue with Western science but also push forward the frontiers of scientific research as well as interdisciplinary and cross-cultural inquiry. Many scientists have written about sciences, and many Buddhists have explained Buddhism, but an in-depth analysis of both fields, including modern engineering and technological aspects, may be rare. This paper discusses that Buddhism has developed the science of consciousness and mindfulness in education for global sustainable development. The comprehensive experimental descriptions based on principles of modern science, engineering, and technology are presented in this paper for an analogous illustration of *anattā*, namelessness, and selflessness in Buddhism. The scientific philosophy of the Buddha is described using modern control theory, grid-integrated renewable energy systems, and Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction.

Keywords: *Buddhism, mindfulness, anattā, selflessness, modern science, reliability.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The ancient Buddhist philosophy, modern science, and sustainable technology bring together distinguished scientists, engineers, technocrats, academicians, philosophers, Buddhist scholars, and naturalists to comprehensively assess the relationship between Western science and Eastern spirituality. This compilation was inspired by a suggestion made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama during a series of cross-cultural scientific dialogues in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, India.¹ Buddhism has been seen as particularly compatible with modern science and technology since the Theravāda reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There is growing evidence that Buddhism can potentially have an important and productive influence on modern science, primarily at two levels: (1) the detailed research level, evident in the study of the mind, and (2) the epistemological impact on the foundations of science and modern technology.² The recent explosion of mindfulness therapies has strengthened this perception. However, the Buddhism that is being brought into relation with science in the context of the mindfulness movement has already undergone extensive rewriting under modernist influences, and many of the more critical aspects of Buddhist thought and practice are ignored. While the origin of life on Earth is explored by modern science based on both experimental and observational methods, a new biological principle is adopted in addition to the principles of physics and chemistry. The biosphere is explored through biodiversity and coexistence among countless different species, reminding us of the Buddha nature.³

In the second century BCE, Western Greek philosophy encountered Eastern Indian Buddhist philosophy, as captured in a Buddhist text, the *Milindapañha* (Questions of Milinda). This resulted in Greco-Buddhism, the cultural syncretism between Hellenistic culture and Buddhism. The historic dialogues were exchanged between two distinguished persons, as recorded in the *Milindapañha*, which preserves the ideal encounter between the Buddhist sage Nāgasena and King Menander I (Milinda in *Pāli*) of the ancient Indo-Greek nation of Bactria in the second century BCE. The king visited the Venerable Nāgasena and asked various critical and valuable questions on Buddhist philosophy. In the second century BCE, the Indo-Greek King Menander I (Milinda in *Pāli*) of Bactria had a strong interest in Buddhism, and his intellectual dialogues with the Buddhist sage Nāgasena were preserved in a famous classic text, the *Milindapañha* (Questions of Milinda). This occurred after the time of Asoka the Great. Shortly after Asoka the Great's death in 232 BCE, the Maurya Empire fragmented, and the northwestern frontiers of India beyond the Indus - Bactria and Parthia - came to be ruled by leaders of Greek descent. King Menander of Kabul advanced deep into northern India

¹ Wallace (2009): p: 24 - 40.

² Saket (2024): p: 45 - 57.

³ Tsutomu (2023): p: 1 - 416.

and established a capital at Sagala (modern-day Sialkot in Punjab).⁴ The only planet where life exists - "My earth," "your earth," "our earth." As we all know, for the existence of life, the existence of Earth is necessary. It should not be swallowed by the Sun or escape into space; it should remain where it is. For Earth to remain in its orbit, it must be stable or balanced. For Earth's balance, the centripetal force must be equal to the centrifugal force - this is a universal fact, scientifically proven according to the laws of science, which no one can deny. The smallest particle of all matter, an atom, which is electrically neutral, balances the negativity of electrons with the positivity of protons - again, a universal fact, scientifically proven. This implies the coexistence of equal and opposite concepts, energies, or things, as nature and the universe maintain balance since energy can neither be created nor destroyed.⁵ If there is God, there is evil; if there is darkness, there is light. Religiously, this is the main philosophy of the Buddha, which teaches that balance is necessary for existence - balance your inner being to achieve balance in the external world. *Vipassanā* is one of the methods to attain that balance through heightened consciousness in all dimensions of life. It is one of the greatest scientific concepts. You may observe that Buddhism and science complement each other. Buddhism is inherently scientific and can help science address challenges in all dimensions of life, contributing to the development of solutions by unlocking hidden talents and creativity within human beings through the cultivation of consciousness.⁶ Buddhist practice and scientific inquiry are both based on discovering unconditioned truth through empirical observation. The Buddha himself said in the *Kālāma Sutta*: "Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."⁷ The *Kālāma Sutta*, as explained by the Buddha, presents one of the most scientific approaches to drawing an analogy between Buddhism and modern science and technology. This enlightened statement is supported and described by the latest advancements in engineering and technology. The experimental setup of grid-integrated renewable energy systems and the principles of Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction can be analyzed to illustrate the empirical nature of Buddhist thought. According to Einstein, "If there is any religion which can cope with modern scientific needs, that would be Buddhism." This paper is organized as follows. The first section provides a brief introduction to Buddhism and modern science. It illustrates the historical overview of the

⁴ *Milindapanha* (1995): p: 24 - 45.

⁵ Saket (2024) p: 245 - 265.

⁶ Buddhaghosa (2012) p: 165 - 185.

⁷ Ambedkar (1997) p: 63 - 68.

engagements, complementarities, and points of interaction between Buddhism and modern physical sciences. Section 2 presents the scientific analogy of the mind as a forerunner, based on the *Dhammapada*, and the principles of Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction. For this scientific analysis, the working principle of an ideal single-phase transformer is described in detail. Section 3 explores the philosophy of impermanence with natural processes, physical phenomena, and biological emotions. The impermanence aspects of Buddhism are analyzed using the principles of reliability engineering. Section 4 discusses mindfulness in education within the Buddhist tradition and culture, the sustainable development of global society, and the scientific significance of Buddhism in assessing impermanence. It also examines the stability analysis of physical life and presents an analogy between control systems and Buddhist philosophy, with a detailed description of controller response analogies. Finally, Section 5 provides a comprehensive conclusion and discussion on the importance of Buddhism in the modern age of science and technology, supported by illustrative examples.

II. SCIENTIFIC ANALOGY OF FORERUNNER MIND AND ELECTROMAGNETIC INDUCTION

This section establishes an analogy between the mind as a forerunner and alternating flux. The *Yamaka Vagga* of the *Dhammapada* explains the fundamental characteristics of the mind. The author incorporates the scientific concept of alternating flux, using examples from the working principle of a single-phase transformer in Section 2.2.⁸

2.1. Mind forerunner: *Dhammapada - Yamaka Vagga*

One day, venerable Chakkhupala who was blind came to pay homage to the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery, Shravasti, India. While he was pacing up and down in meditation, he accidentally stepped on some insects. The Buddha then commended that an evil deed committed will follow the evildoer just like a wheel follows the hoof of the ox that bears the yoke. The following verses are based on *Yamaka Vagga* of the *Dhammapada*. (1) *Yamaka Vagga* Verse 1: Mind is the forerunner of all mental phenomena and states. Mind is chief. They are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind, "*dukkha*" follows him just as the wheel follows the hoofprint of the ox that draws the cart.⁹ (2) *Yamaka Vagga* Verse 2: Mind is the forerunner of all mental phenomena and states. Mind is chief. They are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness "*sukkah*" follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.¹⁰ The comprehensive analogy for the philosophy of the *Yamaka Vagga* of the *Dhammapada* and modern scientific principles is described in the following section 2.2.

⁸ *Dhammapada* (1988) p. 1 - 9.

⁹ *Dhammapada* (1988) p. 2 - 8. "*mano pubbangama dhamma mano settha manomaya/ manasa ce padutthena bhasati va karoti va/ tato nam dukkha manveti chakkam'va vahato padam.*"

¹⁰ *Dhammapada* (1988) p. 5 - 9. "*mano pubbangama dhamma mano settha manomaya/ manasa ce pasannena bhasati va karoti va/ tato nam sukkha manveti chaya va anapayini.*"

2.2. Principle of electromagnetic induction and flux forerunner

The transformer is a static electromagnetic energy conversion (EMEC) device that operates on the principle of Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction. The schematic diagram of a two-winding transformer under no-load conditions - i.e., when the secondary terminals are open while the primary winding is connected to a source of constant sinusoidal voltage with a frequency of 50 Hz - is shown in Figure. 1. When a current-carrying conductor is placed in a magnetic field, it experiences a force. This force is responsible for generating an electromotive force (emf) in the conductor. The induced emf_1 across the primary winding is analogous to the magnetomotive force (mmf_1). This mmf_1 generates alternating flux within the magnetic core, which provides a proper path for the alternating flux to transfer from the primary side to the secondary side of the transformer. This flux links with the secondary winding of the transformer, generating mmf_2 on the secondary side, which is analogous to the induced emf_2 across the secondary terminals. The rate of change of flux linkage is directly proportional to the induced emf. The conditions for an ideal transformer are as follows: (1) The primary and secondary windings have zero resistance. (2) There is no leakage flux. (3) The magnetic core has infinite permeability. (4) Hysteresis and eddy current losses are negligible. The flux remains constant throughout the operation of the transformer to maintain a constant terminal voltage, independent of the type and nature of the electrical load.¹¹

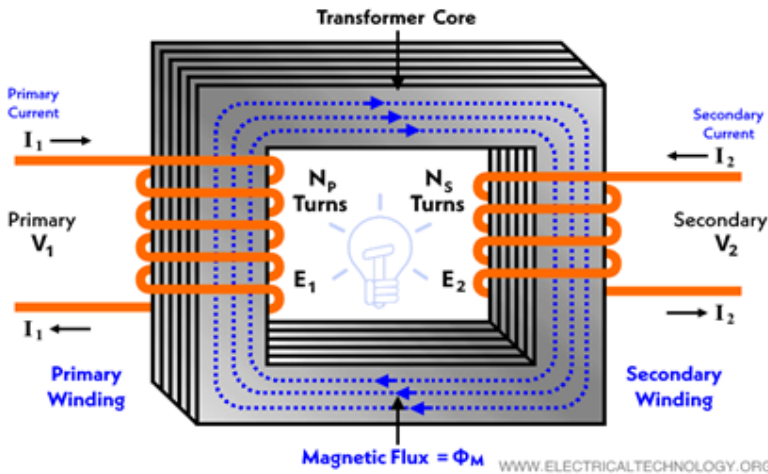


Figure 1: Working principle of the ideal transformer by Flux Forerunner

2.3. Mind forerunner - Flux forerunner analogy

The flux is the forerunner of the transformation process according to Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction. It remains constant, independent of the nature and type of electrical loads, to maintain a stable terminal voltage throughout the operation. The mind as the forerunner of *Dhamma*

¹¹ Kothari (2018): p: 24 - 56.

is analogous to the flux as the forerunner of electromagnetic induction. The rate of change of flux linkage is comparable to the rate of change of the mind due to various disturbances. Similarly, the mind as a forerunner is analogous to alternating flux. The behavior of the flux forerunner varies with the permeability of the magnetic core. Technocrats and scientists ensure the quality of magnetic materials to regulate the maximum value of alternating flux. The efficiency, reliability, and overall performance of all engineering devices and interconnected systems depend on the controllability of magnetic and conducting materials. Mindfulness is analogous to the scientific principles of dependability, maintainability, and stability in life.

III. PHILOSOPHY OF IMPERMANENCE AND SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS WITH RELIABILITY PRINCIPLES

3.1. Philosophy of impermanence, “*dukkha*” and “*anatta*.”¹²

The statements of the Buddha concerning “*anicca*”, “*dukkha*”, and “*anatta*” are described in the *Dhammapada*, in verses 277, 278, and 279. While residing at the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvattī (present-day Shravasti, Uttar Pradesh, India), the Buddha expounded these verses regarding three groups of five hundred bhikkhus each. (1) On Impermanence (*Anicca*): Five hundred *bhikkhus*, after receiving their subject of meditation from the Buddha, went into the forest to practice meditation, but they made little progress. They then returned to the Buddha to ask for another subject of meditation that would suit them better. Upon reflection, the Buddha realized that these *bhikkhus* had, during the time of Kassapa Buddha, meditated on impermanence. Therefore, he said, “*Bhikkhus*, all conditioned phenomena are subject to change and decay and are therefore impermanent.” Then the Buddha spoke verse 277 of the *Dhammapada*: “All conditioned phenomena or things are impermanent. When one sees this in wisdom, then one becomes dispassionate towards the painful. This is the Path to Purity. Transients are conditioned things.”¹³ (2) On Sorrowful (*Dukkha*): The story is the same as the account concerning *anicca*. Here, upon reflection, the Buddha realized that another group of five hundred *bhikkhus* had meditated on *dukkha*. Therefore, he said, “*Bhikkhus*, all *khandha* aggregates are oppressive and unsatisfactory; thus, all *khandhas* are *dukkha*.” Then the Buddha spoke verse 278 of the *Dhammapada*: “All conditioned phenomena are *dukkha* - sorrowful. When one sees this with wisdom, one becomes dispassionate towards suffering. This is the path to purity.”¹⁴ (3) On Insubstantiality or Non-Self (*Anatta*): The story is the same as the accounts concerning *anicca* and *dukkha*. Here, upon reflection, the Buddha realized that yet another group of five hundred *bhikkhus* had meditated on insubstantiality or non-self (*anatta*). Therefore, he said, “*Bhikkhus*, all *khandha* aggregates are

¹² *Dhammapada* (1988) p: 254 - 268.

¹³ *Dhammapada* (1988) p: 258 - 280. “*Sabbe sankhara anicca’ti yada pannaya passata/ atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiya.*”

¹⁴ *Dhammapada* (1988) p: 275 - 279. “*Sabbe sankhara dukkha’ti yada pannaya passata/ atha nibbindati dukkha esa maggo visuddhiya.*”

insubstantial; they are not subject to one's control." Then the Buddha spoke verse 279 of the *Dhammapada*: "All phenomena are without self. When one sees this with wisdom, one becomes dispassionate towards suffering. This is the path to purity."¹⁵ (4) *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* on Impermanence: the Buddha spoke verse: "All things are impermanent. They arise and pass away. Having arisen they come to an end. Their coming to peace is bliss."¹⁶ This verse encapsulates the Buddha's teaching on *anicca* (impermanence), a fundamental concept in Buddhism. It reminds practitioners that all formations (*saṅkhārā*) are transient, subject to arising and passing away, and that true peace comes from letting go of attachment to these impermanent phenomena. In short, the scientific illustration of "*anicca*", "*dukkha*", and "*anatta*" is presented in the following section 3.2 with the help of the principle of reliability engineering and dependability technology.

3.2. Scientific analysis with reliability aspects of components and systems

Reliability is the probability of the system performing its function adequately for a period intended under the operating conditions intended. Based on the fundamental concept of reliability, the key characteristics encompass probability, proper functioning, duration, and operational context of the system. The reliability of both components and systems frequently hinges on the duration they have spent in service. Hence, in the context of reliability research, an essential element to consider is the failure-time distribution, which portrays how the time until component failure is distributed under defined environmental circumstances. Components within a power system might be categorized as repairable or non-repairable.¹⁷ A component earns the designation of "repairable" if it can be restored to its initial state post-failure without disrupting the system's operation. The bathtub curve is a graphical representation in Figure 2 that illustrates how the rate of failure of an item changes over time. This curve demonstrates the initial period of an item's life, known as the "infant-mortality period," during which the failure rate goes down. Afterward, it reaches a stable intrinsic failure rate level, maintaining this rate during its useful life. As the item continues to age and surpasses its designed lifespan, the curve then shows an increase in the failure rate, known as wear-out failures. This curve is constructed by mapping three distinct phases: (1) The initial infant-mortality failure rate upon introduction, (2) the ongoing random failure rate during its operational lifespan, and (3) the wear-out failure rate as the product exceeds its designated lifespan. Instantaneous rate of failure, i.e. hazard function, may be decreasing, increasing, or constant. Usually in the life of a component/device/system, all three types of failure rates are predominant in three stages of the system. These three failure rates are described in

¹⁵ *Dhammapada* (1988) p. 277 - 280. "Sabbe dhamma anatta'ti yada pannaya passata/ atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiya."

¹⁶ DN 16. "Aniccā vata saṅkhārā uppāda vaya dhamminō/ uppajjitvā nirujjhanti tesaṃ vūpa samō sukhō."

¹⁷ Aanchal Verma (2024) p. 3 - 18.

three different regions infant mortality period, random failures, and wear-out failures, as shown in the bathtub curve in Figure. 2.¹⁸ (1) Initial Period (debugging/ burn-in/ infant-monolith period): The initial period where the failure rate is decreasing is known as the debugging period or infant-mortality period. The failure rate is decreasing in this period because as time passes, the design/ manufacturing defects are removed. Failure in this period is due to endogenous reasons. That is, the internal regions are mainly responsible for the system's failure rate. During the burn-in phase, a diminishing hazard function implies a decreased likelihood of an impending failure as time progresses.¹⁹ (2) Constant Hazard Model: The second stage represents the device's useful period, during which the failure rate remains relatively stable. Failures in this region are also known as random failures. Here in this useful period, failures are by chance and reasons are exogenous. Reasons for failures are external, e.g. overstressing, accident, etc. The constant hazard model is relevant to components in which the probability of failure within a given interval remains consistent throughout their entire lifespan. During the middle phase of their life, there is no anticipation of unusual clusters of failures, and thus, the so-called chance failures with relatively low and unchanging hazard rates take precedence.²⁰ (3) Wear-Out Region: In the third region, which is known as the wear-out region, the aging effect dominates, and an increasing failure rate is observed due to wear-out. The rising hazard function demonstrates that these components are gradually becoming more susceptible to failure as they age, particularly within a group of the same size that has endured for the same duration.

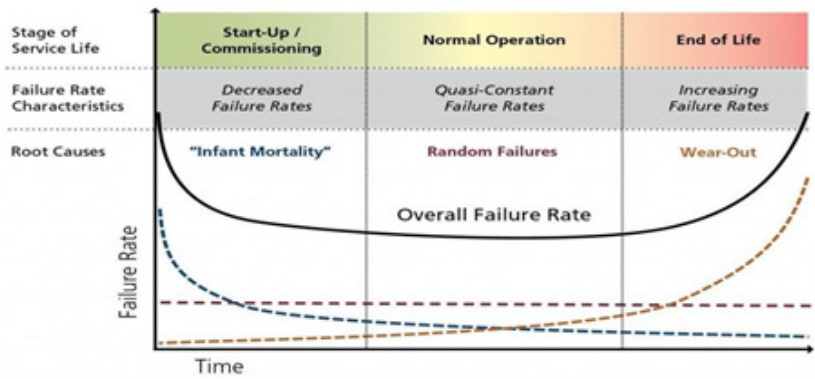


Figure 2: Bathtub curve for analysis of impermanence of life and natural things

The illustration of the bathtub curve and description of various parts of the hazard model established the scientific analogy between the impermanence of the physical world and reliability. The life of all the components and the system

¹⁸ Kothari (2022) p. 1 - 850.
¹⁹ Kothari (2022) p. 1 - 850.
²⁰ Saket (2024) p. 1 - 536.

decreases with time and tends towards the wear-out zone. Nothing is stable, and permanent in this natural world as described by the Buddha.

IV. MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Ancient dialogues of two wise men

The historical *Dhamma* philosophy based on *Milindapañha*: Dialogues between King Milinda and the Buddhist sage Nāgasena is illustrated in this section. Nāgasena's talk plunged into the hidden depths of *vinaya* (*Dhamma* rules) and *abhidhamma* (*Dhamma* philosophy), unraveling all the meshes of the *sutta*'s pure glittering the while with metaphors and high reasoning. Brief discussions on soullessness and selflessness based on *Dhamma* dialogues are described as follows. King Milinda asked the Venerable Nāgasena about the fame and name of the monk Nāgasena. He replied, "I am known as Nāgasena. It is just a common name, a provisional name, a tentative name, or a given name. No real entity is found there because there is no permanent individuality (no soul) underlying it. A human being is destined to die, and its body disperses like mist or cloud."²¹ Venerable Nāgasena said to the King, "You have been brought up in great luxury, as befits your noble birth. If you were to walk in this dry weather on the hot and sandy ground, trampling underfoot the gritty, gravelly grains of the hard sand, your feet would hurt you. And as your body would be in pain, your mind would be disturbed, and you would experience a sense of bodily suffering. How then did you come, on foot, or in a chariot?" King Milinda replied to Nāgasena and said: "I have spoken no un-truth, reverend Sir. It is because it has all these parts (you questioned me about) - the shaft, the axle, the wheels, the spokes, and the whip - that it comes under the term "chariot". The "chariot" is a generally understood term and the designation in common use." The thirty-two kinds of organic matter in a human body, and the five *Skandhas* constitute the being - that I come under the name Nāgasena. The name is a generally understood term and the designation is in common use."²² The Buddhist Philosophy for justification of dependent origination and emptiness of Self is illustrated in this section. The central concepts of Buddhist philosophy are as follows: What is happening in the world is characterized by the concept of dependent origination. This states that everything arises depending upon multiple causes and conditions and that nothing exists as an independent entity. As an example of dependent origination, let us consider a pot. A pot is made from clay under the supporting conditions of water and fire heat. A pot has no entity in the sense of an inherent existence or self-existence. Why? According to conventional reasoning, a pot is affected by the cause of clay by the scientific conditions of water and heat. It does not make sense to consider that the pot (as an effect) pre-existed in the material of clay (as a cause). Moreover, before the pot is made, it does not make sense to consider that clay and water are causal conditions for the pot, because those would be conditions for non-existence (because the pot is not there). In addition,

²¹ *Milindapanha* (1995): p: 1 - 350.

²² *Ibid.* p. 120 - 345.

if the pot is heated to a temperature much higher than that at which it was made, it will melt into a liquid or, at even higher temperatures, will become gas and eventually diffuse into space. This implies that the pot has no entity and is not thought to have an inherent existence or self-existence.²³ The concept of the emptiness of self is described as follows. Around 150 BCE, Buddhists debated how the *ātman* (the self-soul) or *pudgala* was denied as a real entity. The Pāli word *pudgala* denotes a person, personal entity, ego, or soul. There is visual consciousness. Conditioned by both the eye and the visible object, visual consciousness arises. This visual consciousness can only perceive what is visible, not the *pudgala* (the self-soul). Compare this with the fact that visual contact consists of a triplet: the eye, the visible object, and visual consciousness.²⁴ A *pudgala* cannot be perceived by visual consciousness, which is nothing but the transmission of neural signals excited by incoming light rays; only what is visible is perceived by visual consciousness. Thus, this visual consciousness is not the *pudgala*. Contact is made by the coming together of three elements: the eye, the visible object, and visual consciousness. Conditioned by contact, there is a sensation. This sensation, generated by visual contact, can only sense what is visible, not the *pudgala*. The *pudgala* is not sensed by the sensation generated by visual contact; only what is visible is sensed by the sensation generated by visual contact. Hence, the *pudgala* does not exist. As with visual consciousness, the same is true for the other five cases of auditory, olfactory, gustatory, bodily, and mental consciousness. The selflessness, soullessness, and namelessness of the natural and physical world are explained in the following sections by using the working principles of grid-integrated renewable energy systems, the applicability of modern power electronics devices, the controllability of output response in a second-order control system, and the coordinated operation of scientific systems. All the statements of the philosophy of the *Buddha-dhamma* are justified, proven, and supported by principles of modern science and technology.²⁵

4.2. Justification of soullessness using composite power system

The concepts of soullessness, namelessness, and selflessness about mindfulness and sustainable development are illustrated through the interconnection of power components within a grid-integrated wind energy conversion system (WECS). The WECS is a structured integration of various engineering devices, components, circuits, and systems. Wind power is one of the best renewable energy sources and has been extensively developed in recent decades. Wind energy offers several advantages, such as being non-polluting, having comparatively low capital costs, and requiring a short gestation period.²⁶ However, simple induction generators have certain disadvantages, such as reactive power utilization and an unfettered voltage profile due to variable rotor speed. These issues can be resolved through the implementation of a doubly-

²³ *Milindapanha* (1995) p. 125 - 350.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p.145 - 350.

²⁵ Aanchal Singh S. Vardhan (2024) p. 219 - 245.

²⁶ Kothari (2018) p. 25 - 80.

fed induction generator (DFIG) along with a power electronic converter. The power captured by wind turbines is converted into electrical power by the induction generator and is transmitted to the grid through both the stator and rotor windings. The control system generates signals to regulate active and reactive power, control current injection, provide frequency compensation to the rotor windings, and maintain the DC voltage of the common coupling link capacitor.²⁷ The DFIG is essentially a wound rotor induction machine that can operate in both super-synchronous and sub-synchronous modes, as illustrated in Figure 3. The advantages of DFIGs over fixed-speed generators include improved power quality, reduced fluctuations, and lower mechanical stress, along with superior power capture. The DFIG interacts with the grid through both the rotor and network-side converters. The inverter associated with the rotor side provides a fundamental frequency to maintain a constant stator frequency, even under mechanical power variations.²⁸

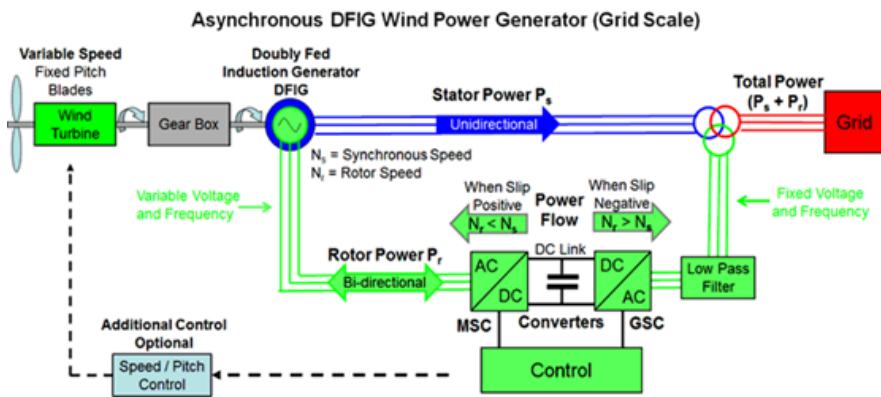


Figure 3: Justification of soullessness using energy system integration

DFIGs operate in two modes: (1) When $N_r > N_s$ and slip (s) is negative, the generator operates in super-synchronous mode, and both the stator and rotor windings transmit power to the grid. (2) When $N_r < N_s$ and slip (s) is positive, the generator operates in sub-synchronous mode, and the stator winding supplies power to both the grid and the rotor winding.²⁹ The stable and reliable performance of WECS is based on the desired operation of all the individual components and devices. This system is a combination of a wind turbine, gearbox, controllers, and a doubly-fed induction generator. The WECS has namelessness and selflessness, just like the soullessness of the physical world and natural phenomena. The dialogues described between King Milinda and Bhikkhu Nagasena in the previous section are justified by the WECS operation. Scientific systems are a proper combination of various components to achieve an overall stable and reliable output. The human body is a system and this body is made of with proper combination of

²⁷ Dilip Pandit (2024) p. 4608 - 4621.

²⁸ Akanksha Singh S. Vardhan (2024): p. 1833 - 1842.

²⁹ Kothari (2022) p. 32 - 47.

various components like the heart, kidney, lung, blood cells, brain, and other biological parts. The overall performance of the body depends on the reliable performance of all individual parts. If the working of any small part is disturbed due to any incidence, the overall performance of the body system is disturbed. Life is reliable if all the individual components are reliable enough to perform their functions accurately. This scientific explanation provides justification related to soullessness of the Buddhism. The stable and reliable performance of the *WECS* depends on the proper functioning of all individual components and devices. This system comprises a wind turbine, gearbox, controllers, and a *DFIG*. The *WECS* exemplifies namelessness and selflessness, akin to the soullessness of the physical world and natural phenomena. The dialogues between King Milinda and Bhikkhu Nāgasena, described in the previous section, are justified through the operation of the *WECS*. Scientific systems are properly integrated combinations of various components that work together to achieve overall stability and reliability. Similarly, the human body is a system composed of multiple components, such as the heart, kidneys, lungs, blood cells, brain, and other biological parts. The overall performance of the body depends on the reliable functioning of each part.³⁰ If even a small component malfunctions, the entire system is affected. Life remains stable and reliable only when all its components function accurately. This scientific explanation justifies the concept of soullessness in Buddhism.

4.3. Scientific importance of Buddhism and controller response analogy

The output response of a second-order feedback control system subjected to a unit step input is shown in Figure. 4. The transient response of a second-order control system can be underdamped, critically damped, or overdamped, depending on the value of the damping ratio. The transient response specifications for a second-order control system subjected to a unit step input include maximum overshoot, natural frequency, damping factor, rise time, peak time, settling time, and steady-state error. The improvement in time response is achieved by applying different types of control actions. The time response of a control system refers to how the system behaves over time when a specified test input signal is applied. The parameters of a control system may vary due to changing environmental conditions, and this variation can affect the desired performance of the system.³¹

³⁰ Saket (2024) p. 158 - 165.

³¹ Aanchal Singh S. Vardhan (2024) p. 1833 - 1842.

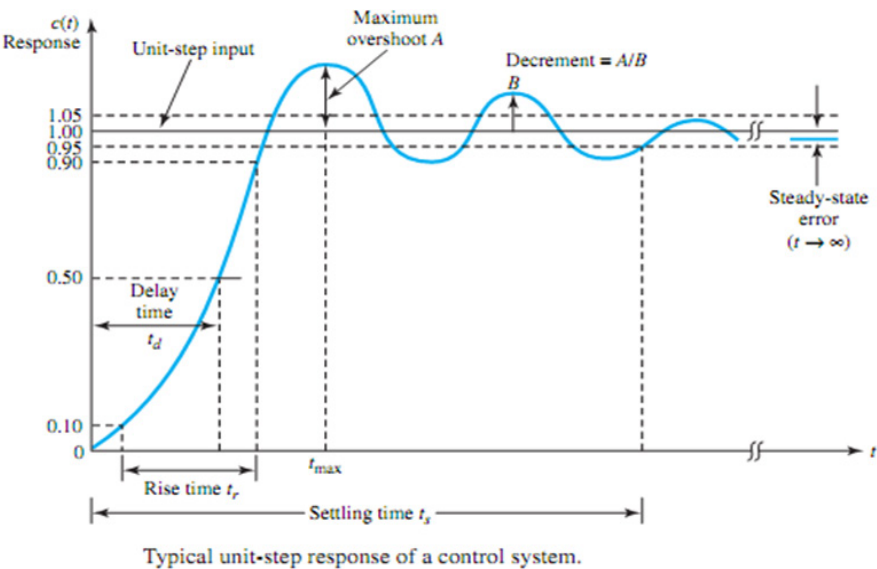


Figure.4: Control system analogy for mindfulness assessment

This discussion presents a comprehensive analogy between controllable physical activities and emotions and the controllable parameters of a control system. Modern technology can be compared to experimental meditation in explaining mindfulness for sustainable development through the application of positive input signals. If disturbances arise in daily life due to negative incidents, mindfulness can be cultivated through meditation and the impermanence philosophy of Buddhism. Just as the parameters of a control system can be regulated by applying appropriate control actions, dukkha and failures in educational life can be managed through dhamma for mindfulness and sustainable development. The disturbances in human life can be stabilized through experimental meditation and by understanding the impermanent nature of the world. The activities of human life, along with all emotions triggered by positive and negative experiences, are naturally self-regulating. Emotional disturbances subside over time, much like the output response of a second-order control system.³² This self-regulating phenomenon is significant for fostering mindfulness in education and promoting global sustainable development.

V. CONCLUSION

This scholarly manuscript describes the importance of Buddhism in the 21st century for mindfulness in education and global sustainable development. The philosophy of Buddhism is explained through the principles of modern science, engineering, and technology. The mind as the forerunner in the *Dhammapada* – *Yamaka Vagga* is described in analogy with the flux as the forerunner in electromagnetic induction, according to Faraday’s law of electromagnetic

³² Saket (2024) p. 165 - 185.

induction. The philosophy of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* is illustrated through the scientific analysis of reliability engineering and hazard modeling. Finally, *anattā*, namelessness, and selflessness are described through grid-integrated WECS and the controllable output response of a second-order control system. A comprehensive analysis and scientific description of Buddhism concerning mindfulness in the educational system, the acceptability of impermanence, soullessness in the physical world, and global sustainable development are successfully presented.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND HOLISTIC AWARENESS

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Abstract:

The integration of mindfulness practices within educational frameworks is instrumental in enhancing awareness and commitment to sustainable development. By promoting present-moment awareness, fostering empathy, and developing resilience, mindfulness equips students with the holistic perspective necessary to address the multifaceted environmental and social challenges of our time. The relevance of mindfulness to the pursuit of sustainable development lies in its capacity to foster a holistic worldview among students, encouraging them to view the intricate interconnections between their personal well-being, societal dynamics, and the environment. This research explores how mindfulness training enhances students' capacity for reflection, leading to a critical evaluation of personal habits and their environmental impact. The relevant data obtained from the secondary sources and interviews are analyzed under the qualitative data analysis method. As educational systems continue to evolve in response to these pressing issues, the incorporation of mindfulness offers a vital pathway toward nurturing environmentally and socially responsible citizens who are prepared to contribute to a sustainable and equitable world. In conclusion, sustainable development is a holistic framework that encapsulates the interconnections among economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social equity. Results indicated that students who practiced mindfulness were more likely to display behaviors that aligned with sustainability, such as recycling, conservation of resources, and mindful consumption. Thus, integrating mindfulness practices into educational settings presents a unique and vital opportunity to enhance students' awareness and commitment to sustainable development.

Keywords: *Challenges, education, mindfulness, student's awareness, sustainable development.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind, a person speaks or acts. Suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.”¹ Mindfulness, a concept originating from various contemplative traditions, has garnered increasing attention in educational settings as a transformative pedagogical approach. Mindfulness is derived from Buddhist practice and it is concerned with regulating concentration such that it remains focused on present-moment sensory and psychological experiences. Mindfulness is the English translation of the *Pāli* term ‘*Sati*’.² It is a psychological process of bringing one’s attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental manner. “Mindfulness is mirror thought. It reflects only what is presently happening and in exactly the way it is happening...”³ “This practice encourages individuals to cultivate awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and sensory experiences, fostering a deeper connection to their inner self and the surrounding environment.”⁴ In educational contexts, mindfulness practices are often implemented through techniques such as meditation, yoga, breath awareness exercises, and reflective practices. The objectives of incorporating mindfulness in education extend beyond personal well-being; they encompass the development of emotional regulation, enhanced focus, reduced stress, and improved social interactions among students.

The relevance of mindfulness to the pursuit of sustainable development lies in its capacity to foster a holistic worldview among students, encouraging them to view the intricate interconnections between their personal well-being, societal dynamics, and the environment. Sustainable development, as articulated by the United Nations Brundtland Commission (1987), entails meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition underscores the importance of a balanced approach that integrates ecological integrity, social equity, and economic viability dimensions that mindfulness practices can significantly enhance. By cultivating present-moment awareness, mindfulness encourages students to become more attuned to the environmental and social challenges they face. This heightened awareness can lead to a stronger commitment to sustainable practices, as students learn to recognize the implications of their behaviors on others. For instance, mindfulness has been linked to increased empathy and compassion, qualities essential for understanding the social dimensions of sustainability.

Moreover, integrating mindfulness into education promotes resilience and adaptability among students, equipping them with the necessary skills to navigate

¹ *Dhp* 1. “*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā; / manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karot vā tato naṃ dukkham anveti cakkam va vahato padam.*” Equivalent English version of Acarya Buddhārakkhita trans., (1985): 21.

² Nyanatiloka (1946):101.

³ Henepola, Gunaratana (1991):144.

⁴ Kabat-Zinn (1990):144.

an increasingly complex and uncertain world. As environmental and social challenges intensify, the ability to respond thoughtfully and effectively becomes imperative. Mindfulness practices help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In this context, mindfulness emerges not only as a tool for personal development but also as a catalyst for social change, empowering the next generation to take an active role in fostering a sustainable future.

In recent years, the importance of sustainable development has gained increasing recognition within educational discourse. Despite this elevation in prominence, there exists a significant gap between the rhetoric of sustainability and the tangible awareness and commitment exhibited by both students and educators. This disjunction is particularly notable in the integration of sustainability into curricula, teaching methodologies, and school cultures.

1.1. Research Problem

This research explores how mindfulness training enhances students' capacity for reflection, leading to a critical evaluation of personal habits and their environmental impact.

1.2. Methodology

The research was done under the qualitative data analysis method. The relevant data obtained from secondary sources and interviews with scholars in the field of counseling and education are analyzed under the above method. The secondary sources books, articles, and research papers related to sustainable development through education and mindfulness in education were studied to collect data for this research.

II. DISCUSSION

The term sustainable development was defined as “the development that can meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”⁵ “The significance of sustainable development has become increasingly pronounced, as nations face multifaceted challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, poverty, and social inequity.”⁶ The United Nations established the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which encompasses 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at fostering a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable world. The SDGs offer a comprehensive blueprint that advocates for actionable targets in various domains, such as alleviating hunger, ensuring quality education, and promoting sustainable economic growth, all while emphasizing the imperative of environmental protection. The urgency of this agenda is underscored by mounting evidence that unsustainable practices have exacerbated social disparities and environmental degradation across the globe.

Integrating sustainable development into educational frameworks is essential for cultivating the awareness, skills, and commitment required

⁵ Peter P Rogers et al. (2008): 12.

⁶ Peter P Rogers et al. (2008): 14.

to address these challenges. Education can serve as a transformative tool in fostering an understanding of sustainability issues and empowering individuals to take informed action. Moreover, educational approaches must engage students in critical thinking and problem-solving regarding environmental and social issues, positioning them as active participants in their learning processes.

Mindfulness practices such as meditation, yoga, and reflective observation encourage individuals to engage in present-moment awareness and cultivate a sense of responsibility towards their surroundings. When integrated into educational curricula, these practices can foster emotional intelligence, enhance empathy, and heighten awareness of the socio-ecological systems that underpin everyday life. Consequently, students are more likely to recognize the implications of their choices and behaviors on the environment and society, thereby nurturing a commitment to sustainable living.

“The general interest in mindfulness in education today is evidenced by the sheer number of hits that occur in a simple Google search on their term mindfulness in education.”⁷ There have been a number of studies and articles that recommend different facts of mindfulness practice to ease tensions and work towards reconciliation. “Deborah Bowman’s article ‘Dispelling the Enemy Image with Clear and Compassionate Speech’ is an excellent study, which focuses on mindfulness of speech and imagery used for non-violent communication.”⁸

Moreover, mindfulness education can support the development of resilience and adaptability qualities crucial for navigating the complexities and uncertainties inherent in today’s world. By fostering a sense of interconnectedness and promoting a holistic understanding of challenges, mindfulness practices can empower learners to engage constructively with issues of sustainability. This educational paradigm highlights the value of fostering a deep intrinsic motivation to pursue sustainable development, moving beyond extrinsic incentives, and promoting enduring engagement with environmental and social stewardship. Ultimately, by embedding mindfulness in educational contexts, we can enhance the potential for meaningful engagement with sustainable development, preparing individuals to confront contemporary challenges with a comprehensive and reflective mindset.

Research indicates that while many educational institutions recognize the necessity of sustainability, they often fall short in creating an integrative approach that permeates all levels of learning. “UNESCO has emphasized that ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) should be locally relevant. It should be based on local needs, perceptions, and conditions.”⁹ Educators should have the knowledge and training required to effectively imbue their teachings with the principles of sustainable development. Consequently, students are not exposed to a comprehensive understanding of environmental issues and

⁷ Kimberly A. Schinert – Reichl at al. (2016): 3.

⁸ Padmasiri De Silva (2014): 59.

⁹ Wolfgang et al. (2012): 5.

the socio-economic dynamics that underpin them. The current fragmentation of sustainability education often leads to superficial engagement, where topics are treated as isolated subjects rather than as components of a larger system that demands interconnection and collaboration.

Moreover, students frequently exhibit limited awareness of the ways their day-to-day behaviors and choices impact the environment. In many cases, the commitment to sustainable practices is relegated to theoretical discussions without corresponding action-orienting frameworks. By overlooking the intricacies of emotional and behavioral aspects related to sustainability, educational systems risk fostering a generation that is intellectually informed yet significantly disengaged from the ecological and social realities they face. Acknowledging this disjunction underscores the urgent need for educational practices that integrate mindfulness as a tool for promoting greater awareness and commitment to sustainability. Mindfulness, characterized by focused attention, present-moment awareness, and non-judgmental observation, can play a pivotal role in reshaping the educational landscape.

The integration of mindfulness practices in education offers a promising avenue for addressing the identified gaps in understanding and engagement with sustainable development. Mindfulness facilitates a holistic approach that encourages students and educators alike to cultivate a deeper awareness of their actions and their consequences. By creating spaces for reflection and self-examination, mindfulness can help reframe how individuals perceive their relationship with the environment and society. Such practices can enhance emotional intelligence and empathy, fostering an intrinsic motivation to commit to sustainable practices both in and out of the classroom context.

Ultimately, the enhanced awareness and commitment to sustainable development cannot be effectively achieved without addressing these gaps through innovative pedagogical strategies. To cultivate a robust understanding of sustainability, it is imperative that educational institutions embrace a comprehensive, integrated framework that not only disseminates knowledge but also nurtures the emotional and psychological dimensions of learning. Integrating mindfulness as a core component of this framework holds the potential for fostering profound transformations within educational practices, leading to a more conscientious and engaged student body committed to both environmental stewardship and social equity. The theoretical framework linking mindfulness practices to sustainable development can be built upon various psychological theories that elucidate the mechanisms through which mindfulness enhances environmental awareness and social responsibility.

“One of the foundational theories relevant to this discourse is the Attention Restoration Theory (ART), posited by Kaplan and Kaplan.”¹⁰ This theory suggests that natural environments have restorative attributes that allow individuals to recover from mental fatigue and sharpen their attentional capacities. When mindfulness practices, such as nature-based meditation, encourage individuals

¹⁰ Kaplan and Kaplan (1989): 41.

to engage with natural surroundings, they not only cultivate present-moment awareness but also enhance cognitive functioning. This cognitive revitalization may propel individuals to demonstrate greater care for the environment and foster a sense of responsibility regarding sustainable practices.

The development of an environmental identity occurs when individuals perceive themselves as part of the natural world. Mindfulness practices, which promote self-awareness and interconnectedness, are instrumental in shaping this identity. By cultivating mindfulness, individuals become more attuned to their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, thereby increasing their recognition of environmental issues and amplifying their commitment to sustainable actions. This increased awareness is crucial in transforming abstract concepts of sustainability into tangible realities that individuals feel personally responsible for addressing.

Furthermore, “the Theory of Planned Behavior posits that intention is a precursor to behavior and is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.”¹¹ Mindfulness practices facilitate the reflection necessary to cultivate positive attitudes toward sustainable practices by encouraging individuals to examine their values and beliefs. Consequently, as individuals become more mindful, they are likely to develop favorable attitudes toward pro-environmental behavior. Moreover, the social dimension of mindfulness, encompassing compassion, empathy, and altruism can influence subjective norms, thereby reinforcing the shared values of sustainability within educational settings. This fosters a collaborative mindset, where collective efforts toward sustainable development are not only welcomed but actively pursued.

Mindfulness practices serve to dismantle the barriers between the self and the environment, promoting an identification with the natural world. Through practices that emphasize mindful observation and appreciation of nature, students may be encouraged to see ecological issues as personal concerns, leading to a higher likelihood of engaging in behaviors that support sustainability initiatives.

The Community Psychology perspective underscores the importance of collective efficacy and social capital. Mindfulness practices in educational contexts can cultivate a sense of community and interconnectedness, fostering environments where individuals feel empowered to act on social and environmental issues collaboratively. The practice of mindfulness may facilitate the development of shared values and norms that support sustainable development initiatives, reinforcing social responsibility within educational settings. This synergy between individual mindfulness and community engagement highlights the potential for educational institutions to not only impart knowledge but to instill a deep-seated commitment to sustainable action through a holistic approach that addresses both environmental and social challenges.

¹¹ Ajzen (2005): 4.

In sum, the theoretical framework connecting mindfulness with sustainable development is grounded in diverse psychological constructs, each illustrating the multifaceted roles that mindfulness practices can play in enhancing individual and collective awareness, commitment, and responsibility towards environmental and social challenges. The integration of mindfulness practices within educational contexts has garnered increasing attention in recent years, particularly in relation to students' attitudes and behaviors regarding sustainability. A growing body of research has explored the intersection of mindfulness, education, and environmental consciousness, providing insights into how these elements collectively contribute to a deeper commitment to sustainable development.

A notable study conducted by Zelazo et al.¹² underscored the relationship between mindfulness and self-regulation. The authors found that mindfulness practices in educational settings not only enhance students' emotional regulation but also foster pro-social behaviors and attitudes. Their research indicates that when students engage in mindfulness exercises such as breath awareness, meditation, or mindful movement, they exhibit improved concentration, decreased stress levels, and an enhanced capacity for empathy. These traits are pivotal not just for personal well-being but serve as foundational elements for fostering a culture of sustainability, where individual actions are aligned with collective environmental goals.

"In parallel, the work of Lambert and Passmore provides compelling evidence on the positive correlation between mindfulness instruction and environmental activism among students."¹³ The study involved implementing a mindfulness curriculum in several schools, which led to significant increases in environmental awareness and engagement in sustainable practices. The researchers highlighted that mindfulness not only cultivates a sense of present-moment awareness but also broadens perspectives toward global challenges, thereby motivating students to take actionable steps in their communities. Such findings suggest that integrating mindfulness can cultivate an environmental ethos among students, promoting long-term commitment to sustainable practices.

Additionally, research by Dyer et al. explored the influence of mindfulness on reducing ecological footprint among students.¹⁴ The researchers utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Results indicated that students who practiced mindfulness were more likely to display behaviors that aligned with sustainability, such as recycling, conservation of resources, and mindful consumption. The researchers proposed that this is attributed to mindfulness training enhancing individuals' capacity for reflection, leading to a critical evaluation of personal habits and their environmental impact.

Furthermore, findings from a systematic review conducted by Meiklejohn et al. summarized the potential benefits of mindfulness in educational

¹² Zelazo et al. (2016): 1.

¹³ Aleksandra and Derek (2021): 3.

¹⁴ Ana Maria (2024): 12.

settings on social and emotional learning (SEL).¹⁵ This perspective aligns with sustainability as SEL incorporates fostering awareness of social interconnectedness and responsibility, both of which are vital for addressing environmental challenges. The review emphasized that mindfulness practices encourage self-awareness and collective responsibility, vital for creating a generation committed to sustainable development.

In summary, the existing literature reflects a consistent narrative highlighting the intersection of mindfulness, education, and sustainability. Studies have shown that implementing mindfulness practices enhances emotional and social capabilities in students, which in turn cultivates a greater awareness and commitment to sustainability. This emerging field of research advocates for the incorporation of mindfulness as a pedagogical tool, stressing its transformative potential in preparing future generations to navigate the complexities of environmental and social challenges. Several educational institutions around the world have successfully integrated mindfulness practices within their curricula, demonstrating a profound impact on students' awareness and commitment to sustainable development. These case studies provide valuable insights into the synergetic relationship between mindfulness and sustainability education.

One notable example is the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where an innovative program called "Mindfulness-Based Sustainability Education" has been implemented. This initiative incorporates mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and mindful reflection, into sustainability courses. Research indicates that students participating in this program report heightened levels of environmental awareness and a deeper sense of connection to ecological contexts. The practice encourages students to develop a reflective mindset, allowing them to approach sustainability challenges creatively and collaboratively. Feedback gathered from participants reveals an increased commitment to environmental stewardship, with many students reporting a shift in their lifestyle choices toward more sustainable practices, including reduced waste and greater advocacy for social justice issues.

Another compelling case is the CA Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, which has integrated mindfulness training as part of its educational outreach efforts. During workshops held for school groups, educators facilitate mindfulness exercises that engage participants in present-moment awareness while exploring themes of biodiversity and conservation. Evaluative measures revealed that students who engaged in these mindfulness activities demonstrated improved emotional regulation and a greater capacity for empathy towards living organisms. These aspects are vital for fostering a holistic understanding of environmental issues, as they encourage students to reflect on their interconnectedness with the natural world. Subsequent surveys indicated a marked increase in students' willingness to participate in conservation activities, highlighting how mindfulness can enhance a sense of

¹⁵ Gordon Maria (2015): 132.

agency in addressing ecological challenges.

In Finland, the “Schools for Future” initiative showcases an integrated approach where mindfulness Buddhist meditations are woven into environmental education.¹⁶ The foundation of the Finnish system is equal and high-quality education that respects childhood and diversity throughout the country.”¹⁷ Teachers trained in mindfulness facilitate experiences where students practice meditation followed by discussions about sustainability issues. This combination cultivates a reflective learning environment where students can critically analyze their relationship with the environment. Research outcomes highlight that students become not only more conscious of ecological footprints but also more inclined to advocate for systemic changes within their communities, linking aspects of both personal responsibility and collective action.

Overall, these case studies illustrate the potential of integrating mindfulness practices into educational institutions as a means to enrich students’ understanding and commitment to sustainable development. By fostering greater awareness of personal and collective impact on the environment, institutions can generate a generation of mindful leaders equipped to tackle complex social and ecological challenges. Mindfulness practices in education serve not only to enhance cognitive awareness but also to cultivate emotional intelligence and empathy two critical emotional skills necessary for addressing the multifaceted social challenges inherent in sustainable development. Emotional intelligence, defined by the ability to perceive, understand, and manage one’s own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, plays a significant role in facilitating interpersonal relationships and social cohesion. This is particularly pertinent in discussions of sustainable development, where collaboration and communicative effectiveness among diverse stakeholders are essential for fostering social change and promoting equitable practices.

The incorporation of mindfulness into educational programs has been empirically linked to various enhancements in emotional regulation. For instance, studies demonstrate that mindfulness practices can reduce stress and anxiety levels, thus enabling individuals to approach social and environmental challenges with a clearer, more focused mindset. This clarity is essential when engaging with social dilemmas as it aids in recognizing the complexities of these issues without the distortion of heightened emotional responses. With an increased capacity for emotional regulation, individuals demonstrate greater resilience in challenging situations, making them more likely to engage constructively with social challenges that pertain to sustainable development.

Thus, mindfulness practices promote greater self-awareness, which is closely tied to understanding one’s emotional state. This self-awareness, when

¹⁶ Wim Lambrechts (2016): 6.

¹⁷ Paivi Tuula et al., *Alternative futures of Finnish comprehensive school*, accessed on (February 22, 2025), available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370562523_Alternative_futures_of_Finnish_comprehensive_school.

combined with the awareness of others' emotional states often termed social awareness can lead to enhanced empathy. Empathy is a foundational aspect of healthy relationships and effective community engagement, as it allows individuals to appreciate diverse perspectives and experiences. Educators who integrate mindfulness into their curricula are effectively laying the groundwork for future leaders and citizens who are not only aware of their emotional landscapes but also capable of recognizing and responding to the feelings and needs of others.

The practice of mindful listening, for example, entails fully engaging with another person's words and emotions without the immediate impulse to respond or judge. This form of listening fosters a deeper connection between individuals, enabling collaborative problem-solving that is crucial for addressing societal issues related to sustainability. When students practice mindful listening, they are not merely absorbing information; they are learning to understand the perspectives of others, allowing them to engage in discussions about social justice and ecological integrity from a place of compassion and understanding.

Further, the application of mindfulness in educational settings cultivates a sense of interconnectedness, an important component of both emotional intelligence and sustainable development. Through mindfulness techniques such as guided meditation and contemplative reflection, students can develop a profound awareness of their relationship with others and the environment, cultivating a holistic perspective that recognizes the interdependence of social systems and ecological health. This perspective can inspire a commitment to sustainable practices that prioritize both social equity and environmental stewardship.

Mindfulness practices in education enhance emotional intelligence and empathy, equipping students with the necessary emotional skills to tackle social challenges inherent in sustainable development. "Lawlor situates new research on mindfulness in relation to the longer standing SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) approach."¹⁸ By fostering self-regulation, self-awareness, and empathetic engagement, mindfulness not only prepares learners for personal success but also empowers them to contribute meaningfully to efforts aimed at achieving more equitable and sustainable societal outcomes. As students become more attuned to their emotional cycles and the emotional narratives of others, they develop the foundational competencies for effective leadership and engaged citizenship that are critical in the face of contemporary environmental and social challenges. Mindfulness practices, which emphasize focused awareness of present-moment experiences without judgment, have been shown to enhance various cognitive skills critical for tackling complex environmental and social issues. As the challenges of sustainable development increasingly require innovative and adaptive responses, the role of cognitive flexibility becomes paramount. Cognitive flexibility refers to the ability to

¹⁸ Kimberly A. Schinert – Reichl et al. (2016): 7.

switch perspectives, adapt to new information, and consider multiple solutions to problems. This trait cultivates a mindset conducive to embracing change and uncertainty, characteristics that are inherent in the dynamics of environmental and social challenges.

Research indicates that mindfulness training positively influences cognitive flexibility. For instance, studies have demonstrated that individuals who engage in regular mindfulness meditation exhibit greater adaptability in their thinking processes, enabling them to shift between different tasks and perspectives more effectively. This versatility is particularly relevant in the context of environmental decision-making, where stakeholders must often reconcile competing interests and navigate complex systems. By fostering a capacity for perspective-taking and adaptability, mindfulness practices can empower educators and students alike to approach sustainability challenges with enhanced cognitive tools.

Moreover, mindfulness has been linked to improved critical thinking skills. Critical thinking, defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to inform problem-solving, is vital for addressing the multifaceted nature of social and environmental issues.¹⁹ The practice of mindfulness encourages a non-reactive mode of engagement with information, allowing individuals to observe their thoughts and feelings without being overwhelmed by them. This nonjudgmental awareness can lead to more thoughtful and deliberate processing of information, thus enhancing critical analysis and problem resolution. By practicing mindfulness, students can develop the skills to critically assess their environmental and social surroundings, ultimately fostering informed decision-making aimed at sustainability.

Additionally, integrating mindfulness practices into education cultivates an ethical dimension to cognitive skills. Mindfulness encourages empathy and compassion, thus nurturing a sense of responsibility towards both human and ecological communities.²⁰ When individuals develop greater awareness of their interconnectedness with the environment and each other, they are more likely to engage in social and ecological stewardship. This holistic perspective not only enhances individual cognitive flexibility and critical thinking but also encourages collaborative problem-solving approaches that are essential in addressing complex global issues.

The implications of mindfulness practices for enhancing cognitive flexibility and critical thinking are significant in the context of sustainable development education. The cognitive benefits enabled by mindfulness facilitate the necessary skills for prospective leaders and change-makers to effectively engage with environmental and social challenges. As education systems look for innovative methodologies to prepare students for the realities of a changing world, mindfulness presents a compelling approach to cultivating the cognitive capacities needed to navigate the intricacies of sustainable development. Integrating mindfulness into educational frameworks not only enhances

¹⁹ Daniel Fasco et al. (2020): 47.

²⁰ Kabat Zinn (2009): 145.

individual cognitive skills but also influences broader societal engagement with pressing global challenges, promoting a more sustainable future. Mindfulness practices have gained traction in educational settings as effective tools for fostering community engagement among students. By encouraging present-moment awareness, mindfulness cultivates essential qualities such as empathy, compassion, and connectedness. This engagement is critical as students emerge into active citizenship roles and confront environmental and social challenges inherent in sustainable development.

The application of mindfulness in education creates an environment where students are encouraged to cultivate their awareness of the world around them. This heightened awareness promotes a deeper understanding of the socio-environmental dynamics impacting their communities. Research indicates that mindfulness results in improved emotional regulation, allowing learners to respond thoughtfully to community needs rather than reacting impulsively. This nuanced approach enables students to engage with community challenges meaningfully, developing a sense of responsibility as they comprehend their roles as stewards for both the environment and their peers.

Furthermore, integrating mindfulness practices into curricula enhances interpersonal connections among students. Mindfulness exercises, such as group meditations or mindful dialogue circles, foster shared experiences that promote collective reflection. “The means by which one learns to practice this in daily life are formalized practices such as sitting, listening, or walking meditation in which practitioners are asked to continually bring their attention back to present moment experience...”²¹ These experiences facilitate the development of empathy, as students learn to listen to and acknowledge each other’s perspectives. In an educational environment promoting collaborative mindfulness, students are more likely to engage in actions that benefit their communities, as they feel intrinsically linked to their peers’ experiences and challenges.

Through cultivating collective mindfulness, students can become advocates for sustainable practices and policies. For example, mindfulness can prompt students to reflect critically on their consumer habits and the broader environmental impacts of those behaviors. Engaging students in discussions about sustainability after mindfulness exercises can lead to increased advocacy for responsible resource use within their communities. As students internalize a mindful approach to consumption, they are more inclined to advocate for practices like recycling, conservation, and supporting local economies, thus fostering a culture of sustainability.

Moreover, established mindfulness programs have shown promise in strengthening community ties and networks. Initiatives such as community gardens or local clean-up days, initiated by students through mindfulness practices, not only enhance the environment but also build social cohesion. In these efforts, students recognize the interdependence between personal well-being and community health. This understanding fosters a collaborative spirit,

²¹ Kimberly A. Schinert –Reichl at al. (2016):6.

drawing in participants from diverse backgrounds and promoting inclusivity in addressing community issues.

“Education as a force for change in society has been restored cooperation, responsibility, and critical thinking...”²² The role of educators in facilitating mindfulness-based community engagement cannot be understated. Teachers equipped with mindfulness skills can model compassionate leadership and inspire students to take action within their communities. Professional development programs focusing on mindfulness training enable educators to create inclusive environments that prioritize social dialogue and environmental stewardship. Consequently, a transformative pedagogical approach emerges, rooted in mindfulness, which places emphasis on student agency and collective responsibility.

Moreover, the institutional barriers present in many educational settings contribute to the challenge of integrating mindfulness effectively. Administrative support is crucial in championing mindfulness initiatives; however, not all educational leaders prioritize or understand the importance of such practices. This lack of administrative endorsement can result in a fragmented approach, wherein mindfulness is treated as an ancillary practice rather than an integral part of the educational mission. Such fragmentation can lead to a lack of continuity in mindfulness practices and diminish their overall impact on fostering a commitment to sustainability.

The successful integration of mindfulness into educational environments must contend with multifaceted challenges that include structural constraints, cultural perceptions, and pedagogical limitations. Addressing these barriers is essential for creating an educational ecosystem that fully embraces mindfulness as a method for enhancing awareness and commitment to sustainable development. Integrating mindfulness into educational curricula requires a multifaceted approach that aligns with existing pedagogical frameworks while remaining adaptable to diverse classroom environments. Educators can leverage various effective strategies to create a curriculum that not only promotes mindfulness but also enhances students’ awareness and commitment to sustainable development.

One promising strategy is the incorporation of mindfulness exercises at the beginning of each class session. Simple practices such as guided breathing exercises, body scans, or short periods of silent reflection can ground students and prepare them to engage more meaningfully with the subsequent material. These exercises foster an awareness of the present moment, thereby enhancing cognitive engagement and emotional resilience. Additionally, by emphasizing the interconnectedness of personal well-being and environmental health during these practices, educators can cultivate a holistic understanding of sustainability.

²² Paivi Tuula et al., *Alternative futures of Finnish comprehensive school*, accessed on (February 22, 2025), available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370562523_Alternative_futures_of_Finnish_comprehensive_school.

Another effective approach involves integrating mindfulness into existing subject matter through thematic lessons that link mindfulness concepts with sustainability topics. For instance, during a science lesson on ecological systems, educators can facilitate mindfulness activities that encourage students to observe and reflect on their interactions with the environment. This could include mindful nature walks or projects that require students to practice observation and reflection about local ecosystems. By embedding mindfulness within the context of environmental education, students may develop a deeper appreciation for their surroundings and foster a commitment to environmental stewardship.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary projects that weave mindfulness into various subjects can enhance students' engagement with both mindfulness practices and the principles of sustainable development. For example, a collaborative project could involve students researching local environmental issues, while simultaneously practicing mindfulness exercises that enhance their collaborative and reflective skills. Such projects can be designed to encourage empathy and social responsibility, as students consider the social implications of environmental degradation and develop actionable solutions.

"Professional development for educators presents another vital strategy in the effective integration of mindfulness practices. Workshops and training programs can equip teachers with the necessary skills to implement mindfulness techniques in their classrooms confidently."²³ Additionally, creating a community of practice among educators can foster sharing of resources and experiences. This communal approach encourages reflection on the ethical dimensions of teaching and the importance of cultivating a mindful classroom atmosphere that promotes not only individual well-being but also collective responsibility towards global challenges.

Incorporating technological tools can further reinforce mindfulness strategies within educational settings. Applications that offer guided meditations, mindfulness reminders, or tools for tracking emotional states provide interactive and accessible means for students to engage with mindfulness practices. Such tools can be particularly appealing to younger generations, integrating seamlessly into their technological lifestyles, and providing an innovative way to explore the connections between mindfulness and sustainable development.

Finally, student-led initiatives that focus on community engagement can effectively extend mindfulness practices beyond the classroom. Programs that encourage students to participate in local environmental projects or social justice initiatives can enhance their sense of belonging and responsibility. By fostering a proactive approach to sustainability, students can navigate the interconnected challenges of their communities with increased awareness and commitment. This hands-on application of mindfulness principles not only strengthens their individual practices but also cultivates a collaborative ethos that is essential for addressing complex social and environmental challenges.

²³ Kimberly A. Schinert – Reichl et al. (2016): 8.

The strategies outlined here can empower educators to embed mindfulness practices effectively within their curricula, ultimately enhancing students' awareness and engagement with sustainable development. Through thoughtful integration, mindfulness in education can foster a generation of learners equipped to tackle the multifaceted challenges of the modern world.

One promising approach to measurement involves the use of self-report surveys that assess participants' awareness and understanding of sustainability concepts before and after participating in mindfulness programs. These surveys can include items measuring environmental knowledge, sociocultural awareness, and attitudes toward sustainable practices. Utilizing Likert-type scales allows for quantitative analysis of shifts in participant perceptions and beliefs about sustainability. Additionally, qualitative measures, such as open-ended questions, can provide deeper insights into the personal meaning and relevance participants attribute to sustainability, thus enriching the quantitative data.

Another relevant metric is the Behavioral Intentions Scale, which assesses participants' intentions to engage in sustainable practices following mindfulness training. "The Behavioral Intention Scale which was developed to measure intentions to start a web-based intervention."²⁴ This scale can capture a range of actions, from simple lifestyle changes, such as reducing waste, to more significant commitments, such as advocating for environmental policies. Tracking changes in behavioral intentions can serve as an early indicator of potential real-world impacts stemming from mindfulness practices.

Moreover, observational methods, including classroom assessments, can be employed to evaluate the degree to which students apply mindfulness principles to sustainability-related activities. Educators can use checklists or rubrics to monitor student engagement in sustainability initiatives, group discussions, and problem-solving activities that require mindfulness, critical thinking, and collaboration. Such observational measures can provide direct evidence of how mindfulness integrates with and enhances sustainability education.

Pre-and post-intervention focus groups can also be beneficial for assessing the impact of mindfulness on sustainability awareness. By facilitating discussions among participants regarding their experiences in the program, researchers can gather qualitative data that reflect shifts in perceptions, values, and community involvement. This method also allows for the identification of specific aspects of the mindfulness curriculum that participants found most effective in promoting sustainability awareness.

Lastly, it is important to consider the integration of community-based evaluations where students engage with local environmental issues as part of their mindfulness education. Collaborations with community organizations can provide contexts for students to apply mindfulness practices in real-

²⁴ Kaczmarek, L. D et al. (2015). *Behavioral Intention Scale* [Database record]. APA PsycTests. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t40308-000>

world sustainability projects. Evaluating outcomes from these initiatives, such as community engagement metrics and environmental assessments, can contribute to a holistic understanding of how mindfulness training influences not only individual participants but also the broader community.

Utilizing a combination of these measurement strategies will yield a comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in promoting sustainability education. By systematically measuring both qualitative and quantitative outcomes, educators and researchers can better understand the transformative potential of mindfulness in addressing the pressing environmental and social challenges of our time. To facilitate the integration of mindfulness practices within educational frameworks that emphasize sustainable development, several policy recommendations can be considered. These recommendations aim to create an enabling environment that fosters the adoption of mindfulness as a pedagogical tool while embedding it within the broader curriculum focused on environmental and social challenges.

First, educational institutions need to adopt a comprehensive policy that explicitly includes mindfulness practices in their mission statements and curricular objectives. By establishing mindfulness as a core component of educational philosophy, schools, and universities can signify the importance of this approach in promoting not only personal well-being but also collective responsibility towards sustainable development. This alignment should be reflected in the national education standards and evaluation frameworks, ensuring that mindfulness practices are recognized as vital to achieving educational outcomes.

Second, teacher training programs should be restructured to incorporate mindfulness and sustainability education as integral components. Policies should mandate the inclusion of mindfulness training in the pre-service and in-service professional development courses for educators. Educators equipped with mindfulness tools can better engage students, cultivate emotional intelligence, and enhance participatory learning about sustainability. Training programs should include workshops focused on mindfulness techniques, the psychological benefits of these practices, and methods for integrating mindfulness with sustainability topics across various subjects.

Additionally, increased funding for mindfulness initiatives in schools should be prioritized. Educational policies should encourage the allocation of resources specifically for implementing mindfulness programs within the curriculum. Funding could support the hiring of trained mindfulness practitioners, the development and dissemination of curriculum materials, and the establishment of school-wide mindfulness programs. Moreover, partnerships with community organizations or academic institutions specializing in mindfulness could enhance the resources available to schools, foster community engagement, and provide access to external expertise.

A further recommendation is the establishment of assessment frameworks that evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in contributing to sustainable development education. Policymakers should develop metrics

to measure not only academic performance but also emotional, social, and environmental awareness among students. Schools should be encouraged to undertake reflective planning and assessment methods that account for the well-rounded development of students as responsible global citizens. Through these recommendations, policymakers have the potential to create a supportive framework that encourages the integration of mindfulness practices in education, ultimately enhancing students' awareness and commitment to sustainability. The intersection of mindfulness practices and sustainable development in educational settings presents numerous avenues for future research that could deepen understanding and enhance implementation strategies. One promising area is the empirical investigation of specific mindfulness practices and their differential impacts on students' environmental awareness and social responsibility. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to assess how consistent engagement with mindfulness practices influences not only immediate outcomes such as increased self-awareness and emotional regulation but also long-term behaviors aligned with sustainability, such as recycling, energy conservation, and community involvement.

Additionally, qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of students and educators who engage in mindfulness integrated with sustainability curricula could illuminate the nuanced dimensions of this intersection. Investigating the perspectives of diverse stakeholders including teachers, students, parents, and community members can yield insights into the subjective understanding and value attributed to mindfulness as it relates to broader environmental and social issues. Understanding these dynamics may assist in tailoring mindfulness programs to better meet community needs and enhance participatory approaches to sustainability.

Another potential area of exploration lies in the pedagogical strategies that effectively integrate mindfulness with sustainability education. As educators strive to foster environments conducive to both mindful awareness and sustainable attitudes, research on varied instructional approaches such as project-based learning, experiential learning, and community-engaged learning can provide valuable insights. Studies exploring how different teaching methods, curricula, and school cultures influence students' engagement with mindfulness and sustainability could inform the design of more effective educational interventions. Additionally, the intersection of mindfulness, sustainability, and social justice warrants critical inquiry. Future research could investigate how mindfulness practices can be leveraged to foster discussions about social equity and environmental justice within educational settings. This line of inquiry would be particularly pertinent in identifying strategies that empower marginalized voices ultimately examining how mindfulness can create space for dialogue and collective action towards addressing systemic inequalities alongside environmental challenges.

Explorations into the role of technology in enhancing mindfulness within education and its connection to sustainability also present a relevant research avenue. As digital tools increasingly mediate learning experiences,

understanding how applications and platforms that promote mindfulness can be integrated into sustainability education could yield innovative practices that resonate with digital-native students. Research focusing on the effectiveness of virtual mindfulness interventions, such as guided meditations or mindfulness apps used in conjunction with sustainability lessons, can offer insights into their impact on student engagement and commitment to sustainable practices.

Lastly, cross-disciplinary research that involves collaboration between education, psychology, environmental science, and sociology could yield comprehensive frameworks for integrating mindfulness into sustainable development curricula. By bridging these disciplines, researchers and educators can co-create theories and practices that address the multifaceted nature of environmental and social challenges, ultimately contributing to the development of holistic educational approaches that are deeply rooted in mindfulness and sustainable development principles. The integration of mindfulness practices within educational settings emerges as a pivotal strategy to enhance awareness and commitment to sustainable development. This exploration has underscored a multifaceted relationship between mindfulness, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility, illustrating how a holistic approach can address current challenges faced by individuals and communities alike.

Mindfulness cultivates an enhanced awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and actions, fostering a deeper connection to oneself and the environment. This awareness is particularly significant in the context of sustainability, wherein understanding the intricate interdependencies between social and ecological systems becomes essential. By engaging in mindfulness practices, students develop a heightened sense of empathy and responsibility toward both their personal well-being and the collective health of the planet. This shift in consciousness encourages students to consider the long-term implications of their actions and decisions in promoting sustainable practices.

Moreover, the findings indicate that mindfulness contributes to emotional regulation and resilience, which are formidable attributes in the context of environmental and social challenges. As students learn to manage stress and cultivate compassion through mindfulness, they are better equipped to navigate complex global issues, such as climate change and social inequality. This emotional fortitude enables them to approach such challenges with a constructive mindset, fostering innovative solutions that reflect a commitment to sustainability.

The practice of mindfulness also enhances collaboration and communication skills among students. "The educational leader and teacher's roles have been considered strong determinants for increasing student achievement."²⁵ By training individuals to listen with intention and respond with awareness, educational environments become spaces of inclusivity where diverse perspectives can be shared and valued. This collaborative spirit is instrumental in engaging students in sustainability initiatives and fostering a

²⁵ Nancy Akhavan et al. (2021): 1.

collective commitment to addressing environmental and social issues.

In addition, incorporating mindfulness practices into curricula supports experiential learning, allowing students to engage directly with their surroundings and understand the implications of their choices in real time. Experiential learning nurtures a sense of agency, prompting students to become active participants in sustainability efforts both within their educational institutions and beyond. This active engagement not only reinforces the principles of sustainable development but also engenders a lifelong commitment to ethical practices and social responsibility.

The integration of mindfulness in education also aligns with contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize the development of the whole person. As educational systems increasingly recognize the necessity of nurturing emotional intelligence alongside cognitive competencies, mindfulness practices offer a pathway to realize this vision. By equipping students with the tools to foster self-awareness and empathy, educational institutions can cultivate informed citizens who are not only knowledgeable about sustainability but are also deeply committed to enacting positive change in their communities.

Ultimately, the synthesis of mindfulness practices within educational frameworks presents a transformative opportunity to enhance awareness and commitment to sustainable development. By fostering a holistic approach that intertwines personal well-being with ecological and social considerations, educational institutions can play a vital role in preparing future generations to confront and resolve the pressing challenges that threaten the sustainability of our planet. The promotion of mindfulness in education is thus not merely beneficial, but essential to fostering a culture of sustainability rooted in awareness, compassion, and collective action. The necessity for a proactive approach in educational reform to include mindfulness practices is paramount in the contemporary discourse surrounding sustainable development. Educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders each play a pivotal role in fostering an environment conducive to holistic learning that integrates mindfulness with sustainability education. This collaborative endeavor can significantly enhance students' awareness and responsiveness to pressing environmental and social challenges.

To begin with, educators must be equipped not only with the knowledge of sustainability issues but also with the tools to cultivate mindfulness within their classrooms. Training and professional development programs that emphasize mindfulness techniques can empower teachers to create a learning environment that promotes both awareness and empathy. These techniques might include practices such as guided meditation, reflective journaling, and group discussions focused on emotional regulation and ethical decision-making. Furthermore, research has shown that mindfulness can significantly improve attention, emotional regulation, and behavioral outcomes, which are essential attributes for engaging with complex social and ecological issues. Therefore, it is imperative that all stakeholders actively advocate for the transition of mindfulness practices from a niche approach to a mainstream component of

educational frameworks. This call to action is not simply an appeal to enhance educational outcomes but an urgent need to cultivate a generation capable of leading initiatives that address psychological, environmental, and social crises through a mindful lens.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research indicates that when students engage in mindfulness practices, they are more likely to exhibit pro-environmental behaviors, such as conserving resources, participating in community service, and advocating for policies promoting environmental justice. Integrating mindfulness practices into educational settings presents a unique and vital opportunity to enhance students' awareness and commitment to sustainable development. As such, educators, policymakers, and community members must collaborate, advocate, and implement these practices. The transformative potential of mindfulness cannot be overstated; it is a key ingredient in equipping young learners to navigate and engage with the multifaceted challenges of their world in a compassionate and informed manner.

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THE ROLE OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS IN TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

The paper, “The Role of Buddhist Teachings in Transforming Education for a Sustainable Future”, explores how Buddhist principles can revolutionize education to tackle global sustainability challenges. In a world struggling with climate change, social inequalities, and resource depletion, traditional education systems often lack the ethical and moral dimensions that are essential for fostering sustainable practices. Buddhist teachings, with their emphasis on mindfulness, compassion, interconnectedness, and the Middle Path, provide a transformative framework to instill values that promote environmental preservation, social harmony, and ethical living.

The paper highlights practical applications of Buddhist philosophy, such as integrating mindfulness into classrooms, encouraging experiential learning through community service projects, and promoting sustainable consumption habits. It underscores the role of education in cultivating critical thinking, emotional resilience, and a global sense of responsibility among learners. Despite its potential, the integration of Buddhist principles in education faces challenges such as curriculum constraints and a lack of awareness. The paper proposes strategies like teacher training, community engagement, and evidence-based research to address these barriers. By embedding Buddhist values into educational systems, the paper argues that we can nurture empathetic, responsible, and mindful global citizens capable of addressing pressing environmental, social, and economic issues. This holistic approach transforms education into a powerful tool for building a sustainable and equitable future.

Keywords: *Buddhism, education, sustainable, environment, teachings.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, humanity faces serious challenges that demand immediate action. Climate change threatens our planet through rising temperatures, unpredictable weather patterns, and an increasing frequency of natural disasters. Social divisions are exacerbated by economic inequality, widening the gap between the rich and the poor and intensifying existing social struggles. The expansion of industrial and human activities has led to severe environmental degradation due to harmful actions such as pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Given the increasing severity of these challenges, working towards an environmentally sustainable future is no longer a choice; it is an urgent necessity. A sustainable future is one where human societies live in harmony with nature, ensuring that resources are used wisely and responsibly so future generations can thrive.

The twenty-first century brings forth complex environmental, social, and economic challenges that require innovative solutions, particularly in education. Modern education systems often focus primarily on economic growth and individual success while overlooking the collective well-being of humanity and the planet. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for quality education underscores the need for inclusive, equitable learning that fosters lifelong opportunities. However, current education systems prioritize academic performance and technical skills, often neglecting the moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions essential for fostering sustainable development. This oversight leaves students ill-prepared to tackle pressing challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and resource depletion. Addressing these gaps requires a transformative educational approach that fosters both intellectual growth and values essential for sustainable living and holistic well-being.

Education plays a crucial role in achieving a sustainable future. Schools, universities, and learning institutions worldwide have the power to shape the minds and values of young people. Beyond simply teaching facts and skills, education can help cultivate a deep sense of responsibility, ethical behavior, and a commitment to positive change. However, for education to effectively address the global sustainability crisis, it must embrace new approaches that foster holistic thinking, emotional intelligence, and a sense of interconnectedness with the environment.¹ This paper argues that Buddhist wisdom offers valuable tools for transforming education to foster sustainability. It explores how integrating Buddhist principles into education can inspire values and actions essential for a sustainable future. Rooted in the Middle Way, interdependence, and mindfulness, Buddhist teachings offer a rich philosophical foundation for reshaping education to prioritize sustainability.

Buddhist teachings, rooted in ancient wisdom and over 2,500 years of guiding human behavior, offer profound insights for enhancing modern education.

¹ UNEP. (2012). *The Global Environmental Outlook 5: Environment for the Future We Want*, p. 33 – 179.

At its core, mindfulness (awareness of actions and their consequences), compassion (toward oneself and others), and interconnectedness (the Buddhist view of the interdependence of all living beings) are fundamental values that align with the challenges of achieving sustainability in our time. Integrating these Buddhist perspectives into educational systems can help educators motivate students toward sustainable lifestyles, empathy, and a sense of global citizenship. This approach encourages learners to reflect on how their choices impact both society and the environment, fostering long-term thinking over short-term rewards. Buddhism-inspired education fosters critical thinking grounded in ethical values, empowering students to actively contribute to a fairer and more sustainable world. This paper explores how incorporating Buddhist values into education can create a transformative framework for sustainability. It emphasizes that education should be about acquiring knowledge and developing character, empathy, and a sense of guardianship for the planet. Contemporary education has the potential to evolve into a powerful tool for addressing the world's most pressing challenges. The global environmental crisis has prompted religiously committed, socially conscious individuals to seek insights from their traditions to address both its root causes and symptoms - Buddhists are no exception. The Buddhist worldview of interdependence, its emphasis on compassion and nonviolence, and the example set by the Buddha and the early *Saṅgha* offer meaningful contributions to the dialogue on sustainable living.² Buddhism perceives nature and humanity as interconnected rather than separate, fostering a sense of responsibility for environmental stewardship. In Buddhism, education is not merely about acquiring knowledge but also about personal development. The term *sikkhā* encompasses not just intellectual growth but also the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, and moral integrity. Buddhist education emphasizes holistic development, integrating knowledge with ethical conduct to shape a way of life. This model promotes habit formation, deep understanding, and self-reflection, ensuring that learning translates into meaningful action. Ultimately, the integration of learning and virtuous action cultivates well-being and a balanced, fulfilling life.

Buddhist philosophy helps us understand the interconnectedness of all life forms and the environment. Two main ideas are essential for understanding this relationship: karmic causality and dependent origination. Karmic causality suggests that every action has consequences, encouraging individuals to carefully consider how their choices impact others.³ Dependent origination asserts that all phenomena are interdependent, illustrating the relationship between humans, nature, and other living beings. This concept calls for awareness of how our actions affect ourselves, the planet, and all forms of

² Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Rytken Williams (1997), *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 21.

³ Dorji Phuntsho, (2023). *Cause and Effect: A Study on the Concept of Karma in the Buddhist Tradition*. Bhutan Journal of Research and Development. Vol.12. No.1, p. 32 - 37.

life. The Buddhist principle of dependent origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*) teaches that all things arise in dependence on multiple causes and conditions. The world operates as a dynamic system of interconnections, where actions and events influence one another. This mirrors ecological systems, in which each component plays a role in maintaining the balance of the whole. For instance, deforestation disrupts local ecosystems and exacerbates global climate challenges. As such, this principle serves as a foundational concept in education, as it addresses the complex interdependencies between social, economic, and ecological systems. Incorporating interconnectedness into curricula can help students recognize how human behavior impacts the environment, economies, and societies. For example, deforestation in one region can contribute to climate change, ultimately reducing agricultural productivity and affecting livelihoods worldwide. When students learn about these connections, they develop critical thinking skills and begin to assess the broader impact of their behavior. This awareness further fosters empathy and a sense of global citizenship, encouraging students to act in ways that promote social equity, ecological balance, and sustainability. Educating students about interdependence can deepen their understanding of how their daily choices - such as energy consumption, waste management, and dietary habits - affect the environment.

Mindfulness is a fundamental aspect of Buddhist practice, emphasizing full presence and awareness of one's thoughts, actions, and surroundings. This awareness enables individuals to better understand their emotions, behaviors, and their broader impacts. By fostering intentional living, mental clarity, and thoughtful decision-making, mindfulness helps reduce impulsive behavior.⁴ The historical Buddha can be seen, among other things, as an early scientist and physician who, despite lacking scientific instruments, used his mind, body, and personal experience to deeply examine human suffering and the human condition. His rigorous contemplative investigation led to profound insights and the formulation of a "medicine" to address fundamental suffering, often characterized by the three "poisons": greed, hatred (aversion), and ignorance (delusion)⁵. Within the Buddhist Eightfold Path, mindfulness is closely tied to ethical action, which provides guiding principles for responsible living. Right Speech promotes truthfulness, kindness, and constructive communication to prevent harm through words. Right Action advocates behaviors that uphold compassion and fairness while avoiding harm to others and the environment. Right Livelihood encourages ethical professions that contribute positively to society while discouraging work that exploits or harms people, animals, or the planet. Together, mindfulness and ethical action form a foundation for personal well-being, social harmony, and environmental sustainability. Mindfulness-

⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh (1992). *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*, Bantam Books, p. 34 – 36.

⁵ Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future*. Clinical Psychology: Science And Practice. vol.10. no.2, Summer 2003, p. 145.

based methodologies, which encourage present-moment awareness and intentionality, have shown significant benefits in education. Research indicates that these practices enhance students' ability to focus, regulate emotions, and develop empathy. Techniques such as meditation, mindful breathing, and self-reflection play a crucial role in this process, fostering an educational environment that prioritizes conscious decision-making, self-awareness, and interpersonal sensitivity. By integrating mindfulness into the classroom, students develop improved concentration, stress management, and emotional resilience. They also gain a deeper understanding of how their consumption habits impact the environment and how their actions affect others. Mindfulness encourages self-reflection and wise decision-making, both of which are essential for sustainability.⁶ By teaching students to pause, observe, and act with intention, education systems can cultivate a generation of mindful individuals who prioritize sustainability and ethical responsibility.

Compassion, or *karuṇā* in Buddhism, is a fundamental value that emphasizes empathy and kindness toward all living beings. It calls for understanding the suffering of others and taking active steps to alleviate it. True compassion extends beyond mere sympathy; it requires proactive engagement to foster harmony, well-being, and fairness in relationships and communities. The Buddhist principles of *karuṇā* (compassion) and *mettā* (loving-kindness) offer a meaningful alternative to the competitive and often harsh model that dominates many modern education systems. As Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) notes, we all possess the seeds of love and compassion, which can be cultivated as powerful sources of positive energy. By nurturing unconditional love that expects nothing in return, individuals can free themselves from the anxiety and sorrow that often accompany attachment and expectation.⁷ In traditional educational settings, students frequently operate in a competitive environment where success is narrowly defined as a triumph over others' failures. This mindset fosters stress, anxiety, and an excessive fixation on external achievement, ultimately hindering personal growth and healthy social relationships.

II. DISCUSSION

In contemporary education, students are encouraged to cultivate empathy, fostering inclusive interactions where respect, cooperation, and understanding naturally thrive. Such students demonstrate kindness and attentiveness to the needs and emotions of others, enhancing their social and emotional skills while strengthening interpersonal relationships. Integrating values of care and compassion into education instills a sense of social responsibility within school culture. A student who embraces these values will respect diversity, advocate for the rights of marginalized individuals, and contribute to building equitable communities. Ethical and compassionate living requires students to

⁶ Ibid. p. 147 - 150.

⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh (1992). *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*, Op. Cit., p. 81.

critically evaluate their impact on their surroundings and the broader world. For example, lessons on environmental stewardship, fair trade, and ethical decision-making empower individuals to make thoughtful choices that benefit society and future generations. This approach also nurtures compassion-driven critical thinking on social justice and ethical issues, helping students balance personal interests with the collective well-being of their communities. As they engage with real-world challenges such as climate change, income inequality, and animal rights, learners develop a sense of moral accountability. They begin to see themselves as active contributors to a more sustainable and just world, empowered to drive positive change within their communities. The Buddhist approach to compassion and ethical living encourages education systems to transcend the mere transmission of knowledge. It aims to cultivate individuals who are not only skilled and knowledgeable but also empathetic, socially responsible, and dedicated to fostering a just and sustainable world. This holistic educational philosophy integrates cognitive understanding, emotional intelligence, and practical action - merging "head, heart, and hand" - to shape well-rounded global citizens.

Buddhist non-violence (*Ahiṃsā*) is deeply rooted in the principles of environmental conservation and sustainable development. The Buddhist concept of non-violence extends beyond the mere avoidance of physical harm; it is grounded in the understanding that all forms of life are interconnected. This perspective recognizes that every living being, regardless of size or significance, plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of life.⁸ The ecosystem exemplifies this principle - when one part is damaged, a chain reaction ensues, affecting the entire system. Central to this understanding is the concept of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which teaches that nothing exists in isolation. Every entity, from the smallest insect to the tallest tree, contributes to the functioning and equilibrium of the whole. This perspective manifests in the way Buddhist practitioners engage with nature. When a Buddhist refrains from harming even the tiniest creature, it is not merely an adherence to a rule but an acknowledgment of the intricate web of life in which all beings are interconnected. This ethical stance extends to broader environmental concerns, such as protecting forests, rivers, and entire ecosystems. Just as one would avoid harming their own body, which consists of countless interdependent cells, Buddhist ethics advocate for the protection of the Earth's ecosystems, recognizing them as an extension of life itself. This commitment to life and interdependence serves as a guiding framework for sustainable practices that benefit both the planet and its inhabitants. Such integrated thinking aligns with modern sustainable development goals. Practicing non-violence in environmental terms means preserving biodiversity by protecting habitats, maintaining ecological balance to prevent natural disasters, ensuring genetic diversity to secure future food resources, and sustaining ecosystems

⁸ Karam Tej Sarao. (2017). *Ahiṃsā (Buddhism)*. *Buddhism and Jainism: Encyclopedia of Indian Religions*. Springer, Dordrecht, p. 19 - 26.

to regulate the planet's climate. In response to contemporary environmental challenges, this principle translates into actionable solutions, such as investing in renewable energy sources that do not destroy habitats, designing wildlife corridors in urban areas to allow safe animal migration, adopting sustainable farming techniques that preserve soil health and biodiversity, and reducing waste to minimize harm to marine life. This perspective goes beyond mere resource management; it fosters a deep sense of reverence and responsibility toward all living systems, leading to more sustainable and ethical choices. When individuals genuinely comprehend their interdependence with nature, they are more inclined to adopt environmentally conscious behaviors - purchasing eco-friendly products, supporting conservation initiatives, participating in habitat restoration projects, and advocating for policies that protect endangered species. This is how Buddhism's principles of non-violence and interconnectedness provide a robust ethical foundation for a sustainable future, fostering respect for all forms of life. Furthermore, Buddhist meditation cultivates four boundless and unconditional positive mental states, known as the *brahma-vihāras*: Loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Together, these qualities promote the well-being of all beings without discrimination, diminish envy and attachment, eliminate aversion and possessiveness, and encourage an impartial, responsible perspective on one's actions. The *brahma-vihāras* offer psychological benefits, enhancing personal well-being, and at a deeper level, they dissolve the illusion of a fixed, independent self. This transformative insight reinforces the Buddhist approach to ethics, sustainability, and interconnected living.⁹

The Middle Path originates from Buddhist teaching, emphasizing balance and moderation in all aspects of life. It rejects two extremes: indulgence, characterized by excessive pleasure-seeking, and asceticism, defined by rigorous self-denial. The Buddha himself experienced both extremes before realizing their futility and discovering, through personal insight, the Middle Path - "which gives vision and knowledge, which leads to Calm, Insight, Enlightenment, Nirvana."¹⁰ The Middle Path, therefore, represents a dynamic and mindful approach to living, advocating for equilibrium rather than excess or deprivation. This perspective aligns closely with the principles of sustainable living, which involves fulfilling present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Sustainable living in relation to the environment requires balancing human desires, such as material comfort and consumption, with ecological constraints. It addresses critical issues like resource depletion, environmental degradation, and climate change, emphasizing mindful consumption and responsible stewardship of natural resources.

⁹ Colin Ash (2008). *Happiness and Economics: A Buddhist Perspective*, Henley Business School, University of Reading, United Kingdom, p. 110 – 112.

¹⁰ Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, revised edition (New York: Grove Press, 1974), p. 45.

In education, teaching the Middle Path can guide students in developing sustainable consumption habits. Sustainable consumption involves using resources in ways that meet immediate needs while preserving the planet's long-term health. Lessons can address topics such as resource conservation, teaching students how to use water, energy, and raw materials efficiently to avoid depletion and minimize waste. Ethical consumerism emphasizes selecting environmentally and socially responsible products, buying locally, supporting ethical companies, and opting for sustainable goods. Students can also learn to reduce waste through recycling, reusing, and prioritizing necessities over excess consumption. Minimalism in student life promotes simplicity, contentment with experiences, and an appreciation for quality and durability over mere quantity. Implementing the Middle Path in education fosters dynamic learning experiences. Practical applications may include organizing awareness programs or workshops on energy conservation and waste reduction. Hands-on projects such as recycling drives, community gardening, or designing energy-efficient products provide students with tangible ways to practice sustainability. By integrating these principles into education, students gain a deeper understanding of mindful consumption and responsible stewardship, reinforcing a balanced and ethical approach to life.

The Buddhist teaching of *anattā* or non-attachment encourages individuals to let go of rigid identification with possessions, status, and self-centered desires, promoting the understanding that material things and even our notions of identity are transient and not inherently tied to true well-being. This aligns with sustainability principles, which balance human needs with the planet's health. Modern society's fixation on excessive consumption and materialism drives environmental degradation. By embracing non-attachment, individuals cultivate mindful consumption, valuing simplicity and prioritizing long-term ecological well-being over short-term gratification. This mindset reduces the urge for endless accumulation and fosters a culture of reuse, recycling, and resource conservation. Teaching non-attachment in sustainability education develops critical awareness of consumerism, encouraging students to seek innovative, fair solutions that benefit both the environment and social justice. Freedom from material dependency empowers students to embrace compassion, mindfulness, and collective responsibility for the planet. Integrating non-attachment into sustainability efforts shifts the focus from mere conscious consumption to true coexistence with nature, making this mindset essential for a more sustainable future.

Now, the question that comes to mind is, how can we bring these valuable teachings into our school system and what difficulties might we encounter in the process? Curriculum development can be greatly enriched by integrating values inspired by Buddhist teachings and practices, encouraging a holistic education that emphasizes sustainability, ethics, and compassion. The practice is based on the three Buddhist principles of learning: *sīla-sikkhā* (moral conduct), *samādhi-sikkhā* (mind training), and *paññā-sikkhā* (wisdom development). In this holistic approach, the principles are practiced

simultaneously and can be applied to many dimensions, including personal, family, school, and communal levels, to cultivate responsive sustainable living practices for the learners.¹¹ These principles can be adapted to the wide radius of the learning environment to enhance not merely the acquisition of knowledge but also a strong sense of moral compass and responsibility towards the wider community and environment. This sort of values-based learning can be adapted to other subjects in order to create holistic, meaningful engagement. Ethics education can draw directly from the Eightfold Path as a practical framework for ethical living. Students can engage in case studies to analyze ethical dilemmas, applying principles of right action, right speech, and right livelihood to develop balanced, thoughtful solutions.

Classroom discussions can cover topics like ethical consumerism, integrity in leadership, and the power of truth and kindness in communication. In social studies, the Buddhist focus on compassion and responsibility can enhance understanding of global issues. Lessons on poverty, access to education, and healthcare can be paired with discussions about the moral responsibility to alleviate suffering. Learning about environmental justice and climate change in relation to marginalized communities develops empathy and a sense of collective responsibility. Projects might include awareness campaigns around specific environmental issues or research on sustainable practices and customs from different cultures. The teaching of Buddhist principles in school is not merely a theoretical notion but a practical guideline for addressing pressing global issues. It is in this light - both immediate experience and long-term prospects - that the study of Buddhist economics becomes relevant, even for those who prioritize economic growth over spiritual or religious values. The question is not about choosing between “modern growth” and “traditional stagnation” but about finding the right path of development - the Middle Way between materialist heedlessness and traditionalist immobility. In essence, it is about achieving “Right Livelihood.”¹² Together, these principles enable students to engage thoughtfully, responsibly, and proactively in their communities. By embedding these values into educational systems, we can cultivate a more harmonious and sustainable world where wisdom, compassion, and care guide the actions of present and future generations.

Experiential learning in Buddhism aligns deeply with the Buddha’s core teaching of “*ehipassiko*”, meaning “come and see for yourself.” This principle emphasizes that discovering the truth should not be based on blind faith but on direct personal experience. The Buddha instructed his disciples to investigate reality for themselves, a practice that remains central to Buddhist education today. Meditation and mindfulness practices form the foundation of this experiential learning. When students engage in meditation, they do not

¹¹ S. Chansomsak, & B. Vale, (2008). *The Buddhist approach to education: an alternative approach for sustainable education*. Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 28 (1), p. 35 – 50.

¹² E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. London: Blond & Briggs, 1973. p. 56 - 66.

merely study mindfulness as a theory; they experience it firsthand. For example, practicing breathing meditation (*Ānāpānasati*) allows students to observe their mental processes - how thoughts arise and dissipate, how concentration develops, and how awareness calms the mind. This direct experience transforms stress management from a mere concept into a lived reality, offering deep, personal, and practical insight into the workings of the mind and emotions.

The Community Service Projects provide another substantive channel for experiential learning and, in this sense, embody the Buddhist notion of *kamma* (action) and its consequences. Activities like tree planting give students an immediate experience of the principle of interdependence. When they plant a tree, they witness how one action contributes to life in the ecosystem - providing shade, creating habitats for birds, and purifying the air. This hands-on engagement transforms the abstract idea of interconnectedness into a tangible reality they can see, touch, and feel. Immersing students in nature allows them to practice *Dhammānupassanā*, observing natural laws in action. A visit to a forest, for instance, offers an opportunity to witness growth and decay, interdependence among species, and the delicate balance of ecosystems. Regardless of its form, direct observation teaches lessons about impermanence and interconnectedness, not through intellectual theories but through lived, sensory experiences.

Experiential learning serves as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and lived wisdom. Rather than merely reading about waste management, students can engage in projects that involve tracking their daily waste production. By collecting, sorting, and analyzing their waste, they gain firsthand awareness of their environmental impact and explore practical strategies to reduce it. Such activities encourage self-reflection on consumption habits, fostering a sense of accountability for sustainable living. This hands-on approach transcends theoretical learning, offering students a direct, personal experience of their role in environmental sustainability. It nurtures what Buddhism calls *paññā* (experiential wisdom), an integration of knowledge, emotional connection, and practical skills. Through experiential learning, students do more than understand concepts - they develop the insight and motivation necessary to become genuine advocates for sustainable and ethical change.

When we prioritize collaborative projects over individual achievements, we cultivate *Saṅgha* - the Buddhist principle of a supportive community based on mutual learning. For instance, rather than working on assignments alone, students can collaborate in small groups, each contributing their unique strengths. A student skilled in mathematics might assist peers in solving complex problems, while another with strong writing abilities helps articulate the group's findings. This approach reinforces the idea that success is not an isolated endeavor but an interconnected achievement. Peer mentorship programs exemplify *dāna* (the practice of giving) in action. When experienced students guide newer ones, both parties benefit beyond academics. The mentor hones patience, communication, and a deeper grasp of the subject through teaching, while the mentee gains academic support and learns that seeking help

is a strength, not a weakness. Celebrating collective success aligns with *muditā* (sympathetic joy). Instead of fostering competition and envy, students learn to take genuine pleasure in each other's accomplishments. For example, when a class completes a challenging group project, the focus shifts from individual contributions to the shared effort that made the achievement possible. This fosters a classroom culture where cooperation and mutual encouragement replace rivalry and isolation.

One of the biggest challenges in integrating Buddhism into education is that many educators have limited knowledge of Buddhist concepts, making it difficult to teach them effectively. To address this, professional development programs, workshops, and resources can be introduced to deepen educators' understanding. These training sessions - whether in the form of workshops, courses, or collaborative discussions with Buddhist scholars and practitioners - can equip teachers with the necessary skills and confidence to present Buddhist principles accurately and meaningfully. Additionally, developing curriculum guidelines, lesson plans, and multimedia resources can provide practical support for incorporating Buddhist teachings into education. Collaborating with Buddhist scholars or practitioners ensures that these ideas are conveyed in a way that is both accessible and relevant, enriching students' learning experiences while maintaining authenticity.

Another major challenge is the time constraints of existing curricula. With school programs already packed with compulsory subjects, there is often little room for adding new content like Buddhist studies. However, this challenge can be addressed by integrating Buddhist concepts into existing subjects such as philosophy, history, ethics, or world religions. Instead of creating a standalone subject, mindfulness, compassion, ethical decision-making, and other Buddhist values can be woven into these courses, making their inclusion seamless. This approach ensures a broad integration without overburdening the curriculum, allowing students to engage with these teachings in a natural and meaningful way.

To gain broader support for integrating Buddhist teachings, it is crucial to provide evidence-based demonstrations of their benefits. Research on mindfulness, meditation, improved focus, emotional regulation, and overall well-being can help persuade educators, policymakers, and parents of their value in education. Additionally, showcasing success stories from schools that have implemented Buddhist principles - such as improved mental health, reduced stress, and enhanced academic performance - can build momentum for adoption. Community engagement and advocacy also play a vital role in embedding Buddhist precepts in classrooms. Collaborations with families, Buddhist community centers, and religious organizations can provide valuable resources and support. Involving parents through workshops, discussions, and forums helps bridge cultural or ideological divides, fostering a stronger sense of community backing. When the broader community is engaged, the integration of Buddhist teachings becomes more natural and aligned with shared values. By combining teacher training, gradual integration, evidence-based research,

and community support, we can establish meaningful ways to incorporate Buddhist principles into education. This holistic approach not only empowers students but also nurtures a deep understanding of interconnectedness, encouraging responsible environmental stewardship and collective action for global sustainability.

III. CONCLUSION

The study explores how Buddhist teachings can transform education, fostering a more sustainable future. Core principles like mindfulness, compassion, and interdependence catalyze environmental awareness, social harmony, and ethical living. The discussion emphasizes the practical integration of Buddhist philosophy in classrooms through experiential learning, which deepens intellectual engagement and encourages sustainable consumption. By embedding Buddhist ethics in education, students develop a greater sense of responsibility toward the planet and their communities. Despite its benefits, integrating Buddhist teachings faces challenges such as curriculum constraints and limited awareness of their relevance in modern education. Addressing these obstacles requires interdisciplinary collaboration, policy advocacy, and teacher training programs incorporating Buddhist perspectives on sustainability and ethics. By implementing these strategies, schools can create a holistic learning environment that nurtures empathy, responsibility, and global consciousness. Ultimately, Buddhist education goes beyond knowledge acquisition - it shapes individuals into compassionate, ethical leaders dedicated to sustainability and social well-being. Grounded in wisdom and mindfulness, these future generations will be better equipped to address pressing environmental, social, and economic challenges.

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SEEDS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: CULTIVATING COMPASSIONATE EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

This paper examines the application of mindfulness in education, rooted in Buddhist teachings, as a means to foster unity, inclusion, and human dignity. Drawing on the works of Bhikkhu Bodhi, David Loy, Gil Fronsdal, Ajahn Sumedho, and Thich Nhat Hanh, the study explores how mindfulness can contribute to global peace and sustainable development, particularly within educational settings. Mindfulness is presented not only as a tool for stress management among educators but also as a method for nurturing socio-emotional skills in students, ultimately aiming to cultivate a more compassionate and sustainable future. The paper highlights the transformative potential of mindfulness in addressing contemporary educational challenges, such as teacher burnout, student stress, and the need for emotional resilience. By integrating mindfulness practices into the curriculum, schools can become spaces where values like empathy, cooperation, and ethical responsibility are cultivated, preparing students to face the complexities of the 21st century with wisdom and compassion.

Keywords: *Mindfulness; education; Buddhism; sustainable development; human dignity.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education faces complex and multifaceted challenges, ranging from educators' occupational stress to the need to develop students' socio-emotional skills. In an increasingly fast-paced and fragmented world, the school is not just a space for transmitting knowledge but also an environment where values, attitudes, and behaviors that shape the future of society are formed. In this context, the practice of mindfulness emerges as a powerful tool to promote a more compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable educational environment.

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Inspired by Buddhist teachings, mindfulness offers an approach that goes beyond mere stress management. It proposes a profound transformation in how educators and students relate to themselves, to others, and the world around them. Bhikkhu Bodhi, in *The Noble Eightfold Path*, highlights that mindfulness is one of the pillars of the Buddhist path to liberation from suffering, being essential for the development of a clear and compassionate mind.¹ David Loy, in *Ecodharma*, expands this view, connecting the practice of mindfulness to the ecological crisis and the need for an integrative vision that promotes sustainability.²

Furthermore, in a scenario marked by social polarization and environmental crises, education needs to transcend traditional models and embrace practices that strengthen interdependence and collective responsibility. This paper explores how mindfulness, combined with Buddhist principles of unity and inclusion, can contribute to human dignity, world peace, and sustainable development. Focusing on the subtheme “Seeds of Awareness: Cultivating Compassionate Education for a Sustainable Future,” we aim to demonstrate that mindfulness practice is not just an individual well-being tool but also a catalyst for social and environmental transformation.

II. DEVELOPMENT

2.1. The reality of contemporary education: global challenges

The 2018 National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC) establishes that schools in Brazil should form citizens capable of facing the challenges of the 21st century, developing skills such as empathy, cooperation, autonomy, and resilience. However, the reality of classrooms is often far from this ideal. Educators face excessive workloads, overcrowded classrooms, lack of institutional support, and, in many cases, verbal and physical violence from students. These factors create a hostile environment that hinders the development of truly transformative education.

This reality is not exclusive to Brazil. Globally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has emphasized the need for education that promotes the holistic development of individuals, preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century.³ Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), part of the UN 2030 Agenda, aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Among its targets is the development of socio-emotional skills such as empathy, resilience, and cooperation, which are essential for forming global citizens.

However, as in Brazil, many countries face significant challenges in achieving these goals. UNESCO and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

¹ Bodhi, (1994): 76 - 100.

² Loy, (2018): 66 - 99.

³ UNESCO accessed on March 4, 2025, available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444>.

Development (OECD)⁴ reports highlight that teachers in various parts of the world deal with precarious working conditions, including low salaries, lack of pedagogical resources, and violent school environments. A 2022 UNESCO study revealed that 75% of teachers in low- and middle-income countries report a lack of institutional support, while 60% face discipline and violence issues in the classroom.

2.2. Educators' stress: A global phenomenon

Occupational stress among educators is a global phenomenon with significant impacts on the physical and mental health of these professionals. Recent data show that teachers in various countries face challenging working conditions that contribute to high levels of stress and burnout. According to a 2020 OECD report, about 50% of teachers in OECD member countries report feeling stressed at work, with particularly high levels in countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States.

In Brazil, the situation is no different. A study was conducted by the São Paulo State Teachers' Union (APEOESP).⁵ In 2022 it was revealed that 70% of public school teachers in São Paulo state suffer from high stress levels. Key factors include work overload, with 60% of teachers working more than 40 hours a week, and lack of institutional support, mentioned by 55% of respondents. Additionally, 40% of teachers reported experiencing verbal or physical violence from students or parents, further aggravating occupational stress.

Globally, a 2022 International Labor Organization (ILO) study highlighted that 65% of teachers worldwide face high emotional demands in their work, including dealing with student indiscipline, lack of institutional support, and pressure for academic results⁶. Additionally, 40% of educators reported suffering verbal or physical violence from students or parents, significantly contributing to occupational stress.

Burnout Syndrome, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, is particularly prevalent among educators. A 2021 World Health Organization (WHO) global study revealed that 30% of teachers worldwide exhibit symptoms of Burnout, with higher rates in regions with more precarious working conditions, such as Latin America and parts of Africa.⁷ In Brazil, a study by the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) in 2021 showed that 35% of primary education teachers exhibit signs of Burnout, especially those working in areas of greater

⁴ OECD. (2018). accessed on March 4, 2025, available at: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/talis-2018-results-volume-i_1d0bc92a-en.html.

⁵ APEOESP (2022): accessed on March 4, 2025, available at: <http://www.apoeesp.org.br/noticias/noticias/pesquisa-aponta-que-depressao-e-maior-caoa-de-afastamento-de-professores/>.

⁶ ILO (2022): accessed on March 4, 2025, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/global-report-teachers-what-you-need-know>.

⁷ WHO (2021): accessed on March 4, 2025, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/global-report-teachers-what-you-need-know>.

social vulnerability.⁸

In the European context, a 2023 European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) survey revealed that 70% of teachers in the European Union work more than 40 hours a week, often without adequate compensation.⁹ Additionally, 60% of educators reported that work-related stress negatively affected their mental health, leading to issues such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders.

These global and national data underscore the urgent need for interventions to improve educators' working conditions and promote their well-being. Mindfulness practice emerges as a viable alternative to restore emotional balance and promote a healthier and more productive learning environment. As highlighted by Ajahn Sumedho in *The Four Noble Truths*, mindfulness allows us to recognize and understand suffering, creating space for transformation.¹⁰ By cultivating mindfulness, educators can develop emotional resilience, learning to cope with the pressures of the school environment more balanced and healthily.

2.3. Mindfulness as an alternative: Compassion at the heart of the practice

Mindfulness practice has its roots in the Buddhist tradition but was adapted to the secular context by Jon Kabat-Zinn, creator of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. The word "*sati*," derived from Pali, is often translated as "mindfulness" or "full attention." However, its meaning goes beyond mere attention to the present moment. "*Sati*" also implies memory, the ability to recall and apply ethical and spiritual teachings in all life situations. This dual dimension of "*sati*", attention and memory, is essential for genuinely committed mindfulness practice aligned with Buddhist values.¹¹

In the educational context, mindfulness practice is not limited to relaxation techniques or stress reduction. It should be integrated with the seven attitudes of mindfulness proposed by Jon Kabat-Zinn: non-judgment, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go. When cultivated, these attitudes create a more compassionate and inclusive learning environment.¹²

Compassion ("*karuṇā*") is a central attitude in mindfulness practice. In Buddhism, compassion is understood as the desire to alleviate others' suffering. In the school environment, this translates into a more empathetic and welcoming approach, where educators and students support each other. Compassion practice can be incorporated through exercises such as loving-

⁸ UFMG (2021): accessed on March 4, 2025, available at: <https://www.medicina.ufmg.br/fatores-psicossociais-e-insatisfacao-com-o-trabalho-estao-relacionados-ao-adoecimento-de-professores-afirma-estudo/>.

⁹ ETUCE (2023): accessed on March 4, 2025, available at: https://www.csee-etuce.org/images/attachments/Report_WRS_EN.pdf.

¹⁰ Sumedho, (2004): 79 - 97.

¹¹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (1994): 79 - 83.

¹² Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990): 72.

kindness meditation (“*mettā bhāvanā*”), which encourages practitioners to develop feelings of love and compassion for themselves and others.¹³

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and pioneer in globalizing mindfulness, teaches that: “True compassion is born from understanding that we are all interconnected”.¹⁴ For him, mindfulness is not just about being present but also acting with kindness and empathy, recognizing that one person’s suffering is everyone’s suffering.

In the school environment, this translates into a more empathetic and welcoming approach, where educators and students support each other. Compassion practice can be incorporated through exercises such as loving-kindness meditation (“*mettā bhāvanā*”), which encourages practitioners to develop feelings of love and compassion for themselves and others. Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes that: “Compassion is an energy that can transform suffering into peace”, an idea that aligns perfectly with this paper’s goal of promoting healthier and more sustainable educational environments.¹⁵

Additionally, mindfulness can be applied more committedly through structured programs like CARE for Teachers (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education), which combines mindfulness practices with the development of emotional and social skills. These programs not only reduce educators’ stress but also improve the quality of classroom interactions, promoting a more harmonious and productive environment.¹⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh complements this view by stating that: “Education should nurture not only the mind, but also the heart” reinforcing the need for practices that integrate compassion and mindfulness into everyday school life.¹⁷

The emphasis on compassion is not accidental. As highlighted by Thich Nhat Hanh: “Without compassion, mindfulness is incomplete.”¹⁸ The goal of this paper, which is promoting education that cultivates human dignity, world peace, and sustainable development, can only be achieved if mindfulness is practiced as an act of collective care. By teaching students and educators to recognize their interdependence with the world around them, compassion becomes the seed for a more just and inclusive society.

2.4. The essence of peace in Buddhist education

Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, personified qualities of compassion and dialogue so important in modern education. He expressed this not just in moments of silent contemplation but in every gesture, word, and interaction. This approach suggests that true education, from a Buddhist perspective, is not limited to transmitting theoretical knowledge but aims to cultivate a balanced

¹³ Fronsdal, Gil, (2012): 88 - 90.

¹⁴ Hanh, (2014): 23 - 30.

¹⁵ Hanh, (2014): 6.

¹⁶ Jennings, *et al.* (2017): 1010 - 1028.

¹⁷ Hanh, (2003): 135 - 174.

¹⁸ Hanh, (2025): 113 - 115.

mind capable of responding to external chaos with serenity and clarity.

Imagine, for example, two monks, immersed in a heated discussion about the interpretation of a sutra, approached by the Buddha. Instead of imposing an authoritative solution, he guides them through compassionate dialogue, allowing both to recognize the partial validity of their perspectives. This image illustrates one of the pillars of Buddhist education: developing wisdom through active listening and overcoming ego, promoting a broader and inclusive understanding.

One of the foundational texts of Buddhism, the Dhammapada, encapsulates this vision in one of its most famous verses: “Hatred will never cease by hatred. Only by love will it be dispelled. This is an eternal law”.¹⁹ This teaching is not just a moral exhortation but an educational directive emphasizing inner transformation as a prerequisite for external harmony. A traditional story exemplifies this practice: a monk, initially consumed by anger after his water pot was broken by a colleague, decides to dedicate himself to *mettā* (loving-kindness) meditation. After days of practice, his irritation gives way to a profound understanding of impermanence and interdependence, demonstrating how Buddhist education uses contemplative methods to reorient destructive emotions.

This approach reflects a pedagogical process we might compare to preparing a garden: the mind, like the soil, must work to remove obstacles, which are attachments, aversions, and illusions before seeds of virtues like patience, compassion, and wisdom can flourish. Contemporary studies on mindfulness, inspired by Buddhist practices, support this idea, indicating that regular meditation reduces stress levels and increases emotional resilience.²⁰ Thus, Buddhist education proposes a continuous cultivation of being, whose fruits benefit both the individual and the community.

The ability to promote peace in conflict situations is another central aspect of Buddhist education, as demonstrated in a historical episode where the Buddha intervenes in a dispute between two kingdoms over control of a river. With a simple question “What is more valuable: water or human lives?” He provokes reflection that disarms hostility and leads to reconciliation. This intervention reveals that education, in the Buddhist view, is not only introspective but also practical, providing tools to deal with ethical and social dilemmas.

In contemporary times, this example remains relevant. In a world marked by political polarizations, economic inequalities, and environmental crises, the Buddha’s question echoes as an invitation to reflective pause. Recent research on conflict resolution points out that approaches based on empathy and dialogue, aligned with Buddhist principles, are more effective than impulsive or coercive responses.²¹ Thus, education inspired by this philosophy offers a

¹⁹ Dhammapada, (2014): v. 5, p. 10.

²⁰ Kabat-Zinn, (1990): 244 - 245.

²¹ Galtung, (1996): accessed on February 19, 2025, available at: <https://us.sagepub.com/>

model to face modern challenges, encouraging individuals to respond with wisdom instead of reacting on impulse.

Contrary to the perception that Buddhist peace implies passivity, the Buddha teaches that it is an active force, demanding courage and commitment. A notable example is a monk who, witnessing injustices in his community, chooses to confront them with compassionate firmness, seeking collective solutions instead of remaining silent in the face of suffering. This case underscores that Buddhist education is not confined to the individual sphere but prepares practitioners to act in the world with integrity and altruism.

In essence, the Buddha showed us that peace is not just the absence of conflict it is the presence of understanding, compassion, and wisdom. In educational practice, this translates into training that balances introspection and action, encouraging individuals to be agents of change in their spheres of influence.

The Buddha presents peace as a state of mental clarity that reflects understanding, compassion, and wisdom. Just as a calm lake perfectly mirrors the sky, a mind trained in Buddhist discipline projects harmony onto its surroundings. This educational ideal suggests that world transformation begins with individual transformation - a process that unfolds in every conscious thought, chosen word, and deliberate action.

Faced with the challenges of the 21st century, marked by global conflicts and social fragmentation, the Buddha's teachings offer a timeless model. Education, from this perspective, becomes a path of self-discovery and collective responsibility, whose impacts reverberate beyond the individual, reaching society as a whole. As the Buddha himself demonstrated, changing the world is, above all, an act of cultivating peace within oneself.

2.5. The relevance of Buddhist peace practices in the educational environment

Buddhist peace practices such as mindfulness, compassion (*karuṇā*), and ethics (*sīla*) have transcended their traditional religious contexts to become valuable tools in secular environments, especially in education. These practices, originally conceived as paths to spiritual liberation, today find practical application in schools and universities worldwide, contributing to student well-being, conflict reduction, and the formation of ethical consciousness. In the educational context, they offer a model to cultivate not only academic skills but also socio-emotional competencies essential for building a more peaceful and sustainable society.

Mindfulness practice, rooted in the Buddha's teachings, has been widely integrated into the educational environment as a strategy to improve academic performance and students' emotional balance. Programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, show that mindfulness training reduces anxiety and enhances concentration, crucial skills in the context of increasing academic pressures. In Brazil, initiatives in

public schools have introduced simple exercises of conscious breathing before evaluative activities, helping students manage stress and maintain focus.

This impact goes beyond the individual. As the Dhammapada teaches: “The undisciplined mind brings suffering; the well-trained mind brings happiness.”²² A student who learns to observe thoughts and emotions without reacting impulsively develops emotional resilience and a greater ability to handle interpersonal challenges. Recent studies show that mindfulness programs in schools can reduce aggressive behaviors and improve school climate, evidencing their potential as a pedagogical tool for forming conscious and peaceful citizens.²³

Compassion, one of the pillars of Buddhist practice, offers a powerful approach to conflict resolution in the educational environment. In schools, where disputes among students or tensions between teachers and students are common, applying principles like the *brahmavihāras* (loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity) can transform conflictual interactions into learning opportunities. For example, techniques of compassionate dialogue, inspired by non-violent communication and Buddhist practices, have been used to mediate misunderstandings, promoting empathy and mutual understanding.

An illustrative case comes from the Theravāda tradition in Sri Lanka, where monks used these principles to facilitate reconciliation in communities affected by civil conflicts. In the school context, this model can be adapted to create listening spaces, such as restorative circles, where students are encouraged to express their perspectives and seek collective solutions. This practice not only resolves disputes but also educates young people about the importance of building relationships based on understanding, a crucial value for global peace.

Buddhist ethics (*sīla*), based on precepts such as not harming, speaking truthfully, and acting with integrity, can serve as a foundation for a school culture that promotes harmony and responsibility. In an educational environment, these principles guide students to adopt behaviors that respect diversity and minimize tensions, such as bullying or social exclusion. Schools in Norway, for example, have implemented integration programs based on ethical dialogue and non-violence, indirectly inspired by Buddhist values, to welcome refugee students and reduce prejudices.

The Dhammapada states: “Victory breeds hatred; the defeated live in pain. Only by relinquishing conflict does one find true happiness.”²⁴ By incorporating Buddhist ethics into the curriculum, through reflective activities or norms of coexistence, educational institutions can form individuals who value cooperation over destructive competition, contributing to lasting peace both inside and outside the classroom.

²² Dhammapada, (2014): v. 35, p. 22.

²³ Felver *et al.*, (2016): 1 - 21.

²⁴ Dhammapada, (2014): v. 201, p. 77.

The Buddhist perspective also offers a unique contribution to environmental education, an urgent theme in the contemporary context. The 14th Dalai Lama observes that “our destiny depends greatly on nature” and warns against the illusion that technology can control the environment (Collected Statements on the Environment).²⁵ In the school environment, this vision can be translated into practices that awaken ecological awareness in students, connecting the alleviation of suffering (*dukkha*) of all living beings to the planet’s preservation.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, emphasizes the need for a “collective awakening” to the illusions that perpetuate the environmental crisis, such as rampant consumerism. Schools can integrate this philosophy through interdisciplinary projects that combine mindfulness, ethics, and science, encouraging students to reflect on the impact of their choices. Alarming data from ecological and environmental sciences can be used in classes to discuss how the lack of awareness, a central theme in Buddhism, exacerbates global issues, reinforcing the relevance of education as a tool for transformation.

2.6. Disconnection and the end of conflict in education: Applying Buddhist principles in the school environment

Integrating Buddhist principles into the educational environment can bring significant benefits to students’ personal development and the construction of a culture of peace in educational institutions. One of the central teachings of Buddhism that can be applied in education is detachment. Attachment to rigid conceptions, possessions, and identities is one of the main causes of interpersonal conflicts and emotional difficulties. By promoting the practice of detachment, schools can foster a more harmonious and conducive learning environment.

Attachment can be understood as the tendency to fixate on beliefs, ideas, and identities inflexibly. In the educational context, this can manifest in various ways, such as resistance to new pedagogical approaches, difficulty accepting feedback, and rivalry between students or teachers. When a student is excessively attached to the idea of always being the best in class, for example, they may develop anxiety, exacerbated competitiveness, and aversion to failure, hindering their academic and emotional growth.

Similarly, teachers who cling to traditional methodologies without openness to innovation may find challenges in adapting to new educational needs. The same occurs when school management maintains rigid structures that do not favor the active participation of the school community in building a more collaborative environment.

2.7. Detachment as a tool for flexibility and harmony

The practice of detachment does not mean giving up responsibilities or losing interest in learning but rather cultivating a flexible and open attitude.

²⁵ 14th Dalai Lama, (2017): 26 - 27.

When students and teachers learn not to cling rigidly to their opinions, they become more receptive to dialogue and intellectual growth. Promoting critical thinking and active listening in schools can be an effective way to apply this principle. As Thich Nhat Hanh explains: "When we let go of our attachments, we create space for understanding and compassion to grow".²⁶ This perspective aligns with the Buddhist teaching that detachment is not about indifference but about freeing the mind from rigid patterns of thought.

Furthermore, detachment can contribute to the development of students' emotional intelligence. By learning not to identify rigidly with their achievements or failures, students develop resilience and self-confidence. This learning can be encouraged through practices such as meditation, which helps cultivate awareness and emotional self-regulation. In *The Art of Communicating*, Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes that: "Detachment allows us to see things as they are, without being clouded by our desires or fears"²⁷ This clarity of mind is essential for fostering emotional balance and adaptability in the face of challenges.

Embracing detachment also fosters an environment of continuous improvement and innovation within the school community. When educators and students are not attached to the fear of making mistakes, they become more willing to experiment with new teaching methods and learning strategies. This openness to change can lead to the development of more effective and engaging educational practices. Moreover, by letting go of rigid expectations, individuals can adapt more readily to the diverse needs and abilities of their peers, creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Encouraging this mindset through collaborative projects, reflective activities, and mindfulness exercises can help cultivate a culture of growth and adaptability in schools.

Detachment also allows for greater empathy and understanding among students and teachers. When individuals are not overly attached to their perspectives, they can more easily understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others. This empathy fosters a sense of community and mutual respect, which is essential for creating a positive learning environment. Through activities such as group discussions, peer reviews, and collaborative problem-solving, schools can promote an atmosphere where diverse opinions are valued and constructive dialogue is encouraged.

Additionally, the practice of detachment can help reduce stress and anxiety in both students and teachers. When individuals are not fixated on specific outcomes or achievements, they can approach their tasks with a sense of calm and equanimity. This mindset can be particularly beneficial in high-pressure situations, such as exams or project deadlines, where the fear of failure can often be overwhelming. By practicing detachment, students and teachers can maintain a balanced perspective, focusing on the process of learning rather than the end result. Techniques such as mindful breathing, guided meditation,

²⁶ Hanh, (2014): 23.

²⁷ Hanh, (2014): 27.

and reflective journaling can support this practice, helping individuals to stay centered and composed even in challenging circumstances.

Moreover, detachment can enhance creativity and problem-solving skills. When students and teachers are not bound by preconceived notions or rigid thinking patterns, they can approach problems with a fresh and open mind. This creative thinking can lead to innovative solutions and new ways of understanding complex issues. Schools can encourage this creative mindset by incorporating activities that promote out-of-the-box thinking, such as brainstorming sessions, design thinking workshops, and arts-based projects. By fostering an environment where creativity is valued and nurtured, schools can help students and teachers develop the skills needed to navigate an ever-changing world.

Incorporating detachment into the educational framework also supports the development of ethical and responsible behavior. When individuals are not driven by ego or personal gain, they are more likely to act in ways that consider the well-being of others and the broader community. This ethical perspective aligns with the principles of social-emotional learning, which emphasize the importance of empathy, cooperation, and responsible decision-making. Schools can integrate these principles into their curricula through service-learning projects, ethical debates, and character education programs. By teaching students to prioritize collective well-being over individual success, schools can contribute to the formation of compassionate and socially responsible citizens.

Furthermore, detachment can enhance the overall well-being and mental health of the school community. The practice encourages individuals to let go of negative emotions, such as anger, jealousy, and resentment, which can be detrimental to their mental and emotional health. By cultivating a mindset of detachment, students and teachers can develop greater emotional resilience and a more positive outlook on life. Activities that promote self-awareness, such as mindfulness practices, gratitude exercises, and positive affirmations, can support this development, helping individuals to build a strong foundation for emotional well-being.

Ultimately, the practice of detachment in education is not about abandoning goals or aspirations, but about approaching them with a balanced and flexible mindset. It encourages individuals to be open to new experiences, to learn from their mistakes, and to grow in the face of challenges. By fostering this attitude of detachment, schools can create a supportive and dynamic learning environment where students and teachers thrive.

2.8. Reducing ego and promoting cooperation in the school environment

Another fundamental aspect of detachment is reducing ego and competitive desires. The school environment often encourages the pursuit of recognition and status, which can lead to individualistic attitudes and unnecessary rivalries. Instead, education can be structured to value collaboration and empathy. Group work, community service activities, and mindfulness practices in school are strategies that help students see the value of cooperation over unbridled competition.

Detachment from the ego can also be encouraged among faculty. Teachers who recognize the importance of continuous learning and sharing experiences with colleagues find it easier to adapt their methodologies and better meet their students' needs. Similarly, school administrators who avoid attachment to power and rigid hierarchy tend to build more democratic and inclusive environments.

In the Majjhima Nikāya 9, The Buddha explains the nature of attachment and how to overcome it: "What is attachment, what is the origin of attachment, what is the cessation of attachment, and what is the path leading to the cessation of attachment? There are four kinds of attachment: attachment to sensual pleasures, attachment to opinions, attachment to rules and observances, and attachment to the doctrine of self. With the arising of craving, there is the arising of attachment. With the cessation of craving, there is the cessation of attachment. The path leading to the cessation of attachment is simply this Noble Eightfold Path."²⁸

In the educational environment, this perspective can be translated into adopting practices that cultivate the right view and mindfulness, promoting learning based on emotional balance and the pursuit of knowledge without obsession or fear of failure. Implementing social-emotional education programs that incorporate principles of mindfulness and self-compassion can be a concrete way to apply these teachings in schools.

Incorporating the principles of detachment into the educational context can transform the way students and teachers interact and learn. By reducing the rigidity of the ego and cultivating a more open and flexible attitude, it is possible to promote more peaceful, collaborative school environments conducive to students' holistic growth. Practices such as meditation, critical reflection, and promoting cooperation can help build an educational culture based on mutual respect and the pursuit of collective well-being. In this way, detachment becomes not just a tool for individual development but an essential pillar for building a more harmonious and compassionate society.

2.9. Innovative approaches to integrating mindfulness in education

The integration of mindfulness into the school curriculum has proven to be a powerful tool for promoting not only individual well-being but also the development of socio-emotional skills, creativity, and collective awareness. Below, we explore various innovative approaches that combine mindfulness practice with active and interdisciplinary methodologies, highlighting concrete examples of how these practices have been applied in different educational contexts around the world.

Project-based learning (PBL), for example, is an active methodology that encourages students to solve real-world problems, developing skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Mindfulness can be integrated into this approach to help students maintain focus and calm

²⁸ MN (1995): 935 - 9. (BODHI, Bhikkhu (1995). *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*).

during the problem-solving process. In schools in Finland, mindfulness has been combined with interdisciplinary projects addressing global issues such as climate change and social justice. Before brainstorming sessions, students participate in brief mindfulness exercises to center their attention and reduce anxiety. This practice not only improves concentration but also cultivates empathy and collective responsibility, preparing students to be agents of change in their communities.²⁹ This approach reflects Thich Nhat Hanh's vision that education should nurture not only the mind but also the heart, promoting a deep understanding of the interdependence between humans and the environment.³⁰

Another innovative approach is the combination of mindfulness with Design Thinking, a human-centered methodology that seeks creative solutions to complex problems. In schools in the United States, Design Thinking has been combined with mindfulness practices to promote innovation and empathy among students. During the "empathy" phase, students practice mindfulness to deeply connect with the needs and experiences of the people for whom they are designing solutions. For example, in a project aimed at creating more inclusive public spaces, students practice guided meditation to reflect on the barriers faced by people with reduced mobility. This approach not only increases students' sensitivity to social issues but also enhances their ability to generate more humane and effective solutions.³¹

Arts education also benefits from the integration of mindfulness, especially when it comes to exploring creativity and emotional expression. In schools in Canada, mindfulness has been integrated into visual arts and music classes to help students explore their creativity more consciously. Before starting to paint or play an instrument, students participate in a brief mindfulness session to connect with the present moment and their emotions. This practice not only improves the quality of artistic works but also helps students deal with frustration and anxiety that may arise during the creative process.³²

In physical education, mindfulness can be innovatively integrated to help students develop a more conscious connection with their bodies and improve their physical performance. In schools in Australia, mindfulness has been incorporated into physical education classes to help students develop greater body awareness and cope with competitive pressure. Before sports practices, students participate in mindfulness exercises focused on breathing and body awareness. This practice not only enhances physical performance but also reduces stress and anxiety related to competition.³³

With the increasing use of technology in education, mindfulness can be a valuable tool to help students manage information overload and develop

²⁹ Kabat-Zinn, (1990): 568.

³⁰ Hanh, (2014): 23 - 30.

³¹ Felver *et al.*, (2020): 1 - 21.

³² Hanh, (2014): 10 - 13.

³³ Jennings *et al.*, (2017): 1010 - 1028.

a healthier relationship with digital tools. In schools in South Korea, mindfulness has been integrated into the digital education curriculum to help students manage screen time and develop a more conscious relationship with technology. Before starting online activities, students participate in a brief mindfulness session to disconnect from distractions and focus on tasks. This approach not only improves focus and productivity but also helps students develop healthier digital habits.³⁴

Peace education is another field where mindfulness can be particularly impactful, helping students develop conflict resolution skills and cultivate a culture of non-violence. In schools in South Africa, mindfulness has been integrated into peace education programs to help students deal with conflicts more constructively. In communities affected by violence, students participate in dialogue circles where mindfulness is used to promote active listening and empathy. Before starting discussions, students practice mindfulness to connect with their emotions and prepare to listen to others' perspectives with respect and compassion. This approach not only reduces aggression but also promotes reconciliation and the building of healthier relationships.³⁵

Finally, mindfulness can be a powerful tool for promoting environmental awareness and sustainability, helping students develop a deeper connection with nature. In schools in New Zealand, mindfulness has been integrated into environmental education to help students develop greater ecological awareness. During outdoor activities such as nature walks, students practice mindfulness to connect with the natural environment and reflect on their relationship with the planet. This practice not only increases appreciation for nature but also inspires students to adopt more sustainable behaviors, such as reducing consumption and recycling.³⁶

These examples illustrate how mindfulness can be innovatively integrated into different areas of the school curriculum, promoting not only individual well-being but also the development of socio-emotional skills, creativity, and collective awareness. By adopting these practices, schools can become spaces of transformation, where students are prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century with wisdom, compassion, and resilience.

2.10. Development of individuals for a compassionate and sustainable future

The practice of mindfulness not only benefits educators but also has a profound impact on the development of students throughout their lives. By cultivating socio-emotional skills such as empathy, resilience, and self-control, mindfulness prepares young people to face the challenges of the 21st century in a balanced and compassionate manner.

“True peace is only possible when there is understanding and compassion.

³⁴ Loy, (2018): 66 - 85.

³⁵ Galtung, (1996), accessed on February 19, 2025, available at: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/node/43595/download.pdf>.

³⁶ Hanh, (2014): 27.

Peace begins with each of us, in our mind and our heart.”³⁷ This quote reinforces the idea that world peace begins with individual transformation, which is at the core of Buddha’s teachings.

These skills are essential for the development of a more just and sustainable society. As highlighted by David Loy, mindfulness helps us perceive our interconnectedness with the world, inspiring more responsible and sustainable actions. In the educational context, this means teaching students to value diversity, promote inclusion, and act ethically and responsibly.

Additionally, it contributes to the development of a culture of peace. By learning to handle conflicts nonviolently and to cultivate compassion, students are prepared to be agents of change in their communities, promoting social justice and harmony.

III. DISCUSSION

Mindfulness as a tool for educational transformation and building a culture of peace

The practice of mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist teachings, offers a transformative approach to education, directly aligning with the conference theme: Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development. While the article already explores the application of mindfulness in stress management and the development of socio-emotional skills, it is possible to deepen the discussion on how this practice can serve as a catalyst for building a culture of peace and sustainability in the educational environment, based on Buddhist scriptures and original references.

The connection between mindfulness and Buddhist ethics (*sīla*) is fundamental for promoting values such as non-violence, honesty, and compassion in the school environment. The Dhammapada, one of the most important texts in the Buddhist canon, states: “The mind is the precursor to all states. The mind is the chief; everything is made by the mind. If someone speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows them, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox.”³⁸ This passage highlights the importance of cultivating a balanced and ethical mind, not only for individual well-being but also for collective harmony. By incorporating mindfulness practices that emphasize ethical reflection, schools can help students develop a deeper moral awareness, preparing them to act with integrity and responsibility in their personal and community lives. In the Majjhima Nikāya, the Buddha teaches that the correct practice of mindfulness (*sammā sati*) is one of the components of the Noble

³⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh. The quote is attributed to Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, poet, and peace activist. However, this specific quote is not directly linked to a particular published work by Thich Nhat Hanh, such as a book or article. It is often cited in speeches, lectures, and writings inspired by his teachings, but there is no exact reference to a specific page or book where this phrase appears verbatim.

³⁸ Dhammapada, (2014): v. 1 - 2: 5.

Eightfold Path, essential for the development of wisdom and ethical conduct.³⁹ This connection between mindfulness and ethics can be applied in the school environment through activities that encourage students to reflect on their actions and their consequences, promoting a culture of responsibility and mutual respect.

The relationship between mindfulness and environmental education can be explored based on Buddhist teachings on interdependence and compassion for all beings. In the *Samyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha teaches that all phenomena are interconnected: "When this exists, that exists; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not exist; with the cessation of this, that ceases"⁴⁰. This view of interdependence can be applied to teaching sustainability, helping students understand that their actions have a direct impact on the environment. David Loy, in *Ecodharma*, connects this idea to the ecological crisis, arguing that human disconnection from nature is one of the root causes of environmental degradation.⁴¹ Outdoor mindfulness practices, such as guided meditations in natural settings, can help students develop a sense of interdependence with the natural world, inspiring more sustainable and responsible actions. This approach aligns with the Buddha's teachings on the importance of caring for all living beings, as expressed in the *Karaniya Metta Sutta*: "Just as a mother protects her only child with her life, cultivate a boundless heart toward all beings."⁴²

The application of mindfulness in conflict resolution can be expanded based on examples from Buddhist scriptures. In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha mediates a conflict between the monks of Kosambi, teaching that harmony can only be achieved through compassionate dialogue and the renunciation of ego.⁴³ This story can be adapted to the school environment, where students are encouraged to reflect on the value of cooperation over competition and conflict. Practices such as restorative circles, which combine mindfulness and compassionate dialogue, can be implemented to resolve conflicts among students, promoting a culture of peace and mutual understanding. In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha teaches: "Hatred never ceases by hatred; hatred ceases by love. This is an eternal law."⁴⁴ This passage reinforces the importance of addressing conflicts with compassion and non-violence, principles that can be integrated into the school curriculum through mindfulness practices and

³⁹ MN (1995): 935 – 117. (BODHI, Bhikkhu (1995). *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*).

⁴⁰ SN (2000): 927 - 12.61. (BODHI, Bhikkhu. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya*).

⁴¹ Loy, (2018): 66-99.

⁴² SN (2000): 12. - 1.8. (BODHI, Bhikkhu. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya*).

⁴³ MN (1995): 410 – 48. (BODHI, Bhikkhu. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*).

⁴⁴ Dhammapada (2014): 10 – 15.

loving-kindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*).

Mindfulness practice, when integrated with a social justice perspective, can help combat prejudice and inequality. In *Sigālovāda Sutta*, the Buddha teaches that true compassion arises from the understanding that all beings deserve respect and dignity.⁴⁵ In the school context, this can translate into practices that encourage students to reflect on their own identities and privileges, promoting greater awareness of social inequalities and the importance of inclusion. Thich Nhat Hanh, in *The Art of Communicating*, emphasizes that true compassion arises from the understanding that we are all interconnected.⁴⁶ Mindfulness programs that incorporate discussions on social justice can help create a more equitable school environment, where all students feel valued and respected.

The role of mindfulness in shaping educators as agents of social transformation can be explored based on the Buddha's teachings on compassionate leadership. In the *Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta*, the Buddha teaches that a leader must govern with justice and compassion, placing the well-being of others above their interests.⁴⁷ When educators cultivate mindfulness and compassion, they become role models for students, inspiring them to act with wisdom and empathy in their own lives. Ajahn Sumedho, in *The Four Noble Truths*, highlights that mindfulness practice allows us to recognize and understand suffering, creating space for transformation.⁴⁸ This approach can be applied in the school environment, where educators are encouraged to practice mindfulness not only for self-care but also to develop compassionate leadership skills.

IV. CONCLUSION

The practice of mindfulness, inspired by Buddhist teachings, offers a powerful approach to addressing the challenges of contemporary education. By promoting the well-being of educators and developing students' socio-emotional skills, mindfulness contributes to unity and inclusion, essential elements for human dignity and sustainable development. As highlighted by Bhikkhu Bodhi, David Loy, Gil Fronsdal, and Ajahn Sumedho, mindfulness is not only a path to world peace but also a tool for building a more compassionate and sustainable future.

Integrating this practice into the educational environment allows for the creation of schools that go beyond the transmission of knowledge, becoming spaces where values such as compassion, respect, and responsibility are cultivated. These schools will be environments where human dignity is respected and valued, and where students are prepared to face the challenges

⁴⁵ DN (1995): 461 – 31. (WALSHE, Maurice. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*).

⁴⁶ Hanh (2014): 23 - 30.

⁴⁷ DN (1995): 395 – 26 (WALSHE, Maurice. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*).

⁴⁸ Sumedho, (2004): 66 - 67.

of the 21st century with wisdom and resilience.

Mindfulness is not limited to being an individual well-being tool; it also acts as a catalyst for social and environmental transformation. By adopting this practice, educators and students can contribute to building a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world, where peace and human dignity are fundamental pillars. Education, when aligned with the principles of mindfulness and compassion, becomes a powerful vehicle for personal and collective transformation, preparing individuals to act with empathy and responsibility in their communities and the world.

This work aligns directly with the goal of Vesak 2025, whose theme is "Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development," and with the panel's subtheme: "Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future." The practice of mindfulness in education reflects the core values of Vesak by promoting unity, inclusivity, and human dignity through an educational approach that integrates Buddhist wisdom and contemporary practices. By cultivating awareness and compassion, we are planting the seeds for a more harmonious and balanced future, where the interdependence between all beings and the environment is recognized and honored.

Therefore, mindfulness in education not only benefits individuals but also has the potential to transform societies, promoting a culture of peace, sustainability, and mutual respect. By adopting these practices, we are contributing to the realization of the ideals proposed by Vesak 2025, building a future where education is an instrument of global transformation, guided by compassion and Buddhist wisdom.

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INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION: A BUDDHIST APPROACH TO CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

This is a qualitative research conducted with a library approach that aims to describe the integration of mindfulness practice in education, exploring the Buddhist approach to character development for a sustainable future. Based on primary sources and secondary sources, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of Buddhist education and the integration of mindfulness in education for the character development of the students. The rising issues of moral degradation and mental health challenges in the present situation remark the urgency of an education system that is not only concerned with academic achievements but also the character development as well as mental health and well-being of the students. The present research finds that the Buddhist approach to education and the integration of mindfulness in education can be an alternative solution to address the challenges. The Buddhist education referred to as “*sikkhā*” reflects the profound concept of education beyond intellectual learning, but also involves ethical training which brings to the character and spiritual development. Buddhist education which is grounded in the three pillars of learning, such as *sīla-sikkhā* (moral behavior), *samādhi-sikkhā* (mental training), and *paññā-sikkhā* (development of wisdom), offers a holistic approach to enhance the moral, mental and wisdom development. With rising levels of stress, anxiety, and mental health issues among students and educators, mindfulness plays a significant role as a holistic approach to addressing these challenges. Integrating mindfulness in education is the most effective way to apply Buddhist teaching in modern educational settings, promoting the Buddhist principles for character development.

Keywords: *Buddhist, character development, education, mindfulness, sustainable future.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In this modern age, the complexities arising from the rapid advancement of technology and globalization have caused education to face more challenges. The first challenge is education should be able to adapt to the digital era but should not neglect the character development of the students. Education should not only focus on academic achievements, but also the moral development of the students. Even though the development of technology offers many positive aspects, the use of technology should be balanced with morality. Without ethical consideration, the technology can be misused by the young generations for unlawful and harmful activities. According to contemporary research, many young generations in Indonesia have misused the advancement of technology for negative activities such as cyberbullying, hate speech, hoax news, online gambling, pornography, and online prostitution.¹ Security, sexting, copyright, and plagiarism are other challenges of this modern education.² The advancement of technology without ethical consideration has led to moral degradation among the students. Many cases like rape, murder, abuse, brawl, and other bad behaviors committed by students in schools and universities reflect the situation of degradation moral of the young generations. The second challenge is education should be concerned with the mental development of the students. Modern education should consider social-emotional learning competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making. In this complex society, mental health has become an important concern in education. In Indonesia, mental health issues among adolescents are becoming a serious concern. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is estimated that one in seven (14%) of 10-19-year-olds experience mental health conditions. Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS) 2022 shows that 1 in 3 adolescents (34.9%) or equivalent to 15.5 million Indonesian adolescents have mental health problems in the last 12 months; 1 in 20 adolescents (5.5%) or equivalent to 2.45 million Indonesian adolescents have one mental disorder in the last 12 months.³ This situation reflects that education in the 21st century should not only concern on academic achievements but also concern on moral and mental development. Character education can be used as an alternative to solve the problem of moral decline among the students in schools.⁴ Character education is an education system that nurtures and promotes the ethical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of individuals.⁵ By this means, education is expected to be a strategic approach to prepare the young generations to achieve character development. Buddhism is a religion that pays much attention to human character development. Buddhist

¹ Nursanti, Ni Nyoman Putri et al., (2023): 130.

² Triyanto, T. (2020): 175.

³ Erskine et al. (2024).

⁴ Suarningsih, N. M. (2024): 3.

⁵ Kuning, D. S. (2018): 119.

education offers a holistic approach to address these modern challenges, giving more concern to moral and mental development. Buddhism offers a solution for the education system that can be useful in producing a generation that is not only knowledgeable, but also a generation that has good morals and spirituality.⁶ Referring to *Dhammapada*, the essence of the Buddha's teachings mainly concerns on establishment of morals by refraining from all bad actions (*sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ*) and encouraging doing good actions (*kusalassa upasampadā*), and mental development by purification of the mind from mental defilements (*sacittapariyodapanaṃ*).⁷ There are many discourses delivered by the Buddha which contain the Buddhist principles to support the character development of the individuals. Kalupahana explains that there are two terms often used in the early discourses to refer to training or education, namely *Sikkhā* and *Bhāvanā*. *Sikkhā* highlights the learning process and the *Bhāvanā* emphasizes the developmental.⁸ In this case, mindfulness practice can be integrated into the learning process as a holistic approach to character development. The Buddha's teaching on *Appamāda* can be presented as mindfulness practice, fostering moral awareness and the development of wholesome mental qualities.⁹ This research examines the integration of mindfulness practice in education as a Buddhist approach to character development. This study explores the Buddhist approach to education for a sustainable future.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

This research adopts a qualitative research methodology conducted with a library approach which aims to describe the integration of mindfulness practice in education, exploring the Buddhist approach to character development for a sustainable future. Library research is understood as a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading, recording, and processing research materials.¹⁰ This present research is conducted through three following steps, namely data collection, analysis and synthesis, and conclusion. Data collection is the step of collecting data or information used in the research, which is gathered from primary sources and secondary sources. The Buddha's teachings contained in *Sutta Piṭaka* and their commentaries, are considered as the primary sources. The secondary sources refer to academic articles, journals, or books written by scholars. Analysis and synthesis are the steps of analyzing the data used in the research. In this step, the collected data are analyzed, taking the useful point for the research. The researcher analyzed and systematized the data to describe the integration of mindfulness practice in education to character development. The conclusion is the discovery explanation in brief. In this step, the researcher identifies the conclusion of

⁶ Medhacitto, T. S. (2024): 2.

⁷ Kalupahana, David. J. (2008): 143.

⁸ Kalupahana, David J. (1998): 142.

⁹ Medhacitto, T. S., Mahatthanadull, S., & Busro, B. (2024): 2.

¹⁰ Zed, Mestika. 2003: 3.

the discussion on the integration of mindfulness practice in education for character development.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Modern approach to education for character development

In general, education is defined as a continuous process that leads people toward maturity, encompassing three core aspects namely knowledge acquisition, skill development, and attitude change.¹¹ According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System in Indonesia, education is defined as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to process spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character and skill needed by themselves, society, the nation, and the state.¹² These definitions reflect that education is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge but also a continuous process to develop noble character and personal growth. Education provides a systematic way to develop knowledge and skills and nurtures individuals to develop the noble character to be compassionate and responsible members of society. Education promotes human growth by addressing the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor dimensions. The affective dimension develops emotions, values, and interpersonal skills, fostering empathy, emotional intelligence, and moral character. The cognitive dimension enhances intellectual abilities such as knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and creativity. The psychomotor dimension develops physical and motor skills through activities that involve coordination, movement, and practical applications such as playing musical instruments, vocational training, or doing sports. According to UNESCO, education is a fundamental human right and a key driver for sustainable development. UNESCO promotes Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), equipping the individuals with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to address global challenges.¹³ There are four pillars of learning highlighted by UNESCO to promote education for sustainable development namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. Learning to know emphasizes cultivating curiosity and critical thinking, enabling individuals to acquire knowledge and adapt to change throughout life. Learning to do emphasizes equipping individuals with practical skills, and preparing individuals with abilities to handle challenges. Learning to be emphasizes personal growth by nurturing self-awareness, creativity, and emotional intelligence, helping individual realize their full potential. Learning to live together highlights the importance of empathy, collaboration, and mutual respect, fostering peace and harmony in diverse communities. The goals of national education as stated in the national legislation, reflect the vision of nurturing people with noble character rooted in the nation's culture, Pancasila, and the 1945 Constitution. Education is

¹¹ Hermino, Agustinus. (2014): 4.

¹² Ministry of Education and Culture. (2003).

¹³ UNESCO. (2020).

not only the transfer of knowledge but also the transfer of values, shaping individuals with good character. The process of instilling values is called character education.¹⁴ Character education emphasizes the development of positive character such as moral values, ethical behavior, responsibility, honesty, and empathy. According to Thomas Lickona, there are three components of character in character education, namely: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Moral knowing refers to understanding ethical principles, moral reasoning, and the ability to distinguish right and wrong. It includes moral awareness, knowing moral values, perspective-taking, moral reasoning, decision-making, and self-knowledge. Moral feeling involves developing emotional foundations of good character, such as self-esteem, empathy, loving the good, self-control, and humility. Moral action is a combination of moral knowing and moral feeling which is manifested in the form of competence, will, and habits.¹⁵ By integrating these three components, education is not merely about teaching values, but also ensuring the students understood, internalized, and practiced in daily life. According to Thomas Lickona, seven essential elements of character must be instilled in education, namely: sincerity, compassion, courage, kindness, self-control, cooperation, and hard work.¹⁶ Character Counts Coalition highlights the six pillars of character such as trustworthiness, fairness, caring, respect, citizenship and responsibility.¹⁷ These elements of character are important elements for shaping the students to be ethical and responsible persons in society. However, to achieve the goal, it takes the involvement of various stakeholders. It involves the role of parents, the community, and the surrounding environment. With this collaborative work, the implementation of character education becomes more effective and meaningful. In 2017, the Indonesian government made a notable effort to formalize the involvement of various stakeholders in character education by launching the program known as Strengthening Character Education abbreviated as PPK. As regulated in Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 and Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 20 of 2018, the education system in Indonesia emphasizes the Strengthening of Character Education in formal education settings. There are eighteen elements of character education to be developed, namely: religion, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love for the homeland, appreciation of achievements, communicativeness, love for peace, love for reading, environmental awareness, social concern, and responsibility. These eighteen values are then summarized into five core values related to religiosity, nationalism, integrity, independence, and cooperation.¹⁸

¹⁴ Zulfida, Sri. (2020): 4.

¹⁵ Hermino, Agustinus. (2014): 159 - 160.

¹⁶ Zulfida, Sri. (2020): 29.

¹⁷ Hermino, Agustinus. (2014): 162.

¹⁸ BPK, R. (2022).

3.2. Buddhist approach to education for character development

In Buddhism, education refers to the Pāli terms “*sikkhā*” (learning/training) and “*ajjhāpana*” (understanding). The word “*sikkhā*” also refers to “good conduct or virtue” and “disciplinary conduct.”¹⁹ Pāli terms like “*sikkhāpeti*,” “*uggaṇhāpeti*,” “*sikkhāpana*” and “*ajjhāphana*” are associated with education. Buddhism introduces various terms for education, reflecting different aspects of the learning process. The term “*sikkhā*” has been introduced to refer to education, extending the concept of education beyond intellectual learning, but also involves the ethical training that brings to character and spiritual development. Buddhist education is grounded in the three pillars of learning, namely *sīla-sikkhā* (moral behavior), *samādhi-sikkhā* (mental training), and *paññā-sikkhā* (development of wisdom). Buddhist education offers a holistic approach that fosters moral, mental, and wisdom development. This definition reflects that Buddhist education is concerned not only with intellectual purpose but giving priority to character development. Therefore, the Buddhist approach to education for character development is explained in three following manners:

(1) *Sīla-sikkhā* for Moral Development: Dissanayake M. K. Dharmasiri pointed out that Buddhist education was primarily intended to transform the inner nature of the person and the formation of character through the development of moral and ethical values.²⁰ Education is the main tool for inculcating moral values by controlling the animal nature of humans. According to Buddhism, morality is grounded in two qualities, namely *hiri* (moral shame) and *ottappa* (moral dread).²¹ *Hiri* refers to the moral shame that arises from understanding right and wrong, which discourages individuals from committing unwholesome actions. *Ottappa* refers to the fear of consequences of wrongdoing, preventing individuals from avoiding unwholesome actions. These two qualities are considered as the important elements for personal development and societal harmony. *Hiri* and *ottappa* play a significant role in Buddhist practice that serves as the foundation for personal ethical behavior and a peaceful society.²² In *Cariya Sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, it is said that *hiri* and *ottappa* are regarded as “the guardians of the world” because these two things prevent the people from engaging in unwholesome actions and maintain moral behavior.²³ Without this *hire* and *ottappa*, morality will not be implemented. People will be free to act as they please because they have no shame in committing bad actions. People will also do as they please because they are not afraid of the consequences of bad actions. Therefore, in Buddhist education, these two qualities are elements of character education that foster to moral behavior of the people. Buddhist education promotes *hiri* (moral shame)

¹⁹ Medhācitto, T. S. (2024): 3.

²⁰ Dharmasiri, Dissanayake M.K. (2019): 91.

²¹ Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. (2010): 12.

²² Medhācitto, T. S. (2023): 96.

²³ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2012): 143.

and *ottappa* (moral dread) for moral development. *Sīla-sikkhā* in Buddhist education refers to moral development. In the teaching of Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*), *Sīla* refers to right speech (*sammāvācā*), right action (*sammākammanto*) and right livelihood (*sammājīvo*).²⁴ Right speech is explained as abstinence from false speech, abstinence from divisive speech, abstinence from harsh speech, and abstinence from idle chatter. Right Action is described as refraining from taking life, refraining from taking what is not given and refraining from sexual misconduct. Right livelihood is giving up the wrong livelihood and keeping by right livelihood. It refers to the way of earning a living positively or ethically, honest, and free from violence. These right speech, right action, and right livelihood strengthen the practice of morality. Buddhism promotes education to establish morality by refraining from all bad actions (*sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ*), encouraging doing good actions (*kusalassa upasampadā*), and purifying the mind from mental defilements (*sacittapariyodapanaṃ*).²⁵ Here, refraining from bad actions and cultivating good actions are training for moral development. Buddhism considers morality as the fundamental path for protecting oneself and society. In the *Attarakkhita Sutta* of *Samyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha said that it is good to be restrained physically, verbally, and mentally; one who is restrained in all ways is protected.²⁶ Morality protects oneself from doing unwholesome actions and allows others to live peacefully without fear. In order to achieve this moral development, students should be trained to observe the Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*), refrain from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and consuming intoxicants. Students should be encouraged to practice *Pañcadhamma*, namely lovingkindness, giving, satisfaction, truthfulness, and awareness. The continuous practice of *pañcasīla* and *pañcadhamma* in daily life promotes individual and social peace.

(2) *Samādhi-sikkhā* for Mental Development: *Samādhi-sikkhā* refers to mental training to enhance mental development. In the teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path, *samādhi-sikkhā* consists of right effort (*sammāvāyāmo*), right mindfulness (*sammāsati*), and right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*). Right effort is the effort or endeavor to prevent the arising of unwholesome states, to abandon unwholesome states that have already arisen, to arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen, and to maintain the perfect wholesome states already arisen.²⁷ Right mindfulness means bringing awareness to the present moment. It is cultivated through a practice of four foundations mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*), the mindful contemplation of four objective spheres such as the body, feeling, states of mind, and the phenomena.²⁸ Right Concentration

²⁴ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2000): 1528.

²⁵ Medhācitto, T. S. (2024): 4.

²⁶ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2000): 169. “*kāyena saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu vācāya saṃvaro; manasā saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu sabbattha saṃvaro; sabbattha saṃvuto lajjī, rakkhitoti pavuccatī.*”

²⁷ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2006): 35.

²⁸ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2006): 42.

refers to the development of a focused, undistracted, and peaceful mind through deep meditation practice. In the Buddhist source, it refers to the attainment of meditative absorptions such as first, second, third, and fourth *jhāna*.²⁹ Buddhist education pays more attention to mental training to enhance mental development. With the right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, Buddhism encourages individuals to develop inner good qualities. Right effort highlights on cultivating positive mental states and eliminating negative mental states. It fosters cultivating good habits and abandoning bad habits. Right mindfulness helps individuals to maintain awareness in the present moments, enabling them to manage stress and anxiety, and fostering mental health and well-being. Right Concentration strengthens the individual's ability to concentrate and focus on studying. It plays a crucial role in enhancing memory retention and recall. Meditation is believed to be the most effective tool to cultivate good qualities for mental development. In Buddhist teaching, there are two types of meditation (*bhāvanā*), namely: *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*. *Samatha bhāvanā* is a tranquility meditation that focuses on developing concentration and calmness of mind. *Vipassanā bhāvanā* is an insight meditation that focuses on developing insight into the true nature of reality. The Buddha's teaching on Four Sublime Abodes applies to character development. The teaching of Four Sublime Abodes (*cattāro brahmavihārā*) consists of four sublime states of mind such as lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*kāruṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).³⁰ These four noble qualities are to be developed in the meditation practice or implemented into action in daily life activities. Lovingkindness encourages individuals to wish happiness and well-being for others and themselves. Compassion is empathy towards others' suffering and taking action to help them. It encourages individuals to cultivate a deep sense of care for those who are suffering. Sympathetic joy is an ability to rejoice in the happiness and success of others. It counters the feeling of jealousy and promotes positive relationships. Equanimity is a balanced state of mind, enabling individuals to manage emotional stability. Mental training has a strong connection with moral training. *Mettā Sutta* can be an example of this relationship. Ācariya Buddhārakkhita analyzed *Mettā Sutta* into three sections, each emphasizing a different aspect of lovingkindness. The first section (lines 3 - 10) deals with the systematic application of lovingkindness in daily life. The second section (11 - 20) highlights lovingkindness and meditation techniques or culture of mind leading to *samādhi*. The third section (21 - 40) underlines a total commitment to the philosophy of universal love and its personal, social, and empirical extensions of lovingkindness through bodily, verbal, and mental activities.³¹ Interestingly, *Mettā Sutta* also includes ethical teaching. Buddhist ethics consists of two aspects, namely the practice of certain virtuous (*cārita*) and the adherence to precepts of abstinence (*vārita*). *Cārita* found in the *Mettā Sutta* is expressed in the stanzas "One should be capable, honest,

²⁹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2000): 1529.

³⁰ Walshe, Maurice. (2012): 489.

³¹ Buddhārakkhita, Ācariya. (2011): 16.

straightforward, kind in speech, humble, free from pride, content with little, easy to support, not overly busy, living simply, calm in their senses, wise and cautious, not brazen and nor fawning on families.” The *vārita* is expressed in the next stanza “He must refrain from any action that gives the wise reason to reprove him.” This discourse highlights the *cārita* and *vārita* which are practiced through *mettā* expressed in one’s bodily and verbal actions in daily life. The ethical values contained in this discourse can be adopted as the Buddhist principles for character education, such as *sakko*: capable of doing wholesome actions; *uju*: be honest; *suhujū*: be absolutely honest; *sūvaco*: easy to receive instruction; *mudu*: flexible mind; *anātimānī*: be humble; *santussako*: be contented; *subhāro*: easily supported without becoming burden of others; *apāpicco*: undertake few tasks; *sallahukavutti*: lead a simple life; *santindriyo*: subdued faculties; *nīpako*: expert in something; *appagabbho*: being humble and polite in good manners; *kulesu ananugiddho*: not attached to family; *na ca khudham samācare*: never commit in bad action; *sukhino*: be happy; *khemino*: be peaceful; *na paro paraṃ nikubbetha*: not deceive another; *nātimaññetha* *katthaci na kañci*: not look down anyone, anywhere; *nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya*: not wishing pain to other; *mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam*: develop a boundless heart; *asambādham*: no narrowness; *averaṃ*: no hatred; *asapattam*: no rivalry; and *brahmametaṃ vihāramidhamāhu*: live in noble life. These ethical principles finally lead the learners to higher learning achievement, namely dispelling the wrong view, being virtuous accomplished in insight, liberated by the destruction of sensual desire, and attaining the stage of purification which is never conceived again in a womb.³²

(3) *Paññā-sikkhā* for Wisdom Development: *Paññā-sikkhā* refers to wisdom training for wisdom development. According to Buddhism, wisdom is very essential in the Buddha’s teaching. The Buddha said that his teaching is for the wise people, not for otherwise.³³ In the teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path, *paññā* consists of the right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and right thought (*sammāsaṅkappo*). *Vibhaṅga Sutta* defines the right view as the knowledge of suffering, the origin of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the path leading to cessation of suffering.³⁴ On another occasion, the right view is also explained as the knowledge of wrong and right actions. In Buddhist practice, the right view serves as the forerunner of the entire path and acts as a guiding principle for all other factors.³⁵ As mentioned in the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikāya*, the right view plays a significant role as a forerunner of other practices.³⁶ The right view forms as basis of wisdom for the understanding of

³² Nāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. (1978): 10-11. “*Diṭṭhiṅca anupaggaṃma, sīlavā dassanena sampanno; kāmesu vineyya gedham, na hi jātuggabbhaseyyaṃ punareṭṭhi*.”

³³ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2012): 1160. “*Paññavato ayaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo duppaññassa*.”

³⁴ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2000): 1528.

³⁵ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2006): 11.

³⁶ Nāṇamoli, Bhikkhu and Bhikkhu Bodhi. (2009): 934. “*sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti*.”

reality. Right, thought is described into three kinds of thought, namely the thought of renunciation (*nekkhammasaṅkappo*), the thought of non-ill-will (*abyāpādasāṅkappo*), and the thought of harmlessness (*avihiṃsāsāṅkappo*).³⁷ The right view plays an important role in shaping individuals with moral considerations. In education, the right view allows students to have the ability to distinguish right and wrong, enabling them to live with good behavior in daily life. Thought of renunciation encourages the students to let go the negative emotions and be free from attachment. The thought of non-ill-will and the thought of harmlessness encourages the students to cultivate the thought of love, compassion, and non-violence. There are three types of wisdom, namely wisdom obtained through critical thinking or reflection (*cintāmayā paññā*), through listening or learning (*sutamayā paññā*), and mind development or meditation (*bhāvanāmaya paññā*).³⁸ These types of wisdom indicate the different ways to cultivate wisdom. Continued reflection and critical thinking enhance the development of wisdom. This critical thinking allows the individuals to explore their perspective to develop a broader understanding, fostering a more inclusive mindset and away from hasty judgment. Listening and learning is another way to cultivate wisdom. Listening is an effective way to collect knowledge as much as possible. Educated or knowledgeable persons in the ancient period are called *bahussuta* because they have many experiences in listening to various subjects of knowledge. Etymologically, the term *bahussuta* is derived from the Pāli words “*bahu*” (much) and “*suta*” (heard of listened). Thus, *bahussuta* has heard much, referring to those who are knowledgeable persons. *Sutamayā paññā* refers to the cultivation of wisdom through listening or learning. This highlights the importance of knowledge for the development of wisdom. The Buddha mentioned that having vast knowledge and skill, including being well-trained in discipline, is the highest blessing in the world.³⁹ Mind development or meditation is another way to cultivate wisdom. The Buddha said, “*Bhikkhus, develop concentration; a bhikkhu who is concentrated understands things as they are.*”⁴⁰ It shows the importance of meditation to cultivate wisdom, allowing people to understand the truth. In the *Paññāvuḍḍhi Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha mentions four things leading to the growth of wisdom. These four things include; associating with wise people (*sappurisasamseva*), listening to the true Dhamma (*saddhammasavanam*), careful attention (*yonisomanasikāra*), practicing in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammānuddhammapaṭipatti*).⁴¹ Associating with wise people is very essential in Buddhist practice because association or friendship with good people is the foundation for the arising and the development of good

³⁷ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2000): 1528.

³⁸ Walshe, Maurice. (2012): 486.

³⁹ Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. (1978): 145.

⁴⁰ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2000): 1838. “*samādhim bhikkhave bhāvētha, samāhito, bhikkhave, bhikkhu yathābhutaṃ pajānāti.*”

⁴¹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2012): 612.

qualities.⁴² The Buddha mentioned the association with the wise people as the highest blessing.⁴³ Association with wise people allows individuals to learn and follow their way of thinking and way of life, enabling them to be wise too. Listening to the true Dhamma is conducive to the development of wisdom. The knowledge and understanding of true teaching will guide the individual to follow the true teaching, enabling them to develop wisdom. Careful attention involves mindful consideration and reflection on one's thoughts and actions, allowing one to cultivate insight into the nature of reality. The practice in accordance with the Dhamma is the implementation of Buddha's teaching in daily life through ethical conduct and meditation. This practice enhances the development of wisdom.

3.3. Integration of mindfulness practice in education

Mindfulness is described as awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.⁴⁴ It includes paying attention and being aware of one's everyday activities such as seeing, breathing, writing, walking, reading, drinking, eating, and sitting.⁴⁵ In Buddhist teaching, it refers to *sati* or awareness in the present moment. In the teaching on the Noble Eightfold Path, right mindfulness is explained as bringing awareness to the present moment. It is cultivated through a practice of four foundations mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*), the mindful contemplation of four objective spheres such as the body, feeling, states of mind, and the phenomena.⁴⁶ Mindfulness in Buddhist teaching also refers to *appamāda* or heedfulness. *Appamāda* is a mindfulness practice that fosters moral awareness and the development of wholesome mental qualities.⁴⁷

Mindfulness practices have their root in Buddhist traditions extending back over 2500 years.⁴⁸ The practice of mindfulness has become popular in recent years in the context of Western medical treatment as an effective approach to managing stress and anxiety. Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) are transformative integration of Eastern contemplative tradition and Western therapeutic practices, rooted in Theravāda Buddhist meditation practice to heal a variety of psychiatric issues and enhance well-being.⁴⁹ Western psychology has adopted and adapted mindfulness principles, incorporating them into systematic, evidence-based programs to effectively address a variety of mental and physical health concerns, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

⁴² Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2012): 1407.

⁴³ Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. (1978): 3.

⁴⁴ Ragoonaden, K. (2015): 18.

⁴⁵ Ragoonaden, K. (2015): 17.

⁴⁶ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2006): 42.

⁴⁷ Medhacitto, T. S., Mahatthanadull, S., & Busro, B. (2024): 2.

⁴⁸ Sipe WEB, Eisendrath SJ. (2012): 63.

⁴⁹ Nandarathana, R. N., & Ranjan, J. K. (2024): 174.

(MBCT), Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) was developed in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, by integrating mindfulness practices such as meditation, body awareness, and yoga as therapy to manage stress and enhance well-being.⁵⁰ It was a pioneering effort to incorporate mindfulness techniques into a structured program to improve well-being, reducing stress, anxiety, depression, sleep disorder, and burnout. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was developed in 1990 by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, integrating mindfulness techniques, like meditation and body awareness with cognitive behavioral techniques to help individuals prevent the recurrence of depression and reduce emotional distress.⁵¹ Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) was developed by Sarah Bowen, Neha Chawla, and G. Alan Marlatt, integrating mindfulness practice with cognitive-behavioral relapse prevention strategies which are aimed to help individuals in recovery from addictive behavior.⁵² In Indonesia, Bali Husada, founded by Merta Ada, offers health meditation programs incorporating mindfulness, concentration, lovingkindness, and wisdom to cultivate a harmonious mind that aids in healing both physical and mental ailments.⁵³ Integration of mindfulness practice into education has become a popular and effective way to enhance the students' mental well-being, concentration, and academic achievements.⁵⁴ In contemporary society, with rising levels of stress, anxiety, and mental health issues among students and educators, mindfulness plays a significant role as a holistic approach to addressing these challenges. There is a growing interest in applying Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) to youth, particularly in the context of schools.⁵⁵ Integrating mindfulness practice into education is an effective way to integrate Buddhist teaching into modern educational settings. Incorporating mindfulness exercises in daily activities such as focused breathing and body scanning practiced in the classroom helps the students to reduce stress, improve concentration, and cultivate a sense of inner calm.⁵⁶ Many studies have demonstrated that the integration of mindfulness practice in education has many positive impacts on the mental health and well-being of students. Mindfulness offers numerous benefits such as enhancing concentration and focus, fostering emotional intelligence and well-being, and reducing stress and anxiety. Stress brings negative effects to the brain, such as degradation of the executive functions of the prefrontal cortex (problem-solving, creativity, reasoning), the activity of the hippocampus (learning, memory, emotional

⁵⁰ Noonan S. (2014): 134.

⁵¹ Sipe WEB, Eisendrath SJ. (2012): 65.

⁵² Penberthy, J.K., Konig, A., Gioia, C.J. et al. (2015): 151.

⁵³ Bali Usada. (2025).

⁵⁴ Seanburan, Prayong. (2024): 3.

⁵⁵ Felver, J.C. et al. (2016): 34.

⁵⁶ Seanburan, Prayong. (2024): 3.

regulation), and the amygdala (reactivity centers).⁵⁷ Incorporating mindfulness in education can reduce the stress of the students, promoting academic performance. Mindfulness meditation can improve students' academic performance by improving attention, memory, and executive function. Based on information processing theory, mindfulness meditation strengthens focus (cognitive process), working memory (information storage), and executive function (decision-making and problem-solving), leading to better learning outcomes.⁵⁸ Integrating mindfulness in education involves incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum, teaching methods, character-building activities, and school cultures. In order to promote mindfulness practice in the school, certain subjects can be adapted to incorporate mindfulness-based activities. The subject of ethics and religious studies can promote mindfulness practice for the development of ethical behavior and the practice of religious teachings. Mindful walking can be integrated into the subject of sport. Learning activities can promote mindfulness such as mindful reading, mindful writing, and mindful listening. The implementation of short meditation before the class effectively helps the students to strengthen their focus and concentration in studying in the classroom. The teacher can encourage students to sit comfortably with closed eyes, paying attention to breathing in and out within five minutes before the class. Mindfulness practice also can be included in character-building activities such as a one-day mindfulness program, where all the students and the teachers can participate in meditation retreats more intensively during one day. Many researches have demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness practice for education. Research conducted by Schonert Reichl shows the integration of mindfulness practice into school curricula. The Mind-UP curriculum, developed by the Goldie Hawn Foundation, integrates mindfulness into Western schools, widely used in schools across the United States and Canada, focusing on neuroscience, positive psychology, and mindful awareness. This curriculum is aimed to teach students to improve attention, regulate emotions and develop compassion. The research shows that the students who participate in such programs experience reduced stress, better academic performance, and enhanced emotional regulation.⁵⁹ Mindfulness meditation is also helpful for the development of emotional intelligence. Buddhist meditation is not only beneficial for the spiritual development but also effectively enhances the emotional intelligence. Meditation helps the students to develop emotional intelligence in three ways namely: enhancing emotional awareness, regulating and expressing emotions, and utilizing emotions for motivation and learning.⁶⁰ Meditation improves the students' ability to observe and accept emotions without impulsive reactions, helping the students to reduce stress, anxiety, and negative emotions that disturb learning. Meditation improves the students' emotional regulation,

⁵⁷ Ragoonaden, K. (2015): 18.

⁵⁸ Liu, Y., et al. (2022): 59.

⁵⁹ Seanburan, Prayong. (2024): 4.

⁶⁰ Sidharta, M. V., et al. (2023): 155.

leading to the development of empathy, loving-kindness, and compassion. Meditation also helps the students to develop a positive attitude, creativity, and enthusiasm for learning. Ni Made Ari Wilani and the members have proved that Bali Husada meditation could significantly reduce the level of depressive symptoms of high school students in Denpasar.⁶¹ Students with high levels of depressive symptoms often experience easy to feel sad, lacking enthusiasm, and feeling of suffering. The practice of mindfulness through meditation, helps the students to observe emotions neutrally, and regulate their feelings more adaptively, leading to inner peace. Lovingkindness promoted in Bali Husada meditation effectively enhances the positive emotions that help to reduce depressive symptoms, sad emotions, and feelings of hopelessness. In short, integrating mindfulness into education is the most effective way to apply Buddhist teaching in modern educational settings, promoting the Buddhist principles for character development. Mindfulness in the modern era has become popular as an effective therapy for reducing stress and anxiety, enhancing the well-being and mental health of students. Incorporating mindfulness into learning activities will effectively help the students improve academic performance and strengthen the moral behavior of the students. Ultimately, integrating mindfulness in education enhances the character development of the students, promoting inner peace, kindness, and moral values.

IV. CONCLUSION

The rising issues of moral degradation and mental health challenges in the present situation remark the urgency of an education system that is not only concerned with academic achievements but also with the character development as well as mental health and well-being of the students. Education in this 21st century should give more concern to moral and mental development, preparing generations with moral behavior and mental qualities for a sustainable future. The Buddhist approach to education and integration of mindfulness in education offer alternative solutions to address the challenges. The Buddhist education which is called “*sikkhā*” reflects the profound concept of education beyond intellectual learning, but also involves the ethical training that brings to character and spiritual development. The Buddhist education is grounded in the three pillars of learning, namely *sīla-sikkhā* (moral behavior), *samādhi-sikkhā* (mental training), and *paññā-sikkhā* (development of wisdom), offering a holistic approach to enhance the moral, mental and wisdom development. The Buddha’s teachings serve as the foundation for moral and mental development. *Sīla-sikkhā* is a training to promote moral development. *Hiri* (moral shame) and *ottappa* (moral dread), the foundations of morality, prevent individuals from engaging in unwholesome actions and maintain moral behavior. *Sīla-sikkhā* involves the practice of right speech (*sammāvācā*), right action (*sammākammanto*), and right livelihood (*sammājīvo*), enabling the people to maintain good speech, behavior, and living. *Samādhi-sikkhā* is a mental training to enhance mental development. It involves the practice of right

⁶¹ Wilani, N. M. A., et al. (2022): 225.

effort (*sammāvāyāmo*), right mindfulness (*sammāsati*) and right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*). These practices allow people to cultivate positive mental states and eliminate negative mental states, maintain awareness in the present moments, and stay focused, enabling them to manage stress and anxiety, and fostering peaceful living and mental health. *Paññā-sikkhā* is training for wisdom development, through enhancing the right view (*sammāditṭhi*) and right thought (*sammāsaṅkappo*). This element is very important in shaping individuals with moral considerations and strengthening positive emotions like detachment, love, compassion, and non-violence. Wisdom serves as an important element in understanding the nature of reality. With rising levels of stress, anxiety, and mental health issues among students and educators, mindfulness plays a significant role as a holistic approach to addressing these challenges. Integrating mindfulness in education is the most effective way to apply Buddhist teaching into modern educational settings, promoting the Buddhist principles for character development. Integrating mindfulness in education involves incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum, teaching methods, character-building activities, and school cultures. Certain subjects in the school can be adapted to incorporate mindfulness-based activities. Learning activities can promote mindfulness such as mindful reading, mindful writing, and mindful listening. Short meditation before the class effectively helps the students to strengthen their focus and concentration in studying in the classroom. Mindfulness practice also can be included in character-building activities such as a one-day mindfulness program for students and teachers. The present has demonstrated how mindfulness has many positive impacts on the mental health and well-being of students. Mindfulness offers numerous benefits such as enhancing concentration and focus, fostering emotional intelligence and well-being, and reducing stress and anxiety. Incorporating mindfulness into learning activities effectively helps the students to improve academic performance and strengthen the moral behavior of the students.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AND FOSTERING UNITY FOR GLOBAL HARMONY

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Abstract:

This study delves into the transformative role of mindfulness in education as a foundational means to cultivate a compassionate, sustainable future while fostering global unity and harmony. Grounded in Buddhist principles, it elucidates how mindfulness - beyond its contemporary applications - nurtures emotional intelligence, ethical discernment, and ecological consciousness. By fostering an awareness that transcends self-interest, mindfulness catalyzes empathy, moral integrity, and a deep sense of interconnectedness with all sentient beings. Furthermore, the study explores the imperative of global unity in confronting pressing challenges such as climate change, systemic social inequities, and the erosion of ethical governance. It posits that only through a collective commitment to compassionate diplomacy, radical inclusivity, and non-violence can humanity hope to navigate the complexities of an interdependent world. In this light, the principles of interbeing - central to Buddhist thought - offer a compelling paradigm for reimagining international relations, emphasizing mutual respect, deep listening, and the resolution of conflict through understanding rather than coercion. A critical examination of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework is presented as an alternative model of development that seamlessly integrates material progress with spiritual and psychological well-being. Unlike conventional economic paradigms that prioritize GDP growth at the expense of social and ecological harmony, the GNH approach underscores the intrinsic value of mindfulness, ethical governance, and environmental stewardship in shaping a just and balanced society. This study underscores how Bhutan's model provides a valuable blueprint for rethinking global development metrics in alignment

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with the holistic well-being of both individuals and the planet. Ultimately, this research advocates for a paradigm shift in education - one that transcends rote learning and instrumentalist knowledge in favor of an education that cultivates inner wisdom, ethical responsibility, and a profound sense of global kinship. Mindful education, rooted in the principles of awareness and compassion, is positioned as a powerful instrument for nurturing future generations of leaders equipped to address the existential crises of the modern age. By embracing a global ethic of mindfulness and cooperation, humanity can move toward a more harmonious, sustainable, and enlightened world.

Keywords: *Buddhism, mindfulness, sustainable future, global harmony.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Mindfulness and emotional intelligence

Mindfulness-based educational practices serve as a transformative vehicle for the cultivation of emotional intelligence, a concept defined by Daniel Goleman as the capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate one's own emotions while skillfully navigating interpersonal relationships.¹ Emotional intelligence is not merely a psychological construct but an essential faculty for ethical living, social harmony, and psychological well-being. Within Buddhist thought, mindfulness (*sati*) functions as the cornerstone of emotional cultivation, fostering a heightened awareness of internal mental states and their ethical ramifications.

A profound exposition of mindfulness in this context is found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10), wherein the Buddha instructs practitioners to engage in systematic contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), thoughts (*cittānupassanā*), and mental objects (*dhammānupassanā*)—a practice aimed at developing clarity, insight, and equanimity.² By refining one's attentional faculties and deepening introspective awareness, this discipline enables practitioners to transcend reactive tendencies, cultivating instead a measured and discerning approach to emotional and cognitive stimuli. Within an educational setting, this translates to the fostering of self-awareness and emotional regulation, equipping students with the resilience to respond to challenges thoughtfully rather than impulsively.

Beyond individual self-mastery, mindfulness in education fosters *sampajañña* – clear comprehension of one's actions and their ethical implications. This quality is indispensable in an increasingly interconnected world, where emotional intelligence is a prerequisite not only for personal success but also for meaningful contributions to collective well-being. By nurturing mindfulness, students develop a greater capacity for empathy, deep listening, and constructive engagement with diverse perspectives, thereby mitigating conflict and fostering more harmonious relationships.

¹ Goleman (1995), p. 32.

² Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145.

Empirical research underscores the transformative impact of mindfulness-based interventions in education. Studies indicate that students who engage in mindfulness training exhibit improved attentional control, reduced anxiety, and enhanced social interactions.³ These findings align with Buddhist psychological insights, which posit that a mind cultivated in mindfulness attains a state of *upekkhā* (equanimity), allowing for greater stability amidst emotional turbulence. In contrast to contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize rote learning and cognitive achievement, a mindfulness-centered approach nurtures a more holistic development of the student - one that integrates intellectual, emotional, and ethical dimensions of growth.

By embedding mindfulness into curricula, educators can provide students with the cognitive and emotional tools necessary to navigate the complexities of an ever-evolving social and academic landscape with greater poise and adaptability. In doing so, education moves beyond the mere transmission of knowledge, becoming a vehicle for profound self-transformation and social responsibility. Such an approach not only aligns with the Buddhist vision of education as a path to wisdom (*prajñā*), ethical integrity (*śīla*), and mental discipline (*samādhi*) but also offers a powerful antidote to the psychological fragmentation and ethical uncertainty that characterize contemporary society. Ultimately, by cultivating mindfulness in education, we nurture a generation of individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also deeply attuned to the well-being of themselves, others, and the world at large.

1.2. Ethical behavior and compassionate action

Buddhist ethics, as systematically outlined in the Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya Atṭhaṅgika Magga), provide a profound ethical foundation for education. The principles of right conduct (*sammā kammanta*), right speech (*sammā vācā*), and right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) emphasize moral integrity, responsible action, and a compassionate approach to life—values that align seamlessly with contemporary educational imperatives of honesty, empathy, and social responsibility.⁴ From a Buddhist perspective, education is not merely a means of acquiring intellectual knowledge but a process of moral cultivation, wherein students develop discernment, ethical awareness, and an intrinsic commitment to non-harming (*ahiṃsā*).

A mindful education, deeply rooted in these ethical precepts, goes beyond conventional moral instruction by fostering direct experiential insight into ethical behavior. Through the cultivation of mindfulness (*satī*), students become increasingly aware of their thoughts, speech, and actions, enabling them to act with greater wisdom (*prajñā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). The practice of mindful reflection encourages self-regulation, moral responsibility, and a sense of interconnectedness, allowing students to engage with the world in a manner that is both ethically and socially constructive.

³ Jennings et al. (2019), p. 78.

⁴ Bodhi (2000), p. 84.

1.3. The transformative power of *mettā bhāvanā* in education

A particularly effective practice in this regard is “*mettā bhāvanā*” (loving-kindness meditation), a contemplative discipline that nurtures unconditional benevolence toward oneself and others. Within Buddhist psychology, *mettā* functions as a powerful antidote to destructive emotions such as anger, resentment, and hostility, replacing them with empathy, patience, and goodwill.⁵ Research has demonstrated that students who regularly engage in *mettā* meditation exhibit significantly lower levels of aggression, greater emotional resilience, and enhanced prosocial behavior - traits that contribute to more harmonious and compassionate learning environments.⁶

Moreover, mindfulness-based interventions in schools have been linked to a measurable reduction in bullying, conflict, and exclusionary behavior. By fostering deep emotional awareness and ethical sensitivity, mindfulness enables students to transcend ego-driven reactions, allowing them to approach interpersonal challenges with understanding and kindness rather than defensiveness or hostility. In this sense, mindfulness in education functions not merely as a personal well-being strategy but as a socially transformative practice, shaping individuals who are both morally discerning and actively engaged in the well-being of others.

1.4. Mindfulness as a path to a compassionate and sustainable future

By embedding mindfulness within the educational framework, institutions can nurture individuals who are not only intellectually proficient but also ethically grounded and socially conscious. A Buddhist-informed approach to education - centered on mindful awareness, ethical reflection, and compassionate engagement - has the potential to cultivate a generation of leaders and citizens who embody integrity, altruism, and a deep sense of global responsibility. This integrative model of education, drawing from Buddhist ethical wisdom, provides a pathway toward a more harmonious, equitable, and sustainable future - one in which individuals not only excel in academic pursuits but also contribute meaningfully to the collective flourishing of humanity and the planet at large.

1.5. Environmental consciousness and sustainable living

The Buddhist concept of interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*) underscores the interconnected nature of all life forms, emphasizing that human actions have direct consequences on the environment.⁷ The *Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta* warns that moral decline leads to environmental degradation and societal unrest, illustrating that ethical conduct directly impacts the balance of nature and human society.⁸ This *sutta* serves as a foundational text for understanding the Buddhist perspective on environmental ethics, linking

⁵ Salzberg (1995), p. 57.

⁶ Weare (2014), p. 102.

⁷ Harvey (2013), p. 56.

⁸ DN 26, (trans) Walshe (1995), p. 397.

human greed and negligence to ecological collapse.

Incorporating mindfulness into education fosters ecological awareness, encouraging students to adopt sustainable lifestyles. Schools that implement mindfulness-based environmental programs, such as nature meditation and eco-conscious decision-making, report increased student engagement in conservation efforts.⁹ These programs teach students to view nature as a living entity interconnected with their existence, reinforcing the Buddhist teaching of *mettā* (loving-kindness) toward all sentient beings. The *Dhammapada* 129 reminds us that just as all beings fear suffering and desire happiness, humans must extend their compassion to nature and its ecosystems.¹⁰ Bhutan provides an exemplary case of mindful environmental governance, where Buddhist principles are integrated into policy-making. The country's constitutional mandate requires that at least 60% of the land remains under forest cover, reflecting the Buddhist values of conservation and long-term sustainability.¹¹ This model highlights how mindfulness, when ingrained in education and governance, fosters a deep respect for nature and responsibility toward future generations. Furthermore, the Buddhist precept of *non-harming* (*ahiṃsā*) extends beyond interpersonal ethics to environmental stewardship. The *Jataka tales* frequently depict the Buddha in past lives as a compassionate protector of wildlife, emphasizing that harming nature disrupts the balance of life.¹² These narratives can be integrated into education to instill an ethical responsibility for environmental conservation among young learners.

1.6. Fostering unity and global harmony

Mindfulness promotes inclusivity and global harmony by cultivating awareness of shared humanity. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* by Śāntideva states, "As long as space endures, and as long as sentient beings remain, may I too remain to dispel the suffering of the world."¹³ This selfless ideal underpins Buddhist-inspired diplomacy and educational policies aimed at fostering peace and cooperation. The cultivation of *karuṇā* (compassion) and *mettā* (loving-kindness) in educational settings ensures that future generations internalize values of empathy and collective well-being.

The *Sigālovāda Sutta* provides ethical guidelines for harmonious social interactions, advocating for mutual respect, generosity, and non-violence in human relationships.¹⁴ By incorporating these teachings into curricula, education can serve as a vehicle for fostering unity and reducing global conflicts. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) model reflects this philosophy, integrating mindfulness with governance to promote collective

⁹ Rabois (2016), p. 121.

¹⁰ Buddhārakkhita (1985), p. 56

¹¹ Ura et al. (2012), p. 72.

¹² Cowell (1895) p. 203.

¹³ Śāntideva (2006) p. 147.

¹⁴ Walshe, 1995, p. 461.

well-being.¹⁵ Unlike conventional economic models, GNH prioritizes holistic development, measuring success through psychological well-being, cultural preservation, and ecological conservation. This model demonstrates that mindfulness-based policies can create equitable and peaceful societies. At an international level, Buddhist diplomacy has historically played a role in fostering peace. The *Dhamma Vijaya* (conquest by righteousness) policy of Emperor Ashoka exemplifies how mindfulness and non-violence can guide global interactions.¹⁶ Modern applications of this principle can be seen in interfaith dialogues and global sustainability efforts, where mindfulness-based negotiations lead to cooperative solutions. Mindfulness-based education aligns with Buddhist principles to cultivate emotional intelligence, ethical behavior, environmental awareness, and global unity. Through mindfulness, students develop resilience, compassion, and responsibility - traits essential for navigating the challenges of the 21st century. The Buddhist teachings on interdependence and ethical responsibility highlight the importance of sustainable living, while mindfulness-based diplomacy offers a framework for fostering global harmony. As education evolves to meet modern needs, integrating mindfulness offers a sustainable and ethical framework for fostering a more compassionate and interconnected world.

II. MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR COMPASSION AND SUSTAINABILITY

2.1. The role of mindfulness in emotional intelligence

Mindfulness cultivates emotional intelligence by enabling individuals to regulate emotions, develop self-awareness, and enhance interpersonal relationships. Schools integrating mindfulness practices have reported lower levels of bullying and improved student relationships, as learners become more compassionate and aware of others' feelings. For instance, schools in the United States, Europe, and Asia have demonstrated that students engaged in mindfulness programs exhibit increased empathy and reduced anxiety, contributing to more inclusive and supportive learning environments.¹⁷ In an increasingly digital world, mindfulness can also address issues such as cyberbullying and misinformation. Teaching mindful communication encourages students to pause and reflect before responding online, promoting a culture of respect and understanding in virtual interactions.¹⁸ Mindfulness cultivates emotional intelligence by enabling individuals to regulate emotions, develop self-awareness, and enhance interpersonal relationships. Schools integrating mindfulness practices have reported lower levels of bullying and improved student relationships, as learners become more compassionate and aware of others' feelings. For instance, schools in the United States, Europe, and Asia have demonstrated that students engaged in mindfulness programs exhibit

¹⁵ Ura et al. (2012), p. 64.

¹⁶ Thapar (1997), p. 132.

¹⁷ Jennings et al. (2019), p. 72.

¹⁸ Weare (2014), p. 45.

increased empathy and reduced anxiety, contributing to more inclusive and supportive learning environments.¹⁹ In Buddhist teachings, mindfulness (*sati*) is central to the cultivation of emotional intelligence as it enhances self-awareness and emotional regulation. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* underscores the importance of mindfulness of emotions (*vedanānupassanā*), thoughts (*cittānupassanā*), and mental states (*dhammānupassanā*) in developing clarity and emotional balance.²⁰ These foundational practices allow individuals to observe emotions without attachment or aversion, thereby reducing impulsive reactions and fostering equanimity. Mindfulness-based education aligns with the Buddhist ethical framework, particularly *sīla* (moral discipline), which advocates for compassionate interactions and the practice of right speech (*sammā vācā*). Right speech, as outlined in the *Noble Eightfold Path*, emphasizes truthful, beneficial, and harmonious communication.²¹ By incorporating mindfulness training, students learn to engage in thoughtful dialogue, reducing conflicts and misunderstandings in both physical and digital spaces. In an increasingly digital world, mindfulness can also address issues such as cyberbullying and misinformation. Teaching mindful communication encourages students to pause and reflect before responding online, promoting a culture of respect and understanding in virtual interactions.²² Digital mindfulness, a modern extension of traditional mindfulness practices, fosters responsible engagement with social media, preventing impulsive reactions that could escalate conflicts.²³ Additionally, scientific research supports the effectiveness of mindfulness in emotional intelligence. Studies show that mindfulness meditation enhances activity in the prefrontal cortex, which is associated with emotion regulation and executive functioning.²⁴ Schools implementing mindfulness programs have reported that students develop increased self-regulation skills, reducing aggressive behavior and fostering positive social interactions.²⁵ Moreover, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* by Śāntideva encourages the cultivation of patience (*kṣānti*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) as essential qualities of emotional intelligence.²⁶ His teachings advocate for the intentional development of these traits to create harmonious and compassionate societies, reinforcing the long-term benefits of mindfulness-based education. Mindfulness fosters emotional intelligence by enhancing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassionate communication. By integrating mindfulness into education, students develop the ability to navigate interpersonal relationships with wisdom and empathy. The Buddhist emphasis on mindfulness as a tool for cultivating patience and right speech further strengthens its role in emotional development. As

¹⁹ Jennings et al. (2019), p. 72.

²⁰ MN 10, (trans.) Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145.

²¹ Bodhi (2000), p. 72.

²² Weare (2014), p. 45.

²³ Harvey (2013), p. 87.

²⁴ Davidson & Begley (2012), p. 114.

²⁵ Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor (2010), p. 140.

²⁶ Śāntideva (2006), p. 92.

technology continues to shape modern interactions, digital mindfulness provides an ethical framework for responsible communication. Therefore, the inclusion of mindfulness-based education is not only beneficial for students but essential for cultivating a society that values compassion, ethical behavior, and sustainable relationships.

2.1. Fostering unity for global harmony: A Buddhist perspective

2.1.1. Compassion as a unifying force

Buddhist philosophy upholds compassion (*karuṇā*) as a foundational principle for transcending national, racial, and cultural divides. The cultivation of empathy and altruistic concern for others serves as a bridge between diverse communities, fostering global cooperation and sustainable peace. Compassion, as emphasized in the teachings of the Buddha, is not merely a passive emotional response but an active commitment to alleviating suffering (*dukkha*) and promoting the well-being of all sentient beings.²⁷ This principle finds expression in modern diplomacy, particularly in the Gross National Happiness (GNH)-oriented foreign policies of Bhutan, which prioritize mutual respect, shared prosperity, and collective well-being over zero-sum competition.²⁸ The *Bodhisattva* ideal in Mahāyāna Buddhism epitomizes this universal compassion, where beings like Avalokiteshvara embody an unwavering commitment to easing the suffering of others, irrespective of social, political, or geographical distinctions.²⁹ Contemporary applications of Buddhist compassion in governance can be observed in initiatives that emphasize humanitarian aid, refugee support, and global public health efforts. For instance, the principles of compassionate diplomacy align with Buddhist ethics in international relations, advocating for dialogue over aggression, understanding over prejudice, and reconciliation over retaliation.³⁰

2.1.2. Inclusivity and respect for diversity

The Buddhist principle of non-discrimination (*aviparita*) calls for an inclusive social framework that recognizes the inherent dignity and potential of all individuals. This ethos aligns with contemporary efforts to promote inclusive governance and equitable representation. In the *Aggañña Sutta*, the Buddha critiques caste-based hierarchies, advocating instead for a meritocratic and ethical leadership model where rulers serve the common good rather than personal gain.³¹ Such teachings provide a moral foundation for modern policies that emphasize the participation of marginalized and historically oppressed groups in decision-making processes. The intersection between Buddhist ethics and contemporary global initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is particularly evident in efforts to eradicate

²⁷ Dalai Lama (1999), p. 87.

²⁸ Heruka, (1995), p. 301.

²⁹ Lopez, (2008), p. 133.

³⁰ Thurman, (2006), p. 205.

³¹ DN 27, Walshe (1987), p. 409.

poverty, address health disparities, and combat environmental degradation through collective action.³² These principles also resonate with the concept of *dāna* (generosity), which underscores social responsibility and resource-sharing as means of reducing systemic inequality.³³ Buddhist monastic traditions, which function as centers of community welfare and education in many parts of Asia, illustrate how spiritual leadership can contribute to inclusive and participatory governance models.

Furthermore, in pluralistic societies, Buddhist thought supports interfaith dialogue and mutual respect as mechanisms for preventing sectarian violence and fostering social harmony.³⁴ Countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand have leveraged Buddhist councils and mediation frameworks to bridge interethnic and interreligious tensions, demonstrating the practical application of Buddhist inclusivity in statecraft and communal peace-building.³⁵

III. PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT MODELS

The Buddhist commitment to non-violence (*ahimsā*) is an essential principle for conflict resolution and sustainable governance. Historical exemplars such as Emperor Ashoka, who renounced warfare following the Kalinga conflict and implemented policies rooted in Buddhist ethics, illustrate how non-violence can be institutionalized in governance.³⁶ Ashoka's rock edicts emphasize moral leadership, religious tolerance, and the welfare of all beings, embodying a vision of statecraft that prioritizes ethical responsibility over territorial expansion.³⁷ Similarly, the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet under Guru Padmasambhava demonstrates how peaceful means of cultural integration and dialogue can be more enduring than coercion.³⁸ His non-violent propagation of *Dharma*, which synthesized indigenous Bon traditions with Buddhist teachings, underscores the capacity of Buddhist frameworks to accommodate and harmonize diverse cultural elements without erasing local identities. In the modern era, Buddhist non-violent resistance movements, such as those led by Mahatma Gandhi (though he was primarily Hindu, he was deeply influenced by Jain and Buddhist *ahimsā*) and Thich Nhat Hanh, provide compelling examples of how moral force can counteract oppression and injustice.³⁹ The *Engaged Buddhism* movement, which integrates meditative insight with social activism, further demonstrates how Buddhist teachings can be mobilized to address contemporary global challenges, from climate change

³² UN (2015).

³³ Harvey (2013), p. 214.

³⁴ Gethin (1998), p. 276.

³⁵ Queen & King (1996), p. 119.

³⁶ Strong (1983), p. 145.

³⁷ Dhendrup (2001), p. 157.

³⁸ Snellgrove (1987), p. 286.

³⁹ King (2009), p. 78.

to human rights violations.⁴⁰

3.1. Buddhist economic and environmental ethics: toward a sustainable and compassionate future

Alternative models of development inspired by Buddhist principles present viable pathways toward a more sustainable, equitable, and ethically grounded global economy. The Buddhist critique of consumerism and material excess, as articulated in E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful*, advocates for an economics of sufficiency - a paradigm that prioritizes well-being over unchecked economic growth.⁴¹ This vision resonates profoundly with contemporary sustainability movements, which seek to redefine prosperity beyond GDP-centric metrics. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness model exemplifies this approach by integrating spiritual, environmental, and social well-being into national policy, challenging conventional economic frameworks that equate growth with progress.⁴² At its core, Buddhist economic ethics call for a fundamental reorientation of values - one that shifts from acquisitiveness to contentment, from competition to cooperation, and exploitation to stewardship. This perspective does not reject material progress outright but insists that economic activity be harmonized with ethical responsibility and ecological balance. Buddhist teachings on right livelihood emphasize that economic pursuits should uphold human dignity, social justice, and environmental integrity, offering a compelling ethical foundation for sustainable economic policies in the modern world.

3.2. Interdependence and environmental responsibility

From an ecological standpoint, Buddhist ethics offer a profound vision of environmental responsibility rooted in the doctrine of interdependence. This principle underscores that all forms of life are deeply interconnected, challenging the anthropocentric worldviews that have contributed to environmental degradation and climate crises. The Jataka tales, which recount the Buddha's past lives, are replete with narratives that affirm the sanctity of nature, depicting forests, rivers, and animals as integral to moral and spiritual life.⁴³ These stories serve as ethical allegories, reminding humanity of its duty to protect and coexist harmoniously with the natural world. Contemporary Buddhist movements have revived and applied these ethical precepts in innovative ways. In Thailand, for example, monks have ordained trees as sacred beings, wrapping them in saffron robes to prevent deforestation and encourage environmental conservation.⁴⁴ This practice not only preserves biodiversity but also reframes ecological protection as a moral and spiritual imperative, reinforcing the idea that environmental degradation is not merely an economic issue but an ethical failing.

⁴⁰ Jones (2003), p. 244.

⁴¹ Schumacher (1973), p. 56.

⁴² Ura et al. (2012), p. 34.

⁴³ Appleton (2010), p. 189.

⁴⁴ Darlington (2012), p. 88.

3.3. Buddhism as a guiding framework for global harmony

As the world grapples with increasing ecological crises, social inequalities, and geopolitical fragmentation, Buddhist thought offers a deeply relevant ethical framework for fostering global harmony, inclusivity, and sustainable development. The Buddhist commitment to compassion, non-violence, and ethical governance provides both a moral compass and a practical methodology for addressing contemporary global challenges. The application of Buddhist principles in governance, diplomacy, and ecological conservation demonstrates their enduring relevance in shaping ethical leadership. Historical precedents - from Emperor Ashoka's policies of non-violence to contemporary Buddhist-inspired social movements - attest to the capacity of these teachings to unite diverse communities in the pursuit of justice and sustainability. In a world increasingly defined by interdependence, Buddhist wisdom reminds us that genuine peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of wisdom, ethical conduct, and compassionate action.

As globalization accelerates, societies must reimagine economic and environmental policies through a lens that prioritizes well-being, sustainability, and ethical responsibility. By embracing mindfulness, ethical stewardship, and a commitment to non-harming, humanity can transition from exploitative paradigms to a holistic and harmonious model of co-existence. In doing so, Buddhist ethics provide not only a vision for a sustainable future but also a practical guide for navigating the complexities of modern civilization with wisdom and compassion.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mindfulness, when systematically integrated into education and global diplomacy, serves as a transformative force, guiding societies toward a future characterized by compassion, sustainability, and harmony. In an era defined by unprecedented challenges - ranging from climate change to social fragmentation - mindfulness offers not only an inner refuge but also a practical methodology for cultivating wisdom, ethical responsibility, and global cooperation. By embedding mindfulness-based practices within educational curricula, societies can nurture a generation of individuals who are not only emotionally intelligent but also environmentally conscious and ethically grounded. The Buddhist emphasis on unity through compassion, inclusivity, and non-violence provides both a philosophical foundation and a practical approach to addressing the complexities of globalization. In contrast to conventional models of education that prioritize cognitive achievement and economic utility, a mindfulness-centered education fosters self-awareness, moral discernment, and a deep sense of interconnectedness - qualities essential for ethical leadership in the 21st century. The Gross National Happiness framework of Bhutan exemplifies the potential of holistic development in fostering peace, well-being, and social harmony. Unlike conventional economic models that measure progress primarily through GDP growth, Bhutan's approach integrates spiritual, psychological, and environmental well-being, offering a more comprehensive vision of human flourishing. The GNH framework reflects Buddhist

principles of mindfulness, interdependence, and compassion, demonstrating how governance rooted in ethical values can contribute to both individual fulfillment and collective prosperity. As humanity navigates the tensions of modern existence, these Buddhist principles serve as a moral compass, guiding individuals, communities, and nations toward greater ethical awareness and social cohesion. By embracing mindful governance, policymakers can cultivate a deeper sense of accountability, fairness, and long-term sustainability, ensuring that economic and technological advancements do not come at the expense of social justice or ecological integrity. Practicing mindfulness at both the individual and collective levels fosters a profound transformation - one that extends beyond personal well-being to strengthen global cooperation and peacebuilding efforts. The conscious cultivation of wisdom, ethical conduct, and compassionate action equip individuals and institutions with the moral clarity necessary to engage in constructive dialogue, conflict resolution, and sustainable policymaking. A world guided by mindfulness and ethical discernment acknowledges interdependence as a fundamental reality - recognizing that the well-being of one is inextricably linked to the well-being of all. In such a paradigm, global unity is not a distant ideal but a practical necessity, fostering inclusive decision-making, environmental stewardship, and cross-cultural understanding. By embracing mindfulness as a foundational principle in education, governance, and international relations, we can work toward a sustainable and inclusive future - one in which cooperation triumphs over division, compassion over indifference, and wisdom over short-sightedness. In this vision, unity is not merely an aspiration but the very foundation of global harmony.

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INTEGRATING MONK BUDDHIST MINDFULNESS PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT IN MODERN WORKPLACES

Arlawka*

Abstract:

This study investigates how mindfulness practices can help manage workplace stress in the Mon Buddhist community. Mindfulness, which involves being completely present and engaged in the moment, has received significant attention in modern workplaces for its potential to improve employee well-being, alleviate stress, and boost productivity. The Mon Buddhist community, known for its deep cultural and spiritual heritage, provides a unique viewpoint on mindfulness, emphasizing meditation, chanting, and mindful living to attain mental clarity and emotional balance.

This study aims to investigate how traditional Mon Buddhist mindfulness techniques can be tailored for contemporary workplace environments to boost employee well-being and productivity. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative data from surveys and physiological metrics with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups. Results indicate notable decreases in perceived stress, enhancements in mindfulness scores, and favorable physiological changes among participants who consistently engaged in mindfulness practices.

The research highlights the importance of cultural context in adopting mindfulness practices and demonstrates that community support enhances their effectiveness. Integrating traditional Mon Buddhist techniques into workplace practices allows organizations to create a supportive environment that promotes mindfulness and reduces stress. Furthermore, the study provides practical recommendations for developing mindfulness programs within the workplace and shares valuable insights for future studies on culturally diverse mindfulness approaches.

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Keywords: *Mindfulness, workplace, stress management, monk Buddhist community, cultural adaptation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness is fully present and engaged in the current moment without judgment. In modern workplaces, Mindfulness has gained significant attention as a tool for enhancing employee well-being, reducing stress, and improving productivity. Methods like mindful breathing, meditation, and mindful breaks are progressively included in corporate wellness initiatives. Studies indicate that practicing Mindfulness can enhance focus, emotional control, and overall job satisfaction.

The Mon Buddhist community, recognized for its profound cultural and spiritual heritage, provides a distinctive perspective on mindfulness.¹ Within the framework of Buddhism, especially the Mon tradition, mindfulness is underscored as an essential practice for attaining mental clarity and emotional equilibrium.² The daily practices of this community typically comprise meditation, chanting, and other mindfulness exercises intricately intertwined with their spiritual convictions.³ By examining mindfulness in this particular context, we can acquire valuable insights into the adaptation of traditional practices for effectively managing stress within contemporary workplace environments.

Studying mindfulness in the workplace is crucial because it addresses the growing issue of stress among employees. Chronic stress can lead to burnout, decreased productivity, and health problems. Mindfulness techniques, including mindful breathing, meditation, and intentional breaks, have proven effective in alleviating stress, enhancing focus, and improving emotional regulation. By integrating mindfulness into workplace practices, organizations can foster a healthier and more productive work environment.

The Mon Buddhist community offers a unique perspective on mindfulness and stress management. Mon Buddhism emphasizes Mindfulness as a core practice for achieving mental clarity and emotional balance. Daily practices such as meditation, chanting, and mindful living are deeply rooted in their spiritual beliefs and provide effective tools for practical stress management (Bodhipaksa, 2008; Craig, 2019).

Studying Mindfulness within the Mon Buddhist context can provide valuable insights into how traditional practices can be adapted to modern

¹ Dr. Sai Non Ju (2024): 44-68.; Journal of Rāmaññarattha Buddhist University, 2024, *Rāmaññarattha Buddhist University*, 2, 163; Ven. Pāla (2023): 23 - 31.

² Rāmañña Dhammācariya, (2023), *Rāmañña Dhammācariya Magazine. Rāmañña Nikāya Office*, 1; Jha, A. P (2015): 10.

³ Jha, A. P., Morrison, A. B., Dainer-Best, J., Parker, S., Rostrup, N., & Stanley, E. A, 2015, "Minds'At Attention": Mindfulness Training Curbs Attentional Lapses in Military Cohorts. *PLOS ONE*, 10(2), e0116889; Stephanie (2024).

workplace settings (Gombrich, 2006). This integration can help employees manage stress more effectively, fostering a sense of inner peace and resilience (Nesterkin & Shcherbina, 2019).⁴ Additionally, it can promote a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and the benefits of incorporating diverse mindfulness practices into corporate wellness programs.

1.1. Research objectives

This study primarily aims to examine the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in alleviating workplace stress within the Mon Buddhist community.⁵ It focuses on adapting traditional Mon Buddhist techniques - such as meditation, chanting, and mindful living - for contemporary work environments to improve employee well-being and productivity. Furthermore, the research intends to explore the Mon Buddhist community's distinct cultural and spiritual elements that aid stress management, offering insights into how these practices can be incorporated into corporate wellness initiatives to foster a more balanced and stress-free workplace. By fulfilling these objectives, the study aspires to enrich the broader mindfulness research field and provide actionable recommendations for organizations interested in implementing mindfulness-based stress management approaches.

1.2. Research questions and hypotheses

This study seeks to explore crucial research questions regarding the role of mindfulness practices in managing stress within the Mon Buddhist community at work. Key questions include: In what ways do traditional Mon Buddhist mindfulness practices affect employee stress levels? Which techniques are most effective at alleviating workplace stress in this community? Moreover, how can these traditional methods be adapted for contemporary corporate settings to boost employee well-being and productivity? The study also posits that incorporating Mon Buddhist mindfulness practices into workplace routines will considerably lower stress levels, enhance emotional regulation, and elevate overall job satisfaction for employees.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Mindfulness and stress management

Mindfulness practices have been extensively studied for their effectiveness in managing stress. Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs), such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), have shown significant benefits in reducing

⁴ Stephanie, S. (2024). Practicing Mindfulness at Work: When It Helps and Doesn't Help | *Psychology Today*, p. 98.

⁵ Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods & techniques*. New Age International (P) Ltd, p. 56.

stress and improving overall well-being.⁶ These interventions typically involve techniques like mindful breathing, body scans, and meditation, which help individuals become more aware of their thoughts and emotions, allowing them to respond to stressors more calmly and effectively (Mustafa, 2024). Research indicates that mindfulness practices can improve physiological and psychological, including reduced cortisol levels, lower blood pressure, and enhanced emotional regulation (Mustafa, 2024; Morton et al., 2020). Additionally, research underscores the importance of mindfulness in fostering positive psychological outcomes, such as greater resilience, improved concentration, and elevated job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2021a).

However, the effectiveness of these interventions can vary based on demographic factors and the specific context in which they are applied (Mustafa, 2024). Despite the promising results, methodological challenges remain, such as reliance on self-reported data and the need for long-term follow-up studies (Mustafa, 2024). Additionally, there is a growing interest in integrating Mindfulness with positive psychology to enhance well-being beyond clinical symptom reduction (Allen et al., 2021a).

Overall, the literature supports the efficacy of mindfulness practices in managing stress, but further research is needed to address existing limitations and explore culturally diverse applications (Mustafa, 2024; Allen et al., 2021a).

2.2. Mindfulness in the workplace

Mindfulness interventions in workplace settings have been widely studied for their potential to enhance employee well-being and productivity. Research has shown that Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs), such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), can significantly reduce stress, improve mental health, and increase overall job satisfaction.⁷ A systematic review and meta-regression analysis of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) found that MBIs and mindfulness-informed interventions (MIIs) positively impact Mindfulness, well-being, mental health, stress, resilience, physical health, and work-related factors (Michaelsen et al., 2023). Another review highlighted the practical implications of these interventions, noting improvements in employee health and well-being, but also

⁶ Mustafa, S., 2024, *The Impact of Mindfulness-Based Interventions on Stress Reduction and Well-Being Across Different Age Groups-Literature Review* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 4947708). Social Science Research Network. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4947708>; Allen J.G (2021): 116. Allen, J. G., Romate, J., & Rajkumar, E, 2021a, Mindfulness-based positive psychology interventions: A systematic review. *BMC Psychology*, 9(1), 116. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-021-00618-2>

⁷ Michaelsen, M. M., Graser, J., Onescheit, M., Tuma, M. P., Werdecker, L., Pieper, D., & Esch, T. (2023). Mindfulness-Based and Mindfulness-Informed Interventions at the Workplace: A Systematic Review and Meta-Regression Analysis of RCTs. *Mindfulness*, 14 (6), 1271 – 1304. Jamieson, S. D., & Tuckey, M. R. (2017). Mindfulness interventions in the workplace: A critique of the current state of the literature. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(2), 180 – 193.

pointed out methodological concerns, such as the need for better internal validity and the use of objective cognitive measures (Jamieson & Tuckey, 2017).

Overall, the literature supports the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in the workplace, though further research is needed to address existing limitations and optimize these interventions for diverse work environments (Michaelsen et al., 2023; Jamieson & Tuckey, 2017; Dinesh et al., 2022).

2.3. Buddhist practices and mindfulness

Buddhist teachings on mindfulness are fundamentally tied to the core principles and practices of the tradition, providing deep insights into managing stress. “Sati,” or mindfulness, is a key component of the Noble Eightfold Path that directs practitioners toward enlightenment. This practice requires maintaining continuous awareness of one’s thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and the environment without judgment (Roar Lion, 2017). Such heightened awareness aids individuals in recognizing and managing stress more effectively, promoting a calm and focused mind.

One of the key teachings on Mindfulness is the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which outlines the Four Foundations of Mindfulness: Mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2023). By training in these areas, practitioners develop a deeper understanding of their experiences and learn to observe them without attachment or aversion. This detachment is crucial for managing stress, as it allows individuals to respond to stressors with equanimity rather than reactivity (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2023). Buddhist mindfulness practices, such as meditation and mindful breathing, are designed to cultivate this awareness and promote mental clarity. Meditation, in particular, helps calm the mind and reduce the physiological effects of stress by activating the body’s relaxation response (Satish, 2024). Additionally, loving-kindness (mettā) meditation encourages compassion toward oneself and others, further alleviating stress by fostering positive emotions and reducing negative self-criticism (Satish, 2024).

Overall, Buddhist practices offer a holistic approach to stress management, integrating mental, emotional, and physical well-being. By embracing these teachings, individuals can develop resilience and maintain a balanced perspective in the face of life’s challenges.

III. GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

Despite the extensive research on Mindfulness and its benefits for stress management, several gaps remain that your study aims to address. Firstly, much of the existing research focuses on clinical settings rather than workplace environments, leaving a gap in understanding how Mindfulness can be effectively integrated into corporate wellness programs (Allen et al., 2021b). Additionally, while there is substantial evidence supporting the benefits of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), there is a lack of studies exploring the specific cultural and spiritual contexts,

such as those found in the Mon Buddhist community (Creswell, 2019). Another gap is the limited research on the long-term effects of mindfulness practices in workplace settings. Most studies tend to focus on short-term outcomes, and there is a need for longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of Mindfulness on employee well-being and productivity.⁸ Furthermore, while Mindfulness has been shown to reduce stress and improve mental health, there is a need for more research on how these practices can be tailored to different demographic groups and organizational cultures to maximize their effectiveness (Allen et al., 2021b).⁹ By addressing these notable gaps, your study has the potential to provide invaluable insights into the application of mindfulness across diverse workplace environments and contribute to the formulation of more progressive and sustainable mindfulness programs.

3.1. Research methodology

This study follows the qualitative primary, quantitative first approach,¹⁰ utilizing data collected from questionnaires, including electronic sources, documents, as well as interviews and observation field. First of all, the researcher will conduct a documentary study. Secondly, the researcher will survey by collecting quantitative preliminary data as the basis for collecting and interpreting the primary qualitative data. Lastly, the researcher will do fieldwork research on the qualitative portion to gather firsthand accounts of the altering of attitude, behavior, and understanding from Mindfulness for stress management. Hence, this research methodology is divided into the following categories:

3.2. Documentary research

In this study, the researcher will collect information found in books, articles, and electronic sources. Published books and recorded notes will be used as primary sources to find out how Buddhist mindfulness practice was affected and how it has led to physical and mental development and wholesome deeds in society nowadays. Based on documental studies, Pāli texts, books, magazines, pamphlets, and pamphlets related to stress management will also be studied to understand the change within the self and other understanding. Materials, including documents, papers, books, events, recording volumes, and articles in English, Myanmar, and Mon languages, will be critically analyzed to form a clear picture of the effect of stress management through social psychology theory by applying the Buddhist mindfulness method.¹¹

⁸ Bartlett, L., Buscot, M.-J., Bindoff, A., Chambers, R., & Hassed, C, 2021, Mindfulness Is Associated With Lower Stress and Higher Work Engagement in a Large Sample of MOOC Participants. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.724126>.

⁹ Allen, J. G., Romate, J., & Rajkumar, E. (2021a). Mindfulness-based positive psychology interventions: A systematic review. *BMC Psychology*, 9(1), 116.

¹⁰ Glatthorn, A. A., Joyner, R. L., & Glatthorn, A. A, 2005, *Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: A step-by-step guide*. Corwin: SAGE [distributor].

¹¹ Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (3rd edition). SAGE Publications, Inc, p. 45.

3.1.2. Survey research

As part of this, questionnaires were used to retrieve primary data. These are precisely what they sound like: open-ended questions to which we expect the participants to provide written answers.¹² The participants were later asked more in-depth questions during an interview.

Fieldwork research will be conducted within the Phar Ga Laie meditation center. The researcher will spend several months with this center's functions and with the informants. The fieldwork research will serve as the tools for in-depth interviews. Tools such as recorders, videos, and phones will be used.

- Interview: The researcher interviewed several Monk Societies and related laity associations. For convincing purposes, the researcher interviewed 20 participants of the Laity Society from 6 townships in Mon state. As stated above, the laity ranges from 20 to 40 years old, and they usually can participate based on their abilities and modern education in civil society.

- Observation: The researcher observed the beliefs, thoughts, perceptions, and emotional, physical, and behavioral consequences of stress. The observations complemented my documentary, survey, and fieldwork research, and the data helped categorize relevant information.

3.2. Data analysis

After the data have been collected and transcribed, the following steps will be used to analyze them:¹³

- Read the data while listening to the recordings to ensure accuracy.

- To analyze the data for common themes that relate directly to the overarching question.

- To identify common themes within the data and write the story from them.

- To take note of an effort to identify the beginning, middle, and end of the story; future evaluation will attempt to identify transitions, sub-stories, emotional statements, and so on.

To code themes that allow for further development of the overall analysis, additional reference material may be added to develop a full explanation and understanding of the practitioner's experience during his or her immigration to Buddhist Mindfulness. The initial draft will be asked to verify that all facts, dates, and the like are accurately portrayed. In the event there are discrepancies, the draft will be modified.

3.3. Population and sample for study

All subject populations are selected from monastic members from two Nikāyas, Dhammayuttika Nikāya and Ramonnya Nikāya (a total of 10 members from each of Nikāya). They all are Mon by ethnicity. Their age varied

¹² Terrell, S. R. (2015). *Writing a Proposal for Your Dissertation: Guidelines and Examples* (1st Edition). The Guilford Press, p. 157.

¹³ Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (3rd edition). SAGE Publications, Inc, p. 165.

from 25 to 50 years old. Of course, all of them are male. They should be in good health to participate in the interviewing process. As the purpose of the research is to understand the method and practices of mindfulness meditation from social psychology theory, the researcher will select the meditator, the Buddhist and modern educated monk from Buddhist meditation centers, monastic education centers, and universities.

For convenience, the researcher will conduct qualitative interviews with 20 members from monasteries, meditation centers, and Buddhist University members from each place. Because all of the interviewees are members of higher ordination, educated and experienced people as well as being monks and meditators for a considerable time, their ages, as stated above, ranged probably from 25 to 60 years, and those who are younger than the prescribed ages would not much responsible for the conducting the stress-reducing. To gain a more experienced viewpoint, this study also included lay members of about 10.5 males and five females.

3.4. Validity

To avoid possible threats and ensure the validity of my conclusion, the researcher will employ the following strategies:¹⁴ triangulation, feedback, “rich data,” and quasi-statistics.¹⁵

Triangulation requires a variety of data-collection methods. Using interviews, surveys, and memos, the researcher counterbalances flaws inherent in a single method. Throughout the study, the researcher will solicit feedback from my committee when forming theories or generalizations based on my data. This can help identify and deter biases or skewed logic that could threaten the conclusions.

The qualitative aspect of this study inherently provides rich data. Interview transcripts capture details that can be found and referred to long after the interview. Writing memos creates additional “rich data” because reactions, initial theories, and/or conclusions are documented before the actual analysis of the data.

Finally, the qualitative survey functions as quasi-statistics, better informing the qualitative data. Although one would expect the statistics and the qualitative data to support each other, discrepancies help reveal possible flaws in the study. These strategies must be used to protect the data and, ultimately, the conclusions from validity threats.

3.5. Ethical considerations

The foremost requirement for any interview question is to get clearance from appropriate authorities before starting research. Further, the interview

¹⁴ Maxwell, J. A., 2013, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (3rd edition). SAGE Publications, Inc, p. 167.

¹⁵ Terrell, S. R., 2015, *Writing a Proposal for Your Dissertation: Guidelines and Examples* (1st Edition). The Guilford Press, p. 120.

questions should be such that minimizing the risk of harm to the participants in the research. Participants must agree to and sign a document as indicated in the Informed Consent Form, and they will be provided with the right to withdraw from the research at any stage of the interview. As noted, participants must be advised of their confidentiality and privacy and the potential for emotional issues arising from retelling their stories.

3.6. Analysis of findings

This research analyses psychological studies of mindfulness, aiming for phenomenal understanding and exploring the outstanding performance of Mindfulness for stress management. At this stage in the survey, Mindfulness will be defined as the four foundations of Buddhist Mindfulness, and a psychological study refers to the combination of factors from both Buddhist psychology and social psychology theory that lead to analyses to study. Self-understanding¹⁶ (Self-perception theory) and other-understanding (social comparison theory) from social psychology and cognition process from Buddhist psychology are the tools utilized in this study.

Social psychology is a scientific discipline that ‘attempts to understand and explain how individuals’ thoughts, feelings, and behavior are influenced by the actual, imagined or imagined, plied presence of other human beings.’ According to Paul Seager (2014), social psychology is connected to the context of people’s interactions.¹⁷ It is how the situation and environment influence the individual’s behavior and social psycho. The study of how people adjust their attitudes and behaviors to one another.

Buddhist psychology is primarily focused on analyzing and understanding the nature of the self, and many positive effects of meditative practice based on Buddhist psychology have been documented by researchers interested in the self process.¹⁸ Additionally, Buddhist Psychology of the University of Toronto states, “Buddhist psychology, simply put, is concerned with the alleviation of human suffering, distress, and dissatisfaction.” These theoretical assumptions showed that overemphasizing the approach of Buddhist psychology may bring about an impairment of an individual’s self-conception, while social-cognitive approaches to the self teach people that it is important to expend much energy solidifying and bolstering their sense of self, as well as promoting self-esteem.¹⁹ To be more balanced and flexible in helping individuals, the theory of self should consider aspects from both standpoints.²⁰

¹⁶ Gallagher, S., & Shear, J. (Eds.). (2000). *Models of the Self*. Imprint Academic, p. 46.

¹⁷ Seager, P. (2014). *Social Psychology: A Complete Introduction: Teach Yourself*. John Murray Press.

¹⁸ Gallagher, S., & Shear, J. (Eds.). (2000). *Models of the Self*. Imprint Academic.

¹⁹ Zhang, Y., Xiao, X., Wu, X., Zhou, S., Zhang, G., Qin, Y., & Dong, J, 2017, A global moderate resolution dataset of gross primary vegetation production for 2000–2016. *Scientific Data*, 4(1), 170165.

²⁰ Sayadaw Dr. K. Dhammasami - *Religions for Peace*, (2020, October 13). https://www.rfp.org/leadership_member/sayadaw-dr-k-dhammasami/

Mindfulness definitions were given by Venerable Dhammasami (1965), who defined it as: ‘the foundation of all self-dependent spiritual practices, and it also helps us see wholesome thoughts in our minds and gives us a chance to develop them.’ Venerable stated that mindfulness practice is indeed a complicated and unattractive one for many people because in its principles it involves a comprehensive study of oneself and self-dependency.” Psychological theories and Mindfulness practices remind us that self-perception theory and social comparison theory explained the way to study how individuals evaluate and compare others to understand self and themselves. Each of these influential studies has claimed that Buddhist and social psychology theories are to understand our and society’s values and practice; Mindfulness is not only the foundation of Vipassanā practice but also a chief factor all the way, and it enables us to develop other qualities of mind and sustain them throughout.

Based on the above assumptions, this study can investigate understanding, self-knowledge, and self-discrepancy, which can reduce stress from the other point of view and the group by applying self-perception and social-comparison theories in line with mindfulness practice.

As recent economic, political, and social adjustments have occurred in Myanmar, the perception of Myanmar Buddhism has shifted from its traditional and religious nature to a more socialized practice. This research aims to analyze this approach’s understanding and reasoning, attitudes and perspectives, and stress-reducing processes. It also aims to inquire how the effects of stress reduction based on mindfulness meditation through the social psychological theory process were achieved.

Indeed, at the period of writing, Mindfulness meditation through social psychological theory was weakening traditional belief that the mindfulness meditation method is a merely religious purpose and empowering of responsibility, self-awareness and self-acceptance, self-respect and self-actualization, integrity and congruence, and so on. When faced with the issues of social-political change, the traditional meditator and many religious fellowships are still practiced in a traditional way rather than modern approaches. Despite this, modern meditators and academically educated monks are convinced of the need to adopt and modernize traditional mindfulness meditation practices into a modern social-psychological approach that can be applied in modern society. So often, we encounter that religious practitioners fail to apply these Buddhist approaches to stress management rather than using them for super mundane purposes.

To deepen our understanding of the potential effects of mindfulness meditation, self-perception, and social comparison²¹ in reducing psychological stress while working as meritorious action (ITBMU, 2020) and reasoning on mindfulness performance, this research analyses mindfulness meditation and stress management. Our review of empirical research reveals that positive changes in the proper attitudes toward the self and others are a result of

²¹ Self-Perception Theory in Social Psychology - IResearchNet,” 2016).

Mindfulness. Meditating can play an important role in giving happiness in this very life and leading to ultimate peace.

Mindfulness through psychology is conceptualized as mindfulness Self-awaken factor (Bodhipakkhiya) and meritorious action (Puññakiriyavattu) developed by understanding and reasoning the knowledge of kamma and its effect, and the insight knowledge onto the psychology theory. We further posit that Mindfulness through psychology will be an important intermediary between mindfulness meditation intervention and stress management. It is an important moderator in promoting self-understanding and the like. More generally, we suggest that mindfulness meditation through psychology may also be a measurement in dictating the higher level of mental development by those who grow up in the culture of Buddhism or regularly engage in meditation over a long period.²²

This study explores how Mindfulness impacts stress management through psychological theories. The methodology of Mindfulness aligns with these theories. The research focuses on three key theories: self-perception theory, social comparison theory, and self-discrepancy theory.

Accordingly, we apply a new approach, the “mindfulness through psychology MTP,” and also study the Mindfulness-Based Learning project (MBL) of Venerable Dr. Dhammhaso of IBSC.²³ We utilize it and psychology theory to describe the positive changes in meditative attitude associated with mindfulness meditation practices or interventions. There is effectiveness in stress reduction and improvements in the mental development of concentration that lead to Mindfulness and clear comprehension. In this study, we will argue that Buddhist contemplative Mindfulness for stress management will provide the result for the next life by accumulating much wholesome kamma. It also provides for present well-being, such as joy, tranquility, peace, and happiness.

3.6. Comparison with existing literature

Current observation shows that mindfulness meditation in stress management has been utilized to relax and alleviate physical and mental tension. Buddhist teaching is not for the pleasantness of the present life but can also be knowledge and lead to ultimate peace.²⁴ Despite this, the result has shown that mindfulness meditation is commonly performed without knowledge of Kamma and its effect (The Ten Courses of Wholesome Karma | BODHI MONASTERY, n.d.). If done without understanding, mindfulness meditation could become merely an intellectual exercise (Zhang et al., 2017).

²² Jha, A. P., Morrison, A. B., Dainer-Best, J., Parker, S., Rostrup, N., & Stanley, E. A. (2015). Minds “At Attention”: Mindfulness Training Curbs Attentional Lapses in Military Cohorts. *PLOS ONE*, 10(2), e0116889. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0116889>

²³ Dhammhaso, H. (2018). Mindfulness for Youth: A Case Study of Peaceful Samanera Project, Thailand. *The Journal of International Association of Buddhist Universities (JIABU)*, 11(3), Article 3.

²⁴ Sayadaw Dr. K. Dhammasami—Religions for Peace. (2020, October 13). https://www.rfp.org/leadership_member/sayadaw-dr-k-dhammasami/

One who performs the mindfulness meditation without knowledge of kamma and its effect as part of their stress management has lower achievement than one who performs the mindfulness meditation with the knowledge of kamma and its effect. For instance, one performs a wholesome deed with the knowledge of kamma and its effect; the wholesome consciousness is associated with understanding (The Ten Courses of Wholesome Karma | BODHI MONASTERY, n.d.). On the contrary, one performs a wholesome deed without knowing kamma and its effect or understanding. Indeed, mindfulness meditation can develop insight and knowledge by identifying everything as impermanent, suffering, and non-self (Dhammasami, 2006). Therefore, utilizing mindfulness meditation on stress management with the quality of understanding and reasoning generates the ultimate benefit for the meditator.

Due to the political, social, technological, and legal circumstances in a developing society, Myanmar has undergone stress. With the enforcement of globalization, capitalism, and modernization, business management training is growing rather than spiritual management. However, as a developing condition, society cannot avoid the mantle development (Bo Kyi, 2018). The result is that lacking awareness of self-perception and social comparison gives rise to stress, depression, and anxiety.

In this study, an auguring is made to claim that the mindfulness meditation of stress management provided the way not only for joy, tranquility, peace, and happiness immediately but also for wholesome deeds. According to Dhammanet Organization, “the Buddha emphasizes the need to be mindful of every action and choice, for every choice of ours has a tremendous potential for the future.”²⁵ Wholesome kamma is the anion that is spiritually beneficial and morally praiseworthy. So, the kamma, which conduces to the good of oneself, to the good of others, or the good of both, is wholesome.

As a hypothesis, utilizing Mindfulness for stress management, based on psychological perception, understanding, and reasoning, can lead to high achievement.

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1. Conceptual framework of mindfulness meditation through social psychology

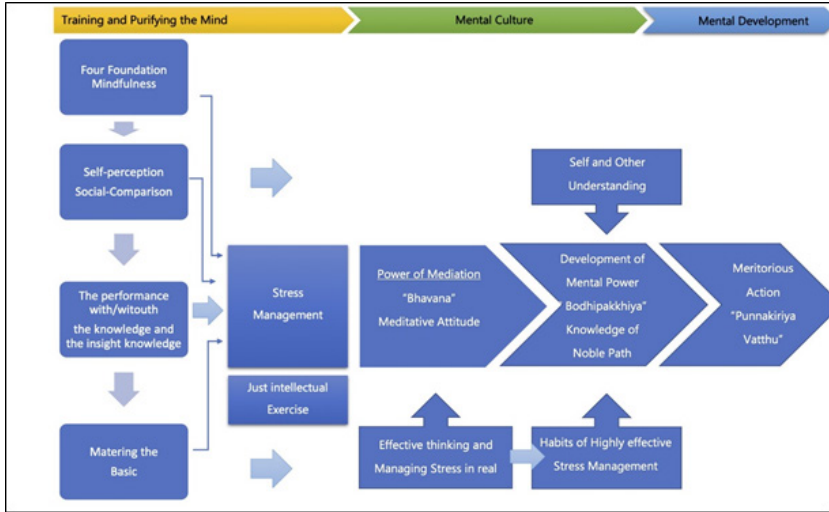
The researcher draws the following conceptual framework and theory to study Mindfulness for stress management, self-perception, and social compression. Mindfulness on stress management is associated with psychological theories. It is the approach to self-understanding and the like. Figure (2) of Bem’s self-perception and Festinger’s social-comparison theories can somewhat be compared to mindfulness meditation on stress management. Bem’s self-perception and Festinger’s social-comparison theories can be seen below in drawing figure (2). The researcher assumes that Bem’s self-perception

²⁵ Thera & Boorstein, 2014, *The Ten Courses of Wholesome Karma* | BODHI MONASTERY, n.d.)

and Festinger’s social comparison theories are appropriate for applying mindfulness meditation to stress management through social psychology.

Here, figure (1) provides a conceptual framework for studying mindfulness meditation and stress management using social psychology theory, and figure (2) illustrates the social psychology theory of Bem and Festinger.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



Meditation is a simple, practical way to train and purify the mind, calm down, culture, and develop it. Mental culture or mental development produces so many sound effects that it should be practiced repeatedly (see Figure 1; Vāraṇa, n.d.).

Mindfulness, also called awareness, can help us live happy and energetic lives. It initially involves a comprehensive study of oneself and self-discrepancy, which requires balancing many factors. Mindfulness also helps us see wholesome thoughts and allows us to develop them. It is the foundation of all self- and other understandings of spiritual practices.²⁶

By being mindful of the meditation object, by mastering the stressor, one controls the mind from wandering from one sense-object to another, thus preventing desires, cravings, aversion, worry, remorse, distraction, and vain thoughts from arising (Vāraṇa, n.d.). Without any knowledge of kamma and its effect, Mindfulness

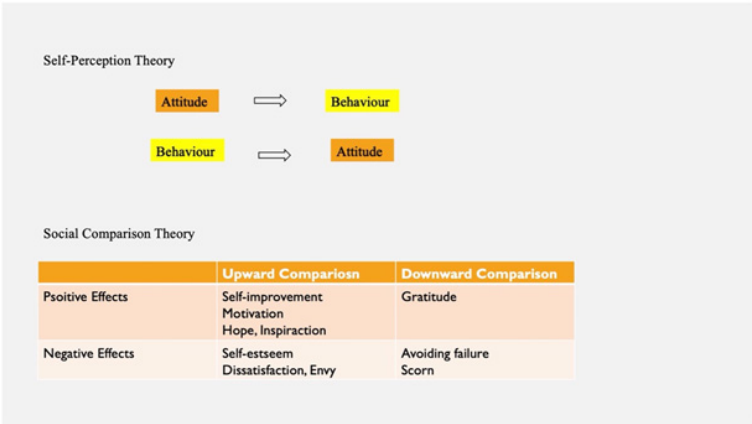
Performing merely brings intellectual exercise. Besides relaxing and rehabilitating the mind, mindfulness meditation builds up positive qualities, practical thinking, and managing stress immediately. It reduces stress and strain, wandering thoughts and judgmental minds, jealousy and selfishness, attachment and anger, delusion and wrong views, and the tendency to smoke,

²⁶ Sayadaw Dr. K. Dhammasami - Religions for Peace. (2020, October 13). https://www.rfp.org/leadership_member/sayadaw-dr-k-dhammasami/

drink, or use drugs. It remarkably brings about habits of highly effective stress management with the combination of self and other understandings rising to the level of mental power development and knowledge of the Noble path (see figure 1).

The MTP approach helps purify the mind, overcome stress, and achieve a higher level of material action. This is one effective way to train and purify the minds of all beings. When you practice Mindfulness in line with the theories of self-perception and social comparison based on the knowledge of Kamma and its effect, mindfulness meditation helps the wholesome consciousness to be associated with understanding. Thus, this MTP helps wholesome consciousness to arise continuously, develops the power of mediation “Bhavan,” a meditative attitude, and strengthens mental power and knowledge of the Noble path “Bodhipakkhiya.” Since wholesome consciousness gives rise to wholesome kamma, such as meritorious action “Puññakiriya vatthu,” which will bear good results in due process, MTP is the most beneficial way of performing.

Figure 2. Theoretical Framework



In addition to the Dissonance theory, Bem explains his self-perception theory, which explains how people create their attitudes in the first place.²⁷

Leon Festinger (1954) defined social comparison theory as ‘how individuals evaluate their own opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to others to reduce uncertainty in these domains and learn how to define the self.’²⁸ Moreover, Festinger categorizes his social comparison theory as upward and down comparisons. Each of his comparisons has a positive effect and adverse effects. According to Festinger’s upward comparison, the individual has hope and inspiration in positive effects. On the other hand, the adverse effects include dissatisfaction and envy. Downward comparison has positive effects, such as gratitude, and adverse effects, such as secondary, jealousy, and satisfactoriness.

²⁷ Self-Perception Theory in Social Psychology - IResearchNet,” 2016).

²⁸ Leon Festinger (1954), *A Theory of Social Comparison Process*, APA Society

Paul Seager (2014) pointed out that “social comparison is how we compare ourselves to others to understand our beliefs, opinions, abilities, and behaviors.”²⁹ Leon Festinger and Paul Seager remind us that social comparison theory explains the way to study how individuals evaluate and compare themselves to others to understand themselves and others. Each of these influential studies has claimed that social comparison is to understand our and society’s values and practices; a better way to frame the issues of this study is to utilize the Upward comparison and Downward comparison theory of Leon Festinger’s social comparison theory.

4.2. Informing mindfulness practices in the workplace within the mon Saṅgha Rāmañña Nikāya

The findings from this study provide valuable insights that can inform the implementation of mindfulness practices in the workplace, particularly within the Mon Saṅgha Rāmañña Nikāya community. Here are some key ways in which the findings can be applied:

The study highlights the importance of cultural context in applying mindfulness practices. Traditional Mon Buddhist mindfulness techniques, such as meditation, chanting, and mindful living, effectively reduce stress and enhance well-being. By incorporating elements that resonate with the cultural and spiritual values of the Mon Saṅgha Rāmañña Nikāya Community (Rāmañña Nikāya, 2025; Kumar, 2021), these practices can be adapted to modern workplace settings.

One key finding is the role of community support in enhancing the effectiveness of mindfulness practices. The sense of connection and support within the Mon Buddhist community was identified as a significant factor in stress reduction. In the workplace, fostering a sense of community through group mindfulness sessions, communal meditation, and shared mindfulness activities can help create a supportive environment that amplifies the benefits of Mindfulness.

The study demonstrates that traditional Mon Buddhist practices, such as chanting and meditation, can be effectively integrated into workplace routines. Organizations can offer regular mindfulness sessions that include these traditional practices, providing employees with opportunities to engage in culturally meaningful mindfulness activities. This integration can help employees feel more connected to their cultural heritage while benefiting from Mindfulness’s stress-reducing effects.

Based on the study’s findings, organizations can develop tailored mindfulness programs that address the specific needs and preferences of the Saṅgha Rāmañña Nikāya Community (Thuyiya, 2020). These programs include workshops on mindful breathing, meditation techniques, and stress management strategies aligned with the community’s cultural and spiritual practices. Tailoring the programs to the unique context of the Mon Buddhist

²⁹ Seager, P. (2014), *Social Psychology: A Complete Introduction: Teach Yourself*. John Murray Press, p. 243.

community can enhance their effectiveness and relevance.

The study underscores the importance of leadership in promoting mindfulness practices. Leaders and managers within the Mon Saṅgha Rāmañña Nikāya community can serve as role models by practicing Mindfulness themselves and encouraging their teams to do the same (Na, n.d.). Leadership training programs focusing on mindful leadership skills, such as active listening, empathy, and emotional regulation, can help create a supportive environment for mindfulness practices.

Regular assessments and evaluations of mindfulness programs can help organizations understand their impact and identify areas for improvement. By measuring stress levels, mindfulness scores, and employee feedback, organizations can continuously refine their mindfulness initiatives to meet better the needs of the Mon Saṅgha Rāmañña Nikāya community (The Mon and Buddhism, 2024). This iterative approach ensures that the programs remain practical and relevant over time.

By applying these findings, organizations can create a culturally sensitive and supportive environment that promotes Mindfulness and enhances employee well-being. Integrating traditional Mon Buddhist practices into workplace mindfulness programs can provide a unique and practical approach to stress management, benefiting both employees and the organization.

4.3. Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of mindfulness practices for stress management within the Mon Buddhist community, several limitations should be acknowledged:

The study's sample size may be relatively small, limiting the generalizability of the findings. While the participants were selected to represent diverse demographics within the Mon Buddhist community, the results may not apply to other cultural or religious groups. Future research with more extensive and diverse samples is needed to validate these findings. Much of the data collected in this study relies on self-reported measures, such as surveys and interviews. Self-reported data can be subject to biases, including social desirability bias and recall bias, which may affect the accuracy of the responses. Incorporating more objective measures, such as physiological indicators and third-party observations, could enhance the reliability of the findings. The study primarily focuses on the short-term effects of mindfulness practices on stress management.

While significant improvements were observed over three months, the long-term sustainability of these benefits remains uncertain. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess the enduring impact of mindfulness practices on stress reduction and overall well-being. The Mon Buddhist community's unique cultural and spiritual context may influence mindfulness practices' effectiveness. The findings may not be directly transferable to other workplace settings or cultural contexts. Future research should explore how mindfulness practices can be adapted to different organizational environments and cultural

backgrounds. Participants in the study may have varying levels of experience and proficiency with mindfulness practices, which could affect the outcomes. The study does not account for individual differences in duration, frequency, or intensity of mindfulness practice. Standardizing the mindfulness interventions and providing consistent training could help control for these variables in future research. Other factors like participants' personal life circumstances, workplace environment, and support systems may also influence stress levels and well-being. While the study attempts to control these variables, it is challenging to account for all potential confounding factors. Future research should consider a more comprehensive approach to control for these influences.

By acknowledging these limitations, the study aims to provide a balanced and transparent account of its findings. Addressing these limitations in future research will help build a more robust understanding of Mindfulness's role in workplace stress management.

V. CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of key findings

This study explored the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in managing workplace stress within the Mon Buddhist community. The main findings are as follows:

Participants who regularly practiced Mindfulness reported a significant reduction in perceived stress levels. The average Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) score decreased from 25 (high stress) to 15 (moderate stress) over three months, indicating that mindfulness practices effectively alleviate stress. The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) scores showed a notable increase, with the average score improving from 3.2 to 4.5 on a 5-point scale. This suggests that participants developed higher mindfulness levels, contributing to better stress management. Physiological measurements revealed decreased cortisol levels and increased heart rate variability (HRV), both indicators of reduced stress. Average cortisol levels dropped by 20%, and HRV increased by 15% after three months of mindfulness practice, demonstrating the physiological benefits of Mindfulness. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups indicated that participants experienced improvements in emotional regulation and focus. They reported feeling calmer and balanced in response to workplace stressors, which enhanced their overall productivity and job satisfaction. The mindfulness practice within the Mon Buddhist community fostered a sense of connection and support among participants. This communal aspect of mindfulness practice was highlighted as a key factor in its effectiveness for stress management. The study provided insights into how traditional Mon Buddhist mindfulness practices, such as meditation and chanting, can be adapted to modern workplace settings. These practices were found to be culturally relevant and effective in reducing stress, offering a unique perspective on integrating Mindfulness into corporate wellness programs. These findings underscore the potential of mindfulness practices to enhance employee well-being and productivity by effectively managing stress. The study also highlights the importance of cultural context in applying mindfulness

interventions, suggesting that traditional practices can be successfully adapted to contemporary work environments.

5.2. Contributions to the field

This study makes several significant contributions to the field of mindfulness and stress management, particularly within the context of workplace settings and cultural diversity:

This study explores mindfulness practices within the Mon Buddhist community, highlighting the importance of cultural context in applying mindfulness interventions. It demonstrates how traditional practices, such as meditation and chanting, can be adapted to modern workplace environments, providing a unique perspective on integrating cultural mindfulness practices into corporate wellness programs. This contributes to a more inclusive understanding of Mindfulness that respects and incorporates diverse cultural traditions.

The study provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in reducing workplace stress. The significant reductions in perceived stress levels, improvements in mindfulness scores, and positive physiological changes (e.g., decreased cortisol levels and increased HRV) offer robust data that reinforce Mindfulness's benefits for employee well-being. These findings add to the growing body of literature that validates mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in occupational health.

The study combines quantitative and qualitative methods to understand how mindfulness practices comprehensively impact stress management. The qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups provide a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and the mechanisms through which mindfulness practices exert their effects. This holistic approach enriches the field by highlighting Mindfulness's multifaceted nature and its potential to address psychological and physiological stress aspects.

The study offers practical recommendations for implementing mindfulness practices in workplace settings. By identifying specific techniques that effectively reduce stress and enhance well-being, the study provides actionable strategies for organizations looking to integrate Mindfulness into their wellness programs. These recommendations are informed by the unique cultural practices of the Mon Buddhist community, offering a culturally sensitive approach to mindfulness implementation. The study identifies several gaps in the current literature and provides a foundation for future research. It calls for larger, more diverse samples, longitudinal studies assessing long-term effects, and further exploring mindfulness practices in different cultural contexts. By addressing these gaps, future research can build on the findings of this study to develop more effective and culturally relevant mindfulness interventions. The study underscores the role of community support in enhancing the effectiveness of mindfulness practices. The sense of connection and support within the Mon Buddhist community was identified as a key factor in stress reduction. This finding contributes to the field by emphasizing the importance

of social and communal aspects of Mindfulness, suggesting that fostering a supportive community can amplify the benefits of mindfulness interventions.

Overall, this study advances the field of mindfulness and stress management by providing a culturally informed, empirically supported, and practically applicable framework for integrating mindfulness practices into workplace settings. It offers valuable insights that can develop research and practical applications, contributing to the development of more effective and inclusive mindfulness-based interventions.

5.3. Practical recommendations for implementing mindfulness practices in the workplace

Implementing mindfulness practices in the workplace can significantly enhance employee well-being, reduce stress, and improve productivity. Here are some practical recommendations for organizations looking to integrate Mindfulness into their corporate wellness programs:

Provide mindfulness training for leaders and managers to set an example and create a supportive environment for mindfulness practices. Leaders who practice Mindfulness can better support their teams and foster a culture of well-being. Develop programs focusing on mindful leadership skills, such as active listening, empathy, and emotional regulation. Organize regular mindfulness workshops and courses for employees. These can include sessions on mindful breathing, meditation, and stress reduction techniques. Provide access to online mindfulness resources, such as guided meditations, instructional videos, and articles. This allows employees to practice Mindfulness at their own pace and convenience. Set up quiet, designated areas in the workplace where employees can practice Mindfulness and meditation. These spaces should be free from distractions and equipped with comfortable seating. Transform break rooms into mindful spaces by incorporating calming colors, plants, and soothing music. Begin meetings with a few minutes of mindfulness practice, such as deep breathing or a short meditation. This helps participants center themselves and approach the meeting with a clear and focused mind. Encourage employees to take regular, mindful breaks throughout the day. These breaks can involve simple practices like mindful walking, stretching, or breathing exercises. Raise awareness about the benefits of Mindfulness through internal communications, such as newsletters, emails, and posters. Share success stories and testimonials from employees who have benefited from mindfulness practices. Identify and train mindfulness champions within the organization who can advocate for mindfulness practices and support their colleagues in adopting these techniques.

Implementing these practical recommendations can assist organizations in creating a supportive environment that promotes mindfulness and enhances employee well-being. These strategies may also help reduce stress, improve focus, and foster a more positive and productive workplace culture.

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MINDFULNESS AS A TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATIONAL TOOL IN UNIVERSITIES FOR GLOBAL HARMONY

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Abstract:

The modern world faces pressing issues of social disharmony and mental health challenges, necessitating innovative educational approaches to foster resilience, compassion, and sustainability. Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist teachings and widely promoted by figures like Thich Nhat Hanh, offers a transformative solution. This study explores its integration into university education to empower youth as agents of peace and sustainability. Using a qualitative approach, it examines a Sri Lankan mindfulness school, *Sathi Pasala*, and a university-based mindfulness intervention. Methods included guided meditation, reflective journaling, and mindful communication exercises. Data from focus groups and interviews indicate improved emotional well-being, reduced anxiety, and heightened self-awareness among students. Results highlight increased compassion, focus, and social engagement. This research underscores the potential of mindfulness education to cultivate a more harmonious society by equipping future leaders with emotional intelligence and conflict-resolution skills. Universities play a pivotal role in integrating mindfulness to build a compassionate and sustainable future.

Keywords: *Social disharmony, mindfulness, Buddhism, transformative education, youth.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of study

The contemporary world is shaped by rapid technological progress. While beneficial, it has also led the world to face many serious challenges, such as economic inequality and social and environmental destruction. In addition to

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these, many people in the present world are experiencing mental health crises, such as anxiety and depression, at unprecedented levels, and individuals are struggling to find stability and purpose in life. Ironically, even though social media acts as a mode of connection, it boosts divisiveness and unrealistic expectations, resulting in feelings of isolation and inadequacy among its users.

As the Most Venerable Thich Nhat Tu, in his article “Five Principles of Global Leadership” insightfully points out, by adjusting awareness with mindfulness or wisdom, we will refine our mission, interactions, and contributions, spanning from the family unit to the community, nation, region, and globe.¹ This progressive process fosters a balanced approach to personal and societal challenges and is hard to ignore. Mindfulness offers a counterbalance to this chaos. By encouraging individuals to focus on the present moment without judgment, mindfulness fosters emotional resilience and mental clarity. Practices such as meditation, mindful breathing, and focused attention enable individuals to respond to challenges thoughtfully rather than react impulsively.

On a broader level, mindfulness promotes empathy and understanding, which are crucial for addressing societal issues like racial hatred, inequality, and environmental degradation. For instance, Thich Nhat Hanh’s contribution to popularizing mindfulness in the Western world during the Vietnam War is often cited by many scholars as proof of the power of this practice in transforming individuals to cultivate a higher quality of life. Understanding the transformative power of mindfulness in interpersonal relationships, he introduced practices such as deep listening and loving speech, which fostered compassionate communication and strengthened relationships² impacting conflict resolution, emotional well-being, and the cultivation of harmonious connections (Hanh, *ibid*).

The importance of youth in a society can be recognized in many ways, but their influence on driving transformative change in the world is particularly significant among their many roles. They bring new approaches and solutions to addressing the burning issues of the world. Ironically, the youth today are often distracted by academic and social expectations, peer competition, and technological distractions, which ultimately lead to burnout, anxiety, and persistent discontentment. Thus, mindfulness helps them manage these mental conditions effectively by cultivating emotional intelligence, enabling them to handle interpersonal conflicts constructively with greater empathetic harmony towards themselves and others. It is in this context that nurturing undergraduates with mindfulness becomes crucial, as they stand out as the future leaders of the world. It is a dire need that the youth be brought up not only with intelligence but also with emotional well-being. It is the responsibility of university lecturers to equip their students with this well-balanced mentality to develop greater connectivity with themselves and others, achievable through

¹ Thich Nhat Tu, Most Venerable, & Thich Duc Thien, Ven. Dr. (Eds.). (2019). *Mindful Leadership for Sustainable Peace*. United Nations Day of Vesak 2019, pp. 19 – 40.

² Nhất Hạnh, Thích. (2013). *The Art of Communicating*. New York: HarperCollins, p. 67.

proper mindfulness. University lecturers can tactfully introduce this approach without disrupting the curriculum by incorporating brief one- or two-minute mindfulness activities.

In Sri Lanka, among the many institutions, including Buddhist temples that focus on nurturing mindfulness in youth *Sathi Pasala*, or the Mindful School, founded by the Most Ven. Uda Iriyagama Dhammjiva Thero, stands out. Thousands of individuals from different age groups and hierarchies in the country, as well as abroad, have shared positive feedback on the transitions they experienced after practicing mindfulness guided by this school. Various physical and online programs are available through the school to promote the practice of mindfulness. Currently, irrespective of religion, many institutions and practitioners worldwide have launched programs to teach mindfulness through different methods and activities. Each program is unique in its approach, yet the impact it creates is undoubtedly beneficial in transitioning young minds towards a more moderate temperament coupled with empathy and compassion.

Building on these insights, this paper proposes a structured plan for implementing mindfulness practices among university undergraduates. This proposal draws from the researcher's experience in incorporating brief mindfulness activities into university teaching, guided by materials from the "Mindful School" and insights from a few trained individuals from this school. The study evaluates the experiences of undergraduates and "Mindful School" practitioners to provide evidence supporting the importance of mindfulness in empowering youth for conflict resolution. Ultimately, the paper aims to outline a comprehensive strategy for universities to train students in mindfulness, cultivating a generation of emotionally intelligent individuals capable of resolving conflicts and fostering sustainable solutions.

1.2. Research objectives

The present research aims to,

- (i) Assess the impact of mindfulness activities on the emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships of the undergraduates.
- (ii) Evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness programs from the "Mindful School" based on participant feedback.
- (iii) Propose a structured plan for implementing mindfulness practices in university curricula.

1.3. Methodology

The present research adopts a qualitative approach to explore the incorporation of mindfulness into universities and its potential to foster emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills. It utilizes both primary and secondary data to evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness practices, focusing on practical applications, the experiences shared by trained individuals, and existing literature.

The primary sample consists of 30 undergraduates from a state university following English literature course unit, with three-hour weekly lectures

conducted over 15 weeks. The participants represent a diverse group, coming from various districts of the country and varied cultural backgrounds. However, they are generally of the same age, as they belong to the same academic batch. The secondary sample includes three individuals who have followed mindfulness training through the “Mindful School” for one year, participating in various programs aimed at developing mindfulness. The third sample includes four respondents from four different countries who have benefited from mindfulness training under the “Mindful School”. Their feedback, published in various volumes of the Mindful School newsletters, has been used as data for this research.

Informal discussions were conducted with twenty-three (out of thirty) randomly selected undergraduates to gather insights into their experiences with mindfulness practices introduced during lectures. The mindfulness activities incorporated into the lectures included two-minute breathing exercises before the commencement of lectures, mindful art drawing, mindful walking during class, mindful listening, gratitude journaling/ reflections, empathy practices, and incident visualizations designed to promote empathy and compassion.

The above-mentioned informal discussions conducted with the undergraduates focused on the perceived benefits of such practices on their personalities and emotional well-being. Additionally, the researcher observed behavioral changes among the students during and after these mindfulness activities. Similar discussions were held with the four trained individuals from the “Mindful School” to understand the long-term impact of structured mindfulness training on their lives.

The researcher also reviewed various documents, web resources, training guides, and videos on mindfulness practices and programs implemented worldwide to analyze their methodologies and assess their applicability in a university setting. Mindfulness practices popularized by Thich Nhat Hanh were widely read to understand the practical success of such activities.

The responses of the undergraduates and trained individuals were documented to identify progress and impact. These responses were categorized to evaluate the short-term and long-term effects of mindfulness practices. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for integrating mindfulness into undergraduate curricula.

1.4. Literature review

“The gentle spring rain permeates the soil of my soul.

A seed that has lain deeply in the earth for many years just smiles”³

This short poem by one of the leading advocates of mindfulness around the world conveys a deep metaphorical meaning that reflects renewal, growth, and the transformative power of mindfulness and compassion. It remarkably presents how gentle and compassionate care achieved through mindfulness, kindness, or life’s positive experiences, has the power to awaken latent potential

³ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 67.

within us. It presents the overall idea that progression and transformation happen naturally when conditions are right, often leading to inner joy and spiritual flourishing.

From the Buddhist origins of mindfulness to its modern applications, “mindfulness” is a transformative practice with the potential to foster emotional resilience and conflict resolution. The original Buddhist teachings provide an important foundation for understanding mindfulness, while modern interpretations and research reinforce its relevance in addressing contemporary challenges.

The Buddha is perhaps the foremost religious leader to emphasize mindfulness, as illustrated in the famed *Satipatthana Sutta*.⁴ In this discourse, he identifies the four foundations of mindfulness as the “one-way path” to the attainment of *Nibbana*, the ultimate liberation from suffering, as follows:

- (1) Contemplation of the body (*kayanupassana*)
- (2) Contemplation of feelings (*vedananupassana*)
- (3) Contemplation of the mind (*cittanupassana*), and
- (4) Contemplation of mental objects (*dhammanupassana*)⁵

The *Satipatthana Sutta* asserts that a practitioner of mindfulness “dwells ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having put away longing and dejection concerning the world.”⁶ Bhikkhu Bodhi elaborates, explaining that these terms indicate the integration of mindfulness, energy, and discernment, alongside detachment from the claims of the mundane world. This perspective is directly relevant to the present study, as it suggests that enhancing mindfulness in youth in the present world can help train them to transcend conflicts rooted in mundane concerns, encouraging a more detached and empathetic approach to worldly matters.

The term mindfulness, or *sati* in *Pali*, has been referenced in Buddhist philosophy for over 2,500 years. Even if it had been known as purely a Buddhist meditation method a few decades ago, with the teachings of Buddhist practitioners such as Thich Nhat Hanh, and modern research, it has now been identified as a holistic practice embedded in daily life. Black⁷ argues that mindfulness is an inherent quality of human consciousness; a capacity for attention and awareness focused on the present moment. This capacity can be empirically measured and is independent of religious, spiritual, or

⁴ MN 10.

⁵ Jotika, U. & Dhamminda, U. (1986), *Maha Satipatthana Sutta*. Translated by U. Jotika and U. Dhamminda. Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. Accessed from https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/mahasati.pdf.

⁶ Bodhi Bhikkhu (2023), *The Buddha's Four Foundations of Mindfulness*. Accessed from <https://www.lionsroar.com/the-buddhas-four-foundations-of-mindfulness/>.

⁷ Black, D.S. (2011), *A Brief Definition of Mindfulness*. Mindfulness Research Guide. Accessed from <http://www.mindfulexperience.org>.

cultural beliefs. Grossman and Van Dam⁸ add that mindfulness conveys the idea of “remembering” to maintain awareness. They note that the term is best understood as “to be mindful,” contrasting it with the noun “mindfulness,” which may imply a fixed trait.

Thich Nhat Hanh beautifully describes mindfulness as “the miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth in the present moment.”⁹ Similarly, Kabat-Zinn¹⁰ defines mindfulness as “the awareness that arises through paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally”. Baer expands on this by describing mindfulness as “the nonjudgmental observation of the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise”.¹¹

Black¹² categorizes the main aspects of mindfulness as follows, based on various definitions of it:

(1) an open and receptive attention to and awareness of what is occurring in the present moment.

b) An intentional, open, accepting, and discerning awareness of whatever arises in the present moment.

(2) an attention that is receptive to the whole field of awareness and remains in an open state so that it can be directed to currently experienced sensations, thoughts, emotions, and memories.

(3) waking up from a life lived on automatic pilot and based on habitual responding.

Sathi Pasala or the Mindful School defines it on their website as, “Mindfulness is focusing attention on the present mental or physical activity continuing from moment to moment, without coming to hasty judgments or decisions. Mindfulness also encompasses the mind’s ability to know when the mind wanders away from the present moment activity”.¹³ With the trend of incorporating mindfulness in various multidisciplinary studies, modern researchers and educators have been excited about applying it in education to help students with their behavioral and education challenges by reducing anxiety and giving them a new way to handle their feelings and emotions. According to an article published

⁸ Grossman, P., & Van Dam, N.T. (2011), *Mindfulness, by Any Other Name: Trials and Tribulations of Sati in Western Psychology and Science*. *Contemporary Buddhism*, Volume 12(1), pp. 219 – 239.

⁹ Nhất Hạnh, Thích. (2013). *The Art of Communicating*. New York: HarperCollins; p. 7.

¹⁰ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994), *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Hyperion, p. 4.

¹¹ Baer, R. A. (2003). *Mindfulness training as a clinical intervention: A conceptual and empirical review*. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10, pp. 125 – 143.

¹² Black, D. S. (2011), *A Brief Definition of Mindfulness*. Mindfulness Research Guide. Accessed from <http://www.mindfulexperience.org>.

¹³ Satipasala (n.d.). *Sati Pasala Story*. Retrieved from <https://www.satipasala.org/sati-pasala-story/>

by the Harvard University, Graduate School of Education, mindfulness-based education can “reduce the negative effects of stress and increase students’ ability to stay engaged, helping them stay on track academically and avoid behavior problems”.¹⁴ The article deals with a study conducted by the Boston Charter Research Collaborative to examine the influence of school-based mindfulness training on sixth-grade students’ stress levels and academic abilities. The study involved an eight-week mindfulness program taught by Calmer Choice, a Massachusetts nonprofit specializing in mindfulness education. Students practiced techniques like focusing on a rock to train attention and emotional regulation, while a control group took coding classes instead.

The research reported key findings such as reduced stress, improved emotional regulation, enhanced focus, and potential for broader application. Thus, students in the mindfulness group reported lower stress levels and improved self-control by the end of the program, unlike the coding group. Their brain scans revealed that the mindfulness group’s amygdala - responsible for emotional reactions, was less responsive to negative stimuli, indicating reduced sensitivity to stress. Further mindfulness training boosted students’ ability to concentrate and cope with stress, which likely supported better learning outcomes. Also, the study suggests that mindfulness training could be valuable for students experiencing trauma or chronic stress, helping them regulate emotions and improve academic performance. Accordingly, these results highlight the potential of mindfulness practices to foster emotional resilience and cognitive focus in educational settings. The study offers recommendations for incorporating mindfulness into school environments to foster a culture of acceptance, self-care, and empathy. Among key recommendations, the following are important.

(1) To introduce mindfulness theory and its scientific basis to both staff and students, ensuring everyone understands its purpose. Regularly integrating mindfulness practices, like guided meditations, into the school day can positively influence school culture.

(2) To provide dedicated time and resources for teachers to engage in mindfulness practice, enhancing their emotional well-being and classroom effectiveness. Mindful teachers can better understand student’s perspectives and model mindfulness practices.

(3) To encourage students to identify and create opportunities for mindfulness practice, fostering emotional awareness and helping them adopt mindfulness as a tool for mental health and happiness.

A research carried out in Jordan to assess mindfulness and its relationship to academic achievement among university students, concludes moderate

¹⁴ Tatter, G. (2019). *Making Time for Mindfulness*. Usable Knowledge. January 23, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/19/01/making-time-mindfulness#:~:text=A%20new%20study%20suggests%20that,academically%20and%20avoid%20behavior%20problems>.

mindfulness levels across all domains, with no significant gender differences. Students with higher academic achievement exhibited slightly higher mindfulness levels, but the connection between mindfulness and academic performance was weak, accounting for less than 1% of academic performance variability.¹⁵

Mindfulness and its impact on conflict management has been researched by Adam A. Kay and Daniel P. Skarlicki,¹⁶ by exploring how mindfulness can foster a conflict-positive workplace by enhancing constructive conflict management. Constructive conflict management is defined as increased collaboration and reduced avoidance in handling workplace conflicts. The research investigates the mediating role of cognitive reappraisal in this process. The findings of this research indicate that mindfulness promotes constructive conflict management by increasing collaboration and lowering avoidance. While cognitive reappraisal explains the link between mindfulness and collaboration, it does not account for the reduction in conflict avoidance. These results suggest that mindfulness's effectiveness in managing workplace conflicts goes beyond its emotional benefits, highlighting its potential as a valuable tool for fostering collaborative and constructive conflict resolution in organizational settings.

While much research has been conducted worldwide on the connection between mindfulness and various fields, there is a lack of studies focusing specifically on youth and the benefits of mindfulness for conflict resolution. The present research aims to fill this gap by introducing mindfulness activities to university students. This initiative is a step toward potentially incorporating mindfulness into curricula with the primary goal of training students to become better leaders and responsible individuals. It seeks to foster enhanced empathy and compassion, helping students avoid conflicts with others, with nations, and within their psychology.

II. SATHI PASALA – MINDFUL SCHOOL

“Sathi Pasala” or “Mindful School” was founded by Most Venerable Udu Eriyagama Dhammavijaya thero in March 2016, located in No. 292/7, Ashokarama Road, Ihala Bomiriya in Kaduwela, Sri Lanka has been a significant place of training school children and educators in developing mindfulness as a lifestyle. By 2018, the programs run by the school had evolved into a broad, non-sectarian, non-religious mindfulness movement in Sri Lanka and other locations in the world. Its mission is, “To promote mindfulness practice among all human beings irrespective of race, religion, nationality or

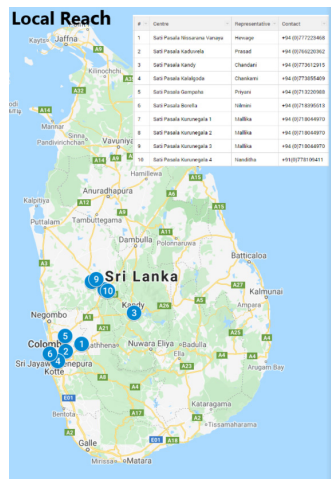
¹⁵ Alomari, H. (2023). *Mindfulness and its relationship to academic achievement among university students*. *Frontiers in Education*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1179584>. Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.

¹⁶ Adam A. Kay, Daniel P. Skarlicki (2020): *Cultivating a conflict-positive workplace: How mindfulness facilitates constructive conflict management*. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Volume 159, pp. 8-20. ISSN 0749-5978. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2020.02.005>.

other differences and help and guide not only the Sri Lankans but the entire world population to live happily, harmoniously and energetically to develop the rare qualities of compassion, contentment, and stillness that naturally blossoms with the practice of mindfulness.” The founder writes in his message to the website of the said school,

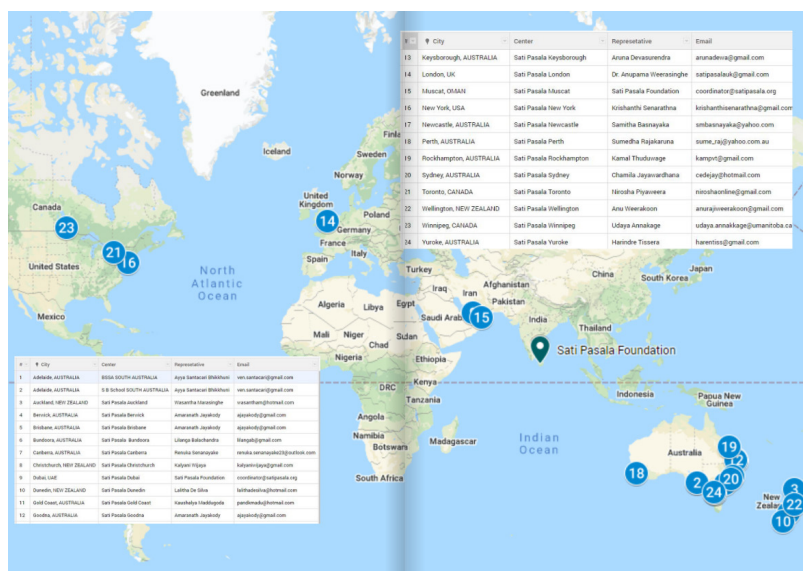
Mindfulness naturally gives rise to diligence and clear comprehension. These two qualities empower a person to successfully face any challenge that life throws at him or her. Once planted, mindfulness grows by itself. My experience tells me that while everyone can benefit from mindfulness training, younger children not only find it easier to learn mindfulness, but they are also more likely to benefit from the practice.¹⁷

The school is organizing various programs/events to train the younger generation to practice mindfulness, and various books and videos are also made available on the website. Both on-site and online programs are available under various skilled practitioners of mindfulness. The programs are conducted locally as well as internationally in centers established in 24 countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The spread of the centers and the number of beneficiaries are shown in the following diagrams. Other than the monthly mindfulness program which mainly focuses on sitting and walking meditations, programs are designed to train the participants to guide them on how to be mindful in their daily lives. Creative activities and games are incorporated to make the participants develop an enthusiasm to follow the guidance. While they engage in their individual challenges of practicing mindfulness, through outdoor workshops and residential camps the participants are allowed to move with others and practice and test their mindfulness.



Pic 1: Local centers of the Mindful School

¹⁷ Satipassala (n.d.). *Sati Pasala Story*. Retrieved from <https://www.satipassala.org/sati-pasala-story/>



Pic 2: International centers of the Mindful School

III. DISCUSSION

3.1. The focus group discussions

The focus group discussions were conducted with three participants of this school; a school student (Coded A - female, aged 15), a teacher (Coded B - female, aged 56), and a father of two kids who is also attending the school (Coded C - male, aged 42) all of whom have already attended the programs for over one year.

- Student A: For a month she has noticed that she can think sharply, and mind is clear, and she is more organized in her work than in the earlier days when she was often identified by her family and schoolmates to be very disorganized. The feedback she started receiving from her peers and home, she has been motivated further to continue her engagement with mindful exercises. “At the beginning, it was a conscious effort to be mindful, but now I’m used to it, and almost all the time of the day I feel mindful about what I’m doing,” says Student A.

- Teacher B: After a few months of practicing mindfulness, she has experienced a quenching of emotions she was calmer in her responses to the tantrums thrown by some students in her classes. The idea that nothing; neither internal nor external could ruin her inner happiness has been ruling within her because she has felt the uselessness of being disappointed for things that we do not have control over. This understanding has come from her observation that nothing is permanent and nothing can be kept under our control. The disappointment she has been experiencing over her job has also weakened now and she is more enthusiastic now as she feels less burdened in her heart now. She says sometimes she wonders why she does not get emotionally disturbed by certain tantrums of students, and she is thus so thankful to her mindful

practices for quenching her emotions.

- Father C: With his practice of mindfulness for almost two years, he sees a remarkable difference in his own life as well as in his treatment of his family members. He says he used to be a very easily angered father but now with his identification of his emotions and his ability to control them, his mind is free, more focused, and happy. As he used to be angry most of the time during the day, he says he was almost always distressed by even minor things that were happening around him, but now he is more relaxed. As his twin sons are also regular members of the *Sathi Pasala*, he says his home environment has also been transferred to a tranquil environment. He further says it is after seeing the transformation of his two sons after sending them to this school, that he also wanted to practice mindfulness. He says his sons do not fight with themselves as well as with his peers now, rather they are more controlled and understanding of their emotions. They have been constant consulters of their friends for settling conflicts in the class too.

3.2. Feedback from across the world

Arosh De Silva (16 years old from New Jersey, USA) who had also been under the guided practices of mindfulness of the Mindful School, shares similar experiences. He lists out the benefits of practice such as sharpening of mind, starting to appreciate the small things in life because he is aware of what is happening around him, less procrastinating of work, being more organized, and understanding how powerful the mind can be. "I have realized that we all live in a clustered society" (Vol 1 2021, p. 4),¹⁸ says he, with so much gratitude for his mindful mind.

Vishmi Thudawage (12 years from Rockhampton, Australia) writes about her experience of developing mindfulness during the time of Covid 19. She also lists out the experiences she underwent with the practice of mindfulness such as being able to identify when emotions changed. She could also be aware of the emotions like a third person, reduce the wilful reactions mindfully, find reasons to be glad under difficult situations, increase emotional literacy, and physical and emotional well-being, and be compassionate about herself. "Then, I could understand my sisters' emotional minds better, and apply it to others as I had experienced it within me first."

She mentions another interesting observation: through distant and non-reactive observation of her mind, her emotions weakened and eventually disappeared (Vol. 1, 2021, p. 5)¹⁹. She concludes her note by emphasizing how helpful simple mindfulness practices could be if community and religious leaders collaborate to organize regular programs. Such programs, she believes, would help children find true happiness and inner peace, making them more resilient in challenging

¹⁸ *Mindful Seeds* (2021). *Mindful Seeds* (Vol. 1, p. 4). Retrieved from <https://v1.madmagz.com/magazine/1819724#/>

¹⁹ *Mindful Seeds* (2021). *Mindful Seeds* (Vol. 1, p. 4). Retrieved from <https://v1.madmagz.com/magazine/1819724#/>

situations like COVID-19. “It will have immense benefits for their well-being and protection, leading to happiness, good health, peace, and harmony.”²⁰

Nethmini Sanjana (16 years old from Muscat, Oman), too, shares her experience of mindfulness practice during the Covid 19, and she has stated that the practice helped her not to be shocked to hear the human suffering and the toll of deaths caused by Covid with her understanding of the impermanence of everything in the world. As she is living in the present moment, she has no worries about the past or the future. She also believes mindfulness to be the only cure for many diseases as the “mind is cured from worry, fear and stress.”²¹

Reika Fernando (16 years old, Toronto, Canada) states that with her mindfulness training, she has been able to get rid of negative emotions. She had been someone who would easily get distracted, would do activities mindlessly, and would easily get enraged with things that she did not want to do. But now, she feels that she has better control over her emotions and is more mindful of her day-to-day actions.²²

3.3. Random mindful activities for the undergraduates to develop empathy and compassion that would improve their conflict resolution skills

The following activities were randomly used to develop empathy and compassion in the undergraduates which would result in their less engagement with conflicts by improving conflict resolution skills. It was expected that through these activities they develop a tendency to solve conflicts rather than escalate them. They were conducted at a state university in Sri Lanka, in the beginning, and in the middle of English literature lecture hours for the first-year undergraduates.

3.3.1. Mindful breathing for emotional regulation (2 minutes)

At the start of the lecture, students sit in a relaxed posture with their eyes closed. They place one hand on their chest and the other on their belly. While breathing deeply, they focus on the sensation of their breath and visualize themselves in a calm state during a challenging situation.

This helps students focus on themselves, improve emotional regulation, and prepare their minds for understanding varied perspectives during conflicts.

3.3.2. Reflective journaling for empathy development

Students engage in an activity (at home or in class) that requires interacting with someone they have had a disagreement with or observing others resolving conflicts. They answer the questions: “What emotions did I feel during this activity, and why?”, “What might the other person(s) have been feeling or thinking?”, “How could I respond mindfully and empathetically in a similar situation?”

This activity encourages self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and

²⁰ Ibid, vol. 1, 2021, p. 6.

²¹ Ibid, vol 1, 2021, p 20.

²² Ibid,, Volume 3, 2021, p 10. <https://v1.madmagz.com/magazine/1902428#/>.

empathy by analyzing one's role in conflicts and potential resolutions.

3.3.3. Mindful communication exercises for conflict resolution

a. Method 01 – Pair-sharing with reflection

In pairs, one shares a challenging experience or conflict for 2 minutes, while the other listens attentively, maintaining eye contact and observing non-verbal cues without interrupting or planning a response. After listening, the listener reflects with empathetic statements (e.g., "It sounds like you felt frustrated because...").

This builds active listening, non-judgmental communication, and the ability to understand others' feelings, fostering mutual respect and collaboration.

b. Method 02 – Group empathy exercise

A student volunteer or a lecturer shares a challenging experience. The group listens mindfully, focusing on non-verbal cues. Afterward, students express empathetic and compassionate responses such as, "I can understand how difficult that must have been" and "That reminds me of a time when I felt similarly" which would lead to a discussion of how empathy can defuse conflict and build stronger relationships. **This activity** demonstrates how empathy and compassionate responses can transform conflict into understanding.

3.3.4. Creative activities for building empathy

(1) Method 01

Students walk slowly, observing their surroundings. They take photos of objects or scenes that reflect human emotions (e.g., a withered flower symbolizing sadness). They answer the question: "Why did this image resonate with me? What emotions or stories does it evoke?". This activity develops empathy by connecting external observations with personal emotions and broader human experiences.

(2) Method 02

In small groups, students collaboratively color a large mandala, discussing their choices for colors and patterns. They reflect on how their contributions complement others.

This promotes teamwork, shared understanding, and the ability to value others' perspectives.

3.3.5. Mindful reading for empathy and conflict insight

Students read a poem or story mindfully, focusing on the emotions of the characters and the underlying conflicts, focusing on the following questions. "Which word or phrase stood out to you, and why? "How does this relate to your own experiences or emotions during conflicts?". **This activity** enhances students' ability to identify emotional cues and relate literature to real-life interpersonal challenges.

3.3.6. Visualization-based creative writing for conflict understanding

(1) Method 01 - Students get prompts that encourage visualizing and resolving conflicts (e.g., "You overhear two friends arguing over a

misunderstanding. How do you step in to help?”)

(2) **Method 02** - Students share their narratives in small groups, discussing the strategies their characters used to resolve the conflict and reflecting on how these strategies could be applied in real life.

These activities encourage creativity while fostering problem-solving skills and empathy for all parties in a conflict.

The students were asked to comment on their experiences after these activities in casual conversations the lecturer had with them. A summary of their responses is as follows.

3.3.7. Mindfulness Activities in the classroom

Emotional transformations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Through mindful communication activities, they became more empathetic as they got the chance to understand and validate the emotions and perspectives of the other party.Through reflective listening they could enhance their ability to focus on words and non-verbal cues used by the other party, without planning their responses.Through creative mindfulness coloring such as coloring mandalas or observation walks, they could improve their creativity and appreciation for the present moment.Through their participation in visualization-based writing, their ability to imagine, empathize, and explore different perspectives was developed.Through mindful reading activities, they learned how to connect deeply with texts, reflecting on personal relevance and emotional responses to themes or characters.Through the opportunities to share personal narratives, they could build trust and compassion within a group while learning to express emotions constructively.
Social and interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">By learning to understand and validate other people’s emotions and perspectives, deeper empathy and interpersonal connections could be developed.Through activities like storytelling and group discussions, they could develop their ability to approach disagreements with compassion and seek collaborative solutions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By building trust, teamwork, and appreciation for others' contributions and viewpoints, group harmony and mutual respect were enhanced.
Cognitive transformations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing their ability to concentrate on tasks and stay present at the moment through practices like mindful reading and breathing. ▪ Exploring and respecting multiple perspectives of different individuals, fostering open-mindedness and inclusivity. ▪ Thinking critically about challenges and generating constructive solutions, enhancing problem-solving skills and adaptability.
Behavioral transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pausing and reflecting before responding, reducing impulsive reactions in conflicts. ▪ Addressing conflicts with open communication and empathy, promoting resolution rather than avoidance or escalation. ▪ Cultivating mental well-being, leading to improved emotional balance and resilience.
Spiritual and ethical transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being more sensitive towards shared humanity, encouraging others to act with kindness and integrity. ▪ Developing a stronger commitment to adopting positive environments and resolving conflicts ethically.

Recommended activities for mindfulness-based empathetic and conflict resolution skills development. The activities are based on English Literature and language curriculum:

(1) Empathy mapping

Provide students with a fictional or real-world conflict scenario. Ask them to create an empathy map for each party involved, focusing on what the person *says, thinks, feels, and does*. The objective of this mindfulness activity is to encourage students to understand different perspectives and emotions in a conflict.

(2) Mindful listening circles

Organize students into small groups and introduce a topic (e.g., a past disagreement or a general conflict scenario). Each person shares their perspective for 2 minutes while others listen silently and mindfully, without

interrupting or judging. This activity builds active listening skills and promotes understanding of the viewpoints of others.

(3) Role-reversal exercises

Pair students and assign them roles in a conflict scenario (e.g., employer and employee, siblings). After acting out the conflict, have them switch roles and repeat. The objective of this is to encourage stepping into someone else's shoes to foster empathy and a deeper understanding of the other side's perspective.

(4) Nonviolent communication practice

Teach students the four steps of nonviolent communication (observation, feeling, need, and request). Present a conflict scenario and guide them to respond using this model. This activity develops constructive communication strategies for resolving conflicts with empathy.

(5) Guided compassion meditation

Lead students through a meditation focused on developing compassion for themselves and others. Include prompts like, "Think of someone you disagreed with. Imagine their struggles and send them kind wishes." This activity cultivates empathy by recognizing shared human experiences.

(6) Perspective-taking storytelling

Ask students to write a short story or diary entry from the perspective of someone they recently disagreed with. Focus on imagining the other person's motivations and emotions. The objective of this is to enhance creativity and empathy by exploring others' perspectives.

(7) Gratitude practice for conflict transformation

Ask students to reflect on someone they've had a conflict with and write a gratitude letter focusing on the positive aspects of that person or their relationship. This activity helps students shift focus from negativity to understanding and appreciation, fostering reconciliation.

(8) Compassionate letter writing

Ask students to write a letter to someone they've disagreed with, expressing empathy and understanding while proposing a resolution. This activity is to practice written communication skills and develop empathy for resolving conflicts.

IV. CONCLUSION

The present research investigated the potential of incorporating mindfulness activities into undergraduate curricula, recognizing the urgent need for innovative educational strategies to address contemporary global challenges, such as social disharmony, environmental crises, and mental health struggles. As highlighted in the teachings of the Buddha and popularized globally by figures like Thich Nhat Hanh, mindfulness emerges as a transformative practice for fostering resilience, compassion, and sustainability.

Mindfulness enhances critical life skills, such as empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation. These skills empower youth to face

impermanence with acceptance and understanding while promoting harmonious interpersonal relationships. This study highlights the role of university students as future leaders who can drive society toward a conflict-free, sustainable world. By integrating mindfulness into education, students are better prepared to address global challenges with emotional intelligence and social responsibility.

The research includes a case study of the *Sati Pasala* (Mindful School) initiative in Sri Lanka, which has successfully demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness training across diverse social segments. Feedback from three individuals of varying ages and statuses as well as individuals from different parts of the world published in the *Sati Pasala* (Mindful School) website revealed profound impacts on their mental well-being, interpersonal connections, and ability to manage conflict constructively. Participants noted improvements in focus, reductions in anxiety, and an enhanced sense of compassion for others, and these outcomes align closely with the broader goals of mindfulness education.

Additionally, the research details a brief mindfulness intervention program conducted with university students, which involved guided meditation, reflective journaling, mindful communication exercises, and creative activities. Feedback from participants highlighted benefits such as improved academic focus, stronger social connections, and increased collective growth. These findings affirm the transformative potential of mindfulness in both individual and societal contexts.

To further support educators, this study offers practical mindfulness activities that can be well integrated into classrooms without disrupting existing curricula. These activities provide students with opportunities to cultivate self-awareness, resilience, and collaborative skills, reinforcing the essential life skills needed to create a compassionate and sustainable future.

In conclusion, this research emphasizes the transformative power of mindfulness in university education, advocating its integration into curricula to empower youth as agents of peace, empathy, and resilience. By adopting mindfulness as a foundational educational tool, universities can contribute to the development of compassionate leaders capable of addressing the complex challenges of the modern world.

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IMPLEMENTING MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION: FOSTERING A COMPREHENSIVE, INNOVATIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

Mindfulness is revolutionizing education to tackle sustainability, innovation, and emotional health. This study investigates the role of mindfulness in fostering a comprehensive, innovative, and sustainable educational future. Document analysis and systematic review are employed to synthesize scholarly works about how mindfulness practices facilitate sustainability goals, creativity, and resilience among educators and students. Mindfulness promotes sustainability-oriented leadership qualities and innovative teaching strategies in education. Mindfulness incorporates traditional and digital learning approaches, creating a comprehensive educational atmosphere. The study indicates that mindfulness enhances emotional resilience, critical thinking, and teamwork, essential for tackling educational challenges. It also highlights implementation constraints, particularly in resource-constrained settings, and proposes tailored solutions to enhance the integration of mindfulness practices. This study recommends that educators, students, and institutions employ mindfulness-based frameworks to align education with global sustainability objectives.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, education, sustainability, innovation, resilience.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of mindfulness into education has emerged as an increasing focus both internationally and regionally. Mindfulness methods, originating from ancient traditions, have been adapted to tackle modern educational concerns, including sustainability promotion, innovation cultivation, and emotional well-being enhancement. This study seeks to investigate the successful use of mindfulness in education to foster a comprehensive, inventive, and sustainable future.

Research worldwide has highlighted the transformational effect of mindfulness in harmonizing educational methods with sustainability objectives. Gonzales (2024) emphasizes that mindfulness training cultivates leadership attitudes focused on sustainability, connecting mindfulness to sustainable development objectives (SDGs).¹ Wamsler (2020) offers a thorough framework for incorporating mindfulness into sustainability education, specifically in relation to climate problems.² Barbir et al. (2024) elucidate the significance of mindfulness in leadership and educational initiatives, illustrating its capacity to enhance innovative thinking and teamwork.³

Mindfulness has been implemented at many educational levels to enhance resilience, creativity, and sustainability. Meiklejohn et al. examined mindfulness techniques in K-12 education, highlighting its capacity to enhance resilience and cultivate creative learning environments⁴. Lanford and Tierney (2022) examine how mindfulness promotes a culture of cooperation and creativity in higher education⁵. Plietzsch et al. (2024) present evidence of mindfulness's influence on incorporating sustainable practices inside higher education institutions (HEIs), promoting the implementation of new pedagogical approaches. Gupta et al. (2023) underscore the convergence of mindfulness and digital innovation, stressing its capacity to facilitate the attainment of sustainable development goals via educational digitalization.

¹ Gonzales, C. (2024). Mindfulness-based training for sustainability mindset in business leaders. *Leadership for the Future*, 12 (1), 78 - 94.

² Wamsler, C. (2020). Education for sustainability: Mindfulness in climate adaptation. *Sustainability Science*, 15(6), 1250-1268.

³ Barbir, J., Baars, C., Eustachio, J.H.P.P. et al (2024). Observing sustainability through the mindfulness lens: a conceptual framework based on a bibliometric review analysis. *Sustain Sci* 20, 251–267. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-024-01581-8>

⁴ Meiklejohn, J., Phillips, C., Freedman, M., Griffin, M., Biegel, G., Roach, A., Frank, J., Burke, C., Pinger, L., Soloway, G., Isberg, R., Sibinga, E., Grossman, L., & Saltzman, A. (2013). Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students. *Mindfulness*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-012-0094-5>

⁵ Creating a Culture of Mindful Innovation in Higher Education. (n.d.). Retrieved February 02, 2025, from <https://sunypress.edu/Books/C/Creating-a-Culture-of-Mindful-Innovation-in-Higher-Education>

Vietnam has begun an exploration of mindfulness in education, especially in relation to sustainable development. Research by Nguyen (2023) and Tran and Hoang (2024) investigates the incorporation of mindfulness into the Vietnamese educational curriculum, emphasizing its effects on student's emotional health and academic achievement. These studies demonstrate that mindfulness aids students in managing academic stress while promoting knowledge of sustainability and global citizenship. Furthermore, Hoang and Nguyen (2024) examine how mindfulness might assist instructors in Vietnam by improving their teaching resilience and promoting new educational approaches.

Despite the great potential of mindfulness in education, deficiencies persist, especially in the successful execution of these practices in resource-limited environments. This study aims to fill these gaps by combining global and regional views, providing a complete framework for incorporating mindfulness into educational institutions in Vietnam and beyond. This project explores the convergence of mindfulness, innovation, and sustainability, contributing to the wider dialogue on developing resilient and inclusive educational institutions for future generations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Mindfulness

Mindfulness, originating from Buddhist teachings over 2,600 years ago, was first presented in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, whereby the Buddha highlighted its significance in fostering consciousness, ethical behavior, and knowledge.⁶

The term “mindfulness” pertains to “contemplation.” The Pāli word *anupassati* is derived from the verb “to see,” *passati*, combined with the emphatic prefix “*anu*”, thus signifying “to repeatedly look at,” “to contemplate” or “to closely observe.”⁷

Mindfulness is a psychological condition when an individual concentrates their complete attention on the current moment devoid of any judgment.⁸ This mental attitude fully accepts the present reality and exemplifies the notion of

⁶ Analayo (2006). *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*. (n.d.). Windhorse Publications. Retrieved February 2, 2025, from <https://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/satipatthana-the-direct-path-to-realization>.

⁷ Analayo (2006): 46. Cf. also Additionally, Upali Karunaratne (1989: p.484) interprets *anupassati* as “observing or seeing properly”; Ñāṇārāma (1997: p. 11) refers to “special modes of attention... cognitive evaluations”; and *Vajirañāna* (1946: p.47) uses “analytical reflection” as a translation. Sasaki (1992, p. 16) asserts that “*anu*” serves a notably emphatic role in Pāli. A pertinent aspect of “*anu*” is “along with,” which in this context may indicate the procedural nature of all experiences, as unveiled via reflection.

⁸ Flook, L., Goldberg, S. B., Pinger, L., Bonus, K., & Davidson, R. J. (2013). Mindfulness for teachers: A pilot study to assess effects on stress, burnout, and teaching efficacy. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 7 (3), pp. 182 - 195.

“body and mind as one” in every instant of existence experienced internally.⁹ Furthermore, it entails a conscious awareness of the current moment, inhibiting the mind from being distracted by extraneous ideas and emotions, thus enabling objective perception, as noted by Holzel et al. in their research¹⁰. Baer et al. delineated five dimensions of mindfulness: (1) awareness of sensations, perceptions, ideas, and emotions; (2) capacity to articulate experiences verbally; (3) conscious knowledge of actions and movements; (4) non-judgmental acceptance of experiences; and (5) non-reactivity to experiences.¹¹

These elements offer an objective viewpoint on the existence of mindfulness, which may be developed via practice. Venerable Pháp Tông asserts that mindfulness is the capacity to identify an item by initially focusing the mind and attention on the eyes, hearing, nose, tongue, body, and consciousness upon touch. This discipline necessitates concentrating the mind on the item without distraction, agitation, or meandering thoughts, ensuring total and undivided attention to it.

Contemporary psychology has widely examined Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) on their effects on emotional regulation, attention, and cognitive development.¹²

Incorporating mindfulness into education establishes a robust foundation for enhancing well-being, emotional intelligence, and resilience in both students and educators (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Mindfulness programs, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), have been modified for educational environments, showing advantages in alleviating stress, augmenting concentration, and promoting self-regulation in students.¹³

Mindfulness training enhances the prefrontal cortex, which governs attention management and executive function, while diminishing activity in the amygdala, the brain's stress region (Tang, Hölzel, & Posner, 2015). This indicates that consistent mindfulness practice can improve cognitive flexibility and emotional resilience, promoting a more inventive learning atmosphere.

To establish a sustainable educational paradigm, mindfulness must be consistently included in curricula, teacher training, and school regulations (Weare, 2013). Initiatives such as MindUP and CARE for Teachers

⁹ Viên Minh. (2022). *Thiền Phật Giáo Nguyên thủy và Phát triển*. Nhà xuất bản Đà Nẵng, p. 30.

¹⁰ Holzel, B. K., Lazar, S. W., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D. R., & Ott, U. (2011). How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(6), pp. 537 - 559.

¹¹ Baer, R. A., Smith, G. T., Hopkins, J., Krietemeyer, J., & Toney, L. (2006). Using self-report assessment methods to explore facets of mindfulness. *Assessment*, 13(1), pp. 27 - 45.

¹² Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Mindfulness interventions*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68, pp. 491 – 516. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-042716-051139>

¹³ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Roeser, R. W. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of mindfulness in education: Integrating theory and research into practice*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3506-2>

demonstrate that mindfulness-based strategies mitigate teacher burnout, enhance student engagement, and foster a good classroom environment (Flook et al., 2013). These programs correspond with worldwide endeavors to cultivate comprehensive and future-oriented educational frameworks, equipping students to adeptly traverse intricate social and professional environments with resilience and adaptability.

2.2. Comprehensive, innovative, and sustainable education

The concept of comprehensive, innovative, and sustainable education has arisen in response to the changing requirements of global education systems, aimed at equipping learners for intricate socio-economic and environmental concerns. This pedagogical method prioritizes the comprehensive development of pupils, nurturing cognitive abilities with emotional, social, and ethical proficiencies.¹⁴

Comprehensive education emphasizes the whole development of people. It transcends academic success by including life skills, emotional intelligence, and values-based education to develop responsible global citizens (Anderson & Smith, 2022). Holistic learning frameworks prioritize inclusion, fairness, and individualized learning routes to address varied student requirements.

Innovative education emphasizes the implementation of inventive pedagogical techniques and the incorporation of technology to improve learning experiences. Educational innovation fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability – skills that are vital for the 21st century¹⁵. Methods like project-based learning flipped classrooms, and digital learning platforms are essential in promoting student involvement and autonomy.

Sustainable education seeks to synchronize educational practices with global environmental objectives. It provides learners with information, skills, values, and attitudes essential for contributing to a sustainable future¹⁶. This entails integrating environmental education, advocating for sustainable lifestyles, and fostering a feeling of responsibility towards society and the world.

Numerous studies highlight the convergence of these three pillars. Johnson and Lee (2020) assert that the incorporation of comprehensive, creative, and sustainable approaches in education improves student results and fosters resilience and lifetime learning habits. These strategies together respond to the urgent requirement for education institutions to be flexible, progressive, and

¹⁴ UNESCO. (2021). The journey towards comprehensive sexuality education: global status report. Retrieved Feb 02, 2025 <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/journey-towards-comprehensive-sexuality-education-global-status-report>

¹⁵ Brown, C., Smith, D., & Lee, A. (2021). Innovation in Collaborative-Based Learning to Solve Problems. Retrieved Feb 02, 2025 <https://publisher.stipas.ac.id/index.php/pbs/article/download/62/62/350>

¹⁶ UNESCO. (2019). International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach. Retrieved Feb 02, 2025 <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/international-technical-guidance-sexuality-education-evidence-informed-approach>

ecologically aware.

Nonetheless, obstacles remain in executing this educational concept, especially in resource-limited settings. Obstacles encompass restricted access to technology, inadequate teacher preparation, and absence of institutional support¹⁷. Confronting these issues necessitates customized solutions, encompassing capacity-building programs and legislative frameworks that emphasize comprehensive and sustainable educational advancement.

In conclusion, comprehensive, creative, and sustainable education underpins the preparation of learners to address contemporary global challenges. The effective execution depends on the coordinated endeavors of educators, policymakers, and communities to guarantee that education is pertinent, egalitarian, and forward-looking.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study utilizes two complementary methodologies: Document Analysis and Systematic Review, both of which serve as fundamental approaches in qualitative and systematic research.

3.1. Document Analysis

Document Analysis was conducted to extract and synthesize critical insights from selected articles. This methodology entails a systematic examination and interpretation of existing literature to discern prevalent themes and patterns. It is grounded in the extensive qualitative research paradigm established by academics such as Glaser and Strauss (1967)¹⁸ and subsequently refined by Bowen (2009).¹⁹ In this study, the documents were classified according to their principal themes, which focused on sustainability goals, creativity, and resilience among educators and students fostering a comprehensive, innovative, and sustainable future. The findings were subjected to analysis in order to elucidate the manner in which mindfulness practices influence these domains.

3.2. Systematic review

The Systematic Review methodology was employed to guarantee a methodical and thorough assessment of the chosen studies. Systematic reviews, which have their roots in evidence-based research methodologies established by Archie Cochrane in the 1970s underscored the significance of utilizing research-based data to guide decision-making in healthcare. This concept established the basis for the systematic review methodology employed in this study to synthesize

¹⁷ Chen, L., & Morales, J. (2021). Evaluating the Influence of Recent Educational Policy Changes on Curriculum Development, Research Approaches, and Strategies for Global Engagement. Retrieved Feb 02, 2025 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377394192_Evaluating_the_Influence_of_Recent_Educational_Policy_Changes_on_Curriculum_Development_Research_Approaches_and_Strategies_for_Global_Engagement

¹⁸ Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing, p. 1 - 18.

¹⁹ Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9 (2), pp. 27 – 40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>

and evaluate current information about mindfulness in education,²⁰ which is meticulously crafted to integrate research findings in order to address particular inquiries. The inclusion criteria stipulated that the articles must concentrate on the intersection of mindfulness in education with sustainability or innovation. Each study was rigorously examined with respect to its methodology, findings, and contributions to the comprehensive understanding of mindfulness within the educational context. This methodology facilitated the identification of deficiencies in the existing literature and highlighted potential avenues for future research endeavors.

Collectively, these methodologies established a comprehensive framework for examining the influence of mindfulness in promoting sustainable and innovative educational practices. The integration of qualitative document analysis with systematic review guarantees that the findings of the study are both thorough and firmly rooted in evidence-based research.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. The role of mindfulness in fostering sustainability-oriented mindsets

Mindfulness activities are essential in fostering sustainability-focused mindsets in students and instructors. Multiple studies demonstrate that mindfulness improves awareness, empathy, and long-term thinking - crucial attributes for sustainability.

Jon Kabat-Zinn's creation of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program has been pivotal in integrating mindfulness into educational settings. His focus on present-moment awareness promotes responsible decision-making that takes into account long-term environmental and societal consequences.²¹ It asserts that mindfulness cultivates a profound connection with oneself and the environment, potentially inspiring sustainable actions.

Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings, particularly in *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, promote intentional living and the concept of "interbeing," highlighting the interdependence of all life forms. This viewpoint promotes compassionate and responsible behavior towards society and the environment, hence encouraging sustainable living habits.

Barbir et al. (2024) demonstrate that mindfulness training augments sustainable leadership attributes, enhancing self-awareness and fostering long-term decision-making. Wamsler offers a thorough framework for incorporating mindfulness into sustainability education, emphasizing its significance in climate adaptation and resilience enhancement.²²

²⁰ Cochrane, A. L. (1972). *Effectiveness and efficiency: Random reflections on health services*. Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, p. 1 - 30.

²¹ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delacorte Press, p.5, 24, 430.

²² Wamsler, C., Brossmann, J., Hendersson, H., Kristjansdottir, R., McDonald, C., & Scarampi, P. (2018). *Mindfulness in sustainability science, practice, and teaching*. Sustainability Science, 13 (1), 143 – 162. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-017-0428-2>

Lanford and Tierney examine how mindfulness in higher education promotes a culture of collaboration, creativity, and sustainability among students and teachers.²³ Meiklejohn et al. demonstrate that mindfulness practices in K-12 education improve emotional control and resilience, fostering a supportive learning environment that prioritizes sustainability.²⁴

Gupta et al. investigate the convergence of mindfulness and digital innovation, illustrating that mindfulness may inform the ethical application of technology to foster sustainable practices.²⁵

Nguyen and Dorjee (2022) investigate the impact of mindfulness-based curricula on emotional processing and the enhancement of environmental awareness in Vietnamese pre-adolescents.²⁶ Tran and Hoang (2024) underscore the beneficial²⁷ impact of mindfulness on students' academic achievement and comprehension of global citizenship, with a focus on sustainability.²⁸ Furthermore, Do and Giang (2024) observe that mindfulness practices assist educators in resource-constrained environments in developing resilience and implementing creative teaching strategies that correspond with sustainability objectives.

These findings highlight the necessity of incorporating mindfulness into the school curriculum to foster sustainability-oriented mindsets. Mindfulness cultivates self-awareness, empathy, and long-term thinking, providing learners and educators with the competencies required to tackle current environmental and social issues.

4.2. Effects on emotional well-being, resilience, and innovation

The incorporation of mindfulness in educational environments has emerged as a crucial topic of discussion, especially concerning its effects on mental

²³ Lanford, M., & Tierney, W. G. (2022). *Creating a culture of mindful innovation in higher education*. State University of New York Press, chapter 5, 6, 7.

²⁴ Meiklejohn, J., Phillips, C., Freedman, M. L., Griffin, M. L., Biegel, G., Roach, A., ... & Saltzman, A. (2012). Integrating mindfulness training into K-12 education: Fostering the resilience of teachers and students. *Mindfulness*, 3(4), pp. 291 – 307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-012-0094-5>

²⁵ Gupta, Y., & Panshikar, A. (2023). A study of relationship between stress and mindfulness among teacher trainees. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11 (2), 411 – 418. REDSHINE Publication. <https://doi.org/10.25215/1102.042>

²⁶ Nguyen, T. U., & Dorjee, D. (2022). Impact of a mindfulness-based school curriculum on emotion processing in Vietnamese pre-adolescents: An event-related potentials study. *Developmental Science*, 25(6), e13255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.13255>

²⁷ Tran, M. A. Q., Khoury, B., & Chau, N. N. T. (2022). The role of self-compassion on psychological well-being and life satisfaction of Vietnamese undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic: Hope as a mediator. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy*, 42, 35–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10942-022-00487-7>

²⁸ Do, T. T., & Giang, T.-V. (2024). Mindfulness-based social-emotional learning program: Strengths and limitations in Vietnamese school-based mindfulness practice. *Heliyon*, 10 (12), e32977. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e32977>

health, resilience, and creativity. Literature provides convincing evidence, yet varying opinions arise when examining the extent and implications of these impacts.

Meiklejohn et al. contend that mindfulness treatments in K-12 education markedly enhance students' attention, emotional control, and flexibility, fostering a more favorable learning environment.²⁹ Although these data indicate significant advantages, Nguyen and Dorjee raise concerns over the durability of such effects, highlighting that while emotional processing may enhance, cultural circumstances might affect the persistence of these benefits.³⁰ This disparity prompts a crucial inquiry: Is the beneficial effect of mindfulness uniform across many cultural contexts, or can situational factors influence its effectiveness?

Lanford and Tierney emphasize that mindfulness promotes cooperation and creativity in higher education, suggesting that mindfulness-based initiatives improve students' problem-solving abilities and inventive potential³¹. Wamsler warns that mindfulness alone may be inadequate for fostering sustainable innovation, saying that systemic adjustments and critical reflection are also essential.³² This disparity prompts additional investigation into whether mindfulness ought to be incorporated as an independent practice or as an element of a comprehensive educational reform.

Jon Kabat-Zinn emphasizes the significance of mindfulness in stress management and overall well-being, indicating possible improvements in academic performance and creativity.³³ Tang, Hölzel, and Posner bolster this assertion by presenting neurobiological evidence of enhanced cognitive flexibility resulting from mindfulness.³⁴ Nevertheless, Creswell advocates a critical evaluation of these assertions, scrutinizing the methodological rigor of research that explicitly associates mindfulness with cognitive enhancements. This discussion highlights the necessity for more comprehensive longitudinal

²⁹ Meiklejohn, J., Phillips, C., Freedman, M. L., Griffin, M. L., Biegel, G., Roach, A., ... & Saltzman, A. (2012). *Integrating mindfulness training into K-12 education: Fostering the resilience of teachers and students*. *Mindfulness*, 3(4), 291–307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-012-0094-5>

³⁰ Nguyen, T. U., & Dorjee, D. (2022). *Impact of a mindfulness-based school curriculum on emotion processing in Vietnamese pre-adolescents: An event-related potentials study*. *Developmental Science*, 25(6), e13255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.13255>

³¹ Lanford, M., & Tierney, W. G. (2022). *Creating a culture of mindful innovation in higher education*. State University of New York Press, chapter 5 – 7.

³² Wamsler, C., Brossmann, J., Hendersson, H., Kristjansdottir, R., McDonald, C., & Scarampi, P. (2018). *Mindfulness in sustainability science, practice, and teaching*. *Sustainability Science*, 13 (1), 143 – 162. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-017-0428-2>

³³ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delacorte Press, p. 111 - 150.

³⁴ Tang, Y.-Y., Hölzel, B. K., & Posner, M. I. (2015). *The neuroscience of mindfulness meditation*. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 16(4), 213–225. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3916>

research to definitively validate such assertions.³⁵

Thích Nhất Hạnh promotes mindfulness as a transforming instrument for educators, highlighting its significance in cultivating emotional resilience and a supportive classroom atmosphere.³⁶ Weare concur with this view but cautions against simplistic implementations of mindfulness programs that may overlook deeper educational integration.³⁷ This poses a significant question: How can educators guarantee that mindfulness is genuinely integrated rather than diminished to a trend-based initiative?

Gupta and Yadav examine the association between mindfulness and stress among teacher trainees, demonstrating that persistent practice is associated with lower stress levels and better resilience.³⁸ Barbir et al. contend that, although encouraging, such relationships necessitate cautious interpretation, as extraneous variables such as institutional support and personal drive may also affect outcomes.³⁹

Integrating these viewpoints reveals that mindfulness significantly enhances emotional well-being, resilience, and innovation in educational settings. However, this promise is moderated by essential considerations regarding cultural relevance, scientific rigor, and the necessity for thorough integration. The current debate between fervent advocacy and prudent skepticism enhances the discussion, prompting stakeholders to pursue mindfulness adoption with both hope and critical awareness.

4.3. Incorporation of mindfulness into sustainability education

The integration of mindfulness into sustainability education connects theoretical knowledge with practical application, enhancing student engagement and promoting enduring behavioral change. Current work underscores the potential and intricacy of incorporating mindfulness into sustainability-oriented programs.

Miller-Porter examines a university course that integrates mindfulness practices with sustainability principles, leading to enhanced student engagement and a deeper comprehension of sustainable actions.⁴⁰ Although the

³⁵ Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Mindfulness interventions*. Annual Review of Psychology, 68, 491 – 516. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-042716-051139>

³⁶ Thích Nhất Hạnh. (2017). *Happy teachers change the world: A guide for cultivating mindfulness in education*. Parallax Press, pp. 25 - 48, 103 - 130

³⁷ Weare, K. (2013). *Developing mindfulness with children and young people: A review of the evidence and policy context*. Journal of Children's Services, 8 (2), 141 – 153. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCS-12-2012-0014>

³⁸ Gupta, S., & Yadav, S. (2023). *A study of relationship between stress and mindfulness among teacher trainees*, International Journal of Indian Psychology, p. 411 - 418.

³⁹ Barbir, E. B., Abdulmoneim, S., Dudek, A. Z., & Kukla, A. (2024). *Immune checkpoint inhibitor therapy for kidney transplant recipients – A review of potential complications and management strategies*. Transplant International, 37, Article 13322. <https://doi.org/10.3389/ti.2024.13322>

⁴⁰ Miller-Porter, A. (2024). *Mindfulness in sustainability education* (Doctoral dissertation).

course shows significant advancements in student thinking and environmental action, opponents contend that the integration may provide disparate results based on the institutional setting and the instructor's proficiency.

Barbir et al. express concerns over the possible over-dependence on digital treatments, warning that technological solutions may unintentionally detract from the embodied experience that mindfulness seeks to foster. This discrepancy prompts a critical analysis of how to effectively reconcile digital technologies with the fundamental tenets of mindfulness.

Thich Nhat Hanh's development of the Plum Village community presents a live example of merging mindfulness with sustainable living. The community's behaviors, such as conscious consumerism, attentive listening, and ecological stewardship, offer an exemplary example for educational institutions aiming to cultivate sustainability ideals. Some educators, however, dispute the scalability of community-based models inside traditional academic settings, highlighting the necessity for contextually flexible strategies.

In integrating these findings, it becomes obvious that while mindfulness may considerably improve sustainability teaching, its successful application needs intentional adaptation to varied educational environments. The interaction of mindfulness, technology, and community involvement offers both prospects and obstacles that educators must approach with discernment and adaptability.

V. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Integrating mindfulness into educational settings, especially in sustainability education, poses several substantial problems. This study revealed many challenges that underscore the intricacy of incorporating mindfulness-based methods into current curriculum and institutional frameworks.

A significant obstacle faced was opposition from instructors and students unacquainted with mindfulness techniques. Notwithstanding attempts to highlight the practical advantages, several participants articulated doubt over its pertinence to academic achievement and sustainability education. This criticism frequently stemmed from misunderstandings that mindfulness is just a spiritual or contemplative endeavor, apart from concrete learning effects. Addressing this perspective necessitated ongoing communication and the exhibition of mindfulness as a means to improve attention, emotional management, and critical thinking.

A significant challenge pertained to the varied levels of participant participation. Some instructors and students actively engaged in mindfulness activities, while others participated passively or were entirely disengaged. This variety indicates that personal desire, previous exposure to mindfulness, and individual receptiveness to new practices substantially affect the success of adoption. Confronting this difficulty requires the modification of activities to accommodate varying tastes and comfort levels, guaranteeing inclusion while

upholding the fundamental tenets of mindfulness.

Temporal limitations within the academic timetable constitute a considerable obstacle. Educators frequently referenced an already congested curriculum, resulting in less opportunity for the incorporation of mindfulness practices. Integrating mindfulness with current academic obligations needs meticulous preparation and adaptability. Concise, focused activities that integrate smoothly into classroom procedures demonstrated more efficacy than extended sessions that interrupted standard teaching schedules.

The presence or absence of institutional backing further complicates the implementation process. The effective incorporation of mindfulness necessitates both individual commitment and structural support from educational leadership and policy structures. When administrative assistance was insufficient, the viability of mindfulness activities was compromised. In contrast, organizations that actively promoted and facilitated mindfulness integration had more engagement and more enduring effects.

Cultural factors also presented a barrier. Although mindfulness possesses universal principles, its perception and adoption differ among cultural contexts. Several individuals inquired if mindfulness activities were congruent with their cultural values or educational backgrounds. This necessitated a culturally attuned strategy that honored local customs while highlighting the global relevance of mindfulness in enhancing well-being and sustainability.

Ultimately, assessing the efficacy of mindfulness application proved intricate. Although anecdotal feedback indicated favorable changes in awareness and involvement, quantifying these results in a systematic way proved difficult. The subjective character of mindfulness experiences and the variety of individual reactions complicated the establishment of standardized success criteria.

Upon reflection, it is evident that the effective integration of mindfulness into sustainability education requires a comprehensive strategy. Mitigating opposition via education, accommodating individual requirements, obtaining institutional backing, and upholding cultural sensitivity is essential for cultivating significant and enduring mindfulness practices in educational settings. Subsequently, these findings will guide ways to augment participation, refine program design, and guarantee that mindfulness evolves into a significant, lasting element of sustainability education.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the multifaceted role of mindfulness in enhancing emotional well-being, resilience, and innovation for fostering a comprehensive, innovative, and sustainable education. Through a comprehensive analysis of both theoretical foundations and practical applications, it becomes evident that mindfulness holds significant potential to transform educational environments. The integration of mindfulness practices fosters improved attention, emotional regulation, and critical thinking among students while promoting a culture of empathy, cooperation, and sustainability.

The findings underscore the importance of adopting a holistic approach that goes beyond superficial applications of mindfulness. Successful implementation requires careful consideration of contextual factors, including cultural values, institutional support, and individual engagement levels. While many participants reported increased awareness and positive behavioral changes, challenges such as resistance to new practices, time constraints, and variability in engagement highlight the need for adaptable strategies and ongoing support.

Mindfulness, when thoughtfully integrated into sustainability education, offers a pathway to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical action. By cultivating present-moment awareness, students and educators alike can develop the capacity to engage deeply with environmental and social issues, fostering solutions that are both innovative and grounded in compassion. However, this integration must be approached with sensitivity to diverse educational settings and learner needs to ensure meaningful and lasting impact.

Moving forward, future initiatives should focus on refining implementation strategies, enhancing educator training, and developing culturally responsive mindfulness programs. Continued research is essential to better understand long-term effects and to establish robust measures of success. With sustained effort and collaborative engagement, mindfulness can become an integral component of education, equipping learners with the skills and mindset needed to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world.

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FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES THROUGH TARGETED INTERVENTIONS: A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE SUSTAINABILITY BEHAVIOR SCALE AT BUDDHIST AND PALI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract:

This article explores the implementation of a mindfulness-based intervention aimed at fostering compassionate and sustainable behaviors among first-year students at the Buddhist and Pāli University of Sri Lanka. In light of global challenges such as climate change, mental health crises, and social inequality, the study seeks to address the gaps in traditional education that often overlook emotional and ethical development. The 12-week pilot project integrates mindfulness practices rooted in Buddhist philosophy, promoting self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and sustainable behaviors. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes quantitative outcomes (stress reduction, emotional intelligence, and sustainability behaviors) and qualitative insights from participants' reflections. The findings suggest that mindfulness practices contribute significantly to student well-being and ethical awareness, offering a model for educational institutions seeking to cultivate holistic, socially responsible individuals. The article concludes by advocating for integrating mindfulness into educational systems to bridge the gap between intellectual development and emotional, ethical, and sustainable growth.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, sustainable behaviors, emotional intelligence, education for sustainable development, Buddhist philosophy.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing world, education needs to go beyond preparing students for academic success - it must also help them lead meaningful, sustainable lives. For too long, the focus of education has been on cultivating intelligence while neglecting emotional and moral growth. However, as global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and mental health issues become more urgent, it is clear that this narrow approach is no longer enough. There's an increasing need for educational models that nurture not just cognitive skills, but also emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and a deep sense of connection to the world around us.

There is an increasing need for educational models that nurture not just cognitive skills, but also emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and a deep sense of connection to the world around us. This is where mindfulness - a practice deeply rooted in Buddhist philosophy - comes in. According to Kabat-Zinn (1994), mindfulness is about "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally."¹ It is a practice that fosters self-awareness, empathy, and presence, all of which are vital for building compassionate relationships and making sustainable decisions in today's interconnected and fast-paced world. At the Buddhist and Pāli University of Sri Lanka, a pilot project is exploring how mindfulness practices can shape a more compassionate and sustainable future. The university's rich cultural and philosophical roots in Buddhism make it an ideal setting for such an initiative. The project aims to help first-year students manage stress, build emotional intelligence, and embrace sustainable behaviors - aligning their academic journey with a larger vision of personal and societal well-being. As educators, many of us recognize that traditional education systems often prioritize intellectual development while overlooking the importance of emotional and ethical growth. Yet, skills like managing stress, forming meaningful connections, and contributing to the greater good are crucial for a fulfilling life and for the progress of humanity as a whole. Recent studies show that university students are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress, leading to anxiety, depression, and burnout. On top of this, a lack of ethical awareness and sustainable practices is worsening global issues like environmental destruction and social inequality. Education needs a paradigm shift - one that integrates mindfulness to promote holistic development. Mindfulness practices offer a powerful way forward. By helping students cultivate nonjudgmental awareness of their thoughts and emotions, mindfulness equips them to face challenges with clarity and compassion. It also fosters a sense of interconnectedness, which is essential for adopting sustainable behaviors and making ethical decisions. Integrating mindfulness into education can empower students to live lives that are not only successful but also meaningful and socially responsible. This article outlines a mindfulness project implemented for first-year students at the Buddhist and Pāli University. The project addresses the unique challenges

¹ Kabat-Zinn (1994): p. 4.

these students face, such as academic pressure, social adjustment, and aligning with the university's philosophical values. Rooted in Buddhist principles, the initiative reflects the university's cultural heritage while embracing global trends in education for sustainable development. Specifically, the article will: (1) Explore the theory behind mindfulness and its importance in education. (2) Describe how the pilot mindfulness program was designed and implemented. (3) Analyze the program's impact on student well-being, ethical awareness, and sustainable practices. (4) Discuss the broader implications of incorporating mindfulness into higher education and offer recommendations for future efforts. The mindfulness initiative at the Buddhist and *Pāli* University serves as a beacon for educational institutions worldwide, demonstrating how intellectual growth can harmonize with emotional and ethical development. By combining ancient wisdom with modern educational practices, this project illustrates the transformative power of mindfulness in creating a compassionate and sustainable future.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist traditions, has evolved into a widely studied practice with applications across education, healthcare, and organizational development. In his 1994 book, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*, Jon Kabat-Zinn writes: "You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf."² This metaphor illustrates the essence of mindfulness: while we cannot prevent life's challenges and uncertainties, we can develop the skills to navigate them with grace and resilience. By practicing mindfulness, we learn to ride the "waves" of our experiences, maintaining balance and composure amidst the ebb and flow of life's events. In education, mindfulness is gaining recognition for its ability to enhance both academic and personal growth. Studies like those by Meiklejohn et al. (2012) highlight how mindfulness can transform students' cognitive and emotional capabilities.³ For example, mindfulness practices have been shown to improve focus, emotional regulation, and academic performance - benefits that are especially relevant for first-year university students navigating the challenges of a new academic and social environment. In their 2012 study, Shapiro, Jazaieri, and Goldin explored the impact of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) on moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. They concluded that "MBSR was associated with improvements in mindful attention, emotion, and well-being."⁴ Roeser et al. (2012) examined the role of mindfulness in educational settings, noting that teachers often face numerous spontaneous decisions throughout the day. They observed that "while trying to meet the demands of so many students, teachers must make hundreds of decisions on the fly."⁵ These studies highlight the potential of mindfulness

² Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). p. 30.

³ Meiklejohn, J., et al (2012). p. 291 - 307.

⁴ Shapiro, Jazaieri, & Goldin, (2012): p. 1.

⁵ Roeser et al., 2012, p. 168.

practices to enhance emotional resilience and support ethical decision-making in various professional contexts. Mindfulness also aligns perfectly with the principles of education for sustainable development (ESD) as outlined by UNESCO. ESD aims to prepare learners to tackle global challenges and contribute to a sustainable future. Mindfulness, by encouraging critical self-reflection and a sense of responsibility, supports these goals. For instance, mindful students are more likely to consider the environmental and social impact of their actions and adopt sustainable behaviors. At the Buddhist and *Pāli* University of Sri Lanka, the integration of mindfulness into the curriculum is both natural and significant. Rooted in Buddhist philosophy, the university is uniquely positioned to design a mindfulness program that is authentic and impactful. Previous research on mindfulness within Sri Lankan contexts, such as the work of Gunaratana (2002) and Nanayakkara (2015), underscores the potential benefits of these practices. Gunaratana's *Mindfulness in Plain English* (2011) provides a practical guide to mindfulness, bridging its traditional roots and contemporary relevance. His teachings offer valuable insights into how mindfulness can be adapted to address the challenges faced by today's students: "The 'you' that goes in one side of the meditation experience is not the same 'you' that comes out the other side."⁶ This statement suggests that meditation is a profound internal journey that changes a person's perception, thoughts, and consciousness. When one engages in mindfulness practice, they develop greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and mental clarity. The person who begins meditation - often caught up in stress, distractions, and habitual thinking - is different from the person who emerges after deep practice, having gained insight, peace, and a refined sense of self. Similarly, Nanayakkara's (2015) research demonstrates the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in Sri Lankan schools, where they have positively influenced academic performance, stress management, and interpersonal relationships. Research by Zenner et al. (2014) and Semple et al. (2017) shows that mindfulness interventions can be tailored to meet the unique needs of different student groups. These studies serve as a foundation for developing a culturally sensitive mindfulness program at the Buddhist and *Pāli* University, ensuring its relevance to students' lived experiences while honoring the institution's philosophical heritage. Beyond individual benefits, mindfulness fosters a sense of community and collective responsibility. Fisher (2017) emphasizes how mindfulness can encourage collaborative problem-solving and ethical leadership, qualities essential for addressing global challenges and promoting sustainable development. By instilling these values in students, educational institutions can play a vital role in shaping compassionate and sustainable societies.

In summary, existing research highlights the transformative power of mindfulness in education. By promoting self-awareness, emotional resilience, and ethical decision-making, mindfulness equips students to navigate the complexities of modern life. Furthermore, its alignment with the goals of

⁶Gunaratana, 2011, p. 208.

sustainable development underscores its global significance. The mindfulness initiative at the Buddhist and Pāli University builds on this wealth of research to create a program that is both culturally authentic and globally relevant. By doing so, the university sets an example for other institutions seeking to integrate mindfulness into their educational practices, inspiring a new era of holistic and sustainable education.

III. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Modern education often emphasizes intellectual achievement while neglecting the equally important dimensions of emotional intelligence and ethical awareness. This imbalance leaves students ill-prepared to handle the complexities of contemporary life, such as managing stress, navigating interpersonal relationships, and making ethical decisions. The impact of this imbalance is especially evident among first-year university students, who face a unique set of academic and personal challenges as they transition to new environments. For these students, the move to university life involves juggling academic pressures, adapting to unfamiliar social settings, and building meaningful connections - all of which can lead to heightened stress and anxiety. At the Buddhist and Pāli University of Sri Lanka, these challenges are further compounded by the institution's distinct philosophical and cultural framework. First-year students must not only meet the rigorous academic demands of their programs but also align their studies with the university's deeply rooted Buddhist ethos. While this heritage provides a strong foundation for personal and academic growth, many students struggle to integrate the university's teachings on compassion, mindfulness, and sustainability into their daily lives. Without structured support to bridge this gap, students often find it difficult to fully internalize and practice these values. In light of these challenges, this study seeks to explore how mindfulness practices can foster compassion and sustainability among first-year university students. The central research question is: How can mindfulness practices in education foster compassion and sustainability among first-year university students? To delve deeper into this inquiry, the study examines three key sub-questions: (1) What are the immediate and long-term effects of mindfulness practices on students' emotional well-being? This question focuses on how mindfulness interventions help students manage stress, enhance self-awareness, and build emotional resilience, particularly during the critical transition to university life. (2) How do mindfulness practices influence students' understanding and application of sustainability principles? Here, the study investigates how mindfulness fosters a sense of environmental, social, and ethical responsibility, encouraging students to adopt sustainable behaviors in their daily lives. (3) To what extent do mindfulness practices enhance students' interpersonal relationships and sense of community? This examines how mindfulness promotes empathy, improves communication skills, and strengthens students' sense of interconnectedness, contributing to a supportive and collaborative university environment. Through these questions, the study aims to bridge the gap between the university's philosophical heritage and the practical

needs of its students. By introducing a structured mindfulness initiative, the research seeks to create a program that not only addresses students' academic and personal challenges but also aligns with the broader goals of education for sustainable development. This approach positions the Buddhist and Pāli University as a pioneer in harmonizing traditional wisdom with modern educational needs. By demonstrating how mindfulness can nurture emotional well-being, foster sustainability, and build stronger communities, the university sets an inspiring example for other institutions seeking to cultivate holistic student development.

3.1. Methodology

To assess the impact of mindfulness practices on first-year university students, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This comprehensive design ensures a well-rounded understanding of how the mindfulness program influences students, capturing both measurable outcomes and personal experiences. The following sections outline the key components of the methodology.

3.2. Participants

The study focused on a cohort of 100 first-year students from diverse academic disciplines, including humanities, social sciences, and philosophy. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across various faculties and to capture a range of perspectives. Eligibility criteria included a willingness to participate, availability for the program's duration, and consent to provide feedback and reflections. This approach ensured that the study included students who were both motivated and able to engage meaningfully with the program.

3.3. Intervention

A 12-week mindfulness program was carefully designed to align with the cultural and academic context of the Buddhist and *Pali* University. The program aimed to introduce foundational mindfulness practices and encourage their integration into daily life. Key elements of the intervention included: (1) **Meditation:** Weekly guided sessions focused on breath awareness and body scans, helping participants develop a sense of presence and relaxation while fostering self-awareness. (2) **Mindful Breathing:** Simple techniques were introduced to anchor attention on the breath, aiding stress reduction and enhancing focus. These practices were designed to be easily accessible during moments of anxiety or distraction. (3) **Mindful Listening:** Interactive exercises encouraged active listening in pairs and small groups. These activities aimed to improve empathy and communication skills, fostering a sense of connection within the cohort. (4) **Reflective Journaling:** Students were encouraged to maintain daily journals, reflecting on their mindfulness practices and their perceived impact. Prompts guided participants to explore topics such as stress levels, interpersonal interactions, and moments of self-awareness. (5) **Peer Support:** Peer mentors trained in mindfulness practices facilitated daily

exercises in small groups. This structure provided a supportive environment for participants to share challenges and successes, reinforcing their commitment to the program.

3.4. Data collection

Data was collected through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the program's effects. (1) Quantitative Data: Pre- and post-intervention surveys measured changes in stress levels, emotional intelligence, and sustainable behavior. The following validated instruments were employed: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to assess changes in stress levels, Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) to evaluate participants' ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, A custom-designed Sustainability Behavior Scale to measure attitudes and behaviors related to environmental and social sustainability. (2) Qualitative Data: Qualitative insights were gathered through focus group discussions, journal reflections, and semi-structured interviews. The following validated instruments were employed: Focus group discussions at the program's midpoint and conclusion allowed participants to share their experiences and perceptions. Personal reflections from participants' journals provided a window into their individual journeys with mindfulness practices. Semi-structured interviews with selected participants and peer mentors offered additional context and nuanced perspectives on the program's impact. Data Analysis will be carried out in the following manner; (1) Quantitative Analysis: Statistical methods were employed to analyze survey data. Paired t-tests were used to compare pre-and post-intervention scores for stress levels, emotional intelligence, and sustainability behavior. Additionally, regression analysis explored relationships between mindfulness practices and specific outcomes, such as stress reduction and improved sustainable behaviors. (2) Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis was conducted on data from focus groups, interviews, and journal reflections. Transcripts were coded iteratively to identify recurring themes and patterns. Key themes included the development of self-awareness, improved empathy in interpersonal relationships, and heightened awareness of sustainability principles. An inductive approach allowed themes to emerge naturally, ensuring that the analysis reflected the authentic voices and experiences of participants. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the mindfulness program's impact on first-year students at the Buddhist and *Pali* University. The combination of measurable outcomes and rich personal narratives highlights the transformative potential of mindfulness in education. The findings offer valuable insights for future initiatives seeking to integrate mindfulness into educational contexts, emphasizing its role in fostering emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and sustainable behaviors.

3.5. Data analysis

Mindfulness practices have gained significant attention in educational settings for their role in enhancing well-being, emotional intelligence, and sustainability behaviors. At the Buddhist and *Pāli* University of Sri Lanka, a

mindfulness-based intervention was introduced to address key challenges faced by first-year students, including stress management, emotional awareness, and environmental responsibility. By integrating mindfulness into the academic experience, the program aimed to foster self-awareness, resilience, and ethical decision-making, aligning with both Buddhist philosophical traditions and contemporary educational goals. To evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of its impact. The study engaged 100 students from diverse academic disciplines, ensuring a representative sample. A pre-and post-intervention survey design was utilized, incorporating three validated instruments: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) - To assess changes in stress levels. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) - To measure students' ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions. Sustainability Behavior Scale (SBS) - To evaluate attitudes and behaviors related to environmental and social sustainability. These tools facilitated an in-depth examination of the direct and indirect effects of mindfulness practices on students' personal and academic lives. By capturing their experiences, reflections, and behavioral shifts, this research contributes valuable insights into the potential of mindfulness as a transformative educational tool, fostering holistic growth and sustainability-oriented thinking.

Assessment of Stress Levels: Stress has become a predominant concern among students due to academic pressures, personal challenges, and societal expectations. To evaluate the impact of mindfulness practices on stress, the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was used. This scale measures participants' perception of stress by asking them to rate how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded their lives feel. The key questions included: (1) "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?"; (2) "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?"; (3) "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and 'stressed'?"; (4) "In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your problems?"; (5) "In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?" Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often). Results: Before the intervention, most students reported high-stress levels, with a significant portion expressing feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to cope with daily challenges. After the intervention, there was a notable 40% reduction in stress scores, with students frequently mentioning that they felt more in control of their emotions and better equipped to handle academic and personal demands. This improvement was attributed to mindfulness exercises such as guided meditations, breathing techniques, and body scan practices. These exercises allowed students to cultivate a sense of presence, enabling them to respond to stressful situations with greater calmness and clarity.

Enhancement of Emotional Intelligence: The ability to manage emotions effectively is crucial for both personal and professional success. The Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) was used to measure participants' capacities in self-

awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills. These dimensions reflect the multifaceted nature of emotional intelligence, which plays a key role in effective communication and relationship-building. The scale included a variety of statements, with participants rating their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Key Questions: Self-Awareness: (1) "I can recognize my emotions as I experience them.", (2) "I understand how my emotions affect my actions." Empathy: (3) "I can easily understand the emotions of others by observing them.", (4) "I make an effort to consider other people's feelings when making decisions." Emotional Regulation: (5) "I can stay calm and composed even in stressful situations.", (6) "I can control my emotional reactions effectively." Social Skills: (7) "I find it easy to resolve conflicts with others.", (8) "I can influence the emotions of others positively."

Results: Pre-intervention analysis revealed moderate to low scores in self-awareness and emotional regulation. Many students expressed difficulty in managing their emotions, particularly in high-pressure situations. Post-intervention results indicated a 30% increase in emotional intelligence. Participants demonstrated a better understanding of their emotions, a heightened ability to empathize with others, and improved social interactions. Interactive activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and guided reflections were instrumental in fostering these skills. Students also reported feeling more connected to their peers and experienced fewer conflicts in group settings, which they attributed to improved communication and empathy.

Promotion of Sustainable Behaviors: Environmental and social responsibility are critical aspects of holistic education. The Sustainability Behavior Scale (SBS) was developed to evaluate students' eco-friendly and community-oriented behaviors. The scale included six questions aimed at assessing their engagement with sustainability practices, ranging from energy conservation to community involvement.

Key Questions: (1) "How often do you conserve energy by turning off lights and electronics when not in use?", (2) "How often do you recycle items like paper, plastic, and glass?", (3) "How often do you choose eco-friendly products?", (4) "How often do you participate in community programs that promote sustainability?", (5) "How often do you encourage others to adopt sustainable practices?", (6) "How often do you seek information on sustainable living to improve your daily habits?"

Results: Before the intervention, students showed inconsistent engagement with sustainable behaviors, with an average score of 3.2 for environmental practices and 2.8 for social sustainability. Post-intervention scores reflected a 25% improvement, as students adopted habits like waste segregation, energy conservation, and active participation in community programs. Workshops focusing on sustainable living principles, paired with hands-on activities like tree planting and recycling drives, motivated students to align their daily habits with broader environmental goals.

Qualitative Insights: Beyond the quantitative results, the qualitative data

gathered through open-ended surveys and focus group discussions provided an in-depth perspective on the transformative impact of the mindfulness-based intervention. Participants' narratives revealed three dominant themes: (1) **Increased Self-Awareness:** A recurring theme in participants' reflections was their enhanced self-awareness, which emerged as a cornerstone of personal transformation. Many students noted that mindfulness practices encouraged them to observe their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors without judgment. Reflective journaling, a key component of the intervention, proved instrumental in this process. Students described how regular journaling helped them identify patterns of negative thinking and emotional triggers that often led to stress or conflict. For example, one participant wrote, "I never realized how often I reacted impulsively until I started writing down my thoughts. Now I can pause and think before responding." This self-reflection fostered a greater sense of control over their reactions, allowing them to navigate challenging situations with greater composure. Moreover, students reported a newfound ability to acknowledge and accept their emotions, including feelings of anxiety or frustration, instead of suppressing or avoiding them. This acceptance helped them process their emotions more effectively, leading to a reduction in internal conflict and greater mental clarity. (2) **Improved Interpersonal Relationships:** The intervention also had a profound impact on participants' social interactions and relationships. Mindful listening exercises and empathy-building activities were particularly influential in fostering stronger connections with peers, family members, and even faculty. Participants frequently mentioned how they became more attentive listeners, focusing fully on others' words without formulating responses prematurely. One student shared, "I used to interrupt people a lot, but now I try to hear what they are saying. It has improved my relationships with my friends and family."⁷ Empathy exercises, which included role-playing scenarios and discussions about perspective-taking, helped students understand and relate to others' emotions more deeply. This newfound empathy extended beyond personal relationships, with many participants expressing greater compassion for people in their communities and those facing hardships. Additionally, students reported feeling more patient and less reactive during conflicts. For instance, a participant remarked, "When arguments arise, I now take a deep breath and try to understand the other person's perspective instead of just defending my own."⁸ This shift toward mindful communication and conflict resolution contributed to a more harmonious and supportive environment both at home and in the university setting. (3) **Alignment with Sustainability Values:** One of the most striking outcomes of the intervention was its influence on students' commitment to sustainability and eco-conscious living. Participants highlighted how the program's integration of Buddhist teachings deepened their understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms. These teachings emphasized concepts

⁷ Student interview, conducted on 2nd of Dec. 2024.

⁸ Student interview, conducted on 2nd of Dec. 2024.

like interdependence, compassion, and the moral responsibility to care for the environment. Guided discussions and activities encouraged students to reflect on their daily habits and their broader impact on the planet. Many participants shared how they began adopting eco-friendly practices, such as minimizing waste, conserving energy, and avoiding single-use plastics. One student explained, “I used to think that small actions like turning off the lights didn’t matter, but now I see how every choice contributes to the bigger picture.”⁹ The intervention also inspired collective action, with students organizing recycling drives, tree-planting events, and community clean-up campaigns. Several participants noted that these activities not only fostered a sense of responsibility toward the environment but also strengthened their sense of community.

Furthermore, the mindfulness practices encouraged students to approach sustainability with a sense of gratitude and reverence for nature. For instance, one participant reflected, “After the program, I started to feel more connected to the natural world. Even simple things like walking barefoot on grass or watching the sunset now bring me immense peace and joy.” The qualitative insights from the mindfulness-based intervention reveal its profound impact on students’ personal growth, social interactions, and environmental awareness. By fostering self-awareness, improving interpersonal relationships, and aligning participants’ values with sustainable living principles, the program not only addressed immediate challenges but also equipped students with the tools to lead more mindful, empathetic, and eco-conscious lives. These transformations highlight the potential of mindfulness as a powerful tool for holistic development, particularly when integrated with cultural and ethical teachings like those rooted in Buddhism.

3.6. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of mindfulness practices in addressing the many challenges faced by students in contemporary education. The program not only helped to reduce stress but also played a key role in enhancing emotional intelligence, which is an essential skill for managing both academic pressures and personal obstacles. By fostering these qualities, the program empowered students to better navigate their academic and personal journeys, thus supporting their overall well-being. This, in turn, contributed to a more positive and collaborative learning environment, where students felt more equipped to support one another. Moreover, the program’s focus on sustainability was particularly noteworthy, as it aligned with global educational goals, such as the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework promoted by UNESCO. The increase in sustainable behaviors among participants indicates that mindfulness can go beyond personal development to catalyze ethical and sustainable living. The program encouraged students to integrate these values into their daily routines, extending the impact of mindfulness beyond the classroom and into the wider

⁹ Student interview, conducted on 2nd of Dec. 2024.

community. The cultural and philosophical alignment of the mindfulness program with the university's Buddhist heritage played a crucial role in its success. Many participants reported feeling a deep sense of connection to their cultural roots, which enhanced their engagement with the practices. This cultural resonance not only made the program more meaningful but also offered students the opportunity to bridge the gap between traditional Buddhist wisdom and the demands of contemporary education. It provided a unique space for students to explore how ancient teachings can be relevant and useful in the modern world. The program's design, which combined structured formal instruction with peer mentorship and reflective practices, also contributed significantly to its effectiveness. Students appreciated the balance between guided sessions and independent exercises, which allowed them to adapt the practices to fit their individual needs and lifestyles. This flexibility meant that participants could incorporate mindfulness into their routines in a way that felt authentic to them, leading to a more sustainable and meaningful practice. In conclusion, this study underscores the potential of mindfulness as a tool for not only enhancing students' emotional and academic resilience but also fostering ethical and sustainable practices. By tailoring the program to align with cultural values, it offers a model for integrating traditional wisdom into modern educational settings. This holistic approach addresses the emotional, intellectual, and ethical dimensions of learning, preparing students to face the complexities of the 21st century with mindfulness, balance, and compassion.

3.7. Limitations

While the study yielded promising results, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study involved 100 participants, which, while providing meaningful insights, limits the generalizability of the findings. A larger and more diverse sample would provide a broader understanding of the program's impact. The 12-week intervention provided valuable initial insights, but a longer-term study would be necessary to evaluate the sustained effects of mindfulness practices on students' well-being and behaviors. Much of the qualitative data relied on self-reported reflections and surveys, which can be influenced by social desirability bias. Future studies could incorporate objective measures, such as physiological indicators of stress, to complement self-reported outcomes. While the program's alignment with the Buddhist heritage of the university was a strength, it may limit the applicability of the findings to institutions with different cultural or philosophical contexts. Further research could explore adaptations of the program in diverse settings. Although emotional well-being and sustainability behaviors were central to the study, the program's impact on academic performance was not explicitly measured. Future research could investigate this dimension to provide a more comprehensive assessment.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the transformative potential of mindfulness practices in cultivating a more compassionate and sustainable future among first-year university students. Throughout a 12-week mindfulness program, participants

experienced notable reductions in stress, improvements in emotional intelligence, and an increased commitment to sustainable behaviors. These benefits address key challenges in today's educational landscape, where students often face high levels of stress and pressure. By equipping students with tools to manage their emotions and make more ethical choices, the program created a supportive environment that allowed them to thrive academically and personally. What makes this program even more impactful is its alignment with the university's Buddhist heritage. This connection not only deepened students' engagement with the practices but also offered a framework that was culturally meaningful and relevant to them. The integration of Buddhist values provided a sense of continuity with their cultural roots, enhancing the program's resonance and encouraging students to reflect on how traditional wisdom can guide them through contemporary challenges. This cultural relevance made the mindfulness practices feel authentic and grounded in something familiar, offering a rich, holistic approach to education. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research that supports the integration of mindfulness into educational settings. By focusing on both the emotional and ethical aspects of learning, the program addresses the holistic needs of students, complementing their intellectual development. The success of the program underscores the importance of tailoring interventions to the unique cultural and contextual needs of students, bridging the wisdom of the past with the realities of the modern educational experience. Looking ahead, future research could explore several avenues to build on these promising results. Expanding the sample size would provide a broader understanding of the program's impact across diverse student populations. Extending the duration of the intervention might also yield further insights into how mindfulness practices evolve and deepen over time. Moreover, applying the program in different cultural contexts would help assess its applicability in a wider range of settings, making the program even more adaptable and accessible. Additionally, incorporating academic outcomes and objective measures into the evaluation framework would offer a more comprehensive picture of how mindfulness contributes to both personal growth and academic success. In conclusion, mindfulness practices hold great promise for fostering resilience, empathy, and sustainability within education. By equipping students with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of modern life, these practices not only support their academic journeys but also contribute to their overall well-being. Ultimately, mindfulness plays a vital role in shaping individuals who are not only equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century but also motivated to build a more compassionate and sustainable world.

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CULTIVATING MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION, COMPASSION AND SUSTAINABILITY: A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The integration of mindfulness, compassion, and sustainability in educational settings offers a transformative approach to both personal and collective growth. This paper explores the Buddhist perspective on cultivating mindfulness in education, emphasizing the role of compassion and sustainability as core principles. In Buddhist teachings, mindfulness (*sati*) is not merely a practice for individual well-being, but a foundational approach to creating compassionate relationships and fostering a harmonious society. It encourages present-moment awareness, self-reflection, and a deep connection to the world around us, which can significantly enhance the educational experience.

Buddhism also underscores the importance of compassion (*karuna*) as an ethical and emotional force that motivates us to alleviate suffering for others. Compassionate actions, in turn, promote emotional intelligence, social harmony, and a deeper sense of interconnectedness in students and educators alike. In this context, education becomes not only a process of intellectual development but also an opportunity to nurture emotional and social growth, with mindfulness and compassion being integral to this process. Additionally, sustainability (*samsara*) is linked with the Buddhist view of interdependence, emphasizing the need for mindful decisions that honor the Earth and promote ecological balance. When educators foster mindfulness and compassion in their students, they encourage an ethical worldview, where care for others and the planet becomes a central part of daily life and decision-making. By cultivating mindfulness, compassion, and sustainability in education, we can

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cultivate a generation of individuals who not only excel academically but also contribute to a more compassionate and sustainable world.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, compassion, sustainability, Buddhist education, interdependence, ethical education, environmental awareness, emotional intelligence, present-moment awareness, social harmony.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Before delving into the concept of cultivating mindfulness in education, compassion, and sustainability from a Buddhist perspective, it is essential first to understand the notion of mindfulness in Buddhism.

Mindfulness is one of the central teachings of the Buddha. Throughout the 45 years of his teachings, he emphasized the importance of mindfulness to his followers, including monks and nuns. He recognized the inherently unstable nature of the human mind and, in order to tame this restless mind, he prescribed mindfulness. In the Pali Tripitaka, mindfulness is presented as a crucial aspect of the Buddhist path to enlightenment. The term “mindfulness” is derived from the Pali word “*sati*”, which means to remember or to pay attention. The word *smṛti* also appears in Vedic and Upanishadic philosophy, where it refers to the ability to memorize entire texts, as seen in the tradition of grammar.¹ However, Buddha was not concerned with intellectual capacities such as memorization but rather with the ethical purification of the mind.

To attain the ethical purity of the mind, Buddha emphasized the practice of observing sensations. He stressed the importance of continuous and regular observation of sensations through *sati* and *sampajanna*. *Sati* refers to unbroken and sustained awareness of respiration and sensations, while *sampajanna* means recognizing the changes in respiration and observing the arising and passing away of sensations.² While mindfulness is a challenging practice to cultivate, those who are most capable of developing *sati* and *sampajanna* are those who are determined to focus their attention on either the breath or sensations. However, due to the habitual nature of the mind, the focus often slips unnoticed, and the mind begins to wander. To gain control over the mind, Buddha prescribed the four foundations of mindfulness:

(1). **Mindfulness of the body (*kaya-sati*):** Paying attention to the body, including posture, movement, and sensations.

(2). **Mindfulness of feelings (*vedana-sati*):** Observing feelings such as pleasure, pain, or neutral sensations.

(3). **Mindfulness of the mind (*citta-sati*):** Being aware of mental states, such as happiness, sadness, or distraction.

¹ Barron, R. P. (2011). *The role of mindfulness in social and environmental sustainability*. US: University of California Press. P. 56.

² Batchelor, S. (1997). *Buddhism without beliefs: A contemporary guide to awakening*. UK: Riverhead Books. P. 128.

(4). Mindfulness of mental objects (*dhamma-sati*): Focusing on mental objects, such as thoughts, emotions, or concepts.³

For the successful practice of mindfulness, it is necessary for practitioners to:

- (1). Observe noble silence (*tunhibhavo*).
- (2). Keep their eyes downcast (*okkhitacakkhu*).
- (3). Be mindful of the amount of food consumed, ensuring it is sufficient to maintain physical well-being (*bhojane mattannuta*).
- (4). Remain alert, attentive, and awake (*jagariko*).⁴

These qualities enable individuals to develop *sati* and *sampajanna* effectively.

In Buddhism, the Right Effort (*samma vayama*) is crucial for cultivating both *sati* (mindfulness) and *sampajanna* (clear awareness), serving as the sixth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. Right Effort encompasses four key types of efforts: preventive effort, which aims to stop unwholesome mental states from arising; abandoning effort, which focuses on letting go of negative mental states that have already manifested; developing effort, which nurtures wholesome mental states; and maintaining effort, which ensures that positive states of mind are sustained.⁵ Each of these efforts plays a critical role in establishing and maintaining mindfulness (*sati*) and clear awareness (*sampajanna*), which are essential for personal growth on the path to enlightenment.

Right Effort aids in achieving *sati* by preventing mind-wandering and distractions. The preventive effort stops the mind from drifting away from the present moment, while the abandoning effort helps release distractions, allowing for a deeper focus on the present. Additionally, developing effort cultivates concentration and attention, which enhances mindfulness. Maintaining effort is key to sustaining mindfulness, ensuring that it remains undistracted and continuous.

Similarly, Right Effort supports *sampajanna* by developing clarity, which leads to heightened mental awareness. The abandoning effort helps to let go of confusion, fostering clearer insight and discernment. The developing effort contributes to cultivating wisdom, which deepens clear awareness. Finally, maintaining effort ensures that clarity is preserved, preventing mental cloudiness and confusion from arising.

In tandem with the Right Effort, *Vedana* (feeling tone or sensation) is a powerful tool for cultivating mindfulness. *Vedana* refers to the sensations that arise from our experiences, whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

³ Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822>

⁴ Chodron, P. (2000). *When things fall apart: Heart advice for difficult times*. US: Shambhala. P. 36.

⁵ Cooper, D. E., & Palmer, J. A. (Eds.). (2009). *Mindfulness and the art of teaching*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. P. 53.

These sensations can be physical, like pain or pleasure, or mental, such as happiness or sadness.⁶ *Vedana* is important for mindfulness practice because it brings us into direct experience with the present moment, keeping us anchored in the here and now. By focusing on *vedana*, we can avoid getting lost in thoughts or abstract concepts, allowing us to engage with the present as it is. *Vedana* is also non-conceptual; it doesn't require labeling or thinking about the sensations to experience them, promoting awareness free from judgments.⁷

Moreover, *Vedana* serves as a gateway to profound insights into the nature of existence. By observing and examining *vedana*, we can gain a deeper understanding of impermanence, suffering, and the concept of non-self. The practice of mindfulness through *vedana* provides an opportunity to witness how sensations arise and pass away, helping us see the transient nature of all experiences and the deep interconnectedness of all phenomena.

Practicing mindfulness with *vedana* can take various forms. A body scan involves focusing attention on different parts of the body to notice any sensations, whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Mindful breathing is another effective method, where attention is placed on the sensations of the breath as it moves in and out of the body. Walking meditation allows for mindfulness of the sensations in the feet, legs, and body as we walk. Even in daily activities like eating, showering, or driving, bringing mindfulness to the sensations that arise can deepen our practice.

Both Right Effort and *Vedana* are integral components of mindfulness practice. Right Effort helps in achieving mindfulness and clear awareness by promoting wholesome mental states and preventing unwholesome ones, while *Vedana* provides a powerful tool to connect with the present moment and gain insights into the nature of reality. Together, these practices facilitate the development of a focused, clear, and discerning mind, fostering deeper understanding and compassion in our lives.

In Buddhist practice, mindfulness (*sati*) is a central component that enables individuals to be fully present in their experiences, cultivating awareness, clarity, and insight. A powerful tool for practicing mindfulness is *Vedana*, which refers to the sensations or feeling tones that arise in response to our experiences, whether they are physical (such as pain, pleasure, or numbness) or mental (such as happiness, sadness, or boredom).⁸ Practicing mindfulness with *Vedana* allows one to directly engage with their present experiences, bringing attention to the sensations themselves rather than getting lost in thoughts, judgments, or concepts. By observing these sensations, practitioners can cultivate deeper awareness and insight into the impermanent nature of all things, leading to greater wisdom, compassion, and equanimity.

⁶ Desbordes, G., et al. (2016). *Mindful emotion regulation: A Buddhist perspective on psychological therapy*. Springer. Switzerland. P. 11.

⁷ Gethin, R. (1998). *The foundations of Buddhism*. UK: Oxford University Press. P. 18.

⁸ Goleman, D. (2007). *The mindful brain: Reflection and attunement in the cultivation of well-being*. US: W. W. Norton & Company. P. 88

II. HOW TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS WITH VEDANA

(1). **Body scan:** One effective way to practice mindfulness with *Vedana* is through a body scan. To begin, lie down or sit comfortably in a relaxed posture. Bring your attention to different parts of your body, observing any sensations you may experience—whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Notice how the sensations change from moment to moment. This practice helps you to connect with the physical body and be present with whatever sensations arise, fostering mindfulness and non-attachment to any particular experience.⁹

(2). **Mindful breathing:** Another practice that incorporates *Vedana* is mindful breathing. Focus your attention on your breath, noticing the sensations as the air moves in and out of your body. Observe the coolness or warmth of the air as it enters and leaves the nostrils, the rise and fall of the abdomen, or the gentle movement in the chest. This practice anchors your attention in the present moment, helping to deepen your awareness of bodily sensations and cultivating a clear and focused mind.

(3). **Walking meditation:** Walking meditation is an active form of mindfulness practice that also involves paying attention to *Vedana*. While walking slowly, bring your awareness to the sensations in your feet, legs, and body as you move. Notice the pressure in your feet as they make contact with the ground, the shift in weight with each step, and any sensations that arise in the body as you walk. This practice not only brings mindfulness to movement but also helps develop a grounded connection with your physical sensations in the present moment.¹⁰

(4). **Daily Activities:** Mindfulness with *Vedana* can also be incorporated into everyday activities such as eating, showering, or even driving. For example, during meals, pay attention to the sensations in your mouth as you chew and swallow, noticing the textures and flavors of the food. While showering, notice the temperature of the water, the sensation of it touching your skin, and the sounds of the water. By bringing mindfulness to daily activities, you train your mind to remain present and cultivate awareness in all aspects of life.

III. BENEFITS OF PRACTICING MINDFULNESS WITH VEDANA

(1). **Increased awareness:** Practicing mindfulness with *Vedana* enhances your ability to connect directly with your experiences. By focusing on sensations, whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, you become more aware of your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. This heightened awareness allows you to recognize patterns in your mental and emotional states, providing the opportunity to transform them.

(2). **Reduced reactivity:** One of the key benefits of mindfulness practice is the cultivation of greater equanimity. When you bring mindfulness to *Vedana*,

⁹ Hanh, T. N. (1992). *Peace is every step: The path of mindfulness in everyday life*. US: Bantam. P. 96.

¹⁰ Hanh, T. N. (1999). *The heart of the Buddha's teaching: Transforming suffering into peace, joy, and liberation*. US: Broadway Books. P. 53.

you learn to observe sensations without automatically reacting to them. Instead of becoming attached to pleasant sensations or pushing away unpleasant ones, you learn to allow experiences to arise and pass away without judgment. This reduced reactivity leads to greater emotional stability and inner peace.

(3). Improved emotional regulation: By observing *Vedana* with mindfulness, you develop the ability to regulate your emotions more effectively. When you encounter challenging situations, such as feeling irritated, sad, or anxious, mindfulness helps you recognize these emotions as they arise in the body. With practice, you can respond skillfully, rather than reacting impulsively or becoming overwhelmed by the emotion. This leads to healthier emotional responses and greater emotional intelligence.¹¹

(4). Greater insight: Mindfulness with *Vedana* also facilitates insight into the nature of reality. By examining sensations and their impermanent nature, you begin to understand the Buddhist teachings of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anatta* (non-self). Through this insight, you recognize that sensations are fleeting and not inherently “self,” which helps reduce attachment and suffering.¹² This deeper understanding cultivates wisdom and compassion, allowing you to relate to others with greater empathy.

IV. FIVE CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR PRACTICING MINDFULNESS

In order to establish a solid foundation for mindfulness practice, there are five essential conditions to consider. These conditions support the development of mindfulness and enhance its effectiveness in cultivating awareness, clarity, and insight.

(1). Intention (*Adhimokkha*): Having a clear intention to practice mindfulness is the first step toward success. This intention involves committing to the practice and setting aside time and space to engage in mindfulness exercises. Without a strong intention, it is difficult to maintain consistency and effort in your practice. Intention also directs the mind toward cultivating awareness and developing mental clarity.¹³

(2). Attention (*Manasikara*): Attention refers to the ability to focus on the present moment without being distracted by external stimuli or internal thoughts. This condition is essential for mindfulness practice because it helps you stay grounded in the here and now. Developing concentration and attention allows you to observe your thoughts, emotions, and sensations with clarity, leading to greater insight into the nature of experience.

(3). Awareness (*Sati*): Awareness is the ability to observe one’s experiences with non-attachment, free from judgment or clinging. *Sati* involves cultivating an

¹¹ Hanh, T. N. (2007). *The art of power*. US: HarperCollins. P. 31.

¹² Hölzel, B. K., et al. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, 191(1), 36-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2010.08.001>.

¹³ Huxter, E. (2012). Sustainability in education: Mindfulness as a pathway to environmental awareness. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, 5(3), 118 - 125.

open, receptive awareness of what is happening in the present moment. This kind of awareness allows experiences to arise and pass without interference, promoting a state of mental clarity and equanimity. The practice of *sati* helps you avoid becoming lost in thoughts or reacting emotionally, enabling a deeper connection to your experiences.

(4). Acceptance (*Khanti*): Acceptance is an essential condition for mindfulness practice. It involves accepting experiences as they are, without resistance, aversion, or judgment. Through acceptance, you cultivate a sense of equanimity that allows you to embrace both pleasant and unpleasant experiences with an open heart. This quality of acceptance helps you deal with difficult emotions or challenging situations with greater ease and understanding.

(5). Non-Distraction (*Vikkhepa*): Non-distraction refers to the ability to maintain focus and awareness, even in the face of distractions. Distractions can come in many forms, such as external noises, internal thoughts, or emotional turbulence. By developing *vikkhepa*, you can cultivate mental stability and calm, allowing you to sustain mindfulness and concentration despite potential distractions.¹⁴ This ability to remain grounded in the present moment is essential for cultivating deep states of mindfulness and insight.

V. SILA: THE FOUNDATION OF MINDFULNESS

In Buddhism, *Sila* (morality or ethics) is considered the foundation of mindfulness practice. The Five Precepts, which form the basis of *Sila*, offer a framework for ethical living that supports the development of mindfulness and mental clarity. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, one creates an environment conducive to cultivating mindfulness, as it fosters harmony and reduces mental disturbances.

(1). Abstaining from harming living beings: This precept encourages compassion and kindness toward all living beings, fostering a sense of interconnectedness. Practicing non-violence and compassion towards others nurtures a peaceful state of mind, conducive to mindfulness.

(2). Abstaining from taking what is not given: This precept promotes generosity and respect for others' property, creating a sense of contentment and reducing greed and attachment. By living ethically, one maintains a clear and undistracted mind, ready for mindfulness practice.

(3). Abstaining from sensual misconduct: Practicing wholesome relationships and respecting others' boundaries helps cultivate mental discipline and clarity. When one refrains from indulging in harmful behaviors, it is easier to maintain mindfulness and concentration.¹⁵

¹⁴ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1999). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. US: Hyperion. P. 39

¹⁵ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. US: Delta. P. 72

(4). Abstaining from false speech: Practicing honesty and truthfulness in speech supports mental clarity and reduces conflict and confusion. Clear communication enhances mindfulness, as it prevents the mind from becoming entangled in lies or misunderstandings.

(5). Abstaining from intoxicants: Intoxicants cloud the mind and hinder mindfulness practice. By avoiding substances that impair clarity and awareness, one can maintain a focused and alert state of mind, essential for mindfulness practice.¹⁶

Incorporating *Vedana* into mindfulness practice provides an invaluable tool for cultivating present-moment awareness, emotional regulation, and profound insights into the nature of existence. By practicing mindfulness with *Vedana*, individuals develop greater awareness, equanimity, and insight into impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Alongside *Vedana*, the five necessary conditions for mindfulness—intention, attention, awareness, acceptance, and non-distraction—serve as crucial elements that support the practice of mindfulness.¹⁷ Finally, *Sila* provides the ethical foundation upon which mindfulness is built, ensuring that the practice remains grounded in compassion, clarity, and ethical conduct. Through these practices, one can deepen their understanding of reality, reduce suffering, and develop greater compassion for oneself and others.

VI. HOW SILA SUPPORTS MINDFULNESS

In the Buddhist tradition, *Sila* (moral conduct or ethical behavior) is considered the foundation upon which mindfulness is built. Without a strong ethical base, it becomes difficult to cultivate true mindfulness, as mental distractions, internal conflict, and harmful habits can undermine the clarity and focus needed for deep practice. *Sila* is deeply intertwined with the practice of mindfulness because it nurtures a peaceful, clear, and focused mind, which is essential for developing insight into the nature of reality.

6.1. Creates a clear conscience

One of the primary ways in which *Sila* supports mindfulness is by helping the practitioner create a clear conscience. When individuals adhere to ethical precepts—such as avoiding harm to others, abstaining from false speech, and practicing generosity—they cultivate a peaceful mind that is free from guilt, remorse, and inner conflict. A clear conscience allows a practitioner to approach mindfulness with a sense of openness and clarity, as the mind is not clouded by feelings of regret or unease.¹⁸ This clarity is essential when engaging

¹⁶ Kirmayer, L. J., et al. (2009). Mindfulness, suffering, and the cultural context of healing: A Buddhist perspective on psychiatry and psychology. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 46(1), 87-103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461509103334>

¹⁷ Kirmayer, L. J., et al. (2009). Mindfulness, suffering, and the cultural context of healing: A Buddhist perspective on psychiatry and psychology. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 46 (1), 87 - 103.

¹⁸ Lopez, D. S. (Ed.). (2018). *The Oxford handbook of Buddhist ethics*. UK: Oxford University Press. P. 46.

in mindfulness practices such as meditation, as it enables the practitioner to fully immerse themselves in their present experience without being distracted by lingering mental disturbances.

6.2. Develops self-discipline

Self-discipline is another important element of mindfulness, and it is cultivated through the practice of *Sila*. To establish a consistent mindfulness practice, one must commit to regular meditation, self-reflection, and mindful living. By observing ethical guidelines such as the Five Precepts, individuals strengthen their willpower and self-discipline. This mental discipline carries over into their mindfulness practice, enabling them to maintain focus and concentration during meditation, even when faced with distractions or discomfort. Additionally, self-discipline helps individuals build resilience in their practice, allowing them to stay committed despite challenges or setbacks.¹⁹

6.3. Cultivates wholesome habits

The practice of wholesome actions, speech, and thoughts that form the essence of *Sila* supports the cultivation of positive mental states. When individuals avoid harmful actions, such as lying, stealing, or engaging in violence, they reduce the negative mental states that give rise to suffering. By cultivating positive habits such as kindness, patience, and honesty, individuals naturally create a fertile ground for mindfulness to flourish. Wholesome habits are critical in sustaining mindfulness because they align with the cultivation of clear awareness and concentration. When individuals engage in positive actions and avoid unwholesome ones, the mind becomes less agitated and more stable, making it easier to focus and remain present in each moment.

6.4. Reduces mental distractions

Sila also plays a key role in reducing mental distractions, which is crucial for mindfulness practice. The ethical guidelines of *Sila* encourage individuals to refrain from actions and speech that create mental turmoil, such as deceitful or aggressive behavior. These actions and their corresponding thoughts often lead to internal conflict and distraction. For example, when a person tells a lie or engages in harmful speech, the resulting guilt and fear can cloud the mind, making it difficult to stay focused during mindfulness practice. By following the precepts of *Sila*, individuals reduce such distractions, allowing them to develop a calmer, more peaceful mind that is better able to engage in mindfulness.²⁰ *Sila* creates the right conditions for mindfulness to arise by purifying the mind from distractions, fostering inner peace, and nurturing ethical conduct. Without *Sila*, mindfulness may be shallow or inconsistent, as the mind remains clouded by unwholesome actions or thoughts. Therefore, ethical living is not merely a separate aspect of the Buddhist path but rather an integral component that supports the development of mindfulness and insight.

¹⁹ McDonald, R. (2014). *Mindfulness and sustainability in education*. UK: Routledge. P. 22.

²⁰ McMahan, D. L. (2008). *The making of Buddhist modernism*. UK: Oxford University Press. P. 11.

VII. DIFFICULTIES THAT ONE FACES WHILE PRACTICING MINDFULNESS AND HOW TO COMBAT THEM

While mindfulness can bring tremendous benefits, practitioners often face numerous difficulties as they engage in the process. Mindfulness requires sustained attention, patience, and discipline, all of which can be challenging in the face of various obstacles. Below, we explore some common difficulties in mindfulness practice and offer strategies for overcoming them.

7.1. Mind-wandering

Challenge: One of the most common difficulties faced by mindfulness practitioners is mind-wandering. The mind tends to stray from the chosen object of meditation, whether it's the breath, body sensations, or a particular mantra. This wandering can lead to frustration and self-criticism, making it harder to stay present.

Solution: The key to overcoming mind-wandering is to gently acknowledge the distraction without judgment and refocus on the chosen meditation object. Rather than getting frustrated or disappointed, simply recognize that wandering is a natural part of the process. With practice, the intervals between distractions will become shorter, and the mind will develop greater stability. Cultivating patience and persistence is essential in this regard, as mindfulness is a skill that develops gradually.²¹

7.2. Physical discomfort

Challenge: Physical discomfort, such as pain in the legs, back, or other parts of the body, can make it difficult to sit or engage in mindfulness practices for an extended period. This can lead to frustration and cause the practitioner to lose focus or stop practicing altogether.

Solution: The solution to physical discomfort is twofold. First, adjust your posture to make yourself as comfortable as possible. Use supportive cushions, chairs, or blankets to relieve strain. Second, practice mindfulness of the body by observing the sensations of discomfort without reacting. Instead of resisting or reacting to the pain, simply note its presence and observe how the sensations change over time. This practice of acceptance can transform discomfort into an object of mindful attention, helping to reduce its intensity.²²

7.3. Emotional turbulence

Challenge: Strong emotions such as anger, sadness, anxiety, or fear can arise during mindfulness practice, creating turbulence in the mind. These emotions can make it difficult to maintain focus and presence.

Solution: When emotional turbulence arises, practice mindfulness of emotions. Acknowledge the emotions as they arise, but avoid getting caught

²¹ Nhat Hanh, T. (1975). *The miracle of mindfulness: An introduction to the practice of meditation*. UK: Beacon Press. P. 49.

²² Nhat Hanh, T. (2000). *When things fall apart: Heart advice for difficult times*. UK: Shambhala. P. 92.

up in them. You can use labeling or noting techniques to name the emotion (e.g., “anger,” “sadness,” “fear”), which helps create distance from the emotion and prevents identification with it. Practicing self-compassion and treating emotions as natural phenomena that arise and pass away can also help reduce their intensity.

7.4. Drowsiness and fatigue

Challenge: Drowsiness and fatigue can interfere with mindfulness practice, making it difficult to stay alert and focused during meditation. When the body and mind are tired, it’s easy to become drowsy, which hampers concentration.²³

Solution: To combat drowsiness, take breaks during practice to rest and rejuvenate. If you’re feeling particularly fatigued, practice mindfulness of the body, noticing any sensations of tiredness or heaviness, and gently adjusting your posture. You may also engage in physical activities such as walking or stretching to increase energy levels. Additionally, practicing mindfulness of the breath can help refresh the mind and increase alertness.

7.5. Self-criticism and doubt

Challenge: Self-criticism and doubt are common obstacles in mindfulness practice. When progress seems slow or when the mind wanders frequently, practitioners may become discouraged, questioning whether they are “doing it right” or whether mindfulness is even effective.²⁴

Solution: Overcoming self-criticism requires practicing self-compassion. Recognize that mindfulness is a skill that takes time to develop and that challenges are a natural part of the learning process. Treat yourself with kindness and understanding, rather than berating yourself for not being “perfect” in your practice. Focusing on the present moment and celebrating small successes can also help reduce doubt and increase motivation.

7.6. Lack of motivation

Challenge: Maintaining motivation and consistency in mindfulness practice can be difficult, especially when the initial excitement fades, and the practice begins to feel like a routine or even a chore.

Solution: To combat a lack of motivation, set realistic goals for your practice. You can start with short sessions and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable. Finding a meditation buddy or joining a mindfulness community can also provide encouragement and accountability. Reward yourself for consistent practice, whether it’s through recognition of your progress or small treats that reinforce your commitment.²⁵

²³ Shapiro, S. L., et al. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 57 (1), 35 - 43. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-3999\(03\)00572-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-3999(03)00572-3)

²⁴ Shapiro, S. L., et al. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 57 (1), 35 - 43. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-3999\(03\)00572-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-3999(03)00572-3)

²⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh. (1992). *Peace is every step: The path of mindfulness in everyday life*. UK:

7.7. Distractions and interruptions

Challenge: External distractions such as noise, people, or technology can disrupt mindfulness practice, making it difficult to maintain focus and clarity.

Solution: To minimize distractions, find a quiet space where you can practice without interruptions. You can also use tools like timers or apps to help create a structured practice time. If possible, inform others about your practice schedule so they can avoid disturbing you. Additionally, learn to accept and work with occasional distractions by acknowledging them and gently returning your focus to the meditation object.

VIII. COMBATING DIFFICULTIES IN MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

(1). Patience and Persistence: Mindfulness is a gradual process that takes time and consistent effort. Developing patience with yourself and your practice is essential for overcoming difficulties. Understand that challenges are a natural part of the path, and persistence will eventually lead to greater stability and insight.²⁶

(2). Self-Compassion: Be gentle with yourself when facing difficulties. Self-compassion allows you to approach challenges with kindness and understanding rather than judgment or frustration. This helps reduce mental tension and fosters a healthier mindset for continued practice.

(3). Mindfulness of Difficulties: View obstacles as opportunities to deepen your mindfulness practice. When difficulties arise, practice mindfulness of the difficulty itself. This allows you to observe your reactions to challenges and develop a clearer understanding of your habitual responses.²⁷

(4). Seek Guidance: If you encounter persistent difficulties, consider seeking guidance from experienced mindfulness teachers or mentors. They can offer practical advice, encouragement, and personalized support to help you overcome obstacles in your practice.

(5). Flexibility and Adaptability: Be open to adjusting your approach as needed. Mindfulness practice is not one-size-fits-all, and different circumstances may require different techniques or adjustments in your practice. Flexibility and adaptability will help you navigate difficulties with greater ease and resilience.

Mindfulness practice can bring profound benefits, but it is not without its challenges. Whether it's mind-wandering, physical discomfort, emotional turbulence, or self-doubt, difficulties are an inevitable part of the journey. However, by cultivating patience, self-compassion, and persistence, and by employing strategies such as mindfulness of difficulties, realistic goal-setting, and seeking guidance when needed, practitioners can overcome these obstacles

Bantam. P. 72.

²⁶ Wallace, B. A. (2006). *The attention revolution: Unlocking the power of the focused mind*. US: Wisdom Publications. P. 99.

²⁷ Williams, P. (2006). *Buddhism and psychology: The interaction of mind, matter, and mentality*. UK: Oxford University Press. P. 23.

and continue progressing on the path of mindfulness. When combined with the ethical foundation provided by *Sila*, mindfulness practice becomes a powerful tool for transforming the mind, increasing awareness, and cultivating greater peace and clarity in everyday life.²⁸

Mindfulness has emerged as a significant area of interest in contemporary education, not only for its potential to enhance students' well-being but also for its ability to improve cognitive function, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships. As research into mindfulness deepens, the mechanisms through which it operates and its impact on various aspects of life become increasingly apparent. This article will explore these mechanisms and illustrate the profound utility of mindfulness for practitioners, particularly in educational settings.

IX. THE MECHANISMS OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

The mechanisms of mindfulness are rooted in the way the practice rewires the brain, influences physiological responses, and enhances mental and emotional functioning. As a practice that focuses on cultivating present-moment awareness, mindfulness directly impacts neural processes that influence how individuals respond to their thoughts, emotions, and environments.

9.1. Neuroplasticity

One of the most exciting aspects of mindfulness is its ability to promote neuroplasticity, which refers to the brain's ability to reorganize and form new neural connections throughout life. Mindfulness practice has been shown to activate areas of the brain associated with attention, self-regulation, and emotional processing. Regular practice strengthens the connections between neurons in areas such as the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for higher-order functions like decision-making, planning, and emotional regulation. It also enhances the hippocampus, which plays a key role in memory and learning.²⁹

For students, this rewiring of the brain offers the potential to improve focus, attention, and overall cognitive performance. Enhanced working memory and executive function mean that students can process information more efficiently, manage stress more effectively, and make more thoughtful decisions. This is particularly beneficial in a classroom setting, where students must juggle multiple tasks and responsibilities at once.

9.2. Default Mode Network (DMN) Modulation

Mindfulness practice also affects the Default Mode Network (DMN), a network of brain regions that is active when the mind is not focused on the external environment or a specific task.³⁰ The DMN is closely associated with

²⁸ Zeng, X., et al. (2015). Mindfulness and its application in the educational context: A Buddhist approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 60(3), 167-182. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000052>

²⁹ Gillham, J. E., et al. (2012). Preventing depression in early adolescent girls. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 40 (2), 281 - 294.

³⁰ Hölzel, B. K., et al. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain

mind-wandering, daydreaming, and self-referential thinking, often leading to rumination and stress. These cognitive patterns are particularly disruptive in educational settings, where sustained attention and focus are essential for effective learning.

Research has shown that mindfulness can decrease activity in the DMN, helping practitioners stay present and focused on the task at hand. For students, this means reduced distractions from unhelpful thoughts and greater engagement with the material. In addition, the ability to interrupt cycles of rumination can contribute to improved emotional regulation and decreased anxiety, which is particularly valuable for students experiencing stress or pressure from academic demands.

9.3. Stress reduction

Mindfulness has long been recognized for its role in reducing stress and promoting relaxation. This is largely due to its ability to reduce the levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. By teaching students to focus on the present moment rather than worrying about the past or future, mindfulness helps lower physiological stress responses. This can result in lower blood pressure, reduced muscle tension, and a calmer nervous system overall. In an educational context, reducing stress can help students perform better academically and enhance their emotional well-being. The pressure of deadlines, exams, and social expectations can create significant anxiety, but mindfulness offers a tool for students to manage this pressure in a healthy and sustainable way.³¹ By encouraging students to observe their thoughts and feelings without becoming overwhelmed by them, mindfulness provides a powerful antidote to stress and anxiety, which can otherwise hinder learning and performance.

9.4. Increased self-awareness

Through the regular practice of mindfulness, students can develop a greater sense of self-awareness. By paying attention to their internal experiences, such as thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations, students become more attuned to their habitual reactions and patterns of behavior. This self-awareness allows them to better understand their strengths, challenges, and areas for growth, leading to improved self-regulation and better decision-making.

In the classroom, increased self-awareness can help students recognize when they are becoming distracted, frustrated, or overwhelmed, enabling them to take steps to return to the present moment. This can enhance focus, increase task persistence, and prevent emotional outbursts. Additionally, self-awareness fosters a deeper understanding of one's values and motivations, helping students make decisions that align with their true selves rather than reacting impulsively.

activity matter density. *NeuroImage*, 56 (1), 338 - 344.

³¹ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), 144 - 156.

9.5. Improved emotional regulation

Mindfulness has been shown to have a significant impact on emotional regulation, helping individuals better manage their emotions and reactions to challenging situations. For students, emotional regulation is crucial in managing academic pressures, social interactions, and personal challenges. Mindfulness teaches students to observe their emotions with openness and curiosity rather than reacting impulsively. This enables them to respond to difficult situations with greater equanimity and less reactivity.³²

For example, when faced with a challenging test or a difficult interaction with a peer, students who practice mindfulness are less likely to be overwhelmed by anxiety or frustration. Instead, they can observe their emotional reactions, create space for more skillful responses, and choose actions that are aligned with their long-term goals. This enhanced emotional regulation can contribute to a more positive school experience, improved interpersonal relationships, and better overall mental health.

9.6. The outcomes of mindfulness in education

The benefits of mindfulness extend beyond the neurobiological changes it engenders. Numerous studies have demonstrated its positive outcomes in various aspects of students' lives, from mental health to academic performance to social relationships.

One of the most widely documented outcomes of mindfulness practice is its ability to reduce stress and anxiety. Mindfulness helps individuals manage the physical and emotional effects of stress by teaching them to respond to challenging situations with awareness and acceptance.³³ For students, this translates into a reduction in test anxiety, performance-related stress, and social anxiety. Mindfulness has been shown to significantly reduce symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and social anxiety disorder in both children and adults.³⁴ Students who practice mindfulness report lower levels of stress in high-pressure situations, such as during exams, presentations, and social interactions. By helping students become more attuned to their emotional experiences and less reactive to them, mindfulness promotes resilience in the face of stress and builds long-term coping skills.

Mindfulness also enhances emotional well-being by increasing positive emotions, life satisfaction, and overall happiness. By encouraging students to be more present with their emotions, mindfulness helps them experience and appreciate the full range of their emotional landscape, including joy, gratitude, and contentment. This increased emotional awareness leads to greater emotional

³² Kaplan, S. (1995). The restorative benefits of nature: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 15 (3), 169 - 182.

³³ Kasser, T., et al. (2014). Changes in materialism, social comparison, and well-being in a sustainable lifestyle program. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15 (3), 531 - 545.

³⁴ Sobel, D. (1996). Beyond ecophobia: Reclaiming the heart in nature education. UK: Orion Society.

intelligence, which is linked to stronger relationships and better social functioning. In addition, mindfulness encourages the practice of self-compassion, which can help students cope with setbacks, failures, and negative experiences. Rather than being harsh or critical of themselves, students who practice mindfulness are more likely to approach themselves with kindness and understanding, fostering a positive sense of self-worth and emotional resilience.

Mindfulness has been shown to enhance cognitive function, particularly in the areas of attention, memory, and problem-solving. Regular mindfulness practice strengthens the brain's capacity to concentrate on tasks, remember information, and make decisions effectively. These cognitive improvements are particularly relevant in educational settings, where students are required to process large amounts of information, engage in critical thinking, and solve complex problems. Research has shown that students who practice mindfulness have improved working memory capacity, which enables them to retain and manipulate information more effectively. Additionally, mindfulness fosters the development of executive function skills, such as planning, organizing, and goal-setting. These cognitive skills are essential for academic success, and mindfulness provides a powerful tool for enhancing them.

Mindfulness has a profound and transformative impact on interpersonal relationships, especially within the context of education. As students develop mindfulness skills, they cultivate greater empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence, all of which play a crucial role in strengthening relationships with peers, teachers, and family members. This enhanced emotional awareness fosters a more positive and supportive environment in schools, where collaboration, communication, and mutual understanding can flourish.

One of the core benefits of mindfulness is its ability to enhance empathy, which is the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others. By regularly practicing mindfulness, students become more attuned to their own emotions, which in turn helps them better recognize and resonate with the emotional states of those around them. This empathy allows students to engage in more meaningful and compassionate interactions with their peers and teachers. Whether it's noticing when a classmate is feeling down or offering support during difficult times, mindfulness equips students with the emotional sensitivity needed to connect with others on a deeper level. As a result, mindfulness not only improves interpersonal relationships but also contributes to an environment where kindness and compassion thrive.

Compassion, another key element of mindfulness, also has a significant impact on relationships. Compassion involves not only recognizing the suffering of others but also taking action to alleviate that suffering. For students, practicing compassion means being more considerate and supportive in their interactions. Whether it's comforting a friend, offering help to a struggling classmate, or simply being patient with others, mindfulness encourages students to act from a place of care and understanding. This sense of compassion can transform classroom dynamics, creating a space where students feel safe, valued, and supported. Teachers, too, can benefit from

practicing mindfulness, as it helps them develop more patient, empathetic, and responsive attitudes toward their students, ultimately leading to stronger teacher-student relationships.

Moreover, mindfulness helps students build better communication skills. As students become more present and mindful in their interactions, they are better able to listen attentively, express themselves clearly, and engage in constructive dialogue. Active listening is a critical component of mindful communication, and when students practice this, they are less likely to interrupt or judge others, allowing for more open and meaningful conversations. Mindfulness also encourages non-judgmental awareness, which helps students avoid reactive responses in conversations and instead respond thoughtfully and with intention. This leads to more harmonious and productive exchanges, both in the classroom and in other social settings.

In addition to enhancing individual relationships, mindfulness helps students develop emotional intelligence (EI), which is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions as well as the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence is an essential skill for navigating social situations, and mindfulness helps students cultivate a greater awareness of their emotional reactions. By observing their emotions without judgment, students can learn to regulate their feelings more effectively, making them less likely to react impulsively or emotionally in difficult situations. This ability to manage emotions contributes to improved conflict resolution skills and promotes a calm, grounded approach to handling challenges in social interactions.

For students, mindfulness can reduce interpersonal conflict by fostering greater understanding and tolerance. In a school environment, conflicts often arise due to misunderstandings, differences in opinion, or strong emotions. Mindfulness promotes non-reactivity, which allows students to approach difficult conversations and disagreements with a sense of calm and openness. By reducing emotional reactivity, students are better able to listen to the perspectives of others and engage in conflict resolution strategies that are respectful and fair. This contributes to a more peaceful and collaborative atmosphere in the classroom, where students feel more comfortable expressing themselves and resolving differences constructively.

Furthermore, mindfulness promotes a sense of collective well-being in the classroom. As students develop awareness of their own emotions and learn to respond to the emotions of others with kindness and empathy, a shared sense of connection and support naturally emerges. This sense of collective well-being encourages students to act with consideration and care toward others, leading to stronger relationships not only with peers but also with teachers and family members. Mindfulness encourages students to approach their interactions with others as opportunities for connection and understanding, rather than conflict or competition.

Mindfulness also helps students become more open-minded and accepting of diverse perspectives, which is particularly important in today's multicultural and diverse educational environments. By cultivating awareness

and presence, students develop a greater appreciation for the differences that exist among people and are more likely to engage in inclusive behaviors. Mindfulness promotes non-judgment, which allows students to approach others without preconceived notions or biases, fostering an atmosphere of respect and inclusivity. In doing so, mindfulness creates a more harmonious school environment, where diverse viewpoints are valued and students feel empowered to express their authentic selves.³⁵

Finally, mindfulness fosters self-acceptance, which is crucial for mental and emotional well-being. By cultivating a non-judgmental awareness of their thoughts and emotions, students develop a deeper sense of self-compassion and self-understanding. This allows them to accept themselves as they are, without striving for perfection or comparing themselves to others. Students who practice mindfulness are more likely to feel confident in their abilities and comfortable with their imperfections. This sense of self-acceptance can improve overall life satisfaction and mental health, making students more resilient to setbacks and better equipped to navigate the challenges of adolescence and beyond.

The practice of mindfulness also plays a critical role in self-discovery. Through mindfulness, students can develop a deeper awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, allowing them to uncover their true nature. This self-awareness is key to understanding one's values, motivations, and goals, providing a foundation for personal growth and fulfillment. Mindfulness reveals the impermanent, interconnected, and ever-changing nature of all experiences, allowing students to let go of attachments to fleeting thoughts, emotions, and outcomes. By embracing this impermanence, students can develop a sense of equanimity and openness to life's challenges, leading to increased wisdom, greater compassion, and a deeper sense of purpose.

As mindfulness becomes more integrated into educational settings, its potential to enhance students' well-being, cognitive function, and emotional regulation is increasingly recognized. By fostering self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and resilience, mindfulness equips students with the tools they need to succeed academically and personally. Furthermore, mindfulness supports the development of a deeper understanding of the self, revealing the impermanent, interconnected, and fluid nature of all experiences. Through this process, students are not only able to improve their academic performance but also experience greater peace, wisdom, and compassion in their lives, both inside and outside the classroom. As such, mindfulness represents a powerful tool for unlocking the full potential of students, preparing them to navigate the complexities of the world with clarity, confidence, and compassion.

X. CONCLUSION

Cultivating mindfulness in education from a Buddhist perspective provides

³⁵ Segal, Z. V., et al. (2013). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression: A meta-analysis. *Depression and Anxiety*, 30 (2), 133 - 139.

a holistic approach to developing both the minds and hearts of students, leading to a more compassionate, sustainable, and meaningful learning experience. Rooted in the core principles of Buddhism, mindfulness invites students to engage in the present moment with awareness, non-judgment, and acceptance, allowing them to develop greater emotional resilience, cognitive clarity, and a deeper sense of interconnectedness with the world around them.

From a Buddhist viewpoint, mindfulness is not just a mental exercise but a way of life that involves cultivating wisdom (*prajna*), ethical conduct (*sila*), and concentration (*samadhi*). This holistic integration supports students in developing a balanced and harmonious approach to their studies and relationships. In an educational setting, this means that students are not merely learning academic content but also engaging in self-reflection, ethical decision-making, and empathy toward others. Such practices encourage compassionate actions that extend beyond the classroom, promoting a sense of social responsibility and interconnectedness with all living beings.

In addition, mindfulness enhances sustainability, both in the environment and within the individual. On a personal level, mindfulness teaches students to recognize the impermanent nature of their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, which fosters an attitude of acceptance and flexibility. This not only helps students manage stress but also nurtures their ability to adapt to challenges in a more sustainable manner. At the same time, mindfulness cultivates awareness of the interconnectedness of all life, encouraging students to consider their actions and their impact on others and the planet. Such awareness can inspire a deep commitment to social and environmental responsibility, which is crucial in the face of global challenges such as climate change and social inequality.

Ultimately, integrating mindfulness and compassion into education creates a learning environment where students can thrive both intellectually and emotionally. They are encouraged to embrace the present moment, develop a compassionate mindset, and act with integrity and kindness toward themselves and others. By fostering this kind of inner transformation, mindfulness in education has the potential to shape a future generation of individuals who are not only knowledgeable and skilled but also compassionate, ethical, and deeply attuned to the well-being of the world. Thus, mindfulness, when approached from a Buddhist perspective, holds the key to cultivating a sustainable, compassionate, and holistic form of education that benefits both individuals and society as a whole.

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CONTRIBUTION OF MINDFULNESS FOR TOTAL EDUCATION: A BUDDHIST ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

This paper has three aspects, namely, defining total education, defining mindfulness, and describing how the latter (mindfulness) promotes the former (education). Education means, according to the Oxford Concise Dictionary (OCD), giving 'intellectual, moral and social instruction' to someone. Usually what is meant by education is giving facts or information about various issues and aspects of reality. But education goes beyond the narrow function of information gathering, it has to do with people's intellectual, moral, and social development. Without any doubt, this is a very broad conception of education covering several vital aspects of human existence. This seems to come very close to the Buddhist concept of education in which the total development of a person is the goal.

What is meant by mindfulness is 'sati' which is a very important virtue that occurs in the lists of five (spiritual) faculty and five (spiritual) powers among the factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). In the well-known Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta mindfulness is elaborated comprehensively. Sati or mindfulness helps education at two different levels, according to the Buddhist view. The first level is education as acquiring information and developing skills needed for life. As memorizing or keeping in mind education is impossible without mindfulness. This stage can be compared with what is mentioned in the teaching of the Buddha as 'knowledge generated from learning' (*sutamaya-nāṇa*). The knowledge acquired in this manner promotes the other type of knowledge called 'knowledge generated from thinking' (*cintāmaya-nāṇa*). One cannot think without knowledge to think about or to reflect. For these two forms of knowledge, we can see that mindfulness is essential.

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The most important and unique type of knowledge is knowledge generated from reflection –bhavanāmaya-ñāṇa. For this kind of knowledge mindfulness as being attentive to one's inner development is essential. The fact that sati or mindfulness is described in the Dhamma as an 'aspect of enlightenment', sambojjhanga, highlights its significance in the path. This is not to mention that sati as sammā-sati, right mindfulness, is an essential aspect of the eightfold path. In the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta itself, mindfulness is described by the Buddha as the 'direct path for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for terminating pain and grief, for the realization of liberating knowledge and the realization of Nibbāna.' What is emphasized in these words is the vital importance of mindfulness for the ultimate goal of Buddhism. In this manner, in Buddhism, education is viewed as mundane or worldly and supra-mundane or as oriented toward the realization of the ultimate goal, Nibbāna. While mundane knowledge and skills are very important in successful worldly living and Buddhism does not neglect or undervalue them, the primary emphasis in Buddhism is supra-mundane knowledge which brings about liberation from suffering.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, education, total education, knowledge, final goal.*

I. INTRODUCTION

While valuing the noble efforts by the Vietnamese Saṅgha and the lay Buddhist community of Vietnam to sponsor UN Vesak 2025, this paper attempts, following the guidelines provided, to discuss the role of mindfulness in creating and promoting education in its complete sense. This paper has three aspects, namely, defining total education, defining mindfulness, and describing how the latter (mindfulness) promotes the former (education).

II. WHAT IS TOTAL EDUCATION?

Education means, according to the Oxford Concise Dictionary (OCD), giving 'intellectual, moral and social instruction' to someone. Usually what is meant by education is giving facts or information about various issues and aspects of reality. This definition goes well beyond that act. According to this definition, the primary function of education is to teach or to provide instruction to those who are willing to receive it. In addition, education also means the quality of life gained by the process of instruction. An educated person, according to this sense, has high intellectual capacity, moral character and successful social life. Intellectual capacity may be considered as in-born. Whether that in-born capacity remains the same or even deteriorates or whether it is developed and improved depends on the education one receives.

A well-known instance where this concept of education is highlighted occurs in Plato's philosophy of education. According to a well-known story found in the dialogue named the Meno, Socrates claims to have proved that intellectual capacity is inborn and, in that sense, one already owns knowledge before one is given formal education. To prove this idea, Socrates, while he was visiting his friend, Meno, asks a set of questions from one of his friend's slave boys who did not have any formal education and demonstrates that this

uneducated young man, though he was not educated at all in mathematics, did possess knowledge of fundamentals of mathematics. Whether the experiment of Socrates was successful or not, what he tried to establish was the idea that human beings possess knowledge as their inborn capacity. It is following this conviction that Socrates held the view that, in a proper sense, a teacher really cannot teach anyone, but what a teacher can do is what is comparable to the function of a mid-wife who will not give birth to a child but would only facilitate the birth. The Socratic concept of education highlights its role as one paving the way for the blossoming of one's intellectual capacity. Such a system of education identifies the real strengths and weaknesses of a student and guides the student to remedy his/ her weaknesses and improve the strengths.

An examination of the practice the Buddha followed in teaching his pupils or disciples can be useful in this context. The first step of the method adopted by the Buddha in disciplining his disciples is the identification of their intellectual capacities. Accordingly, the disciples were identified as belonging to four different levels of capacity, namely, those who have advanced capacities to grasp quickly or *ugghatitaññū*, those who grasp with a brief explanation, or *vipacitaññū*, those who have to be guided step by step, or *neyya*, and those who are at the level of mere words, one who cannot go beyond words to real essence, or *padaparama*.¹ The purpose of this identification is to explore ways and means to elevate the people belonging, in particular, to those lower levels to the levels of higher understanding.

Another analysis developed in the Buddhist tradition is to identify the dominant personality traits, temperament, or character (*carita*) of the disciples. In the early discourse, there is the idea that people are of different natures and they have the tendency to gather together owing such natures. The Buddha has asserted that 'people tally and get identified with depending on their natures, and those with low propensities with those who are with low propensities and those with good propensities with those who are with good propensities.'² Following this basic analysis, the *Visuddhimagga*³ has developed the idea of *carita* further into six types, namely, those with the characteristic of greed (*rāga-carita*), characteristic of aversion (*dosa-carita*), characteristic of delusion (*moha-carita*), characteristic of faith (*saddhā-carita*), characteristic of intelligence (*buddhi-carita*) and those with the characteristic of speculation (*vitakka-carita*). The first three characteristics refer to the fundamental traits of all worldly people, *puthujjana*, namely, attachment, aversion, and delusion, the three roots of unwholesome deeds (*akusala-mūla*). Although all ordinary people in the world have these traits, in this context those who have each of

¹ A. II. 135.

² S. II. 154: "*dhātuso bhikkhave sattā samsandenti, samenti. Hīnādhimuttikā sattā hīnādhimuttikehi saddhimi samsandenti samenti, kalyānādhimuttikā kalyānādhimuttikehi saddhimi samsandenti samenti.*"

³ *Visuddhimagga*, Kammatthana-niddesa. *The Path of Purification*, translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Nanamoli. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, pp 96 - 104.

these characteristics as their predominant temperament are meant. Those who are of the nature of believing or trusting easily are called 'faith-characteristic', those who are sharp in intelligence are called 'intelligence-characteristic', and those who are of vacillating nature are called 'speculative-characteristic.' The basic purpose of this character identification is practice-related, namely, for the sake of determining the most appropriate course of inner development and the supportive factors such as food, lodgings, etc. that are suited for that particular temperament. For instance, for one who is with characteristic attachment or lust the meditation on loving kindness will not be suitable because both traits bear the tendency of being mild on objects. For such people, lust may arise in the form of loving-kindness. Similar analyses are found elaborated in the Visuddhimagga with regard to the rest of the Caritas. The analysis is not meant to be value-judgmental but teaching-oriented.

Although the intellectual development meant in the modern system of education may not be the same as what is meant in the Buddhist tradition both seem to agree that ultimately education should serve the purpose of developing the understanding of those who receive it.

The moral aspect of education may be considered even more important from a perspective of well-being, peace, and harmony in society. If people living in a society lack moral character such a society will not be a fit place for people to live. For instance, the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) advocated by the Buddha for ordinary people are the most fundamental rules in social morality. The first rule, abstaining from taking life, signifies love and respect for life, not only human life but also any form of life. A person who follows this rule brings peace and harmlessness to society. The second rule, abstaining from taking what is not given, or abstaining from taking what does not belong to oneself lawfully signifies respect for others' property and their right to own property. The third rule, abstaining from sexual misconduct, signifies respect for others' personal life and respect for marriage-related social norms. The fourth rule, abstaining from telling lies, signifies trustworthiness with regard to one's verbal behavior and respect for the fundamental rule in interpersonal communication. The fifth and last, abstaining from consuming intoxicants, signifies one's own personal integrity and smooth social relations. The purpose of education, accordingly, is guiding people toward moral behavior the minimum standard of which is the observance of the five precepts mentioned above. This insight has been clearly stated in the Jātaka literature in the following words: the learnedness of one who is lacking morality is of no use: *sīlena anupetassa suten'attho na vijjati* (*Silavimamisa-Jātaka*).

The third aspect of education, social development, signifies the social or public behavior of those who receive education. What is meant is that the social life of a person who is educated has to be successful. In addition to the observance of basic social morality signified by the five precepts, an educated person must be one living a good and accomplished social life. According to the teaching of the Buddha as found in the *Sīṅgālovāda-sutta*,⁴ 'Advice to

⁴ D. III. 180 - 193.

Siṅgāla, one's successful social life must comprise the following: abstaining from the four defiled acts (*kamma-kilesa*), avoiding four biases (*agati*), abstaining from the six avenues of the destruction of one's wealth (*bhoga-apāya-mukha*), the four ways of treating people well (*saṅgaha-vatthu*), and, most importantly, paying homage to the six 'directions' or social institutions (*cha-disā-namakkāra*). According to this account, an educated person needs to be away from morally corrupt acts, namely, killing, stealing, uttering falsehood, and sexual misbehavior, which are also parts of basic moral behavior included in the five precepts. Avoiding biases constitutes a very basic virtue of one's social dealings, namely, not to be biased due to favor, anger, delusion, and fear, four reasons due to why people follow ethically questionable courses of action. The next is to avoid six avenues of destruction of one's wealth, namely, bad friends, frequent gatherings, roaming in streets at improper times, laziness, drunkenness, and gambling. Although not specifically described in the *Siṅgālovada-sutta*, the Buddha has described factors that are conducive to earning and maintaining wealth. Addressing a young householder called Dighajānu, a son of Koliya, the Buddha elaborates on four factors that are conducive to one's economic development, namely, initiative energy to earn wealth, protection of what is earned, having good friends and balancing one's income and expenditure.⁵ It is the wealth earned in this manner that one has to protect without getting involved in the six ways of destroying one's wealth. The most important teaching of the *Siṅgālovada-sutta* is how to pay homage to the six directions, or the six social groups including one's parents (as the East), teachers (as the South), children and wife (as the West), friends and associates (as the North), workers (as the below) and religious people (as above).

The *Siṅgālovada-sutta* enumerates a long list of mutual duties⁶ to be fulfilled by each party, i.e. from parents to children and vice versa, and so on for all types of relations. What party should initiate duties depends on the nature of the relationship between the two parties. For instance, in the case of parents and children, it is the parents who have to initiate duties to their children and, having received such treatment from their parents, children will have to reciprocate. In the case of teachers, the pupil must impress him by performing duties and teachers reciprocate subsequently. For the children and the wife, the father and husband have to initiate duties. For the friends, the main responsibility lies in oneself to initiate performing duties. For the workers and the religious people, one has to initiate. About these relations, what is emphasized in the discourse is the mutuality of the duties. The crucial character of fulfilling mutual duties is described in the discourse taking the example of the function of a cross-bar of a cart to keep the wheel in place without letting it go astray. The *Siṅgālovada* discussion ends with a list of four ways of treating people well, namely, by giving, by pleasant ways of speaking, by working for the welfare of others, and

⁵ *Vyagghapajja-sutta*, *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, 8th division.

⁶ Although the term 'duty' is used here, the *sutta* itself articulates this idea as ways of being treated well and paying homage.

by treating others as one would do to oneself.⁷

As is clear in the definition of education found in the OCD, education encompasses some very important aspects of human life and goes well beyond the narrow function of information gathering. It has to do with people's intellectual, moral, and social development. Without any doubt, this is a very broad conception of education which, as we found in the above discussion, goes along the Buddhist conception of education comfortably.

III. THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION IN BUDDHISM

The above characterization seems to come very close to the Buddhist concept of education in which the total development of the person is the goal. The total development according to Buddhism covers both inner development as well as the external or social and economic development of the person. The Buddha may be considered an educationist a teacher, or a guide, in the sense of guiding his followers to these two types of development. In the list of the nine virtues of the Buddha, with which all Buddhists are familiar, the sixth, 'incomparable guide of divine and human beings –sattā devamanussānam' - refers to the virtue of the Buddha. The main function of the Buddha was to guide his disciples to achieve this goal. The education process that leads one who follows it to the highest goal has been described in the discourses in the following words:

Here one who has faith [in a teacher] visits him; when he visits him, he pays respect to him; when he pays respect to him, he gives ear; one who gives ear hears the Dhamma; having heard the Dhamma, he memorizes it; he examines the meaning of the teachings he has memorized; when he examines their meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings; when he has gained a reflective acceptance of those teachings, zeal springs up in him; when zeal has sprung up, he applies his will; having applied his will, he scrutinizes; having scrutinized, he strives; resolutely striving, he realizes with the body the supreme truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom.⁸

What is described by the Buddha in this discourse is the process of education that will culminate in the realization of the ultimate goal.

The above-mentioned analysis of the Kitagiri-sutta captures several very important aspects of the process of education. The beginning stage of the process is to acquire necessary information or what is called today 'textual knowledge.' In ancient times, this type of knowledge was gained by listening to the teacher. At an age in which written texts were not easily available those who wished to acquire knowledge had to rely on the learned people. They were called 'bahussuta' or 'those who have heard much.' The quality of such persons was called 'bahusacca' or learnedness which the Buddha listed in the Maṅgala-sutta among the auspicious (*maṅgala*) matters.

This type of learnedness was necessary for all activities that are related to

⁷ The relevant term is 'samānattatā' (samāna+atta+tā = 'equal to oneself-ness').

⁸ MN 70; *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995, pp. 582 - 583.

knowledge. In a mundane sense, one cannot do anything, or engage in any type of activities in order to earn a living, without the necessary knowledge. As far as the teaching of the Buddha is concerned there is another very important aspect of the Dhamma, namely, the practice. To practice the Dhamma or the Buddha's advice, one needs to know the Dhamma. Without the knowledge of the Dhamma, one can't practice it. If we consider Buddhism to represent a system of education, the acquisition of knowledge, in this manner, constitutes the beginning or the very first step of the process.

This aspect of gaining knowledge is so important in Buddhist practice that the Buddha himself and all his disciples who were enlightened dedicated their lives to teaching the Dhamma to people. It is what the Buddha did in his entire life. And all the arahant bhikkhus and bhikkhunis in the same manner spent their lives teaching the Dhamma to people. It is a well-known story that the Buddha, at the beginning of his mission, addressed the first sixty monastic followers who had attained arahanthood and said the following: "Bhikkhus, I am freed from all traps, you too are freed from all traps; Bhikkhus, engage in traveling for the good and welfare of many people; out of compassion for the world; for the benefit, good and welfare of human and divine beings. Two should not go on one road. Bhikkhus, teach the Dhamma which is good at the beginning, good at the middle, good at the conclusion; meaningful, and properly worded; proclaim the noble life which is complete and pure"⁹. This statement highlights the importance of teaching people the Dhamma or the doctrine without knowing which one cannot attain the final goal of religious life.

One cannot attain the goal without the knowledge of the Dhamma. Due to this reason knowledge in the Dhamma was valued in the Buddhist tradition from the beginning. During the time of the Buddha, there were his disciples, not only bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, but also *upāsakas* and *upāsikās* who were well versed in the Dhamma and also who were the teachers/preachers of the Dhamma. During the time of the Buddha among his close disciples, Ananda Thera was the foremost among those who were learned (*bahussuta*) of the Dhamma; among the female household disciples, Khujjuttarā was the foremost among the learned. Among the teachers of the Dhamma, Punna Mantāniputta Thera was the foremost, and Dhammadinnā Theri among the bhikkhunis, and Citta Ganapati of Macchikāsaṇḍa among the household males, were the foremost among the preachers of the Dhamma.¹⁰ This tradition of learnedness was continued in the Theravada tradition throughout, first in India, and subsequently in countries like Sri Lanka and Myanmar where Theravada tradition was established. Later in Theravada history, this practice became

⁹ Vin. I. 20 - 21: "*Muttāhami bhikkhave sabbapāsehi ye dībbā ye ca mānusa. Tumhepi bhikkhave muttā sabbapāsehi ye dībbā ye ca mānusa. Caratha bhikkhave cārikam bahujaṇahitāya bahujaṇasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānam. Mā ekena dve agamittha. Desetha bhikkhave dhammam ādikalyāṇam majjhakalyāṇam pariyoṣānakalyāṇam sāttham sabyañjanam kevalapariṇāmanam parisuddham brahmacariyam pakāsetha.*"

¹⁰ A. I. 23 - 26.

known as ‘the yoke of texts’ (gantha-dhura), and preserving the knowledge in the Dhamma for posterity and teaching it to their pupils and the public was their specific function in Buddhist organization.

Even though learnedness was valued in the tradition, we must note that it was not taken as an end in itself, but it was considered always as only a means to achieve the end or the goal. In other words, there were always limits to the learnedness. In the Dhammapada, the following two stanzas occur: Even if one were to recite the texts much, if he does not practice what is read, like a cow herd protecting the cattle belonging to others would not partake of cow products, such a person will not share the fruits of recluship. Even if one were to read the texts a little, but practice what he has read, having given up attachment, aversion, and delusion, with the right knowledge and a well-liberated mind, not being attached to here or there, he will share the fruits of recluse-ship.¹¹ What is emphasized by the Buddha in these statements is that textual knowledge or the knowledge of the Dhamma, although it is very important, is not the final goal. In other words, it is only a necessary condition to attain nirvana but not a sufficient condition.

In the ancient world, when people had only limited means of securing information, and when books were rare, receiving information from learned people was very important. But today, in the age of the internet and Artificial intelligence (AI) collecting information has become very easy. What people spent years a few decades ago would take only seconds today to collect. As a result, human beings now have the largest collection of information at their disposal in the entire history of the human race. Consequently, the fact-gathering aspect of education gradually becomes less and less important today. Nevertheless, what is important in the context of the Buddhist religious life is that both knowledge as information and knowledge as understanding are essential for the attainment of the ultimate goal, nirvana.

IV. WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

The Pāli language term for what is usually rendered as mindfulness is ‘sati.’ It is a very important virtue that occurs in all the major lists of Dhamma such as five (spiritual) faculties (indriya), five (spiritual) powers (bala), and the seven factors of enlightenment (bodhipakkhiya-dhamma). The most well-known canonical mention of ‘sati’ occurs in the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta (of the Dīgha-nikāya, the collection of long discourses). Bhikkhu Analayo analyzes ‘satipaṭṭhāna’ in the following manner:

The term satipaṭṭhāna can be explained as a compound of sati, “mindfulness” or “awareness”, and upaṭṭhāna, with the u of the latter term, dropped by vowel elision. The Pāli term upaṭṭhāna literally means “placing near”, and in the present

¹¹ Dhṛp 19, 20: “Bahumpi ce sahitam bhāsamano - na takkaro hoti naro pamatto/Gopova gāvo ganayaṃ paresaṃ - na bhāgavā sāmaññaṃ hoti/Appampi ce sahitam bhāsamāno - dhammassa hoti anudhammacāri/Rāgañca dosañca pahāya mohaṃ - sammappajāno suvimuttacitto/Anupādiyaṃ idha vā huram vā - sa bhāgavā sāmaññaṃ hoti.”

context refers to a particular way of “being present” and “attending” to something with mindfulness. In the discourse, the corresponding verb *upatthahati* often denotes various nuances of “being present” or else “attending”. Understood in this way, “*satipaṭṭhana*” means that *sati* “stands by”, in the sense of being present; *sati* is “ready at hand”, in the sense of attending to the current situation.¹²

Etymologically, the term ‘*sati*’ derives from ‘*sarati*’ to recollect; ‘*sati*’ is the noun form of the verb ‘*sarati*.’ This particular meaning is directly connected to education as an exercise involving memorizing - memorizing what one hears from teachers for reading was not the usual practice. The other important nuance of the term *sati* is a state of being aware or being mindful of the four phenomena discussed in the context of mindfulness, namely, body, feeling, thoughts, and phenomena (*kāya*, *vedanā*, *citta*, and *dhamma*). In being mindful of these four one is mindful of the total human experience internally and externally.

The *Satipaṭṭhana-sutta* describes mindfulness regarding the body with reference to the following aspects: (1) in-breathing and out-breathing; (2) physical postures; (3) physical activities; (4) 32 anatomical parts; (5) consisting of the four elements; and (6) the nine stages of a decaying corpse. Each is described in the discourse in the following manner:

(1) “Breathing in long, he knows ‘I breathe in long,’ breathing out long, he knows ‘I breathe out long,’ breathing in short, he knows ‘I breathe in short,’ breathing out short, he knows ‘I breathe out short.’ He trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body,’ he trains thus: ‘I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body.’ He trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in calming the bodily formation, he trains thus: ‘I shall breathe out calming the bodily formations.

(2) “Again, monks, when walking, he knows ‘I am walking’; when standing, he knows, “I am standing’; when sitting, he knows ‘I am sitting’; when lying down, he knows: ‘I am lying down’; or he knows accordingly however his body is disposed.”

(3) Again, monks, when going forward and returning act clearly knowing; when looking ahead and looking away act knowing; when flexing and extending their limbs they act knowing; when wearing their robes and carrying their outer robe and bowl cats knowing; when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting the cats knowing; when defecating and urinating he acts knowing; when walking, standing, sitting, falling sleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent he acts knowing.

(4) Again, monks, he reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, enclosed by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: ‘in this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen,

¹² Analayo, Bhikkhu (2010). *Satipaṭṭhana: The Direct Path to Realization*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, p. 145.

lungs, bowels, mesentery, contents of the stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.”

(5) “Again, monks, he reviews this same body, however, it is placed, however, disposed of, as consisting of elements thus: ‘in this body, there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.

(6) Again, monks, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground – one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter... being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals, or various kinds of worms... a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews... a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews... a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together with sinews... disconnected bones scattered in all directions... bones bleached white, the color of shells... bones heaped up, more than a year old... bones rotten and crumbling to dust – he compares this same body with it thus: ‘This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate’.

In this form of meditation, the human body is analyzed according to its vital act of breathing, its activities and postures, the elements with which it is made, the parts that constitute it, and finally, the conditions undergone by the body after death. All these are reflected in one’s physical body. The purpose of reflecting on one’s own body is described in the following words (and in the discourse, this is repeated for all six ways of reflection):

In this way, regarding the body he abides by contemplating the body internally, or he abides by contemplating the body externally, or he abides by contemplating the body both internally and externally. Or, he abides in contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or he abides in contemplating the nature of passing away in the body or abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Or, mindfulness that ‘there is a body’ is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independently, not clinging to anything in the world.

This statement indicates that the purpose of reflecting on the body is ultimately for the sake of understanding the impermanent nature of one’s body which is cherished by all people.

The next two aspects to be mindful of are feeling (*vedana*) and mind (*citta*) which constitute the psychological dimension of a human being. The mindfulness in feeling is described in the following words: “Here when feeling a pleasant feeling, he knows ‘I feel a pleasant feeling’; when feeling an unpleasant feeling, he knows ‘I feel an unpleasant feeling’; when feeling a neutral feeling, he knows ‘I feel a neutral feeling.’” This same method is applied when feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, unworldly pleasant feeling, worldly unpleasant feeling, unworldly unpleasant feeling, worldly neutral feeling, and unworldly neutral feeling. The mindfulness of mind is described in the following words: “Here he knows a lustful mind to be ‘lustful’, and a mind without lust to be ‘without lust’; he knows an angry mind to be ‘angry’, and a mind without

anger to be 'without anger'; he knows a deluded mind to be 'deluded', and a mind without delusion to be 'without delusion.' The same method is applied with regard to mind contracted or distracted, great or narrow, surpassable or unsurpassable, concentrated or unconcentrated, and liberated or unliberated.

The last aspect of mindfulness practice is the phenomena, or dhamma, under which are included five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), namely, sensual desire, aversion, sloth-and-torpor, restlessness, and doubt; five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-khandha*), namely, material form, feeling, cognition, volitions, and consciousness; six internal and external sense –spheres (*cha-ajjhātika bāhira āyatana*), namely, eye and forms, ear and sounds, nose and odors, tongue and flavors, body and tangibles, and mind and mind-objects; the seven awakening factors, (*satta bojjhanga*), namely, mindfulness, investigation-of-dhammas, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity; and the four noble truths (*cattāri ariya saccāni*), namely, suffering, arising of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. The purpose of reflecting on all the factors associated with feeling, mind and phenomena is the same as that was mentioned with regard to the reflection on the physical body.

The importance of mindfulness on these four factors becomes clear when they are seen as constituting the total human experience covering both physical and psychological phenomena related to human existence. It may be described in the following manner: the reflection on the human body is very important because we cannot think about a human being without thinking of his or her physical body. A human being (or any being) is known to be living due mainly to in-breathing and out-breathing, inhalation, and exhalation, and this act happens without stopping till a human being dies and, usually continues without being noticed. The Buddha's analysis of mindfulness of the body begins with the mindfulness of this vital physical action of breathing. The purpose of this meditation is to develop one's awareness of oneself by developing mindfulness of this most common and unnoticed physical activity.

V. HOW MINDFULNESS HELPS TOTAL EDUCATION

Sati or mindfulness helps education at two different levels, according to the Buddhist view. The first level is education as acquiring information and developing skills needed for life. As memorizing or keeping in mind education is impossible without mindfulness. Today indeed memorizing is not very important with the developments of technology such as AI. Nevertheless, for one's day-to-day living and efficient functioning retaining the capacity of the mind is essential. What we refer to in this context is knowledge or acquisition of necessary information. This stage can be compared with what is mentioned in the teaching of the Buddha as 'knowledge generated from learning' (*sutamaya-nāṇa*). This is what children get from school and what grown-up people get from universities and colleges. The knowledge acquired in this manner promotes the other type of knowledge called 'knowledge generated from thinking' (*cintāmayā-nāṇa*). One cannot think without knowledge to think about or to reflect. For these two forms of knowledge, we can see that mindfulness is essential.

Coming to the most important and unique type of knowledge, knowledge generated from reflection –bhavanāmaya-nāṇa-, mindfulness as being attentive to one's inner development is essential. The fact that sati or mindfulness is described in the Dhamma as an 'aspect of enlightenment', sambojjhanga, highlights its significance in the path. This is not to mention that sati as sammā-sati, right mindfulness, is an essential aspect of the eightfold path taught, first, in his first sermon to the world, the Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta (*Samyutta-nikāya, Sacca-samyutta*). In the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta itself, mindfulness is described by the Buddha as the 'direct path for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for terminating pain and grief, for the realization of liberating knowledge and the realization of Nibbāna' (*ekāyano ayam bhikkhave maggo sattānam visuddhiyā, soka-pariddavānam samatikkamāya, dukkha-domanassānam atthaṅgamāya, nāyassa adhiḡamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya... Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta, Dighanikaya*). What is emphasized in these words is the vital importance of mindfulness for the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

VI. CONCLUSION

In Buddhism, education is viewed as mundane or worldly and supra-mundane or as oriented toward the realization of the ultimate goal, Nibbāna. While mundane knowledge and skills are very important in successful worldly living and Buddhism does not neglect or undervalue them, the primary emphasis in Buddhism is supra-mundane knowledge which brings about liberation from suffering.

It is very important to reflect on the total education taught in Buddhism on this great joyous occasion of Vesak in which the Buddhist world celebrates the birth, enlightenment, and arinirvana of the Buddha.

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CULTIVATING COMPASSIONATE LEADERS: THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

As the world faces escalating challenges such as environmental crises, rising social inequalities, and a growing mental health epidemic, education must evolve to equip individuals with not just knowledge but also emotional and ethical resilience. This paper explores the transformative potential of integrating mindfulness into educational systems, with a focus on fostering compassion, sustainability, and collective responsibility. Grounded in Buddhist insights and interdisciplinary frameworks, the study critically examines how mindfulness can catalyze the creation of a generation of empathetic, ethically conscious, and environmentally aware leaders.

Drawing on thematic analysis and an in-depth exploration of case studies, this paper investigates the application and outcomes of mindfulness-based education across diverse contexts. It highlights how mindfulness promotes self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking, enabling students to navigate the complexities of a globalized and interconnected world. The discussion situates mindfulness within a broader pedagogical framework, illustrating its potential to transform not only individual learners but also institutional practices and societal structures.

By analyzing successful initiatives worldwide, the study reveals how mindfulness-based interventions have addressed issues such as student stress, interpersonal conflicts, and ecological disconnection. For example, programs integrating mindfulness have demonstrated improvements in academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and environmental stewardship, showcasing their multifaceted impact. Additionally, the paper addresses challenges such as cultural adaptability and institutional resistance, offering strategies for effective implementation.

Through a synthesis of Buddhist philosophy, contemporary educational theories, and practical case studies, this paper positions mindfulness as a cornerstone

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for fostering inclusivity, ethical leadership, and sustainable development. It concludes by advocating for mindfulness to be embedded in educational policies and curricula, emphasizing its capacity to bridge divides, nurture compassion, and inspire collaborative efforts for a harmonious and sustainable future.

Keywords: *Mindfulness in education, emotional resilience, ethical leadership, environmental consciousness, social-emotional learning.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview of global challenges

The 21st century has ushered in a series of unprecedented challenges that threaten global stability, equity, and sustainability. Environmental crises such as climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss continue to accelerate, posing existential risks to humanity. Meanwhile, rising social inequalities, economic instability, and political polarization exacerbate tensions within and among nations, eroding the fabric of communities. Compounding these issues is a growing mental health epidemic, with stress, anxiety, and burnout reaching alarming levels across all age groups, particularly among young people. Education, long regarded as a cornerstone of human progress, faces the critical task of not only equipping individuals with knowledge and technical skills but also nurturing emotional resilience, ethical decision-making, and a profound sense of interconnectedness essential for tackling these global challenges.

1.2. The evolving role of education

Traditionally, education has been viewed as a means of economic and social mobility, focusing on academic excellence and workforce readiness. However, in the face of complex and interconnected global issues, this narrow view of education is no longer sufficient. Modern educational paradigms must evolve to include holistic development, emphasizing emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility. The role of education today is to empower learners to navigate uncertainty, adapt to changing environments, and collaborate across cultural and ideological divides. This shift calls for innovative approaches that prioritize personal growth alongside collective well-being. Integrating mindfulness into education represents a transformative strategy to achieve these goals, enabling students to develop self-awareness, empathy, and critical thinking skills that extend beyond academic achievement to foster meaningful contributions to society.

1.3. Defining mindfulness in education and its Buddhist roots

Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist philosophy, is the practice of cultivating present-moment awareness with an attitude of non-judgment and compassion. Historically, mindfulness has been integral to Buddhist teachings, emphasizing self-awareness, ethical conduct, and interconnectedness as pathways to personal and collective liberation.¹ In contemporary contexts, mindfulness

¹ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 43.

has been adapted and secularized to address modern challenges, finding applications in fields as diverse as healthcare, business, and education.²

In the academic context, mindfulness goes beyond stress management skills to include a profound transformation process. It leads students to monitor their thoughts, feelings, and actions with clarity and kindness, in the process building a deep sense of self-awareness. This practice resonates with Buddhist concepts of “right mindfulness” (*sammā sati*), which calls for mindful awareness that results in ethical behavior and harmonious society.³ By incorporating mindfulness into school curricula, teachers hope to develop not just academic skills but also emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience. These attributes are increasingly being identified as key to navigating the complexities of the contemporary world and cultivating a sustainable, equitable future.

1.4. Research objectives and significance

This paper seeks to critically analyse the role of mindfulness in education as a means to developing compassionate, ethically aware, and sustainability-focused leaders. Through an exploration of Buddhist wisdom and an analysis of case studies from various settings, it hoped to underscore the transformative role of mindfulness in redefining educational paradigms. The study explores the ways mindfulness practices can develop emotional balance, promote ethical thinking, and encourage environmental and social stewardship.

The significance of the study lies in its ability to contribute to the emerging body of literature on holistic education. By bridging ancient wisdom with modern educational concerns, this paper makes a case for the use of mindfulness as an underpinning of inclusive and sustainable pedagogy. It contends that mindfulness is not an isolated individual practice but a social strategy to encourage collaborative action toward a harmonious, equitable future.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

2.1. Historical and philosophical foundations

Mindfulness, originating from Buddhist traditions, has been practiced for over 2,500 years as a means of cultivating awareness, ethical behavior, and inner peace. The concept of “*sati*” (mindfulness) is central to Buddhist teachings, particularly in the Eightfold Path, where it is linked to right understanding and right concentration (Rahula, 1974). Early Buddhist texts, such as the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, outline mindfulness as the foundation for insight and liberation, emphasizing present-moment awareness and compassionate engagement with the world.⁴

In Mahayana Buddhism, mindfulness evolved into a broader practice encompassing not just individual enlightenment but also compassionate action for the benefit of all beings. Thich Nhat Hanh highlights how mindfulness serves as a bridge between personal well-being and societal transformation.

² Kabat-Zinn (2005): 87.

³ Rahula (1974): 128.

⁴ Analayo (2003): 57.

His teachings emphasize engaged Buddhism, where mindfulness is not only a meditative practice but also a way of living ethically and responding to social injustices.

Western engagement with mindfulness began in the 20th century through the works of scholars such as Nyanaponika Thera, who introduced the concept of “bare attention” as a method of non-judgmental awareness. Later, Jon Kabat-Zinn secularized mindfulness through his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, making it accessible to modern healthcare and education. This historical trajectory demonstrates how mindfulness, while rooted in Buddhist traditions, has been adapted to meet contemporary societal needs, particularly in education.

2.2. Mindfulness in contemporary education

The integration of mindfulness into education has gained momentum over the past few decades, driven by research demonstrating its benefits for student well-being, cognitive function, and emotional resilience. As educational paradigms shift toward holistic development, mindfulness is increasingly recognized as a vital tool for fostering emotional intelligence and ethical awareness in students.⁵

In contemporary educational settings, mindfulness programs have been implemented across various age groups and cultural contexts. The Inner Kids Program⁶ and the MindUP program developed by the Goldie Hawn Foundation exemplify how mindfulness can be tailored to enhance social-emotional learning, self-regulation, and empathy among students. These programs emphasize experiential learning, where students engage in breathing exercises, reflective journaling, and compassionate listening practices.

Empirical studies further support the efficacy of mindfulness in education. Research by Schonert-Reichl et al. in 2015 indicates that mindfulness training leads to improvements in students’ attentional control, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior. Additionally, mindfulness has been shown to reduce teacher burnout and enhance classroom environments by fostering greater awareness and connection among educators and students.⁷

Despite its growing acceptance, challenges remain in implementing mindfulness education on a larger scale. Issues such as cultural adaptability, institutional resistance, and concerns about the secularization of mindfulness need to be addressed. Nevertheless, the ongoing integration of mindfulness into curricula reflects a paradigm shift toward education that nurtures not only intellectual capacities but also emotional and ethical development.

2.3. Key components of mindfulness education

Mindfulness education is structured around core components that cultivate self-awareness, emotional regulation, and ethical responsibility.

⁵ Meiklejohn et al. (2012): 80.

⁶ Kaiser Greenland (2010): 112.

⁷ Roeser et al. (2013): 195.

These components include:

(1) **Self-Awareness and Attention Regulation:** Mindfulness practices train students to observe their thoughts and emotions without reactivity. Techniques such as focused breathing, body scanning, and mindful walking help develop concentration and cognitive flexibility.⁸

(2) **Emotional Intelligence and Resilience:** By fostering awareness of emotions, mindfulness enables students to respond to stress with greater composure and compassion. Studies suggest that mindfulness reduces anxiety and depression in adolescents, enhancing their overall well-being.⁹

(3) **Compassion and Ethical Engagement:** Mindfulness education encourages empathy and ethical behavior by cultivating an understanding of interdependence. Practices such as loving-kindness meditation and gratitude exercises promote social harmony and cooperation.¹⁰

(4) **Integration into Daily Learning:** Effective mindfulness education extends beyond meditation exercises to influence pedagogical approaches. Teachers trained in mindfulness incorporate reflective discussions, mindful listening, and inquiry-based learning to create more inclusive and responsive classrooms.¹¹

(5) **Sustainability and Environmental Awareness:** Mindfulness fosters an appreciation for nature and interconnectedness, aligning with educational goals of sustainability. Programs integrating eco-mindfulness encourage students to engage in environmental stewardship through direct experiences with nature.¹²

III. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.1. Mindfulness and emotional intelligence

Mindfulness and emotional intelligence (EI) share a fundamental connection, as both emphasize self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy. Daniel Goleman, in 1995, introduced EI as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others. Mindfulness cultivates these competencies by enhancing present-moment awareness and non-reactivity, allowing individuals to respond thoughtfully rather than impulsively.¹³

Studies indicate that mindfulness training strengthens key aspects of EI, such as emotional regulation, impulse control, and interpersonal sensitivity.¹⁴ Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015)¹⁵ found that mindfulness-based programs in schools significantly improve students' social-emotional competence, fostering

⁸ Siegel (2007): 135.

⁹ Kuyken et al. (2013): 175.

¹⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh (2008): 67.

¹¹ Roeser et al. (2013): 195.

¹² Kabat-Zinn (2018): 92.

¹³ Siegel (2007): 135.

¹⁴ Kuyken et al. (2013): 175.

¹⁵ Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015): 210.

greater emotional resilience and empathy. Teachers trained in mindfulness also report lower stress levels and an enhanced ability to create supportive classroom environments (Roeser et al., 2013).

By developing EI through mindfulness, individuals cultivate greater patience, kindness, and understanding in their interactions. This connection is particularly relevant in education, where mindfulness-based EI training fosters not only academic success but also social and emotional well-being (Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

3.2. Ethical frameworks and sustainable behavior

Mindfulness is deeply rooted in ethical traditions, particularly within Buddhist philosophy, which emphasizes non-harming (*ahimsa*), compassion, and interconnectedness.¹⁶ Ethical mindfulness encourages individuals to act with intentionality and awareness, fostering sustainable behaviors that benefit society and the environment.

Research suggests that mindfulness enhances ethical decision-making by promoting self-reflection and reducing automatic biases (Kabat-Zinn, 2018; Roeser et al., 2013) highlights that students who engage in mindfulness training develop stronger moral reasoning skills and an increased sense of social responsibility. Additionally, mindfulness encourages prosocial behavior, such as cooperation, altruism, and environmental stewardship (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008).

From a sustainability perspective, mindfulness fosters an awareness of the impact of personal actions on the planet. Programs integrating eco-mindfulness encourage students to develop a conscious relationship with nature and adopt sustainable habits.¹⁷ This ethical dimension of mindfulness education is crucial for addressing global challenges such as climate change and social inequality.

3.3. Neuroscientific and psychological insights

Advances in neuroscience provide compelling evidence for the cognitive and psychological benefits of mindfulness. Functional MRI studies demonstrate that mindfulness training strengthens the prefrontal cortex, which governs executive functions such as attention, self-regulation, and decision-making.¹⁸ Additionally, mindfulness has been shown to reduce activity in the amygdala, the brain's fear center, leading to lower stress and anxiety levels (Siegel, 2007).

Psychological research corroborates these findings, highlighting mindfulness as a tool for enhancing cognitive flexibility and emotional resilience (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Kuyken et al. found that mindfulness-based interventions significantly decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety in students, improving overall well-being. Furthermore, studies suggest that mindfulness improves working memory and concentration, leading to better academic performance and problem-solving skills.

¹⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh (1999): 43.

¹⁷ Kabat-Zinn (2005): 87.

¹⁸ Davidson & Lutz (2008): 214.

By integrating neuroscientific and psychological insights, mindfulness education can be tailored to optimize learning environments and foster mental well-being. These findings reinforce the need for mindfulness-based curricula to support both cognitive and emotional development in educational settings.

IV. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Case study approach

This research employs a case study approach to explore the integration of mindfulness in education. A case study methodology allows for an in-depth investigation of real-world applications, providing rich qualitative insights into the impact of mindfulness practices on students and educators.¹⁹

By analyzing successful mindfulness programs implemented in various educational settings, this study seeks to highlight best practices and challenges in adopting mindfulness-based interventions.²⁰

Case studies chosen for this study concentrate on various education settings that have incorporated mindfulness practices into their curricula. The study features a look at programs such as MindUP and the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), which have been shown to improve students' emotional intelligence, academic performance, and overall well-being (Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

4.2. Thematic analysis

A thematic analysis method is used to discern prominent patterns and findings from case study data. This method of thematic analysis enables the systematic coding of qualitative data to allow the researcher to categorize and interpret emerging themes about mindfulness education.²¹ This method guarantees a systematic analysis of interview transcripts, observational notes, and program reports.

Themes of emotional regulation, academic engagement, and teacher well-being are examined to comprehend the wider implications of mindfulness in education. By using a thematic framework, this study guarantees findings based on empirical evidence while extracting the nuanced experiences of students and teachers (Kuyken et al., 2013).

V. CASE STUDIES AND GLOBAL PRACTICES

5.1. Case Study 1: Developed country example

In recent years, the United Kingdom has emerged as a leader in integrating mindfulness into its educational framework. A notable example is the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), which was developed to introduce mindfulness-based training to students aged 7 to 18. The MiSP curriculum, particularly its "b" (pronounced "dot-be") program, is designed to enhance students' well-being, emotional regulation, and concentration. Rooted

¹⁹ Yin (2018): 45.

²⁰ Stake (1995): 77.

²¹ Braun & Clarke (2006): 87.

in empirical research, the program is based on Jon Kabat-Zinn's (2005)²² Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) approach and is adapted to the developmental needs of young learners.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that students who participate in mindfulness training exhibit lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. A longitudinal study by Kuyken et al. found that students enrolled in the MiSP program reported significant improvements in resilience and attentional control compared to those in a control group. Moreover, teachers who underwent mindfulness training reported reduced burnout, improved classroom management, and enhanced relationships with students (Roeser et al., 2013).

The UK government has also recognized the value of mindfulness in education, funding large-scale trials and research initiatives to assess its long-term impact. In 2019, the government launched a nationwide study involving 370 schools to evaluate mindfulness-based interventions. Preliminary results suggest that mindfulness enhances emotional intelligence, social cohesion, and academic engagement.²³

Despite these achievements, there are challenges to fully institutionalizing mindfulness education. Contesting the secularization of mindfulness in schools is that it is likely to water down its ethical and philosophical foundations. In addition, logistical hurdles, including time constraints in school timetables and the requirement of specialized teacher training, act as impediments to mass implementation. However, the UK experience shows how mindfulness could be systemically integrated into mainstream schooling, with promising implications for student well-being and rounded development.

5.2. Case Study 2: Developing country example

Conversely to the formal policy-oriented approach in the developed world, mindfulness education in Bhutan is intrinsically linked to the nation's cultural and spiritual tradition. Bhutan, famous for its Gross National Happiness (GNH) policy, has integrated mindfulness into its national education system as a strategy to develop ethical leadership, emotional resilience, and ecological awareness (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008).

A flagship project in Bhutan's education system is the "Educating for Gross National Happiness" program, initiated in 2009. Under this program, mindfulness practices, including meditation, reflective silence, and gratitude exercises, are incorporated into the daily school routine. Drawn from Buddhist traditions, mindfulness is not an extracurricular activity but a part of the students' ethical and spiritual formation. Teachers undergo training in mindfulness-based pedagogies with a focus on compassion, nonviolence, and sustainability (Rahula, 1974).

Research in Bhutanese schools shows that students who practice mindfulness

²² Jon Kabat-Zinn's (2005): 87.

²³ Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015): 210.

exhibit greater self-awareness, better emotional regulation, and more cohesive community relationships. Meiklejohn et al.'s research points out that Bhutanese students exhibit high pro-social behavior and lower stress levels compared to students in neighboring nations with more exam-focused education models. Environmental mindfulness is also a fundamental aspect of Bhutanese education, with schools adding nature-based meditation and eco-stewardship courses (Kabat-Zinn, 2018).

There are, however, challenges to ensuring the scalability and modernization of mindfulness education in Bhutan. While deeply rooted in tradition, the model has challenges in reconciling with the requirements of a globalized economy. There is also an ongoing debate on balancing mindfulness-based education with the need for technological and scientific skills. Furthermore, as Western models of mindfulness gain momentum, concerns are raised on maintaining Bhutan's unique, culturally embedded approach to mindfulness education.

Despite these challenges, Bhutan's experience presents a compelling model of how mindfulness can be integrated into education as a means of promoting collective well-being and sustainable development. The country's holistic approach, based on Buddhist ethics, offers key lessons for nations looking to combine ancient wisdom with modern educational needs.

VI. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The United Kingdom and Bhutan case studies present two different approaches to the implementation of mindfulness in education: one policy-driven and research-based interventions, and the other embedded firmly in cultural and spiritual traditions. Although both approaches have common objectives of promoting emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and well-being, their strategies for implementation are markedly different.

The UK model demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating mindfulness within structured educational policies, backed by empirical research and government funding. The emphasis on standardized training and teacher certification ensures consistency in program delivery. However, challenges such as institutional resistance and concerns about secularization highlight the complexities of implementing mindfulness within Western education systems (Roeser et al., 2012).

In contrast, Bhutan's mindfulness education is naturally woven into its cultural fabric, offering a more holistic and ethically grounded approach. The integration of mindfulness into daily school practices fosters a sense of interconnectedness and sustainability. However, the challenge lies in balancing traditional mindfulness-based education with the evolving demands of global education standards (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999).

Key lessons from these case studies suggest that successful mindfulness education requires a balance between structured implementation and cultural sensitivity. Policymakers should consider contextual adaptations, ensuring that mindfulness programs resonate with local values while maintaining evidence-

based rigor. Additionally, training educators in both the philosophical and practical dimensions of mindfulness is crucial for fostering a compassionate and ethically conscious generation of future leaders.

VII. BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

7.1. Emotional well-being

Mindfulness plays a crucial role in promoting emotional well-being among students and educators by fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience. Research has shown that mindfulness-based interventions significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression in students (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). By training individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions without reactivity, mindfulness cultivates a greater sense of inner stability and balance.

One of the key mechanisms through which mindfulness enhances emotional well-being is by strengthening the prefrontal cortex, which governs executive functions such as attention regulation and impulse control, while reducing activity in the amygdala, the brain's center for processing stress and fear (Davidson & Lutz, 2008). These neurocognitive benefits help students develop emotional resilience, enabling them to navigate academic pressures, peer relationships, and personal challenges with greater ease.

Educators also benefit from mindfulness training, as it has been shown to lower burnout rates and improve overall job satisfaction (Roeser et al., 2013). Teachers who practice mindfulness report increased emotional regulation, greater patience, and enhanced classroom management skills. When implemented at the institutional level, mindfulness-based programs contribute to creating a supportive and emotionally intelligent learning environment, ultimately fostering a school culture that prioritizes mental health and holistic development.

7.2. Ethical and leadership skills

Mindfulness education is closely linked to the cultivation of ethical awareness and leadership skills, as it encourages self-reflection, moral reasoning, and compassionate decision-making. The Buddhist principle of "right mindfulness" (*sammā sati*) underscores the importance of ethical behavior and conscious action, aligning with contemporary educational goals of fostering responsible and socially engaged leaders (Rahula, 1974).

Studies suggest that mindfulness enhances ethical decision-making by promoting self-regulation and reducing automatic biases (Kabat-Zinn, 2018). When students develop greater self-awareness and emotional intelligence, they are better equipped to make thoughtful and ethical choices. Research by Roeser et al. highlights that students who participate in mindfulness training exhibit stronger moral reasoning skills and a heightened sense of responsibility toward others.

Leadership development is another critical area where mindfulness proves beneficial. Effective leadership requires emotional intelligence, active listening, and the ability to remain composed under pressure - all skills that mindfulness

strengthens.²⁴ Mindfulness-based leadership programs have gained traction in educational and corporate settings alike, with research demonstrating that mindful leaders are more empathetic, adaptable, and capable of inspiring positive change (Siegel, 2007).

By incorporating mindfulness into education, institutions can foster a new generation of leaders who prioritize ethical considerations, social responsibility, and inclusivity. This approach aligns with the broader goal of developing compassionate, forward-thinking individuals who can address the complex challenges of the modern world with integrity and wisdom.

7.3. Environmental consciousness

Mindfulness fosters a deep awareness of interconnectedness, which is essential for cultivating environmental consciousness. By encouraging individuals to develop a heightened sense of presence and attentiveness, mindfulness enables students to engage with the natural world in a more meaningful and compassionate manner.

Eco-mindfulness programs, which integrate mindfulness with environmental education, have demonstrated success in promoting sustainable behaviors. Studies indicate that individuals who practice mindfulness exhibit greater pro-environmental attitudes, reduced materialistic tendencies, and increased ecological awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). In Bhutan, for instance, mindfulness is integrated into the national education system to instill respect for nature and sustainability (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008).

Moreover, mindfulness enhances individuals' ability to recognize the impact of their actions on the environment, leading to more conscious consumption and conservation efforts. Schools that incorporate nature-based mindfulness activities, such as outdoor meditation and mindful walking, report increased student engagement with sustainability initiatives and ecological preservation efforts (Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

By integrating mindfulness into educational curricula, schools can cultivate environmentally conscious citizens who are inspired to be stewards of the earth. This holistic approach to education benefits not only personal well-being but also supports larger initiatives to address environmental issues.

7.4. Social cohesion through empathy

One of the greatest social advantages of mindfulness education is its capacity to create empathy and enhance interpersonal relationships. Mindfulness increases social awareness as it teaches people to interact with others in a non-judgmental and empathetic way, resulting in greater trust, cooperation, and social cohesion.

Studies prove that mindfulness training enhances perspective-taking skills and minimizes implicit biases, making people more open to other people's views (Kuyken et al., 2013). Initiatives like the Mindfulness in Schools Project

²⁴ Goleman (1995): 62.

(MiSP) have proven that students who are trained in mindfulness show more prosocial behavior, such as kindness, patience, and conflict resolution (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

Teachers, too, derive advantages from mindfulness in creating more inclusive classroom settings. Through the development of present-moment awareness, teachers become more sensitive to the emotional needs of their students, resulting in better teacher-student relationships and a more supportive learning environment (Roeser et al., 2013).

At a larger level, mindfulness can serve to bridge social divisions by instilling understanding and dialogue. By integrating mindfulness into education, schools can facilitate the development of socially aware individuals whose priorities include empathy, inclusivity, and collective welfare.

VIII. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

8.1. Institutional resistance

Despite growing evidence of its benefits, integrating mindfulness into educational systems faces significant institutional resistance. Traditional school structures prioritize standardized testing, academic performance, and efficiency, leaving little room for holistic practices like mindfulness. Administrators and policymakers may view mindfulness as a distraction from core subjects, particularly in high-pressure educational environments focused on measurable outcomes (Roeser et al., 2013).

Additionally, a lack of trained educators poses a challenge to implementation. Many teachers are unfamiliar with mindfulness practices, and without proper training, their ability to integrate it effectively into curricula is limited (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Budget constraints further complicate efforts, as schools may be reluctant to allocate resources to mindfulness programs over other pressing needs.

To overcome these challenges, advocates must present mindfulness as a tool for enhancing focus, emotional regulation, and academic achievement rather than as an alternative to traditional education. Policy-level support and structured teacher training programs can help normalize mindfulness in mainstream education.

8.2. Cultural and contextual barriers

Mindfulness, with its roots in Buddhist traditions, may be perceived as culturally or religiously specific, leading to concerns about its appropriateness in secular or non-Buddhist contexts. In some regions, parents and educators worry that mindfulness practices conflict with religious beliefs, particularly in communities with strong Christian or Islamic influences (Rahula, 1974). These concerns can lead to skepticism or outright opposition to mindfulness initiatives in schools.

Moreover, the effectiveness of mindfulness programs may vary based on cultural context. Approaches that work in Western education systems may not be directly applicable in collectivist cultures, where different learning styles and values shape the educational experience (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999).

Programs must be adapted to reflect local traditions and belief systems to ensure meaningful engagement.

To address these barriers, mindfulness education should be framed in a secular and inclusive manner, emphasizing scientific evidence and universal benefits such as stress reduction, emotional resilience, and improved learning outcomes.

8.3. Risk of commercializing mindfulness

The increasing popularity of mindfulness has led to concerns about its commercialization, with corporations and private institutions marketing mindfulness products and services primarily for profit rather than for genuine well-being. This trend risks diluting the ethical and philosophical depth of mindfulness, reducing it to a consumer-driven wellness trend (Kabat-Zinn, 2018).

In education, some mindfulness programs are promoted as quick fixes for stress and anxiety rather than as holistic practices that encourage deep personal and ethical growth. To maintain integrity, educators should prioritize evidence-based, ethically grounded mindfulness programs that focus on long-term development rather than market-driven trends.

8.4. Addressing critiques

Mindfulness in education has faced critiques from scholars and educators who question its effectiveness, accessibility, and long-term impact. Some argue that mindfulness programs lack rigorous empirical validation, with concerns that research findings may be exaggerated or overly generalized (Kuyken et al., 2013). Others contend that mindfulness is being used to make students more adaptable to stressful academic environments rather than addressing systemic issues such as high-stakes testing and school pressures (Roeser et al., 2012).

In addition, critics caution against the use of mindfulness as a one-size-fits-all solution, as students with trauma or mental illness may need more targeted psychological interventions (Siegel, 2007). Without careful guidance, mindfulness might be misused or even cause adverse emotional reactions in susceptible individuals.

To counter these criticisms, mindfulness programs must be introduced as part of wider educational reforms fostering mental well-being, equity, and systemic support for students. Additional longitudinal studies are required to evaluate mindfulness education's long-term benefits across diverse groups.

IX. STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

9.1. Teacher training

One of the most important keys to implementing mindfulness in education successfully is ensuring that teachers are properly trained. Teachers are the key to modeling mindfulness practices and creating a supportive learning environment, but many are not formally trained in mindfulness-based practices (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Without proper preparation, mindfulness programs risk being misused, resulting in superficial or ineffective results.

Effective teacher training must include both theoretical and experiential aspects. Teachers must first establish their mindfulness practice prior to introducing it to students. Programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) teach educators hands-on techniques for developing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and stress management (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Additionally, training should address how to integrate mindfulness into classroom routines, adapt practices for various age groups, and handle potential student issues (Roeser et al., 2013).

Institutional support is also crucial. Schools should allocate time and resources for professional development in mindfulness, ensuring that teachers feel confident and competent in delivering mindfulness-based lessons. By investing in teacher training, schools can create a sustainable framework for mindfulness education that benefits both educators and students.

9.2. Integrating mindfulness into curricula

For mindfulness to have a lasting impact, it must be seamlessly integrated into educational curricula rather than treated as an optional extracurricular activity. Effective integration involves embedding mindfulness practices into daily classroom routines, academic subjects, and school-wide policies (Kuyken et al., 2013).

A structured approach includes incorporating mindfulness exercises into morning meetings, transitions between lessons, and reflective activities at the end of the school day. Short guided breathing exercises, mindful listening, and gratitude journaling can enhance students' focus and emotional regulation (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). Moreover, mindfulness can be woven into subjects such as literature, where students analyze characters' emotions with greater empathy, or environmental science, where mindfulness fosters a deeper connection to nature (Kabat-Zinn, 2018).

Schools should adopt evidence-based mindfulness curricula, such as the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) or the Inner Kids Program, which provide structured lesson plans tailored to different age groups (Kaiser Greenland, 2010). By embedding mindfulness across subjects and daily routines, schools can create a culture of awareness, resilience, and well-being that extends beyond formal mindfulness sessions.

9.3. Policy recommendations

To support the widespread implementation of mindfulness in education, policymakers must recognize its benefits and allocate appropriate resources. Government and educational institutions should fund large-scale studies to evaluate the long-term impact of mindfulness programs and establish evidence-based best practices (Roeser et al., 2012).

Additionally, mindfulness should be included in national and regional educational frameworks as part of social-emotional learning (SEL) initiatives. Policies should mandate teacher training in mindfulness-based education, ensuring that educators are well-equipped to integrate mindfulness into their classrooms (Siegel, 2007).

Funding should also be directed toward the development of culturally adaptive mindfulness programs that respect diverse traditions and belief systems (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999). Finally, collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and educators is essential to scaling up mindfulness education while maintaining quality and ethical integrity.

9.4. Collaborations with stakeholders

Successful implementation of mindfulness education requires collaboration among key stakeholders, including educators, parents, policymakers, and community organizations. Schools should engage parents by providing workshops and informational sessions that highlight the benefits of mindfulness for student well-being and academic success (Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

Partnerships with universities and research institutions can help schools access evidence-based mindfulness curricula and ongoing professional development for teachers (Kuyken et al., 2013). Additionally, non-profit organizations and mindfulness advocacy groups can provide funding, training, and program evaluation support (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

By fostering a collaborative approach, schools can ensure that mindfulness education is not only effective but also sustainable in the long term. Involving multiple stakeholders helps build a shared commitment to student well-being and creates a supportive ecosystem for mindfulness-based learning.

X. DISCUSSION

10.1. Intersection of Buddhist insights and modern education

The integration of mindfulness into education represents a powerful intersection between Buddhist wisdom and contemporary learning practices. Rooted in Buddhist traditions, mindfulness emphasizes self-awareness, ethical living, and interconnectedness - all of which align with modern educational goals of fostering emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and holistic development. While traditional education primarily focuses on cognitive skills and academic performance, Buddhist teachings offer a broader perspective, emphasizing the cultivation of inner wisdom and ethical conduct (Rahula, 1974).

In contemporary education, mindfulness has been adapted into secular frameworks, ensuring accessibility across different cultural and religious backgrounds. Programs such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) have successfully integrated these ancient principles into structured learning environments. The Buddhist concept of "right mindfulness" (*sammā sati*) resonates with modern educational objectives by promoting focus, self-regulation, and compassionate engagement with the world (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999).

However, the challenge lies in maintaining the depth of mindfulness practice without reducing it to a simple stress-relief tool. In some cases, mindfulness has been commodified, stripped of its ethical and transformative potential. For mindfulness education to remain impactful, it must retain its core principles - encouraging not just individual well-being but also ethical

responsibility and social consciousness. By embracing both the practical and philosophical dimensions of mindfulness, modern education can nurture well-rounded, compassionate individuals prepared for the complexities of the globalized world.

10.2. Transformative potential for global challenges

The adoption of mindfulness in education extends beyond the classroom; it has the potential to address some of the most pressing global challenges, including mental health crises, social fragmentation, and environmental degradation. By fostering emotional resilience, mindfulness helps students and educators navigate stress and uncertainty more effectively. Given the increasing prevalence of anxiety and depression, particularly among young people, embedding mindfulness in education equips individuals with lifelong coping strategies that enhance mental well-being.

Beyond personal benefits, mindfulness also has a role to play in reducing societal divisions. Practices that promote empathy, active listening, and non-judgmental awareness contribute to more inclusive and harmonious communities. In multicultural and conflict-prone societies, mindfulness can help bridge ideological and cultural divides by encouraging individuals to engage with others in a compassionate and open-minded manner. Schools that integrate mindfulness-based social-emotional learning (SEL) programs report stronger student relationships, reduced bullying, and increased collaboration - skills that are crucial in fostering global citizenship.

Furthermore, mindfulness supports environmental sustainability by nurturing a deep sense of interdependence with nature. When individuals cultivate mindfulness, they become more attuned to their surroundings, fostering behaviors that prioritize environmental conservation and sustainability. Education systems that incorporate eco-mindfulness practices encourage students to adopt sustainable lifestyles, reinforcing the idea that global well-being is inherently tied to ecological balance. By embedding mindfulness into education, institutions can contribute to shaping future leaders who approach global challenges with awareness, compassion, and ethical integrity.

10.3. Reaffirming compassion, inclusivity, and sustainability

At its core, mindfulness education is not just about individual self-improvement - it is about cultivating a more compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable world. By fostering compassion, mindfulness strengthens the social fabric, encouraging individuals to act with kindness and consideration toward others. In an era marked by polarization and social unrest, the ability to listen, empathize, and engage with diverse perspectives is more critical than ever. Mindfulness instills these qualities by teaching individuals to approach interactions with presence and awareness rather than reactionary judgment.

Inclusivity is another crucial dimension of mindfulness education. Schools that prioritize mindfulness create environments where students from different backgrounds feel valued and heard. Mindfulness practices

encourage mutual respect, reduce social anxiety, and help students develop the emotional intelligence needed to navigate diverse spaces with sensitivity and understanding. The result is a more cohesive and cooperative learning environment that mirrors the inclusive societies we strive to build.

Finally, sustainability - both in the ecological and educational sense - remains a cornerstone of mindfulness education. By reinforcing interconnectedness, mindfulness fosters a commitment to environmental stewardship and responsible decision-making. Furthermore, sustaining mindfulness education itself requires careful implementation, ongoing research, and commitment from educators and policymakers. If approached thoughtfully, mindfulness can serve as a transformative force, not only within the realm of education but across global efforts to create a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world.

XI. CONCLUSION

11.1. Summary of findings and insights

This research has touched on the integration of mindfulness into education, pointing to its potential to promote emotional well-being, ethical thought, and leadership, along with a culture of compassion, inclusivity, and sustainability. The United Kingdom and Bhutan case studies showed varied responses to integrating mindfulness, reflecting both systematic policy-oriented models and culturally embedded traditions. In spite of challenges ranging from institutional resistance, cultural obstacles, and commercialization risks, mindfulness has been shown to have considerable dividends in education if taken up with integrity and care.

The debate highlighted how mindfulness acts as a bridge between ancient Buddhist teachings and contemporary education. Its values of self-awareness, ethical responsibility, and interconnectedness reflect current calls for resilience, social coherence, and global citizenship. Additionally, mindfulness presents a transformational response to global issues, providing students and teachers with the means to manage stress, form meaningful relationships, and engage with environmental and social sustainability.

11.2. Role of mindfulness in developing leaders

The future requires leaders who are not only intellectually gifted but also emotionally intelligent, ethical, and compassionate. Mindfulness has a key role to play in developing such leaders by cultivating self-awareness, patience, and the capacity to work with complexity without reactivity. Mindful leadership is marked by deep listening, reflective decision-making, and an inclusive style of problem-solving - attributes critical for navigating an increasingly interconnected and insecure world.

By integrating mindfulness into education, institutions have the capacity to develop leaders who are not only academically competent but also responsive to the well-being of communities and the world. Whether in business, governance, education, or activism, mindfulness-trained leaders are more likely to respond with integrity, resilience, and a long-term vision for collective well-being.

11.3. Call to action

For mindfulness education to reach its full potential, it must be embraced at all levels - by educators, policymakers, and communities. Schools should invest in teacher training, integrate mindfulness into curricula, and advocate for policies that support holistic education. More research and cross-cultural collaborations are needed to refine and expand mindfulness programs, ensuring their accessibility and effectiveness.

The time to act is now. By prioritizing mindfulness in education, we can cultivate a generation of compassionate, ethical, and visionary leaders capable of addressing the urgent challenges of our time. The path to a more mindful, inclusive, and sustainable future begins in the classroom.

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PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF MINDFULNESS IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND DEPLETION OF RESISTANT THOUGHTS AMONG STUDENTS

Kaluarachchilage Rakshana Supun Kaluarachchi*

Abstract:

Throughout a long time, Buddhist studies have grown into a complex field, with significant concerns regarding historical, philosophical, linguistic, and socio-cultural aspects, which are being studied independently as well as in a comparative light. As a result, the concept of mindfulness taught in Buddhism has now become a significant tool subjected to experimental application in many different contexts in the modern world. Additionally, the field of education, especially in relation to students representing newer generations, faces complexities due to mental weaknesses stemming from unethical practices, memory issues, and related discrepancies, which require special attention. Strong attempts at applying the Buddhist concept of mindfulness to resolve complexities among students are not widely available, but slightly adapted curricula incorporating this concept have been observed in Sri Lankan education. The objective of this research article is to reveal the practicality of the concept and to illustrate how mindfulness practices can be instrumental in identifying and mitigating resistant thoughts among students. By fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation, mindfulness allows students to recognize and challenge negative thinking patterns. Furthermore, integrating mindfulness-based interventions into school curricula has shown promise in reducing stress and improving cognitive performance, thereby enhancing overall academic success. This study examines the potential of mindfulness to address cognitive and emotional barriers in students, emphasizing the need for more systematic implementation in educational settings, particularly in Sri Lanka.

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Keywords: *Buddhism, mindfulness, education, students, thoughts.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of mindfulness, rooted deeply in Buddhist teachings, holds significant potential for addressing the challenges of resistant thoughts in students. In Buddhism, the mind is recognized as both the source of suffering and the gateway to liberation. The identification of resistant thoughts - mental patterns driven by attachment, craving, and ignorance - is an essential first step in fostering a more peaceful and productive mental state. While the eradication of these defilements is a gradual process, the practice of mindfulness offers a practical approach for students to become aware of and disengage from these harmful thought patterns. By training the mind through mindfulness, individuals can not only recognize resistant thoughts but also develop the mental discipline needed to counteract them, enhancing both academic and personal growth.

This article explores how Buddhist principles, particularly mindfulness, can be applied to identify and reduce resistant thoughts among students, thereby supporting their mental and emotional well-being.

Research methodology

This study employs the historical research methodology within the qualitative research paradigm. The research is grounded in both primary and secondary data sources, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the applicability of the Buddhist concept of mindfulness in addressing issues related to student complexities arising from mental weaknesses due to unethical practices, memory issues, and related discrepancies.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF RESISTANT THOUGHTS

In a broader sense, the primary reason for all the issues an individual experiences, whether mentally or physically, is birth, which is followed by craving. Therefore, Buddhism emphasizes that the eradication of defilements, including craving, is the most precious way to achieve eternal happiness. The complete eradication of defilements is, on one hand, a difficult practice that takes time. That is why the Buddha preached not only the philosophy of extinction but also teachings on worldly matters so that individuals can live righteously before attaining salvation while making efforts to fully eradicate defilements. Buddhist education originated with this fundamental purpose, and it is evident that Buddhist education primarily aims to purify the mind by cleansing mental fetters, issues, and illnesses. Therefore, the foundational steps of Buddhist education begin with the practice of understanding the mind. The advancement of this practice, which results from the process of mental development, manifests in various developmental stages of an individual's (or student's) behavior. Mental and physical well-being, psycho-motor development, work ethics, the joy of continuous learning, scientific attitudes, cultural literacy, appreciation of multicultural diversity, communication skills, problem-solving ability, design thinking, innovation, adaptability, analytical

skills, synthesis ability, acceptance of challenges, entrepreneurship, imagination, fulfillment of civic duties, adopting a simple lifestyle, responsibility, time management, crisis management, organizational strength, resilience to change, equity, teamwork, compassion, politeness, soft skills, initiative, knowledge exploration, and a global vision are among the key attributes fostered through the educational process.¹ The mind itself is the most complex and potentially dangerous aspect of an individual, as it generates numerous defilements. It is the individual's responsibility to guard the mind against resistant thoughts while cultivating positive ones. In the *Roga Sutta* of the *Catukkanipāta* in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha states that there are two types of diseases affecting human beings: physical and mental. "Monks, there are two diseases. What are the two? The disease of the body and the disease of the mind."² Furthermore, the discourse explains that while physical diseases may be cured within a year, two years, three years, four years, or even fifty years, mental diseases are rarely cured. Buddhism highlights the rarity of individuals who experience uninterrupted mental well-being, even though physical illnesses may persist for varying durations. The text emphasizes that those who achieve continuous mental health are exceedingly rare, as they have successfully overcome mental afflictions related to illness. The term *khīṇāsavehi* refers to individuals who have eradicated defilements or impurities. "Monks, beings who, on account of a physical illness, enjoy health for even one year, two years, three years, four years, five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years, fifty years, or even a hundred years more, are rare in the world - except for those with ended defilements."³ The above passage from the *Dīgha Nikāya* reflects on the relationship between mental and physical health, suggesting that a resilient mind can contribute to prolonged physical well-being. This aligns with Buddhist principles that emphasize the importance of mental cultivation in achieving overall happiness. The incremental progression in the number of years and the persistence of good health underscore both the rarity and difficulty of attaining a state of enduring wellness. It further highlights the exceptional nature of individuals who maintain mental well-being despite physical ailments, attributing their rarity to the eradication of mental defilements. This perspective encapsulates the Buddhist view on the deep interconnection between mind and body in the pursuit of lasting health and inner peace. This implies that almost all worldly beings suffer from psychological issues or mental disturbances. Modern psychologists concur with the Buddha's view that *sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā viya*, which means "all worldly people are lunatics." This suggests that, in alignment with modern psychology, every individual experiences some form of mental affliction, except for noble beings such as the Buddha, the Silent Buddhas (*Paccekabuddhas*), and the Arahants. Additionally, some Buddhist discourses mention that there are numerically

¹ Kariyawasam (2016), p.25-26.

² AN II, p.131: "Dveme bhikkhave rogā- Katame dve? Kāyiko ca rogo cetasiko ca rogo."

³ DN II, p.132: "Dissanti, bhikkhave, sattā kāyikena rogena ekampi vassaṃ ārogyaṃ paṭijānamānā, dvepi vassāni ārogyaṃ paṭijānamānā, tīṇipi vassāni."

1,500 mental diseases afflicting people. In common usage, various forms of mental distress - including jealousy, anger, hatred, arrogance, inferiority complex, overestimation of oneself, underestimation of others, condemnation of others' actions, excessive self-righteousness, doubt, intense greed, rigid attachment to personal opinions, intolerance, vengefulness, excessive suspicion, emotional distress over minor obstacles, phobias such as acrophobia (fear of heights) and hydrophobia (fear of water), excessive fear of harmless animals, arrogance due to wealth, status, caste, or youth, and insomnia caused by mental disturbances - are often classified as mental illnesses.⁴ Buddhist discourses indicate that the Buddha identified a mental condition resembling what modern psychology refers to as "mania." Furthermore, medical science acknowledges that mental distress can contribute to physical illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure. According to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Buddhism maintains that the mind (*citta*) is naturally radiant but becomes tainted by external defilements through attachment to worldly objects: "This mind, monks, is luminous, but it is defiled by taints that come from without."⁵ This statement suggests that consciousness, though inherently pure, is obscured by external pollutants. Modern psychologists also recognize this perspective. Human behavior is largely a response to an underlying need, and such behaviors are often directed toward external objects that fulfill or gratify these needs. The external world influences and conditions individual actions, often leading to attachment and suffering. However, Buddhist teachings, particularly in Buddhist education, emphasize the importance of training the mind to remain under one's control rather than being dictated by external stimuli. Buddhism asserts that the cultivation of morality (*sīla*) leads to concentration (*samādhi*), and concentration fosters wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, developing concentration is crucial in gaining mastery over one's mind. Buddhism emphasizes that one should cultivate an understanding of external forms, acknowledging their characteristics and beauty in order to keep the mind under control. Additionally, being aware of the arising fetters and attachments related to sensory experiences, desires, and ignorance is crucial. Recognizing the nature of these mental phenomena with clarity allows for better control and mindfulness. "One understands: 'The eye sees form.' He perceives: 'It sees form as its defining characteristic, its essential quality.'" Whatever arises dependent on the eye and forms - impermanent, ever-changing, subject to transformation and cessation - is known as the fetter of the eye. The craving that fuels further becoming - accompanied by passion and delight, seeking gratification now here, now there - manifests as a craving for sensual pleasure, craving for existence, and craving for non-existence. This, too, is a bond. Likewise, whatever arises dependent on the ear and sounds, the nose and aromas, the tongue and flavors, the body and tactile sensations - each impermanent, constantly changing, and ceasing - is

⁴ Mann & Youd (1992), p. 66.

⁵ AN-1, p. 8: "Pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave, cittaṃ. Tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ."

called the fetter of the body.”⁶ The same craving, driven by passion and delight, roaming in search of pleasure, binds one to the cycle of existence. To identify thoughts, Buddhism prescribes the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness helps an individual identify both positive and obstructive thoughts. By recognizing the nature of thoughts, obstructive thoughts can be subdued. In this case, mindfulness meditation is highly applicable. The step-by-step guide on how mindfulness meditation can be applied to address issues related to student diversity is as follows. Step 1: Self-Reflection: Encourage individuals to engage in self-reflection through mindfulness meditation. Guide students to examine their own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions about diversity, fostering greater self-awareness. Step 2: Mindful Breathing: Begin with a basic mindfulness practice, such as focused breathing. Instruct students to pay attention to their breath, helping them cultivate concentration and presence in the moment. Step 3: Cultivating Empathy: Introduce loving-kindness meditation to nurture empathy. Guide students to extend compassion and understanding toward themselves and others, particularly those from different backgrounds. Step 4: Non-Judgmental Awareness: Emphasize the importance of adopting a non-judgmental mindset during meditation. Encourage students to carry this awareness into their daily interactions, fostering acceptance and reducing stereotyping. Step 5: Group Meditation Sessions: Organize group meditation sessions to create a shared experience. This fosters a sense of unity and connection, transcending cultural and other differences. Step 6: Open Dialogue: Use mindfulness as a foundation for open and honest discussions. Encourage students to share their thoughts, experiences, and concerns about diversity in a supportive environment. Step 7: Mindful Conflict Resolution: Teach mindful conflict resolution techniques. Mindfulness helps individuals remain calm and focused during conflicts, facilitating more constructive and understanding resolutions. Step 8: Cultural Sensitivity Training: Combine mindfulness practices with educational sessions on cultural sensitivity. This integrated approach enhances both self-awareness and knowledge of diverse cultures. Step 9: Integration into the Curriculum: Embed mindfulness practices into the curriculum to ensure they become a regular part of students’ routines. This promotes continuous self-awareness and deeper understanding. Step 10: Community Building: Extend mindfulness practices beyond the classroom to community-building activities. Engage students in collaborative projects that highlight the value of diversity and teamwork. By incorporating mindfulness at various levels and addressing both individual and collective aspects, this approach aims to create a more inclusive and understanding environment among students. Meanwhile, the *mettā* meditation should be started while the character development of the student is being monitored.

III. DEPLETION OF RESISTANT THOUGHTS

The Buddha has analyzed two significant potentials and powers of the

⁶ MN 28: “*Rūpe ca pajānātīti - bahiddhā catusamutthānikarūpaṇca yāthāvasarasalakhaṇavasena pajānāti. Yaṇca tadubhayaṃ paṭicca uppajjati saṃyojanaṃ ti*”

human mind. They are the ability to not be a slave to instinctive passions and the mind's developable nature. Normally, other beings act according to instinctive passions that arise naturally and mechanically in the mind. However, unlike other beings, human beings are capable of controlling the instinctive passions that arise in the mind by nature. For this purpose, human beings practice morality and virtue (*sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño*), and this practice controls the natural mental tendency toward instinctive passions. This can probably be practiced only by human beings because this capacity is unique to the human mind. The other significant potential of the mind is its improvable or developable nature. This, too, is likely unique to human beings, except in some rare special cases (*paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ*). The *Visuddhimagga* points out three types of intelligence or wisdom according to Buddhist teachings: (1) *Jāti paññā* - genetic intelligence, which originates from inherited traits at birth, (2) *Parihāri paññā* - intelligence that develops through interaction with one's environment, and (3) *Bhāvanā paññā* - intelligence that grows through directed effort and meditation.⁷ By developing all three aspects, one can achieve liberation not only in the worldly sense but also in the transcendental sense, which is the ultimate goal of Buddhist learning. Thus, mental concentration and mental discipline are essential in the learning process. The Buddha provided profound teachings on mental discipline that no one else has. "Those who carry water for farming control the water and take it where they want. The carpenter chops wood as he likes, the wise take control of the mind."⁸ The importance of concentrating the mind is illustrated in the above *Dhammapada*. Although this simile is very simple, it demonstrates how the mind behaves. Elsewhere, the mind is compared to a wild buffalo. Mental restraint means controlling all three doors of action, including the mind, which is often bewildered. Psychologists have also provided some advice on controlling the mind, yet it remains the most difficult task for a person to accomplish. It is also a significant challenge for a teacher striving to help students succeed. No other teaching introduces methods for controlling the mind as comprehensively and practically as Buddhism.⁹ The Buddha has shown that all good and bad actions take place through three doors: the mind, the body, and speech. There is no other way through which human actions occur. Functions such as retention and logical thinking in the mind, feedback and expression through speech, and action through the body are all carried out within this framework. This principle also applies to the process of learning.¹⁰ Furthermore, the Buddha taught that mindfulness (*sati*) should be established as the gatekeeper of the mind. Through mindfulness, one should examine those who enter the mind - identifying which are dangerous and which are peaceful - and allow in only the suitable ones. The Buddha emphasized that every action should be performed mindfully (*sammā sati*). Mindfulness is also of great

⁷ *Vism* (2010), p. 168.

⁸ *Dhp.* verse 80.

⁹ Krishnamurthi (1959), p. 128.

¹⁰ Jayasuriya (1963), p. 88 - 89.

importance in the process of learning. The Buddha highlighted its significance extensively in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. When answering a question posed by a Brahmin, the Buddha explained that there are five sense faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) that receive sensory input separately, and their refuge is the mind. In response to the Brahmin's second question - what serves as the refuge for the mind? - the Buddha replied that mindfulness is the refuge for the mind. A punishment given to a person sentenced to death by royal order is considered as an example to understand this situation. The person sentenced to death happens to walk without dropping even a drop of the oil contained in the pot, as in a case where he is made to hold a bowl full of oil on his head, and if by any chance a drop of oil spills, he is cut to death by a sword-wielding torturer. A simile shows that the mind should be controlled in such a way as to engage in the journey of life with control over the mind.¹¹ Moreover, the Buddha explained that if one simply acts according to all the impulses received from the five sense bases, they will suffer great harm and become a slave to the mind. Thus, controlling and developing the mind, and maintaining it with mindfulness, is essential for its protection. A punishment given to a person sentenced to death by royal order serves as a simile to illustrate this concept. The condemned person is forced to walk while balancing a bowl full of oil on his head. If even a single drop spills, he is immediately executed by a sword-wielding torturer. This simile demonstrates that the mind must be controlled with the same level of precision and attentiveness, ensuring that one navigates the journey of life with full mental discipline.

In the *Āloka Sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha made significant statements about the wisdom associated with the factors of mind, consciousness, and mindfulness. The Buddha stated that wisdom is greater than anything else in terms of light, radiance, and luminosity. Among the four sources of light - the moon, the sun, fire, and wisdom - the supreme light is wisdom. Furthermore, it is said that wisdom shines the most out of these four; the moon, the sun, and fire are luminous, but wisdom surpasses them all in brilliance. "There are monks, these four lights. What four? The light of the moon, the light of the sun, the light of fire, and the light of wisdom; these, monks, are the four lights. Among these four lights, monks, the foremost is the light of wisdom."¹² Resistant thoughts can thus be controlled by practicing the fundamental Buddhist teaching on morality and ethics. When people observe and protect the precepts, they should practice them in two ways. The first is refraining - abstaining from unethical behavior, which prevents unwholesome actions. However, mere abstention does not necessarily lead to proper mental management to weaken resistant thoughts. For this purpose, the second practice observation - must be cultivated. This involves actively developing

¹¹ Jayasuriya (1963), p. 96.

¹² AN-II, 126: "Cattārome, bhikkhave, ālokā. Katame cattāro? Candāloko, sūriyāloko, aggāloko, paññāloko - ime kho, bhikkhave, cattāro ālokā. Etadaggaṃ, bhikkhave, imesaṃ catunnaṃ ālokānaṃ yadidaṃ paññāloko."

a significant quality that counteracts the resistant thought. For instance, the first of the five precepts is refraining from killing beings. While abstaining from killing prevents one from physically committing the act, it does not necessarily eliminate thoughts of harming, discriminating, or blaming others.¹³ To suppress such thoughts and train the mind, one must cultivate a positive quality that opposes the tendency to harm. Loving kindness (*mettā*) is the essential quality that corresponds to the first precept. One who has fully developed loving-kindness does not need to restrain themselves from killing by force, as their mind is already conditioned to extend goodwill to all beings. With *mettā*, no anger or harmful thought arises.¹⁴ Additionally, practicing the duties outlined in the *Vattakkhandhaka* of the *Cullavagga* can aid in reducing resistant thoughts and fostering wholesome mental states. These duties emphasize ethical conduct, mindfulness, and compassion. Applying these principles in an educational setting involves promoting a culture of respect, empathy, and understanding among students. Teachers and administrators can integrate mindfulness practices, ethical teachings, and discussions about compassion into the curriculum to create a supportive learning environment. Moreover, emphasizing the interconnectedness of individuals and fostering a sense of community aligns with the Buddhist principles found in the *Vattakkhandhaka*. By cultivating a school community that values diversity, teaches kindness, and discourages harmful behaviors, a preventive support system can be established to address issues like bullying and neglect. Regular communication and conflict resolution strategies based on these principles can further contribute to a harmonious and inclusive educational environment. When carefully examining the evolution and development of human civilization, it becomes evident that the progress and decline of society have been determined by the positive and negative strengths of the human mind. Food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and comfort are all results of a well-directed mind. Conversely, when misused, the mind has led to the creation of weapons, bombs, and other destructive instruments. An uncontrolled mind is the root cause of conflicts, wars, and unrest in the modern world.

IV. IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE AND REGENERATIVE THOUGHTS

Buddhist education leads the student to the depletion of resistant thoughts and the development of positive and regenerative thoughts. One significant feature of the mind is its developable nature. The same applies to intelligence, which has a great capacity for growth. According to modern biology, the capacity of the mind or intelligence is measured using a unit called a 'bit.' It is said that the capacity of the outer mind is 2,000 bits, whereas the inner mind has a capacity of 400 billion bits.¹⁵ What we experience in any way within worldly life, from birth to death, pertains to the intelligence of the outer mind.

¹³ Jayatilleke, 1980, p. 99 – 103.

¹⁴ Jayatilleke, 1980, p. 103.

¹⁵ Bartleby research (2018), p. 145.

This means that worldly beings are not even aware of the abilities that belong to the inner mind or intelligence. What Buddhist education does is lead the student to experience the inner mind, allowing them to realize the truth of the universe - the reality. Thus, it is evident that the mind and intelligence can be developed. Buddhist sources have proved this with many factors. According to the *Catukkanipāta* of the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, four basic factors lead to the growth of the mind and intelligence: associating with noble ones, listening to the doctrine, focusing on the doctrine, and acting according to the path of the doctrine.¹⁶ There is a relationship between every behavioral inclination and motivated activity. It is emphasized that qualities such as effort in starting, effort in continuation, and effort in hard work should be present in a person for the development of the mind and intelligence. Intellectual development is accelerated by full concentration of effort. On the other hand, laziness and inactivity reduce the growth of the mind and intelligence. Learning, self-discipline, and verbal restraint have a positive effect on the development of the mind.¹⁷ Intemperance, abstinence from alcohol and drugs, and being mindful of one's desires create stability in the development of the mind and intelligence. Living in an appropriate environment, having previous merits, and maintaining good mental control are factors that make the growth of the mind more permanent. Focusing on learning leads to increased intelligence while diverting the mind from learning reduces intelligence. If the development of intelligence is desired, what is learned must be put into practice. Lack of practice is a constant factor in reducing intelligence. Modern psychologists tend to think that a person's intellectual development stops at around twenty-five years of age. Perhaps they are referring to the physical development of the human brain. However, Buddhist sources have a different view on this. From early Buddhist teachings, it can be concluded that if one is constantly engaged in learning, age is not a barrier to the growth of intelligence. Listening, meditation, and experience are good learning approaches. Meditation holds an important place in planning the learning process. One who practices meditation even for a very short period is considered a good student. Regular and consistent meditation affects even the nature of one's body, further enhancing various psychological powers. Meditation practice increases psychological power. Meditation helps to develop the intellect, foster intellectual productivity, expand and strengthen the intellect, enhance quick understanding, and sharpen intellectual acuity. Thus, it is obvious that mindfulness is the tool for identifying positive and regenerative thoughts, whereas meditation is the most precious practice for developing them.

V. MOTIVATION

The aspects that urge or stimulate an individual to accomplish something are known as motivators, whereas the function of stimulation is identified as motivation. From a psychological perspective, motivation drives a person's

¹⁶ Narada (1998), p. 171 - 172.

¹⁷ Jayatilleke (1980), p. 128.

behavior and propels them forward to achieve goals or fulfill needs. However, motivation is an internal state that compels individuals to take action, push themselves in a particular direction, and engage in specific activities. According to Buddhist teachings, there are four primary reasons for motivation: willingness to sustain life - *jīvita-kāmā*, willingness to remain immortal - *amata-kāmā*, willingness to enjoy pleasure and ease - *sukha-kāmā*, willingness to reject suffering - *dukkhappatikkūla-kāmā*. In the context of education, motivation plays a crucial role in guiding and maintaining students' determination. Everyone indeed experiences the eight worldly conditions - namely, gain and loss, fame and disgrace, praise and blame, joy and sorrow - in daily life. Although Buddhism emphasizes the importance of remaining equanimous in the face of these conditions, ordinary individuals are still susceptible to strong negative influences. In such situations, motivation serves as a valuable and supportive tool in stabilizing the mind toward a particular goal.

The Buddha frequently employed motivation to stabilize his students and guide them toward their ultimate goal. The story of the novice Cullapanthaka serves as a remarkable example. The Buddha utilized kind and encouraging words along with an activity as motivational tools. Later, after attaining liberation, *Cullapanthaka Thera* recalled how he was motivated by the Buddha: "The Blessed One came there, touched my head, and took hold of my arm, and led me to the monastery."¹⁸ This verse illustrates the Buddha's loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and affectionate guidance as powerful motivational tools that helped stabilize the novice Cullapanthaka, ultimately leading him to his final goal. Not only did the Buddha employ gentle and pleasing words as motivational tools, but he also occasionally used stern words when necessary. The *Bhaddāli Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* exemplifies this approach: "Bhaddāli, your transgression has been overcome as one who is foolish, ignorant, and unskillful..."¹⁹ Additionally, the Buddha employed various motivational strategies, such as instituting prohibitions and disciplinary rules, granting positions of responsibility, offering praise and recognition, imposing appropriate reprimands, using righteous skillful means, demonstrating miraculous powers, providing direct advice, and employing similes and metaphors.

The occasions of appreciation for disciples such as Puṇṇa Thera, Ānanda Thera, Sāriputta Thera, Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā, and Kassapa Thera, as recorded in the discourses *Puṇṇovāda Sutta*, *Sekha Sutta*, *Pavāraṇa Sutta*, *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta*, *Cullavedalla Sutta*, and *Candūpama Sutta*, serve as examples of the motivation practiced by the Buddha to develop his disciples and students. Sometimes, the Buddha has used even gimmicks, but righteously, in order to protect the disciple's stability and ensure the achievement of

¹⁸ Theragāthā 559: "Bhagavā tattha āgacchi sīsaṃ mayhaṃ parāmasi/ Bāhāya maṃ gahetvāna, saṅghārāmaṃ pavesayi."

¹⁹ MN 65. "Taggha tvam, Bhaddāli, accayo accagamā yathābālaṃ yathāmūlhaṃ yathāakusalaṃ."

their goal. The story of Nanda Thera falls under this type of motivation. The distinctive feature of these motivational techniques employed by the Buddha as a teacher is that all of them were successful, and the students subjected to the Buddha's motivation also attained their final goal. In motivating students such as Uruvelā Kassapa, Queen Khemā, Maṭṭhakuṇḍalī, and Aṅgulimāla, *iddhi* (miraculous powers) were performed. The uniqueness of Buddhist motivation strategies lies in the selection of the most relevant motivational tool that best corresponds to the psychological background of the student. Identifying the psychological state of an individual and motivating them accordingly is beautifully exemplified in each story related to the motivation found within the Buddhist dispensation. Thus, it is evident that motivation is an essential aspect of education, particularly in addressing the unique challenges that arise due to the diversity of students. In modern teaching and learning, incorporating Buddhist motivational principles can foster stable determination in students. By aligning motivation with the four Buddhist aspects - sustaining life, seeking immortality, enjoying pleasure, and rejecting suffering - educators can effectively guide students toward their goals. The Buddha's use of both pleasant and occasionally stern words, along with various strategies such as prohibitions, appreciation, punishment, and *upāya* (skillful means), showcases a versatile approach to motivation. Recognizing and addressing students' psychological backgrounds with tailored motivational tools can enhance the effectiveness of education, mirroring the success observed in the Buddha's teachings.

VI. CONCLUSION

The concept of mindfulness, deeply rooted in Buddhist teachings, offers a practical and effective approach to addressing resistant thoughts among students. By fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation, mindfulness enables students to recognize and mitigate harmful mental patterns, thereby promoting a healthier and more productive learning environment. The integration of mindfulness practices into the educational curriculum, particularly in Sri Lanka, can help students manage stress, enhance cognitive performance, and develop emotional resilience. The Buddhist teachings on *sīla* (morality) and *samādhi* (concentration) further reinforce the importance of cultivating positive mental habits to counteract resistant thoughts. Through the gradual development of mindfulness, students can not only overcome cognitive barriers but also cultivate virtues that lead to personal growth and academic success. This study highlights the necessity of systematically implementing mindfulness-based interventions in educational settings to foster a more inclusive, compassionate, and focused student body, ultimately contributing to both individual well-being and societal harmony.

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BUDDHIST MORAL GUIDANCE FOR SELF-CENTERED CHILDREN: CULTIVATING COMPASSION THROUGH MINDFULNESS EDUCATION (CASE STUDY: VIETNAM)

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Abstract:

This research paper explores the potential of Buddhist moral guidance, particularly the cultivation of compassion through mindfulness education, as a means of addressing self-centered tendencies in children. Drawing from the principles of Buddhist philosophy and empirical studies on the benefits of mindfulness and self-compassion, the paper discusses how these approaches can be effectively integrated into educational settings to foster a more altruistic and empathetic mindset among young learners. The paper delves into the underlying mechanisms of compassion development, the role of mindfulness in regulating emotions and promoting prosocial behaviors, and the practical implications for implementing such programs in diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords: *Mindfulness education, Buddhist moral guidance, compassion development, self-centeredness, gen Z education, Vietnamese cultural context.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Raising children in a competitive and individualistic society can be a daunting challenge for parents. Often, children develop a self-centered mindset that prioritizes their own needs and desires over the well-being of others. However, the principles of Buddhist philosophy offer a path towards cultivating compassion and mindfulness in children, which can help mitigate

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this tendency towards self-centeredness.¹ This paper explores how mindfulness education rooted in Buddhist teachings can guide self-centered children (Gen Z) in Vietnam towards a more altruistic and empathetic worldview.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness and self-compassion for individuals of all ages.² Central to this approach is the idea that mindfulness can be cultivated through practice, and that it can lead to greater emotional regulation, problem-solving abilities, and concern for others³. For adolescents, mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to foster socioemotional strengths and help navigate the unique challenges of that stage of life⁴. Similarly, mindful parenting has been linked to improved parent-child relationships and more effective family-based prevention programs.

The literature suggests that the development of self-compassion and compassion for others can be a powerful antidote to the self-centeredness that often arises in children. By incorporating Buddhist principles of non-judgment, common humanity, and kindness into mindfulness education, children can learn to view themselves and their experiences with greater acceptance and care.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mindfulness-based curricula have been developed and implemented in various educational settings to help adolescents develop socioemotional skills and cope with the unique challenges of that stage of life. Cultivating mindfulness, which involves present-moment awareness and acceptance, can help young people better regulate their emotions, improve their focus and attention, and foster compassion towards themselves and others. One such program, “Learning to BREATHE,” has shown promise in helping adolescents build these important capacities.⁵ The development of mindful parenting practices has also been linked to positive outcomes for children and families. Mindful parenting involves cultivating qualities like attentive listening, emotional awareness, and non-judgmental acceptance in one’s interactions with children. This approach has been found to improve the quality of parent-child relationships, particularly during the transition to adolescence, and has been integrated into family-based prevention programs.

Furthermore, research on the role of compassion in child development suggests that it can serve as a powerful antidote to self-centeredness. Mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to enhance self-compassion and compassion for others, which in turn can promote prosocial behaviors, emotional regulation, and overall well-being in children.⁶ Additionally, studies have explored the role of mindfulness and self-compassion in addressing self-

¹ Biggers et al. (2020): 2274 – 2282.

² Hope, Koestner and Milyavskaya (2014): 579; Neff (2003): 85.

³ Malachowski (2015): 61 - 67.

⁴ Broderick and Frank (2014): 31 - 44.

⁵ Broderick and Frank (2014): 44.

⁶ Weis, Ray and Cohen (2020): 8.

centered tendencies in individuals. Mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to enhance self-regulation, reduce stress and anxiety, and promote more prosocial behaviors. The cultivation of self-compassion has been linked to greater empathy and concern for the well-being of others.

Mindfulness-based treatments have also been shown to benefit adolescents by helping them reduce stress and develop better self-regulation skills. The nonjudgmental awareness cultivated through mindfulness is theorized to facilitate self-regulatory processes and coping, especially during times of stress. Furthermore, the literature suggests that the development of self-compassion and compassion for others can be a powerful antidote to self-centeredness in children. By incorporating Buddhist principles of non-judgment, common humanity, and kindness into mindfulness education, children can learn to view themselves and their experiences with greater acceptance and care. Buddhist philosophy offers a framework for understanding the root causes of self-centeredness and guides how to overcome it. At the core of Buddhist teachings is the idea of interconnectedness - the recognition that all beings are fundamentally linked and that individual suffering is inherently tied to the suffering of others. This perspective stands in contrast to the individualistic worldview that often dominates modern society, where personal achievement and self-interest are frequently prioritized.

Research has shown that self-compassion, a key tenet of Buddhist thought, can play a crucial role in helping children and adolescents develop a more balanced and empathetic outlook. Self-compassion involves treating oneself with kindness, recognizing one's common humanity, and maintaining a mindful awareness of one's experiences. Studies have demonstrated that self-compassion is associated with a range of positive outcomes, including improved goal-setting and well-being among university students⁷. Furthermore, self-compassion has been found to be inversely related to depression and anxiety and positively related to greater life satisfaction and wisdom.⁸

Beyond the individual benefits, self-compassion also appears to foster greater concern for others. Compassion, defined as "a distinct affective experience whose primary function is to facilitate cooperation and protection of the weak and those who suffer," has been linked to increased prosocial behaviors and reduced aggression.

To explore the potential of mindfulness education in cultivating compassion among self-centered children, this paper will draw on a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. The sources selected provide insights into the relationship between self-compassion, compassion, and mindfulness, as well as their applications in educational and clinical settings.⁹ Self-compassion, as described by Kristin Neff, is a multifaceted construct that involves three key elements: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Self-kindness

⁷ Hope, Koestner and Milyavskaya (2014): 579.

⁸ Crary (2013): 75.

⁹ Neff (2003): 85.

refers to treating oneself with care and understanding, rather than harsh self-criticism. Common humanity involves recognizing that imperfection and struggle are a shared aspect of the human experience, rather than feeling isolated in one's difficulties. Mindfulness, in this context, means holding one's present-moment experience in a balanced perspective, without exaggerating the dramatic narrative of one's suffering.¹⁰

Research suggests that the cultivation of these self-compassionate qualities can have far-reaching benefits for children and adolescents. For instance, self-compassion has been found to be a strong predictor of well-being, inversely related to depression and anxiety, and positively associated with greater life satisfaction, wisdom, and adaptive learning goals¹¹. The notion that mindfulness can be cultivated through meditation practice holds regardless of one's race, ethnicity, education level, or socioeconomic status. In the context of Vietnamese culture, Buddhist morality has had a profound influence on the lives of the people, serving as a vital cultural resource that has shaped the nation's history and continues to promote its values in the present day. As a way of spiritual and moral improvement, Buddhist morality offers a framework for cultivating the ideal modern Vietnamese individual, endowed with both spiritual and ethical merits¹².

The specificity of Buddhist morality within the Vietnamese cultural context is a crucial aspect to consider when exploring its potential for guiding self-centered children toward the development of compassion through mindfulness education. While the universal principles of Buddhist philosophy, such as the emphasis on mindfulness, can be applied across diverse communities, the nuances of how these teachings are interpreted and integrated within the unique cultural fabric of Vietnam must be examined. One of the central tenets of Buddhist philosophy is the belief that all sentient beings possess the inherent capacity for enlightenment or the realization of their true nature. This notion of the fundamental equality and interconnectedness of all life forms is a powerful foundation for cultivating compassion, as it challenges the self-centered perspective that often takes root in children. By instilling a sense of reverence for all existence and the understanding that our actions have consequences that extend beyond our individual selves, mindfulness education grounded in Buddhist moral guidance can help reshape the mindset of self-centered children.

In summary, the existing literature suggests that mindfulness education grounded in Buddhist principles of compassion and non-self-centeredness holds promise for addressing self-centered tendencies in children. By cultivating self-compassion and extending compassion to others, children can

¹⁰ Neff and McGehee (2009): 225.

¹¹ Neff (2003): 88.

¹² Phương, Đ. & Нижников, А. (2020): *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, p. 446, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200901.008> [Accessed 5 Nov. 2024].

develop a more balanced and empathetic worldview, moving away from the individualistic mindset that often characterizes self-centeredness. This study explores the potential of Buddhist moral guidance in cultivating compassion through mindfulness education, with a focus on the Vietnamese cultural context. By examining the nuances of how Buddhist teachings are interpreted and integrated within the unique fabric of Vietnamese society, this paper aims to provide insights into the effective implementation of mindfulness-based interventions to address the challenges of self-centered behavior in children.

2.1. Defining mindfulness and compassion

Mindfulness, a core tenet of Buddhist philosophy, is a state of present-moment awareness and acceptance. It involves paying attention to one's thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations without judgment or attempts to change them. Mindfulness has been associated with a range of psychological benefits, including reduced stress, increased emotional regulation, and improved well-being. Practicing mindfulness can help individuals cultivate a deeper appreciation for the present moment and a greater sense of inner calm and clarity, which in turn can foster more compassionate and empathetic relationships with others.

According to Buddhism, mindfulness as a cornerstone of the Buddha's teachings, is elaborated upon in several foundational suttas, underscoring its centrality to spiritual practice. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, found in both the *Majjhima Nikāya* (MN 10) and *Dīgha Nikāya* (DN 22), outlines the four foundations of mindfulness: contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), mind (*cittānupassanā*), and mental objects (*dhammānupassanā*). This sutta serves as the fundamental guide to mindfulness and meditation in early Buddhism. Building upon these teachings, the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (DN22) delves deeper into mindfulness, linking its practices to the Eightfold Path. Similarly, the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* from the *Samyutta Nikāya* (SN 46.3) highlights mindfulness as a critical element of the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), emphasizing its role as a vital tool for achieving liberation. These texts collectively illustrate the profound importance of mindfulness in the Buddhist path to awakening.

While *ātāpī* (ardent effort) and *sampajañña* (clear comprehension) are integral elements of the Buddha's teachings, frequently emphasized in connection with mindfulness practices. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*,¹³ these qualities are described as essential companions to mindfulness (*sati*), ensuring that one's practice is infused with diligence and discernment. *Ātāpī* signifies the ardent and sustained effort required to overcome unwholesome states and cultivate wholesome ones, highlighting the necessity of energetic commitment in mindfulness practice. *Sampajañña*, on the other hand, refers to the clear comprehension or awareness of actions, thoughts, and their underlying intentions, fostering insight into the nature of reality. Together, they form a triad with mindfulness, guiding practitioners toward deeper understanding and

¹³ *Majjhima Nikāya*, MN 10; *Dīgha Nikāya*, DN 22.

liberation. These qualities are further echoed in the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*,¹⁴ which stresses their application within the Eightfold Path, and in the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta*,¹⁵ where they contribute to the seven factors of enlightenment. These teachings underscore the inseparability of effort, awareness, and mindfulness on the path to awakening.

Compassion, another key concept in Buddhist teachings, is the empathetic concern for the suffering of others coupled with a desire to alleviate that suffering. Compassion involves three key elements: self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, and mindful awareness. Self-kindness refers to treating oneself with warmth and understanding, rather than harsh self-criticism¹⁶. A sense of common humanity involves recognizing that all people experience difficulties and that one's struggles are part of the human experience. Mindful awareness enables individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions with objectivity, rather than becoming overwhelmed by them.¹⁷

Mindfulness, as described by Kristin Neff, involves three key elements: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindful awareness. Self-kindness refers to treating oneself with care and understanding, rather than harsh self-criticism. Common humanity involves recognizing that imperfection and struggle are a shared aspect of the human experience, rather than feeling isolated in one's difficulties. Mindful awareness enables individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions with objectivity, rather than becoming overwhelmed by them. Compassion, another key concept in Buddhist teachings, is the empathetic concern for the suffering of others coupled with a desire to alleviate that suffering. Compassion involves these same three elements: self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, and mindful awareness.

The development of self-compassion and compassion for others can be a powerful antidote to the self-centeredness that often arises in children. By incorporating Buddhist principles of non-judgment, common humanity, and kindness into mindfulness education, children can learn to view themselves and their experiences with greater acceptance and care. Compassion, defined as "a distinct affective experience whose primary function is to facilitate cooperation and protection of the weak and those who suffer," has been linked to increased prosocial behaviors and reduced aggression. This cultivation of compassion can also foster a sense of interconnectedness, where children recognize that their well-being is inherently linked to the well-being of others. Through mindfulness practices that cultivate present-moment awareness, self-kindness, and an understanding of shared humanity, children can develop a more balanced and empathetic worldview that transcends individual self-interest.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Dīgha Nikāya*, DN 22.

¹⁵ *Samyutta Nikāya*, SN 46. 3.

¹⁶ Neff (2003): 90.

¹⁷ Foroughi et al. (2020): 80 – 91.

¹⁸ Duncan, L. G., Coatsworth, J. D. & Greenberg, M. T. (2009): *A model of mindful parent-*

2.2. Buddhist moral guidance for self-centered children tracing from Pāli Nikāya

The fundamental teachings of the Buddha, found in the *Pāli Nikāya*, form the roots of Buddhist moral guidance. A key principle emphasized in these teachings is the importance of mindfulness, which enables the cultivation of self-awareness and compassion.

Buddhist philosophy views mindfulness as more than just attention or concentration. It involves a deep, non-judgmental observation of one's thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations, aiming to develop a clear understanding of the nature of experience.¹⁹ This practice of mindful awareness is seen as a powerful tool for overcoming the egoistic tendencies that contribute to self-centered behavior in children.

The Four Immeasurables (*Brahmavihāras*) – loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), empathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) – form a central component of the Buddha's teachings, as extensively discussed in several foundational suttas within the *Pāli Nikāyas*. These qualities are repeatedly emphasized in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya* (MN), *Āṅguttara Nikāya* (AN), and *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN) as essential mental states that lead to ethical conduct, mental purification, and spiritual progress. The *Tevijja Sutta* (DN 13), for instance, highlights the practice of the *Brahmavihāras* as a path to union with the Brahmā realms, while the *Metta Sutta* (AN 8.1) illustrates how radiating loving-kindness results in profound benefits for practitioners, such as peaceful sleep and freedom from fear. Similarly, the *Karuṇā Sutta* (SN 46. 54) emphasizes the importance of compassion in overcoming suffering, and the *Muditā Sutta* (SN 46. 57) underscores empathetic joy as a means to counter jealousy and envy. Equanimity, detailed in the *Upekkhā Sutta* (SN 46. 53), is presented as a state of balanced awareness, vital for achieving liberation. Together, these teachings demonstrate how the *Brahmavihāras* serve as both a meditative practice and an ethical framework, fostering harmony within oneself and others while guiding practitioners toward the ultimate goal of awakening.

The four immeasurables - loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity - are key teachings in the *Nikāya Suttas*. These qualities are considered essential for developing a truly selfless and altruistic mindset that transcends self-centeredness. The *Suttas* also emphasize the importance of cultivating the four *brahmaviharas*²⁰ (or divine abodes): *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita*, and *upekkha*²¹, which are seen as foundational for the development of compassion and the transcendence of self-centeredness. By incorporating these principles into mindfulness-based interventions for children, educators can help foster a more

ing: *Implications for parent-child relationships and prevention research*. Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, **12** (3), pp. 255 - 270. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-009-0046-3> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2024].

¹⁹ MacBeth and Gumley (2012).

²⁰ Pali term: the 4 abodes of Brahma.

²¹ The Pali terms mean loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity.

empathetic and prosocial orientation, moving them beyond the confines of self-interest.

Mindfulness practices, such as focused attention meditation, open monitoring, and loving-kindness meditation, can teach children to observe their thoughts, feelings, and impulses with greater clarity and non-judgment. This can, in turn, foster the development of self-compassion, as children learn to accept themselves with kindness and understanding. By cultivating self-compassion, children can then extend this compassionate attitude towards others, developing a more empathetic and altruistic perspective.

The potential benefits of these mindfulness practices include: (1) Mindfulness Practice; (2) Potential Benefits; (3) Focused Attention Meditation; (4) Improved concentration, and self-regulation; (5) Open Monitoring; (6) Enhanced self-awareness, emotional regulation; (7) Loving-Kindness Meditation; (8) Increased compassion for self and others.

By incorporating these mindfulness-based practices and the principles of Buddhist moral guidance into educational settings, educators can help children develop a more balanced, empathetic, and prosocial worldview. This approach can counteract the concerning trends of self-centeredness and narcissism observed among Gen Z children, fostering a greater sense of interconnectedness and concern for the well-being of all.

2.3. Gen-Z children and the increasing self-centered trends

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the rise of self-centered behavior among children, particularly those belonging to Generation Z. A study conducted by the American Psychological Association found that younger generations, including Gen Z, tend to exhibit higher levels of narcissism and entitlement compared to previous generations²². This trend is often attributed to the increased influence of social media, which can foster a culture of individualism, instant gratification, and a preoccupation with one's own image and status.

Research has also suggested that the current generation of children, shaped by the rapid technological advancements and societal changes of the 21st century, may face unique challenges in developing empathy and a sense of social responsibility. The prevalence of smartphones and social media has been linked to an increase in depression, anxiety, and a diminished ability to engage in meaningful interpersonal relationships.²³

Furthermore, the "CIA" parenting style²⁴ adopted by many Gen Z parents,

²² Neff (2003): 99 - 100.

²³ Cain (2018): 6862

²⁴ The "CIA" parenting style refers to a modern approach characterized by Control, Involvement, and Accountability, often observed in Generation Z parents. This style emphasizes high parental oversight, particularly through technology, where parents closely monitor their children's activities via social media, GPS tracking, and digital communication. While involvement in a child's life fosters emotional security and strong parent-child bonds, excessive control may

which involves the use of technology to closely monitor their children's lives, may have contributed to an overreliance on external validation and a reduced sense of autonomy and self-regulation among these children²⁵. Given these concerning trends, the need for effective interventions that can foster compassion and counter the growing self-centeredness in children has become increasingly urgent. Mindfulness-based programs grounded in Buddhist moral guidance offer a promising approach to address this challenge. By drawing upon the principles of Buddhist philosophy, such as the emphasis on mindfulness, compassion, and the interconnectedness of all beings, educators can develop holistic interventions that cultivate empathy and counter the growing trend of self-centeredness among children²⁶.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. Potential of Buddhist moral guidance in cultivating compassion through mindfulness education

The principles of Buddhist philosophy, particularly the emphasis on mindfulness and the cultivation of compassion, offer a compelling framework for addressing the challenges of self-centered behavior in children. Numerous studies have highlighted the potential of mindfulness-based interventions in enhancing empathy, prosocial behavior, and emotional regulation among children and adolescents.²⁷

A meta-analysis of the association between self-compassion and psychopathology found that higher levels of self-compassion are linked to decreased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as increased levels of well-being and achievement motivation. Furthermore, research has shown that self-compassion training can lead to improvements in emotional regulation, social connection, and overall psychological health among children and adolescents. Continued research in this area has further demonstrated the potential for self-compassion to foster greater prosocial behavior, empathy, and concern for the wellbeing of others, suggesting its important role in cultivating compassion and countering self-centered tendencies in youth.

lead to dependence, reduced autonomy, and increased anxiety among children. Research suggests that authoritative parenting, which balances warmth and discipline, may be more effective than highly controlling approaches like the "CIA" style in promoting self-regulation and resilience. Thus, while "CIA" parenting can offer security and structure, it requires a careful balance to avoid overprotectiveness and encourage children's independence.

²⁵ Schroth (2019): 5 - 8.

²⁶ Talmon (2019): 9 - 11.

²⁷ Silke, C., Brady, B., Boylan, C. & Dolan, P. (2018): *Factors influencing the development of empathy and prosocial behavior among adolescents: A systematic review*. Children and Youth Services Review, **94**, pp. 421 -436. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.07.027> [Accessed 11 Nov. 2024].

The principles of Buddhist philosophy, particularly the emphasis on mindfulness and the cultivation of compassion, offer a compelling framework for addressing the challenges of self-centered behavior in children. Numerous studies have highlighted the potential of mindfulness-based interventions in enhancing empathy, prosocial behavior, and emotional regulation among children and adolescents.

Mindfulness-based practices and compassion training can help children overcome self-centered tendencies and develop a more empathetic, other-oriented perspective. By cultivating a sense of interconnectedness and concern for all beings, these programs can equip children to navigate the complexities of modern life with care, consideration, and a commitment to the greater good.

The challenges posed by self-centered behavior in children are particularly acute in the context of the modern, technology-driven world. While the rapid pace of technological and societal change has brought about many benefits, it has also contributed to the rise of self-centered tendencies among the younger generations, as observed in the case of Generation Z in Vietnam. To address these concerning trends, we must explore effective interventions and educational approaches that can cultivate compassion and counter the growing self-centeredness in children. One promising avenue is the integration of Buddhist moral guidance and mindfulness-based practices into educational curricula, which can leverage the cultural relevance and spiritual resonance of these teachings within the Vietnamese context.

In the Buddhist *Nikāya Suttas*, the Buddha provides extensive guidance on how to cultivate compassion and mindfulness, which can serve as a foundation for addressing self-centeredness in children. The *Suttas* emphasize the development of the “four immeasurables” - loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity - as a means of transcending egoism and cultivating a selfless, altruistic mindset. By incorporating these principles into mindfulness-based interventions, educators can help children expand their circle of concern beyond the self and develop a more balanced, empathetic worldview. The four immeasurables offer a powerful framework for nurturing compassion and overcoming self-centered tendencies in children. Through practices like loving-kindness meditation, children can learn to direct warm, compassionate thoughts towards themselves, their loved ones, and ultimately all beings, fostering a sense of interconnectedness and concern for the wellbeing of others. This expansion of empathy and altruism is crucial for preparing children to navigate the complexities of the modern world with care and consideration for those around them.²⁸

Mindfulness Practices and Their Potential Benefits: Focused Attention Meditation: Improved concentration and self-regulation Open Monitoring²⁹: Enhanced self-awareness and emotional regulation Loving-Kindness

²⁸ Lawlor (2016): 65 – 80.

²⁹ MacBeth and Gumley (2012)

Meditation: Increased compassion, empathy, and prosocial behavior³⁰

Furthermore, the integration of mindfulness-based practices into educational curricula can provide children with valuable tools for emotional regulation, self-awareness, and stress management. Studies have shown that mindfulness training can lead to improvements in attention, cognitive flexibility, and impulse control, all of which are crucial for countering self-centered tendencies and cultivating a more prosocial, compassionate outlook. By teaching children to observe their thoughts and emotions with non-judgment and to respond with greater self-regulation, mindfulness education can empower them to break free from the grip of self-absorption and develop a more balanced, empathetic perspective.

3.1.2. Buddhist moral guidance and mindfulness education in Vietnam

The integration of Buddhist moral guidance and mindfulness education within the Vietnamese educational system presents a promising approach to addressing the challenges of self-centered behavior in children. By drawing upon the principles of Buddhist philosophy, such as the emphasis on mindfulness, compassion, and the interconnectedness of all beings, educators can develop holistic interventions that cultivate empathy and counter the growing trend of self-centeredness among Vietnamese youth. The cultural relevance and spiritual resonance of these teachings can make them particularly impactful in the Vietnamese context, where traditional values and spiritual practices remain deeply influential.

As noted,³¹ Buddhist morality has had a profound influence on the cultural and social fabric of Vietnam, shaping the values and ethical norms of the Vietnamese people. The emphasis on spiritual and moral development, rather than the rigid application of divine commandments, aligns well with the holistic and transformative goals of mindfulness-based interventions. This approach, grounded in the core teachings of Buddhism, provides a powerful framework for cultivating compassion and countering the growing trend of self-centeredness among Vietnamese youth. By integrating these principles into educational programs, educators can help children develop a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that values the interconnectedness of all beings.

Vietnam's Generation Z, as discussed in, has demonstrated a strong preference for preserving and integrating traditional cultural elements, including those inspired by Buddhist teachings, into various aspects of their lives. This openness and receptiveness to incorporating local values and spiritual traditions can create a favorable environment for the successful implementation of mindfulness-based programs grounded in Buddhist moral

³⁰ Döllinger, S., Wienrich, C. & Latoschik, M. E., (2021): *Challenges of interaction paradigms in VR-based training applications: A systematic review*. *Frontiers in Virtual Reality*, 2, p. 644683. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/frvir.2021.644683> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2025].

³¹ Phương, Đa and Нижников (2020): 89.

guidance. Moreover, the younger generation's inclination to embrace and blend traditional and modern elements in their lives suggests a unique opportunity for educational initiatives that seamlessly integrate Buddhist principles of compassion and mindfulness into contemporary teaching methods. By leveraging this cultural receptiveness, schools and educators can develop innovative mindfulness-based curricula that resonate with Vietnamese youth and effectively address the challenges of self-centeredness.

The combination of Buddhist moral guidance and mindfulness-based practices holds great promise for addressing the growing challenge of self-centeredness in children. By fostering the development of compassion, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness, these interventions can equip children with the emotional and spiritual resources needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world with care, consideration, and a commitment to the greater good.

Mindfulness practices, such as focused attention meditation, open monitoring, and loving-kindness meditation, can teach children to observe their thoughts, feelings, and impulses with greater clarity and non-judgment. This can, in turn, foster the development of self-compassion, as children learn to treat themselves with kindness and understanding rather than harsh self-criticism. Through these practices, children can develop a more balanced perspective, recognizing their shared humanity and extending compassion not only to themselves but to others as well. By cultivating self-compassion, children become better equipped to approach the modern world with care and consideration for those around them (key mindfulness practices; potential benefits; focused attention meditation; improved concentration and self-regulation; open monitoring; enhanced self-awareness and emotional regulation; loving-kindness meditation; increased compassion, empathy, and prosocial behavior).

In conclusion, the integration of Buddhist moral guidance and mindfulness-based practices within the Vietnamese educational system presents a promising approach to cultivating compassion and addressing the challenges of self-centeredness in children. By leveraging the cultural relevance and spiritual resonance of these teachings, educators can develop holistic interventions that empower

3.1.3. Cultivating compassion through mindfulness education: A holistic approach

The modern world with care and consideration for those around it. Mindfulness Practices and Their Potential Benefits: (1) Focused Attention Meditation: Improved concentration and self-regulation Open Monitoring; (2) Enhanced self-awareness and emotional regulation; (3) Loving-Kindness Meditation: Increased compassion, empathy, and prosocial behavior³². The

³² Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz and Walach, 2014, cited from <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603>

integration of mindfulness-based practices into educational curricula can provide children with valuable tools for emotional regulation, self-awareness, and stress management³³.

In conclusion, the combination of Buddhist moral guidance and mindfulness-based practices holds great promise for addressing the growing challenge of self-centeredness in children. By fostering the development of compassion, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness, these interventions can equip children with the emotional and spiritual resources needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world with care, consideration, and a commitment to the greater good³⁴. Buddhist Moral Guidance and Mindfulness Education in Vietnam The integration of Buddhist moral guidance and mindfulness education within the Vietnamese educational system presents a promising approach to addressing the challenges of self-centered behavior in children. By drawing upon the principles of Buddhist philosophy, such as the emphasis on mindfulness, compassion, and the interconnectedness of all beings, educators can develop holistic interventions that cultivate empathy and counter the growing trend of self-centeredness among Vietnamese youth. The cultural relevance and spiritual resonance of these teachings can make them particularly impactful in the Vietnamese context, where traditional values and spiritual practices remain deeply influential.

As noted in, Buddhist morality has had a profound influence on the cultural and social fabric of Vietnam³⁵ and the younger generation has demonstrated a strong inclination to preserve and integrate these traditional elements into their lives. This receptiveness to blending old and new presents a unique opportunity for educational initiatives that seamlessly incorporate Buddhist principles of compassion and mindfulness into contemporary teaching methods.

Mindfulness-based practices, such as focused attention meditation, open monitoring, and loving-kindness meditation, have been shown to have a range of benefits for children, including improved attention, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior. By teaching children to observe their thoughts and emotions with non-judgment and to respond with greater self-awareness and self-control, mindfulness education can empower them to break free from the grip of self-absorption and develop a more balanced, empathetic perspective. Integrating Buddhist moral teachings and mindfulness-based practices into educational programs can be a powerful way to address the rising trend of self-centeredness among Vietnamese youth. By drawing upon the rich traditions and principles of Buddhism, such as the cultivation of the “four immeasurables” (loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity), educators can develop holistic interventions that nurture empathy, compassion, and a sense of interconnectedness within children. The cultural and spiritual relevance of these teachings can make them particularly impactful in the Vietnamese context, where traditional values and Buddhist practices remain

³³ Lawlor (2016): 70 - 75.

³⁴ MacBeth and Gumley (2012).

³⁵ Biggers et al. (2020): 2274.

deeply embedded in the social fabric. Through mindfulness-based activities and lessons on the four immeasurables, children can learn to expand their circle of concern beyond the self, developing a more balanced and empathetic worldview that is crucial for navigating the complexities of the modern world.

3.1.4. Fostering equanimity and emotional regulation

The Buddhist concept of equanimity, or a balanced and impartial perspective, is also highly relevant to the development of self-regulation and emotional intelligence in children. Cultivating equanimity can help children respond to the inevitable ups and downs of life with greater composure, allowing them to navigate challenges without becoming overwhelmed by intense emotions or lashing out in self-centered ways. By practicing mindfulness and compassion-based exercises, children can learn to observe their thoughts and feelings with a sense of distance and acceptance, rather than getting caught up in or overly identified with them. This increased emotional regulation, in turn, can support children's overall well-being, academic success, and ability to form positive relationships with peers and adults. Furthermore, it can foster a greater sense of empathy, cooperation, and social cohesion among children, preparing them to navigate the complexities of the modern world with compassion and care for others. By incorporating mindfulness and compassion-based practices into educational curricula, schools can play a crucial role in helping children develop a more balanced and empathetic worldview. Mindfulness education can teach children to be more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and to approach themselves and others with greater kindness and understanding. Specific mindfulness-based interventions that have shown promise in this context include focused attention meditation, open monitoring, and loving-kindness meditation. These practices can help children cultivate greater awareness, self-compassion, and concern for others. Additionally, mindfulness-based social and emotional learning programs have demonstrated positive impacts on children's emotional regulation, empathy, and prosocial behaviors. By integrating these evidence-based mindfulness and compassion-focused interventions into educational curricula, schools can play a pivotal role in nurturing children's ethical and social development.

Furthermore, the implementation of mindfulness-based programs can be complemented by the integration of Buddhist moral teachings, including the cultivation of the "four immeasurables" - loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. This holistic approach, combining mindfulness practices and Buddhist principles, can help children develop a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that transcends self-centeredness and promotes the well-being of the broader community. In addition, this integrated approach can also help children cultivate a sense of interconnectedness and responsibility towards the larger community, fostering a more sustainable and compassionate society. By nurturing these qualities from a young age, children can grow into adults who are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world and contribute positively to their communities. This increased emotional regulation, in turn, can support children's overall well-being, academic success,

and ability to form positive relationships with peers and adults. Furthermore, it can foster a greater sense of empathy, cooperation, and social cohesion among children, preparing them to navigate the complexities of the modern world with compassion and care for others.

By incorporating mindfulness and compassion-based practices into educational curricula, schools can play a crucial role in helping children develop a more balanced and empathetic worldview. Mindfulness education can teach children to be more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and to approach themselves and others with greater kindness and understanding³⁶. Specific mindfulness-based interventions that have shown promise in this context include focused attention meditation, open monitoring, and loving-kindness meditation. These practices can help children cultivate greater awareness, self-compassion, and concern for others. Additionally, mindfulness-based social and emotional learning programs have demonstrated positive impacts on children's emotional regulation, empathy, and prosocial behaviors³⁷. By integrating these evidence-based mindfulness and compassion-focused interventions into educational curricula, schools can play a pivotal role in nurturing children's ethical and social development. Furthermore, the implementation of mindfulness-based programs can be complemented by the integration of Buddhist moral teachings, including the cultivation of the "four immeasurables" - loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. This holistic approach, combining mindfulness practices and Buddhist principles, can help children develop a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that transcends self-centeredness and promotes the well-being of the broader community. In addition, this integrated approach can also help children cultivate a sense of interconnectedness and responsibility towards the larger community, fostering a more sustainable and compassionate society. By nurturing these qualities from a young age, children can grow into adults who are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world and contribute positively to their communities.

By incorporating mindfulness and compassion-based practices into educational curricula, schools can play a crucial role in helping children develop a more balanced and empathetic worldview. Mindfulness education can teach children to be more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and to approach themselves and others with greater kindness and understanding. Specific mindfulness-based interventions that have shown promise in this context include focused attention meditation, open monitoring, and loving-kindness meditation. These practices can help children cultivate greater awareness, self-compassion, and concern for others. Additionally, mindfulness-based social and emotional learning programs have demonstrated positive impacts on children's emotional regulation, empathy, and prosocial behaviors. By integrating these evidence-based mindfulness and compassion-focused

³⁶ Hope, Koestner and Milyavskaya (2014): 579.

³⁷ Crary (2013): 74 - 88.

interventions into educational curricula, schools can play a pivotal role in nurturing children's ethical and social development.

Furthermore, the implementation of mindfulness-based programs can be complemented by the integration of Buddhist moral teachings, including the cultivation of the "four immeasurables" - loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. This holistic approach, combining mindfulness practices and Buddhist principles, can help children develop a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that transcends self-centeredness and promotes the well-being of the broader community. In addition, this integrated approach can also help children cultivate a sense of interconnectedness and responsibility towards the larger community, fostering a more sustainable and compassionate society. By nurturing these qualities from a young age, children can grow into adults who are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world and contribute positively to their communities.

3.2. Discussion

The integration of Buddhist moral guidance and mindfulness education within the Vietnamese educational system presents a promising approach to addressing the challenges of self-centered behavior in children. By drawing on the cultural and spiritual resonance of Buddhist teachings, as well as the benefits of mindfulness and compassion practices, educators can develop holistic programs that nurture children's emotional, social, and ethical development.

The key elements of this approach include: (1) Cultivating the "four immeasurables" of loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity through mindfulness-based practices; (2) Fostering a sense of interconnectedness and responsibility towards the larger community; (3) Developing children's emotional regulation, empathy, and prosocial behaviors through mindfulness-based social and emotional learning programs. Integrating Buddhist moral teachings and mindfulness-based interventions into educational curricula can be an effective way to address self-centeredness in children.

Addressing the rise of self-centeredness among children is a pressing challenge that requires a multi-faceted approach. By drawing on the wisdom and moral guidance of Buddhist teachings and integrating them with evidence-based mindfulness and compassion-focused interventions, educators in Vietnam can play a crucial role in fostering a new generation of children who are more attuned to the needs of others and more committed to the common good. This approach can help cultivate a sense of empathy, responsibility, and concern for the well-being of the larger community, which is essential for the development of a more compassionate and sustainable society.

The key elements of this integrated approach include: Element Description
Cultivation of the "Four Immeasurables" Developing loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity through mindfulness-based practices
Mindfulness Education Instructing children to observe their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors with greater awareness and non-judgment

Compassion Training Fostering the ability to empathize with others and take actions to alleviate their suffering Emotional Regulation Cultivating equanimity and the capacity to respond to life's fluctuations with composure and balance. By integrating these elements into educational curricula, schools can help children cultivate a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that goes beyond self-centeredness. This holistic approach can contribute to the development of a more compassionate, resilient, and socially engaged younger generation in Vietnam. Addressing the rise of self-centeredness among children is a complex challenge that requires a multifaceted approach. By drawing on the wisdom and moral guidance of Buddhist teachings and integrating them with evidence-based mindfulness and compassion-focused interventions, educators in Vietnam can play a crucial role in fostering a new generation of children who are more attuned to the needs of others and more committed to the common good. This approach can help cultivate a sense of empathy, responsibility, and concern for the well-being of the larger community, which is essential for the development of a more compassionate and sustainable society.

IV. CONCLUSION

The rise of self-centeredness among children in Vietnam is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. By drawing on the wisdom and moral guidance of Buddhist teachings, and integrating them with evidence-based mindfulness and compassion-focused interventions, educators in Vietnam can play a crucial role in fostering a new generation of children who are more attuned to the needs of others and more committed to the common good. This approach can help cultivate a sense of empathy, responsibility, and concern for the well-being of the larger community, which is essential for the development of a more compassionate and sustainable society. Through the cultivation of the "Four Immeasurables" - loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity - along with mindfulness education, compassion training, and emotional regulation, schools can help children develop a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that transcends the narrow confines of self-centeredness.

By implementing this holistic approach, educators can contribute to the creation of a more compassionate, resilient, and socially engaged younger generation in Vietnam. By integrating these elements into educational curricula, schools can help children develop a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that transcends the narrow confines of self-centeredness. This holistic approach can contribute to the creation of a more compassionate, resilient, and socially engaged younger generation in Vietnam. Addressing the rise of self-centeredness among children is a pressing challenge that requires a multifaceted approach. By drawing upon the wisdom and moral guidance of Buddhist teachings and integrating them with evidence-based mindfulness and compassion-focused interventions, educators in Vietnam can play a crucial role in fostering a new generation of children who are more attuned to the needs of others and more committed to the common good. This approach can help cultivate a sense of empathy, responsibility, and concern for the well-

being of the larger community, which is essential for the development of a more compassionate and sustainable society.

By integrating these elements into educational curricula, schools can help children develop a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that transcends the narrow confines of self-centeredness. This holistic approach can contribute to the creation of a more compassionate, resilient, and socially engaged younger generation in Vietnam. The rise of self-centeredness among children in Vietnam is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. By drawing on the wisdom and moral guidance of Buddhist teachings, and integrating them with evidence-based mindfulness and compassion-focused interventions, educators in Vietnam can play a crucial role in fostering a new generation of children who are more attuned to the needs of others and more committed to the common good. This approach can help cultivate a sense of empathy, responsibility, and concern for the well-being of the larger community, which is essential for the development of a more compassionate and sustainable society. Through the cultivation of the “Four Immeasurables” - loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity - along with mindfulness education, compassion training, and emotional regulation, schools can help children develop a more expansive, other-oriented perspective that transcends the narrow confines of self-centeredness. By implementing this holistic approach, educators can contribute to the creation of a more compassionate, resilient, and socially engaged younger generation in Vietnam.

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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MINDFUL EDUCATION FOR HUMAN MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Nguyen Huu Tri*

Abstract:

This study aims to explore the relationship between mindful education and human moral development, with a focus on the improvement of mindfulness practices in encouraging ethical actions and emotional management skills. By combining theoretical frameworks and empirical research, we investigate how mindfulness cultivates self-awareness, empathy, and compassion key components of moral development. We also discuss the application of mindfulness within the contemporary educational context, whereby evidence is provided on the enhancement of learners' moral reasoning and decision-making abilities. Further, we explore how mindful education helps people develop social responsibility and engage in prosocial activities. In reaction to the literature and cases presented in this study, suggestions are made enabling an understanding of how beneficial mindfulness may be towards the development of moral behavior, and why it should be incorporated within the education system. Finally, we argue that mindful education is not only beneficial for personal health, but it can also help build a more ethical and sustainable society.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, mindful education, human moral development, ethical behavior, etc.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, mindful education has emerged as a powerful tool in the modern world, gaining popularity for its holistic approach to learning, self-awareness, and emotional regulation.¹ In essence, mindfulness is concerned with cultivating awareness of the present moment without judgment or

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¹ McDonough & Lemon (2018): 4f; and Sheinman & Russo-Netzer (2021): 609.

distraction. As Anālayo explains, mindfulness does not strictly refer to memory but rather to an “awareness in the here and now” and the act of remembering to remain in that state of awareness.² It involves attentive awareness of the characteristics and changing nature of the body (*kāya*), feeling (*vedanā*), mental states (*citta*), and dhammas (*dhamma*) – fundamental patterns in the stream of experience.³

In Buddhist philosophy, mindfulness (P. *sati*, S. *smṛti*) is one of the foundational elements of the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*), a key teaching of the Buddha that outlines the path toward liberation from suffering (*dukkha*). Specifically, mindfulness is grouped under the “mental discipline” section of the path, alongside right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) and right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*). Its importance is described as “the guarantor of correct practice of all the other path factors.”⁴ The function of mindfulness extends beyond mere awareness of the present moment; it encompasses active, sustained attention to the ethical implications of one’s thoughts, speech, and actions.⁵ Therefore, the Buddha often compared mindfulness to a gatekeeper (*dovāriko*),⁶ always aware and vigilant, ensuring that defilements do not intrude. By cultivating mindfulness, individuals can observe their mental and emotional states, recognize unwholesome tendencies like greed, hatred, and delusion, and redirect their behavior in alignment with Buddhist moral principles.

Buddhist ethical principles, especially those outlined in the Five Precepts (*pañca sīla*),⁷ provide a comprehensive moral framework designed to foster harmony, non-harm, wisdom, and compassion.⁸ In educational contexts, where students are at formative stages of character development, mindful education can serve as a conduit for these ethical values, encouraging students to act with greater kindness, integrity, and responsibility.⁹ Integrating mindfulness in education promotes a greater sense of self-awareness and empathy, which naturally aligns with the Buddhist focus on reducing suffering and promoting collective well-being.

A core aspect of mindful education is to create “emotionally intelligent learners” who are not only capable of excelling academically but also adept at navigating their emotions and social interactions with ethical sensitivity.

² Anālayo (2006), p. 47.

³ Harvey (2013), p. 83.

⁴ Bodhi (2011), p. 26.

⁵ Thich Nhat Tu (2022), p. 540f.

⁶ *Samyutta Nikāya* (2000), p. 1252 (S. IV. 195).

⁷ The Five Precepts – refraining from killing (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*), taking the not giving (*adinnādānā veramaṇī*), sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācāra veramaṇī*), false speech (*musāvādā veramaṇī*), and intoxication (*surā-meraya-majja pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī*) – serve as practical guidelines for ethical living.

⁸ Verhaeghen & Aikman (2020), p. 243.

⁹ Rechtschaffen (2014), p. 227.

Similarly, Buddhist ethics stresses the importance of fostering inner wisdom and compassion as key elements of a meaningful life.¹⁰ By promoting a thoughtful and deliberate mindset in both thinking and behavior, mindful education encourages learners to internalize principles such as non-harm, generosity, truthfulness, etc.¹¹ As a result, the educational environment becomes not just a place for intellectual development but also for moral and ethical growth.

By clarifying the link between mindfulness and human ethical development, we will assess the potential of mindful education to foster moral awareness, encourage responsible decision-making, and promote social harmony. In doing so, it contributes to the growing discussion about the role of contemplative activities in supporting moral and ethical development, particularly in contemporary educational contexts. Accordingly, the outline of this study is divided into three parts:

- (1) Mindfulness as a Foundation for Ethical Conduct, (2) The Psychological Mechanism of Mindfulness in Human Moral Development, and (3) Integrating Mindfulness in Education: Current Opportunities and Challenges.

II. METHODS

To conduct this study, we used a qualitative research methodology to explore the link between mindful education and human moral development from a Buddhist perspective. A comprehensive literature review is conducted, drawing on classical Buddhist texts, contemporary academic articles, and existing mindful education programs. Additionally, the study examines various mindfulness curricula implemented in contemporary educational contexts, evaluating their effectiveness in fostering moral awareness and ethical behavior among students. By synthesizing findings from scholarly research and practical applications, the study aims to illuminate the transformative potential of mindful education in promoting ethical development. This methodological approach provides a robust framework for understanding how integrating mindfulness practices in education can cultivate moral values aligned with Buddhist teachings, thus contributing to a holistic view of moral education.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Mindfulness as a foundation for ethical conduct

Mindfulness serves as a powerful foundation for ethical conduct by fostering self-awareness, enhancing moral decision-making,¹² and promoting compassionate interactions.¹³ Fundamentally, mindfulness involves the practice of “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally,”¹⁴ which allows individuals to become more

¹⁰ Greenberg & Mitra (2015), p. 76.

¹¹ Hyland (2011), p. 182.

¹² Ruedy & Schweitzer (2010): 73ff; and Small & Lew (2021): 103ff.

¹³ Tirch (2010), p. 113.

¹⁴ Kabat-Zinn (1994), p. 4.

aware of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This heightened self-awareness plays a crucial role in moral decision-making, as it helps individuals recognize their internal biases, motivations, and the consequences of their actions. In many suttas, the Buddha warned about the dangers of not being mindful: “If he left the mind faculty unrestrained, bad unwholesome states of longing and dejection might invade him”.¹⁵

When individuals live mindfully, they can assess situations more objectively, leading to more informed and ethical choices (Fig.1). As Gethin described, “how one speaks, acts and thinks at any time is dependent on one’s vision of oneself and the world”.¹⁶ For instance, in a dilemma where one must choose between personal gain and the well-being of others, mindfulness allows for a deeper consideration of the broader implications of one’s actions, encouraging individuals to prioritize ethical considerations over immediate desires.

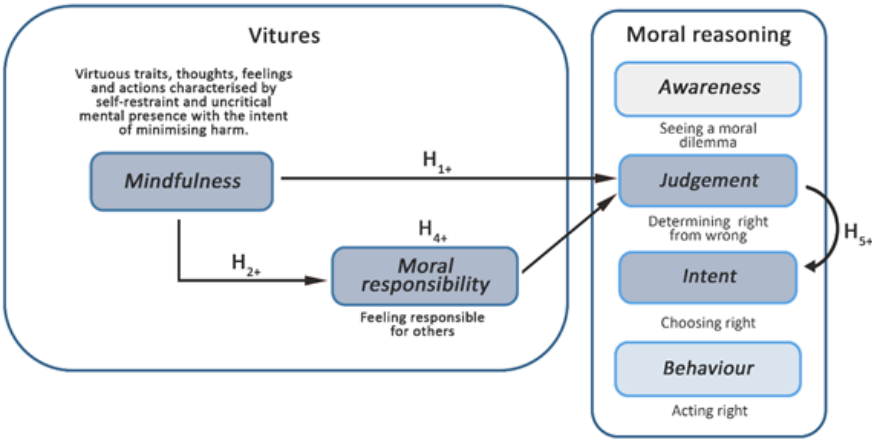


Fig. 1: A framework for research situated within the conceptual understanding of virtues and moral reasoning¹⁷

Moreover, mindfulness acts as a tool for self-restraint by helping individuals control their impulses and desires.¹⁸ In a world full of distractions and temptations, the ability to pause and reflect before acting can significantly reduce harmful actions. By fostering a greater understanding of the fleeting nature of desires, mindfulness encourages individuals to engage in thoughtful reflection rather than impulsive reactions. This self-control is vital in ethical conduct, as it allows individuals to resist harmful behaviors and make choices that align with their values.¹⁹ For example, in scenarios where individuals

¹⁵ Majjhima Nikāya (1995): 274 (M. I. 181); and Saṃyutta Nikāya (2000): 1193f (S. IV. 104); Aṅguttara Nikāya (2012), p. 427 (A. II. 40).
¹⁶ Gethin (2001), p. 221.
¹⁷ quoted in Small & Lew (2021), p. 108.
¹⁸ Frieze et al. (2017), p. 431.
¹⁹ Maheshwari (2020), p. 415.

may be tempted to act out of anger or frustration, mindfulness helps them recognize these emotions without immediately reacting, promoting responses that are more thoughtful and constructive. This process not only prevents harm to oneself and others but also contributes to the cultivation of a more compassionate and ethical society.

Furthermore, mindfulness nurtures compassion and empathy, which are essential components of ethical conduct.²⁰ When individuals practice mindfulness, they develop a deeper understanding of their interconnectedness with others and the world around them. This awareness fosters a sense of compassion, prompting individuals to act in ways that consider the feelings and needs of others. Empathy, cultivated through mindfulness (Fig. 2), enables individuals to recognize and resonate with the experiences of those around them, leading to more compassionate interactions.²¹ By practicing mindfulness, individuals can move beyond their self-centered perspectives, embracing a more inclusive view that prioritizes the well-being of all beings. This shift in perspective not only enhances personal relationships but also contributes to the development of a more just and compassionate society.

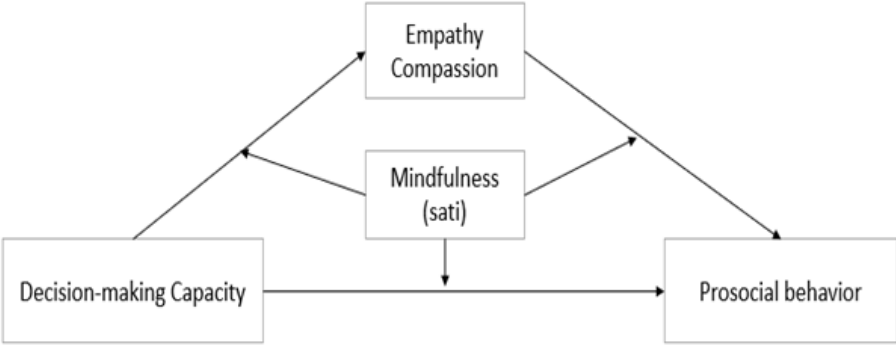


Fig. 2: Hypothesis concerning the essential role of mindfulness in influencing empathy, compassion, and prosocial behavior

The ethical impact of mindfulness extends to interactions with others and the environment as well.²² Individuals who frequently practice mindfulness are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors,²³ as their heightened awareness allows them to perceive the needs of others and respond accordingly. Whether through acts of kindness, active listening, or support for those in distress, mindfulness encourages individuals to act ethically in social interactions. As individuals become more aware of their consumption patterns and their impact on the planet,²⁴ they are more likely to adopt sustainable practices and advocate for environmental protection. This awareness leads to choices that

²⁰ see Kirby (2016), p. 146ff.
²¹ Fulton (2018), p. 51 - 4.
²² See Thiermann & Sheate (2022), p. 2997ff.
²³ Chen & Jordan (2020), p. 19.
²⁴ Li et al. (2021), p. 759 - 63.

benefit not only individuals but also the broader community and ecosystem.

In summary, mindfulness serves as a foundational pillar for ethical conduct by enhancing self-awareness, promoting self-restraint, and cultivating compassion and empathy. Through the practice of mindfulness, individuals can make more informed moral decisions, restrain harmful desires, and engage in compassionate interactions with others and the environment. By embedding mindfulness into daily life, individuals contribute to the development of a more ethical and compassionate society, fostering a culture that values awareness, empathy, and responsible action. This holistic approach to ethical conduct not only enriches individual lives but also promotes the collective well-being of humanity and the planet.

3.2. The psychological mechanism of mindfulness in human moral development

Mindful education is increasingly recognized as a vital tool for fostering human moral development, operating primarily through the regulation of emotions such as anger, greed, and delusion.²⁵ These emotional states often cloud judgment and hinder ethical decision-making, leading individuals to act impulsively or unethically. When individuals practice mindfulness, they cultivate a heightened state of awareness that allows them to observe their emotional responses without immediately reacting to them. This detachment enables them to process their emotions intellectually, facilitating a more deliberate approach to ethical dilemmas. As researchers write, “Mindfulness promotes self-awareness, and greater self-awareness should curtail unethical behavior.”²⁶ For example, when faced with anger, a mindful individual can acknowledge their feelings, understand the triggers behind that anger, and choose a response that aligns with their moral values rather than succumbing to an impulsive reaction. This capacity to regulate emotions is essential for moral development, as it allows individuals to respond thoughtfully rather than reactively, leading to more ethical behavior. To better understand this section, we can turn to the perspective of a notable practitioner, Thich Nhat Hanh. He advises that:

During the moment one is consulting, resolving, and dealing with whatever arises, a calm heart and self-control are necessary if one is to obtain good results... If we are not in control of ourselves but instead let our impatience or anger interfere, then our work is no longer of any value. Mindfulness is the miracle by which we master and restore ourselves.²⁷

Neurocognitive research has provided valuable insights into the mechanisms through which mindfulness fosters ethical behavior. Studies indicate that mindfulness practice enhances mental clarity and emotional

²⁵ Purser & Milillo (2015), p. 18.

²⁶ Ruedy & Schweitzer (2010), p. 76.

²⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh (1991), p. 14.

regulation,²⁸ which are crucial for moral reasoning. Neuroscientific findings reveal that mindfulness can alter brain activity in fields related to self-regulation and empathy, such as the prefrontal cortex and the anterior insula.²⁹ Specifically, in an experimental study by Mursaleen et al. (2024), a randomized controlled trial involving 150 individuals compared a mindfulness meditation group with a control group engaged in relaxation activities over eight weeks. The results showed significant improvements in emotional regulation for the mindfulness group, mediated by better attention control and self-awareness, along with observable neural adjustments, including increased activation of the prefrontal cortex and reduced amygdala reactivity.³⁰

In addition, case studies and examples from Buddhist literature further illustrate the transformative effects of mindfulness on ethical behavior. One compelling example is the story of Aṅgulimāla, a notorious bandit who committed numerous violent acts. According to the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta*,³¹ Aṅgulimāla encountered the Buddha during one of his violent pursuits. Instead of reacting with fear or anger, the Buddha remained calm and compassionate, ultimately inspiring Aṅgulimāla to reflect on his actions and change his ways. Through mindful contemplation, Aṅgulimāla recognized the suffering he had caused and sought redemption. This story exemplifies how mindfulness can lead to profound ethical transformation, allowing individuals to move from a state of delusion and harm to one of clarity and compassion. By practicing mindfulness, individuals can emulate Aṅgulimāla's journey, learning to recognize the harmful consequences of their actions and developing a commitment to ethical behavior.

Another poignant illustration from Buddhist literature is the concept of the Four Noble Truths (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*), which emphasizes the importance of understanding suffering and the path to its cessation through ethical living. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, mindfulness plays a central role in this process: The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path are also present. When we are mindful, our thinking is Right Thinking, our speech is Right Speech, and so on. Right Mindfulness is the energy that brings us back to the present moment. To cultivate mindfulness in ourselves is to cultivate the Buddha within.³²

By cultivating a mindful awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and actions, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings. This realization fosters compassion, encouraging individuals to act in ways that alleviate suffering rather than contribute to it. For example, when individuals become mindful of their tendencies toward greed or selfishness, they are more likely to recognize the negative impact of these behaviors on their relationships and community. This recognition can lead to a commitment

²⁸ e.g., Sevinc & Lazar (2019), p. 268ff; and Tang et al. (2015), p. 218ff.

²⁹ for review, see Allen et al. (2012), p. 15601ff; and Laneri et al. (2017), p. 4034ff.

³⁰ Mursaleen et al. (2024), p. 309f.

³¹ See *Majjhima Nikāya* (1995), p. 710 - 17 (M. II. 98 - 105).

³² Thich Nhat Hanh (1999), p. 64.

to more ethical choices, such as practicing generosity and kindness.

In conclusion, the psychological mechanisms underlying mindful education play a crucial role in human moral development. By enhancing emotional regulation and mental clarity, mindfulness equips individuals with the tools needed to navigate ethical dilemmas thoughtfully. Insights from neurocognitive research elucidate how mindfulness practice positively influences brain function, leading to improved self-regulation and empathy. Moreover, examples from Buddhist literature serve as powerful reminders of mindfulness's potential to transform individuals' ethical behavior profoundly. Through the lens of mindfulness, individuals can learn to recognize and manage their emotions, consider the perspectives of others, and ultimately engage in more ethical decision-making. As mindful education continues to gain traction, its impact on human moral development promises to be both profound and lasting, paving the way for a more compassionate and ethical society.

3.3. Integrating mindfulness in education: Current opportunities and challenges

Amidst the growing pressures faced by both students and educators, mindfulness training offers transformative benefits that extend beyond personal well-being. For students, engaging in mindfulness practices fosters enhanced focus, emotional regulation, and resilience against stressors crucial skills in today's fast-paced educational landscape.³³ The cognitive and psychological development of adolescents is profoundly influenced by societal trends, including the pervasive use of technology, as noted in the exploration of contemporary culture's impact on youth. This underscores the necessity of incorporating mindfulness within educational settings to mitigate these negative influences. Similarly, educators benefit from mindfulness through reduced stress and increased compassion, as evidenced by the Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers program, which equips teachers with tools for emotional balance and self-care.³⁴ Therefore, integrating mindfulness practices into educational curricula not only promotes mental health but also cultivates a positive learning environment that supports both students and educators in thriving.

A noteworthy example of a successful mindfulness education program can be observed in the educational reforms undertaken by the Huaiyin Institute of Technology in China, which highlights the importance of integrating emotional regulation and psychological factors into educational practices. In the context of innovation and entrepreneurship education, the school incorporated mindfulness techniques to enhance students' emotional self-efficacy and encourage positive emotional expression, building a foundation for their innovative capabilities.³⁵ This comprehensive approach not only addresses the psychological aspects of learning but also fosters an ecosystem

³³ cf. Singha (2024), p. 102ff.

³⁴ cf. Nolden (2019), p. 43ff.

³⁵ Zhao & Huang (2022), p. A46.

that encourages students to actively engage in their educational experiences. Additionally, the transformative potential of digital platforms in promoting mindfulness practices is exemplified by Tulane University's initiative in the United States, which integrates social media as a tool for intercultural competency development during study abroad programs. This interconnected strategy allows for continuous reflection and mentorship, reinforcing the role of mindfulness in enhancing students' cognitive and emotional engagement within diverse cultural contexts.³⁶

Also in the United States, many universities have recognized the value of mindfulness and integrated it into their curricula. Top universities such as Harvard University, Stanford University, and the University of California have introduced mindfulness programs or courses aimed at improving students' mental health, emotional regulation, and cognitive focus. Harvard University, for example, offers mindfulness courses through its Center for Wellness and Health Promotion (CWHP), and most recently the establishment of the Thich Nhat Hanh Center for Mindfulness in Public Health (April 24, 2023). Stanford's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) includes mindfulness in its research and education on compassion cultivation.³⁷ These programs are designed not only for stress reduction but also to improve emotional intelligence, empathy, and ethical behavior, making mindfulness an increasingly essential component in education for future leaders and professionals.

The incorporation of mindfulness training into educational settings not only enhances individual student well-being but also fosters a more emotionally intelligent society. As research indicates, implementing mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) can markedly improve academic achievement and emotional regulation among students, even in diverse socio-economic contexts.³⁸ This is crucial as the cultivation of emotional resilience can mitigate the effects of stress and anxiety prevalent in contemporary society, contributing to healthier interpersonal relationships and a more compassionate community. Furthermore, recognizing the role of emotions in news consumption, as discussed in Sivek (2018), underlines the importance of equipping students with the tools to navigate an increasingly complex media landscape. Mindfulness practices can empower individuals to engage critically with emotional responses elicited by news, ultimately fostering a more discerning and empathetic citizenry.³⁹ Thus, the societal impact of mindfulness training extends beyond the classroom, promoting a holistic approach to emotional well-being and informed engagement in a rapidly evolving world.

However, integrating mindfulness programs into various organizational contexts, particularly workplaces and educational settings, presents a unique

³⁶ Gibson & Capdeville (2019), p. 15 - 8.

³⁷ See Goldin & Jazaieri (2017), p. 237ff.

³⁸ Bakosh et al. (2018), p. 35.

³⁹ See Sivek (2018), p. 123ff.

set of challenges that must be meticulously addressed. One significant hurdle is the need for cultural sensitivity; mindfulness practices traditionally rooted in specific cultural contexts may not resonate equally across diverse employee or student populations. As highlighted by Fasalojo (2023), there is a pressing need to modify mindfulness approaches to incorporate diverse cultural themes, especially for BIPOC (black, Indigenous, and person of color) individuals, to foster a truly inclusive environment.⁴⁰ Another important challenge, besides cultural resistance, pointed out by many scholars, is that logistical constraints and concerns about the appropriate age of learners can reduce the effectiveness of implementing mindfulness activities in schools.⁴¹ Therefore, developing appropriate mindfulness programs requires educators to have a keen awareness of these complexities to ensure the programs are beneficial across age groups and demographic spectrums.

The growing body of research underscores the necessity of integrating mindfulness training into contemporary educational frameworks. By fostering emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and enhanced attention spans, mindfulness offers significant benefits that can transform not only individual student experiences but also broader classroom dynamics. The practice assists students in cultivating a deeper awareness of their thoughts and emotions, which can lead to reduced stress levels and improved academic performance. As educational institutions increasingly confront challenges such as rising mental health issues and disruptive behaviors, adopting mindfulness-based interventions emerges as a proactive strategy. This integration not only prepares students for academic success but also equips them with essential life skills, including empathy and resilience. Ultimately, incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum is not simply an enhancement of existing practices but a necessary evolution toward a more holistic approach to student well-being and development in an increasingly complex society.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aims to highlight the significant impact of mindful education on human moral development through the lens of Buddhist teachings, revealing the complex relationship between mental awareness and ethical behavior. By fostering a deeper awareness of thoughts, intentions, and actions, mindfulness equips practitioners to approach ethical dilemmas with greater discernment and integrity.

The findings illustrate that mindfulness is more than just a meditative technique; it is a transformative practice that influences daily life and ethical decision-making. In various Buddhist traditions, mindfulness nurtures virtues like compassion, non-violence, and honesty, aligning seamlessly with fundamental ethical teachings. Furthermore, the study indicates that contemporary mindfulness training programs have considerable potential to enhance moral behavior, bridging the gap between theoretical ethics and lived

⁴⁰ See. Fasalojo (2023), p. 107ff.

⁴¹ Whitworth & Currie (2019), p. 36f; and Ibrahim (2024), p. 22.

experience.

Nevertheless, challenges and criticisms persist, particularly regarding the risks of misinterpretation or superficial engagement with mindfulness practices. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure that mindfulness contributes positively to moral development. Future research should explore the long-term effects of mindfulness on ethical behavior and investigate its applications in diverse cultural and religious contexts.

Ultimately, this study reaffirms the integral role of mindfulness in the ethical framework of Buddhism, providing valuable insights into how mindfulness practices can enrich ethical living. The continued integration of mindfulness into ethical training presents an exciting opportunity to deepen the understanding and application of Buddhist ethics, fostering both individual moral growth and contributing to the broader ethical dialogue within Buddhism.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION: UNLOCKING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI) FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

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Abstract:

Mindfulness and emotional intelligence (EI) are vital for academic success, emotional well-being, and positive relationships in education. Mindfulness fosters present-moment awareness and acceptance, while EI involves recognizing, understanding, and managing emotions effectively. Despite evidence linking mindfulness to enhanced EI, research on its application in educational settings remains limited.

This study explores how mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) can enhance EI, resilience, and emotional regulation among educators and students. Using a qualitative, interpretive approach, it examines theoretical foundations, instructional strategies, and participant experiences. MBIs have been shown to improve cognitive skills, reduce stress, and enhance motivation, contributing to emotional and academic growth. As global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation increase, education must shift from a purely analytical approach to a holistic, sustainable, and compassionate model. Encouraging mindfulness in education fosters self-awareness, empathy, and a deeper sense of interconnectedness. This transformation is crucial for developing responsible, emotionally intelligent individuals who positively impact society and the environment.

By integrating mindfulness into educational practices, this study highlights its potential to cultivate emotional intelligence, resilience, and well-being, ultimately shaping a more compassionate and socially responsible future generation.

Keywords: *mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), education, resilience, compassionate leadership, holistic learning sustainable development.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The capacity to engage in proactive ways, to successfully deal with strong negative emotions, and to develop a positive and constructive balance is an instrument that supports each person's learning and self-esteem. By applying the skills to deal with challenges while developing a calm, assertive, and positive demeanor, the capacity to manage social and intrapersonal challenges increases. The processes involving the identification, understanding, development, utilization, and regulation of one's emotions involve the development of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) is characterized as understanding and recognizing patterns in body sensations following emotional arousal and the corresponding specific emotional responses. Additionally, mindfulness is sustaining a nonjudgmental moment-by-moment awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and immediate surroundings. Both constructs relate to self-awareness and awareness of external cues, impacting how individuals perceive or manage emotions. Recent research highlights the positive impact of mindfulness on EI, with mindfulness interventions showing potential for improving EI skills. Mindfulness is often regarded as a solution to address EI skill deficits, as higher EI individuals tend to be more mindful. However, the relationship between the two constructs remains underexplored.

There has been growing interest in the potential to develop the skill of mindfulness in educational settings. Nevertheless, there has been limited research on the development of emotional intelligence (EI) through a mindfulness approach in educational settings. In order to promote academic achievement, emotional health, and interpersonal harmony, EI and mindfulness have drawn more and more attention as crucial educational tools. This paper aims to explore how cultivating a mindfulness approach develops the EI of educators and learners, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the interplay between mindfulness and EI in enhancing teacher-student relationships. It starts with a review of pertinent research, looking at the theoretical underpinnings and empirical data that connect EI and mindfulness to greater mental health, social skills, and academic achievement. It will be a framework that provides a transformative approach to get the future generation ready for sustainable living and compassionate leadership. This plan provides a way to realize that goal by developing well-rounded people who are able to deal with the challenges of life in a resilient and compassionate manner.

The study uses a qualitative approach to examine how mindfulness exercises and the growth of emotional intelligence in learning environments are related. Using an interpretive methodology, the study examines how mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs)¹ enhance emotional intelligence (EI) by closely

¹ The term "mindfulness-based therapies" (MBIs) describes a class of therapeutic approaches that incorporate mindfulness exercises, especially mindfulness meditation, into the therapeutic process in an effort to enhance psychological health. The two most well-known and extensively studied MBIs are Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and

examining participant experiences, educational methods, and theoretical frameworks. In order to establish a theoretical framework, a thorough analysis of a set of current literature is carried out. Rigorously reviewed books, journal articles, and case studies centered on emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and educational interventions are examples of sources.

Researching Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in educational contexts for the potential positive outcomes associated with well-being and academic success, including reduced stress levels, emotional regulation, greater resilience, enhanced motivation, attention, and memory. As part of a broader focus on emotional regulation and well-being in schools, this research seeks to understand the relationship between mindfulness, measured through changes in mindfulness, changes in emotion regulation skills, and changes in EI as potential mediators of mindfulness on emotional, academic, and social outcomes. However, further investigation into the relationship between the outcomes and the impact of potential mediators of the impact of mindfulness in a formal learning context is required to understand ways in which educational consequences are being translated into definitions of mindfulness.

II. BACKGROUND OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MINDFULNESS

2.1. Exploring the concept of mindfulness

Mindfulness is now understood to be the English equivalent of the Buddhist psychology concept of “*sati*”. Thus, it is necessary to explore the meanings and significance of the Buddhist term *sati* in order to properly understand the Buddhist interpretation of mindfulness. As a noun, the Pali word *sati* is equivalent to *smṛti* in Sanskrit and is etymologically related to the verb *sarati*, meaning “remembers”. It is not memory in the sense of ideas and pictures from the past, but rather clear, direct, wordless knowing of what is and what is not, of what is correct and what is incorrect, of what we are doing and how we should go about it. It would be more accurate to use the phrase “keeping in mind” or even “bringing to mind.”

A key component of Buddhist practice, mindfulness (*sati*) is often covered in the *Pāli Canon*. It stands for the level of consciousness and focus required for spiritual growth. The Buddha defines mindfulness in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as *sati*, or awareness, as the primary and straightforward route to *Nibbāna*, or

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn created Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), a systematic program that uses mindfulness meditation to improve mental and physical health outcomes, at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in the late 1970s. (Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990))

In order to help people with depression avoid relapsing, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), which was created in the 1990s by Drs. Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, mixes mindfulness meditation with cognitive therapy approaches. (Segal, Z. V., Williams, M., & Teasdale, J. D. (2002) Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>

spiritual emancipation. It highlights mindfulness as a life-changing technique that develops resilience, cleanses the mind, and gets rid of mental and physical pain.² The Four Establishments of Mindfulness – focused awareness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena – are the foundation of the practice and offer a methodical way to comprehend the world.³

In this *Sutta*, mindfulness is emphasized as the “direct path” (*ekāyana magga*) to enlightenment. It is a useful technique for perceiving the nature of reality without attachment or aversion. It cultivates awareness of the present moment and insight into suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), and non-self (*anattā*).

Apart from the well-known *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) and *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22), other suttas expand on the concept, illustrating its relevance and transformational potential. The discipline of sustaining consciousness and presence of mind, based on observation of the body, emotions, mind, and mental objects, is known as *sati*. Mindfulness is also portrayed as the ability to remember and maintain awareness of wholesome qualities. In the *Samyutta Nikāya*, for instance, mindfulness is likened to a gatekeeper: “Just as a gatekeeper in a king’s frontier fortress is wise, competent, and intelligent; one who keeps out strangers and admits acquaintances, for the protection of the inhabitants and for warding off outsiders – so too, mindfulness is the gatekeeper for the noble path.”⁴

Being mindful is a pre-symbolic state that is not constrained by reasoning. Despite this, it is easily approached and may be explained, as long as one keeps in mind that words are only indicators – like fingers pointing to the moon – and not the experience itself. The essence of mindfulness is beyond words and symbols. The concept of mindfulness is not limited by descriptive language, thus it might be expressed in a variety of ways, all of which would be as true.

Mindfulness is a subtle process that you are using at this very moment. The assertion that this phenomenon transcends verbal expression does not render it illusory; rather, it is the contrary. Mindfulness serves as the foundational reality from which verbal constructs emerge – subsequent linguistic expressions are merely dim reflections of this reality. Consequently, it is imperative to recognize that all subsequent discourse is metaphorical in nature. It is unlikely to achieve complete coherence. It shall invariably remain outside the realm of verbal reasoning. Nevertheless, it is accessible for experiential engagement.

A variety of profound traits that foster clarity and are present in day-

² Nāṇamoli & Bodhi, (1995), MN 10: 145.

³ The four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*):

- Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*).
- Contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*).
- Contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*).
- Contemplation of mental objects (*dhammānupassanā*).

⁴ Bodhi, (2000) *Samyutta Nikāya* 48. 1.

to-day living are included in mindfulness. It serves as a “mirror-thought,”⁵ reflecting experiences exactly as they are, free from subjectivity or distortion. Fundamentally, mindfulness is “non-judgmental,”⁶ enabling people to accept rather than criticize their thoughts and feelings. It acts as an “unbiased watchfulness,”⁷ encouraging composure by witnessing the course of events without prejudice or preference. “Nonconceptual awareness,”⁸ which goes beyond scholarly study to incorporate a direct, experiential connection with the present moment, is another characteristic of mindfulness. Its nature as “present-time awareness,”⁹ which centers attention on the present and releases the mind from the weight of regrets from the past and worries about the future, is intimately related to this. Last but not least, mindfulness promotes a greater appreciation of life’s fleeting beauty by highlighting an “awareness of change”¹⁰ and acknowledging the temporary character of all events. Because of these interrelated features, mindfulness is an effective strategy for resilience, emotional equilibrium, and overall well-being.

The rich heritage of mindfulness in Buddhist literature has influenced contemporary practices, including secular mindfulness programs. Practice or research related to mindfulness needs to have a clear understanding regarding what type of mindfulness is being employed. While modern adaptations often emphasize stress reduction and cognitive benefits, the early Buddhist conception frames mindfulness as a transformative practice aimed at ultimate liberation.

2.2. Defining Emotional Intelligence (EI)

The psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer introduced the first formal model of “Emotional Intelligence” (EI) in their 1990 paper of the same name. They defined emotional intelligence as “the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”¹¹, combining findings from developmental and social psychology with a growing body of research on mental abilities. The term and concept were first used by Salovey and Mayer,

⁵ *yathābhūtañāṇadassana* refers to seeing things as they truly are, insight into the true nature of things without distortion or bias.

⁶ *anupavādanañ’eva anupavādāpanaṇca* (*DhA* III.238) defines as ‘not scolding as well as not inciting others to grumbling.’

⁷ This is known as equanimity (*upekkhā*), the state of observing calmly and impartially, as one of the Four Brahmavihāras or virtues of the Brahma realm (*brahmaloka*).

⁸ *Asañkhatañāṇa*: Perception beyond concepts, often emphasized in understanding *Nibbāna*, which is unconditioned and unconditioned.

⁹ *Paccuppanna*: observe the present moment. *Paccuppannaṇca yo dhammaṃ tattha tattha vipassati* (Whatever phenomenon is present, he clearly sees right here, right there.) *M* I.307, 310; III.188; 190, 196

¹⁰ *anicca-saññā* (perception of impermanence) involves the realization that all things, events, and states are impermanent and subject to change.

¹¹ Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990): 189.

but it was psychologist and science journalist Daniel Goleman who popularised it with his 1995 book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. By incorporating qualities like drive, empathy, and social skills into the larger definition of emotional intelligence, Goleman broadened the term. His writings made emotional intelligence (EI) a household phrase by highlighting its significance in leadership, organizational behavior, and personal success. He defined it as “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”¹² His research highlighted the significance of EI for both professional and personal success, arguing that it frequently surpasses conventional measures of cognitive intelligence, like Intelligence Quotient (IQ), in assessing total life accomplishments and well-being.

In 1997, Mayer and Salovey updated their original definition of emotional intelligence in order to clarify and more precisely define the skills the construct includes. They wrote: “Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.”¹³

Mayer and Salovey warned against conflating behavioral preferences with intellect, stating that “although a trait such as extraversion may depend on social skill, or result in it, a trait is a behavioral preference rather than an ability. Knowing what another person feels, in contrast, is a mental ability.”¹⁴ Not only is emotional intelligence a novel and unique psychological variable, but it also satisfies the requirements for standard intelligence when viewed as a collection of mental skills.¹⁵

In recent years, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has received considerable attention from the academic community, particularly in the field of organizational behavior. EI is first described as the ability to perceive and understand emotions and the ability to use them as support for thoughts. A diverse range of abilities that help people manage the intricacies of emotions in both themselves and others are collectively referred to as EI. According to Tommasi (2023), EI comprises four fundamental skills such as the ability to recognize emotions in oneself and others, use emotions to improve thinking and cognitive processes, understand emotions and emotional knowledge in a variety of contexts, and effectively control emotions to promote psychological and emotional development.¹⁶ These interrelated skills highlight how EI is both a learned talent and a dynamic attribute, which are crucial for personal and interpersonal development.

¹² Daniel Goleman (1998): 317.

¹³ Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1997): 10.

¹⁴ Ibid.: 145.

¹⁵ See Carroll (1993); Fancher (1985).

¹⁶ Tommasi, M. (2023): 98 – 115.

Furthermore, by looking at how EI relates to other personal traits, a more effective and thorough description of the concept can be developed. According to Tommasi, EI interacts with more general cognitive and social dimensions and is closely related to factors including gender, personality traits, and fluid intelligence.¹⁷ While personality traits like agreeableness and extraversion have been positively linked to improved emotional awareness and control, research has shown that women may score higher on specific aspects of emotional intelligence, such as empathy. The ability to think abstractly and solve problems is another aspect of fluid intelligence that might affect how well a person processes emotional data and incorporates it into frameworks for making decisions.

Critics of emotional intelligence argue that these differences in definitions and strategies for assessment lead to varying results in the research. However, the advocates argue that such emotional and social skills brought into the broader concept of intelligence structure, make EI one of the essential elements which are missing in our picture of the human mind.

Studies from a wide range of disciplines have provided substantial evidence for the significance of EI, emphasizing its benefits in fostering success and well-being in the workplace, in education, and interpersonal interactions. EI has a major positive impact on mental health in education by helping students develop resilience, control their emotions, and handle stress. According to research, kids with greater EI are more adept at interacting socially with teachers and peers, which improves classroom engagement and fosters a supportive learning environment. Additionally, EI has been associated with superior academic results because emotionally intelligent students are more focused, collaborative, and have better conflict resolution skills—all of which are critical for academic success.¹⁸

In the workplace, EI includes effective leadership, teamwork, conflict-solving, and flexibility, particularly in stressful situations. According to studies, leaders with high EI are better at encouraging teamwork, managing stress in high-pressure situations, and inspiring and motivating their staff. Through fostering open communication, empathy, and trust among coworkers, emotional intelligence promotes teamwork. It is also essential for conflict resolution, allowing people to resolve conflicts amicably and preserve a positive work atmosphere. Additionally, EI fosters both individual and organizational performance by giving people the flexibility and agility they need to deal with stressful or quickly changing situations.

Furthermore, proponents of EI contend that it fills important gaps in conventional conceptions of intelligence. EI takes into consideration the social and emotional aspects of human functioning, in contrast to IQ, which focuses on cognitive ability. EI offers a more comprehensive framework for comprehending human behaviour by incorporating these sometimes

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See Petrides (2004): 227 – 293.

disregarded elements. Proponents contend that EI is a vital tool in education, workplace dynamics, and interpersonal interactions since it is necessary for tackling the complex social and emotional issues facing contemporary society.

III. THE INTERSECTION OF MINDFULNESS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are such wonderful ways to tackle real societal challenges that arise from our fast-paced lives. Researchers and educators believe that these practices can help build valuable skills and qualities often referred to as emotional intelligence and social competence. The study by Greenberg and Harris emphasizes the beneficial effects that mindfulness can have on kids' social and emotional growth. According to their research, fostering mindfulness in young people improves their emotional intelligence, which includes social competence, empathy, and emotional control. These attributes are crucial for the growth of well-adjusted, socially conscious people as well as for academic achievement. In order to promote students' emotional development and general well-being, the research acts as a call to action for teachers to include mindfulness-based practices in their lesson plans.¹⁹ Furthermore, a more thorough examination of how mindfulness exercises can affect teachers' emotional growth as well as their capacity to foster encouraging, supportive classroom environments was offered by another study examining the results of mindfulness-based programs created for educators by Jennings and her colleagues.²⁰

Numerous programs aimed at fostering these skills have been prompted by the pressing demand in Asian civilizations and the significance attributed to the development of these important soft skills. Social and emotional education has been incorporated into the curricula of several Asian educational systems, such as those in Japan, Singapore, and South Korea, as a result of the realization of its importance in fostering resilience, well-being, and psychological health in children and young people. To address the social and emotional needs of pupils, Japan, for example, has been increasing the number of social workers and counselors assigned to schools.²¹ To improve social and emotional learning, Singapore has also increased the number of social welfare officers in all of its schools.²² Social-emotional development has gained more attention in South Korea, where research shows that culturally appropriate methods are necessary to promote kids' social-emotional development.²³

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are increasingly being introduced in Sri Lankan schools as part of efforts to improve students' mental well-being and academic performance. Integrating mindfulness practices with Sri Lanka's cultural and religious traditions is a significant component of these practices.

¹⁹ Greenberg, M. T., & Harris, A. R. (2012): 161 - 166

²⁰ Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009), 79(1): 491 - 525

²¹ National Centre on Education and the Economy, (2022).

²² Ibid., (2022).

²³ Anne et al., (2022)

Mindfulness is taught in many Buddhist schools as a component of the larger Buddhist teaching system. Sunday sessions, often known as “Dhamma school,” frequently involve exercises like chanting and silent sitting. The majority of religious events are held at monasteries or temples on the Full Moon Poya Day,²⁴ particularly around holidays like Vesak, Poson, and Esala.²⁵ In addition to strengthening students’ relationships with their cultural heritage, these activities give them the skills they need to focus and find inner calm.

Even though these programs may not always result in appreciable gains in emotional intelligence, it is evident that they are quite successful at lowering stress. A comprehensive study that discovered a lack of ethnocultural studies and an uneven distribution of research on children’s social-emotional development across Asian countries indicates the need for more culturally relevant research. A lot of research involving children and teenagers looking at the impact of these programs often lacks strong methodologies, and while those in the experimental groups generally see better outcomes, predicting the success of these programs can sometimes be tricky or not very significant for many teaching strategies used. Positively, it appears that both genders are better at forecasting program performance, and it is widely held that cultural context is crucial to the viability of these programs since it influences the motivation of trainers, who in turn motivate participants in uplifting ways.

3.1. Mindfulness-based interventions in schools

3.1.1. Enhancing Self-awareness and Academic Success

The practice of mindfulness, or being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations, is one of the best strategies to increase your emotional intelligence (EI). It has been demonstrated that mindfulness improves academic achievement by increasing self-awareness.²⁶

A key element of EI is self-awareness, which is the capacity to identify and comprehend one’s feelings, ideas, and actions. Focused breathing, meditation,

²⁴ In Sri Lanka, Full Moon Poya Day is a monthly holiday of significant religious and cultural significance, especially for Theravāda Buddhists. These days are public holidays honouring important occasions in the Buddha’s life, Buddhist history, or the Sangha. In order to observe the day, devotees go to temples to meditate, hear speeches on the Dhamma, follow precepts, and perform merit-making tasks.

²⁵ Prominent Poya Days include Vesak Poya, which marks the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment, and Parinibbāna; Poson Poya, celebrating the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka; and Esala Poya, commemorating the Buddha’s first sermon and the start of the rainy retreat.

²⁶ In Buddhist teachings, self-awareness is not about identifying with a permanent “self” but understanding the impermanent, conditioned, and interdependent nature of phenomena, including the concept of “self.” Practices like mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) are designed to cultivate awareness of:

Body: Physical sensations and movements.

Mind: Thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

Actions: Ethical considerations and their impact.

and body scans are examples of mindfulness techniques that allow people to notice their inner states objectively. Students are better able to recognize emotions as they surface thanks to this increased awareness, which also helps them comprehend how these emotions affect their choices and behaviors.

Before an exam, for example, a student who practices mindfulness may experience anxiety. Mindfulness enables individuals to recognize the emotion as a normal reaction to stress rather than allowing it to consume them. Instead of letting their worry impair their concentration or performance, this awareness gives them the chance to deal with it healthily, maybe by practicing relaxation techniques or using constructive self-talk.

Furthermore, students greatly benefit from reflective thinking, which is an essential component of self-awareness and is improved by mindfulness. It motivates people to evaluate their educational experiences, pinpoint their areas of strength and growth, and expand their comprehension of both academic material and personal growth. Students who practice reflective thinking become more aware of their feelings, ideas, and behaviors, which improves their ability to solve problems and develop more efficient learning techniques. In addition to encouraging critical thinking and assisting students in drawing connections between new and existing knowledge, it also helps them feel more accountable for their education. Students who engage in reflective thinking are therefore more capable of overcoming obstacles, establishing worthwhile objectives, and succeeding academically.

For contemplative thought, the Pāli discourse recounts the Buddha's meeting with Bāhiya.²⁷ He is advised to see only what is seen, hear only what is heard, sense only what is sensed, and think only what is thought, without adding any judgments or interpretations.²⁸ The teachings of the Buddha emphasize the value of developing present-moment awareness. Practitioners can fully immerse themselves in the present moment by concentrating on what is directly experienced rather than projecting ideas about the past or future. By engaging with reality as it is, without the mental diversion and distortion that frequently occur when we attach to experiences, people can practice mindfulness or bare attention. The Buddha's lesson to Bāhiya is essentially a warning against mental expansion (*papañca*), which is the process by which the mind expands on basic sensory experiences to produce a complex network of ideas and feelings. One of the main causes of pain is this mental proliferation, and people can start to see the world in a more clear, balanced, and peaceful

²⁷ It highlights the many parallels among mindfulness techniques, especially those that promote bare-awareness, which is a legitimate *theoretical* definition of mindfulness that applies to all of its modalities.

Thanissaro (2012): 61 "there is no role for bare attention or bare awareness on the path." His stance seems to be predicated on the idea that naked consciousness is inherently an unconditioned kind of awareness;

²⁸ Ud 1.10, Thanissaro B. (1994): *ditṭhe ditṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati*

way by just letting each experience come and go without intervention.

Additionally, self-confidence and self-assessment are components of self-awareness. In this process, self-assessment is essential because it entails recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses and promotes a more profound awareness of oneself. Introspection, which involves thinking back on one's own prior experiences, emotions, and deeds, as well as asking for input from others, can help one realize this. Positive or negative, feedback provides an outside viewpoint that can be useful in pinpointing areas that require development. Introspection and feedback can be combined to help people understand themselves more accurately and comprehensively, which may increase their self-confidence. This confidence results from identifying one's strengths while also recognizing and improving on areas that need improvement. Therefore, self-awareness, self-assessment, and self-confidence are interrelated processes that play a major role in learning, emotional health, and personal development.

3.1.2. Improved social skills and relationship

It is commonly acknowledged that social skills are necessary for effective involvement in society. Emotional intelligence (EI), which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, is a crucial component of both personal and professional success. Effective communication, active listening, dispute resolution, and teamwork are all examples of social skills, which are a crucial part of emotional intelligence. These abilities help people establish rapport, negotiate a variety of social situations, and promote cooperative settings.²⁹ Both students and teachers may build trust, favorably influence others, and collaborate well in diverse teams by honing their relationship management abilities. The development of good relationship management abilities is based on these components, which help people establish trust, have a positive impact on others, and collaborate well in a variety of teams.

At first glance, it may seem unexpected that mindfulness might aid in the development of social skills. However, it naturally extends its transforming impact on personal well-being to interpersonal interactions. When someone is emotionally stable, intensely focused, and in balance with themselves, this equilibrium radiates outward and has a favorable impact on other people. As a result, mindfulness not only encourages social peace but also personal balance. People who practice mindfulness become more present, sympathetic, and non-judgmental, which fosters cooperative and understanding relationships. Therefore, mindfulness acts as a link between societal cohesiveness and individual well-being. Fundamental skills such as teamwork, negotiation, dispute resolution, active listening, and effective communication, each of these abilities is examined in depth below, emphasizing both their significance and the ways in which mindfulness promotes their growth.

i. Effective Communication

In order to ensure mutual comprehension, effective communication

²⁹ Goleman (1995): 316.

requires the flow of information in a clear and meaningful manner. Whether in families, businesses, or educational institutions, it is an essential component of wholesome interactions. The teachings in the Sāleyyaka Sutta serve as timeless principles for ethical communication. Truthful speech (*saccavādī*) fosters credibility; kind speech (*piyavādī*) nurtures relationships; and purposeful speech (*atthavādī*) enhances understanding and focus.³⁰ These elements contribute not only to personal development but also to harmonious and effective social interactions. It also allows teachers to cultivate inclusion, trust, and meaningful involvement while assisting students in becoming informed and morally sound adults. These methods produce compassionate members of society in addition to accomplished students.

A positive learning environment is built on trust, which can only be established via honest communication between peers, teachers, and students. By being honest in their remarks and candidly recognizing students' areas of strength and growth, teachers play a crucial role in promoting openness and respect for one another. In order to assist students become more self-aware and accountable, it is also important to support them in voicing their opinions and owning up to their mistakes without fear of criticism. Kind communication is equally vital since it fosters a secure, welcoming environment where everyone's opinions are valued. In order to create a supportive environment where students feel appreciated and inspired, teachers must actively oppose bullying and divisive behaviors while encouraging empathy and teamwork. By encouraging students to take pleasure in their efforts and accomplishments, positive reinforcement enhances this atmosphere even more. Effective use of class time is ensured by purposeful communication, which concentrates on providing clear, pertinent, and interesting content while reducing distractions. Additionally, teaching kids how to actively listen and promoting thoughtful participation in class discussions help them acquire critical life skills. When combined, these communication techniques foster emotional intelligence, empathy, and teamwork – skills essential for both academic and personal success – while also improving the learning process.

ii. Active listening

Active listening entails comprehending the speaker's point of view, paying close attention to them with openness, and intelligently answering. It fosters a nurturing atmosphere in learning environments where students feel appreciated, understood, and inspired pupils who actively listen gain empathy, critical thinking, and teamwork abilities, while teachers who engage in active listening are better able to meet the needs of their pupils.

The *Cūlasaccaka Sutta* provides a significant illustration of the Buddha's adept communication, especially his use of empathy and active listening in a conversation with the itinerant debater Saccaka. This sutta illustrates how, even in cases of ideological conflict, polite and attentive participation can promote

³⁰ Nāṇamoli & Bodhi, (1995), MN 41.

fruitful dialogue.³¹ In a similar vein, educators who listen with empathy foster a welcoming and caring learning environment. By keeping eye contact, summarising students' answers, and offering insightful criticism, teachers can exhibit active listening. Students should be encouraged to listen to their peers without interjecting and to consider what they have heard. Activities like group problem-solving exercises or paired sharing might help to reinforce this behavior.

iii. Dispute resolution

In any social setting, including schools, conflicts are unavoidable. Students may argue with one another over miscommunications or competition, or they may argue with professors over different expectations or poor communication. Relationships may suffer and the learning environment may be disturbed if such disputes are not resolved. Nonetheless, these difficulties can be turned into chances for development, peace, and understanding between parties by using a thoughtful approach to conflict resolution.

In today's educational setting, "school violence" is one of the concerning issues that arise. When abusive behavior – whether verbal, physical, psychological, or cyber – occurs in or is connected to a school setting, it is referred to as school violence. It includes physical altercations, verbal abuse, bullying, and even more serious situations like shootings. This problem puts instructors' and students' safety, health, and academic performance at risk, which presents serious problems for educational systems around the world.

By encouraging empathy and emotional control, mindfulness is essential to conflict resolution. The likelihood of escalation is decreased when people practice mindfulness since it teaches them to think things through before responding rashly. By fostering a peaceful mental environment where feelings are recognized without becoming overwhelming, mindfulness enables all participants in a conflict to approach the matter with understanding and clarity. As a result, an atmosphere is produced in which disagreements can be resolved amicably and respectfully.

Buddhist teachings, including those presented in the *Kakacūpama Sutta* (MN 21), are closely aligned with this attentive method. The Buddha counsels in this talk to remain calm even in difficult or confrontational circumstances. The comparison of tolerating harshness with composure, like a sawed-off tree stump, emphasizes the value of inner peace in settling disputes amicably.³² By putting this lesson into practice in the classroom, both teachers and students can use mindfulness to handle disagreements amicably and patiently, making sure that they are settled in a way that improves rather than destroys relationships.

Schools serve as miniature versions of society, teaching students social and

³¹ Nāṇamoli, B., & Bodhi, B. (1995), MN 35.

³² 'na ceva no cittaṃ vipariṇatāṃ bhaviṣṣati, na ca pāpikaṃ vācaṃ nicchāressāma, hitānukampī ca viharissāma mettacittā na dosantarā': Our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no evil words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of lovingkindness, without inner hate. (Nāṇamoli, B., & Bodhi, B. (1995), MN 21).

emotional skills in addition to academic knowledge. The role of loving-kindness (*mettā*) becomes more pertinent when the significance of social-emotional learning (SEL) is recognized more and more. Frequent mindfulness exercises that incorporate loving-kindness meditation can support pupils' growth in empathy and emotional fortitude. In the educational setting, incorporating loving-kindness into routines, classroom activities, and larger institutional frameworks can greatly improve students' social and emotional health, foster wholesome connections, and develop caring communities. The Buddha stresses in the *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta* the significance of radiating loving-kindness (*mettā*) to all beings globally, without any kind of partiality or discrimination. He exhorts practitioners to develop an infinite and unconditional goodwill that is extended to all living things equally, irrespective of their size, species, or proximity. In addition to promoting inner peace, this practice helps create a society that is caring and harmonious.³³

iv. Teamwork

In education, teamwork is essential because it promotes collaboration, shared accountability, and a feeling of group accomplishment. Group projects, class debates, and extracurricular activities all foster the development of critical social and organizational skills in pupils. By fostering focus, minimizing miscommunications, and promoting respect for one another, mindfulness is a powerful instrument that helps people stay present and involved in group activities.

The Buddha's teachings on the seven elements for preserving community cohesion and strength³⁴ are found in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16), and they provide important guidance for creating a supportive and harmonious learning environment. Although these ideas were initially developed for monastic communities, they can be used in contemporary educational environments to improve the experiences of both teachers and students and foster a supportive learning environment. These principles include regular and frequent assemblies, cooperation in decision-making, adherence to and respect for regulations, deference to seniors and seasoned people, avoiding being influenced by one's interests or ambitions, safeguarding women and children, and reverence for holy sites and spiritual principles. By putting these lessons into practice, schools may foster a caring and sustainable learning community while fostering a supportive, courteous, and peaceful environment that benefits students' academic and personal growth.

The Buddha points out in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* factors that can lead to conflict and division within a community such as "arguing, quarreling, and disputing, continually wounding each other with barbed words" and "could not persuade each other or be persuaded, nor could they convince

³³ Bodhi, B. (Trans.). (2000), SN 1.8.

³⁴ 'Seven conditions of welfare' or 'seven principles of social stability' as in Pāli: *satta अपarihāniyā dhammā*

each other or be convinced.”³⁵ The Buddha emphasizes a universal subject of interpersonal and communal dynamics, providing insights into the reasons behind conflict and strategies for reunification as well as the significance of harmony, understanding, and compassion in interpersonal interactions. This experience has taught us the value of essential connections and the capacity to collaborate in a community.

3.1.3. Better mental health and well-being

It has been shown that incorporating mindfulness exercises into classrooms greatly improves students’ and teachers’ mental health and general well-being. Among other advantages, mindfulness – which is defined as present-moment awareness without passing judgment – has been demonstrated to improve focus, lower stress, and boost emotional resilience. For instance, a quick mindful breathing exercise at the start of class can help students relax and get ready for concentrated study, while a body scan at the end of the day encourages stress relief and relaxation. These advantages are corroborated by research, which demonstrates that mindfulness-based therapies (MBIs) enhance academic achievement and mental health outcomes. MBIs successfully improve university students’ psychological health by lowering stress and enhancing emotional control, according to a comprehensive review and meta-analysis.³⁶

Furthermore, mindfulness training improved academic performance and emotional well-being by reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression in students at risk of academic failure, according to Franco’s randomized controlled experiment. These results highlight how mindfulness exercises can help students of all educational levels manage stress, build resilience, and establish encouraging learning environments. According to the study’s findings, self-selected students’ mental health can be considerably enhanced in just three months by providing mindfulness training as part of an undergraduate teacher education program to 67 student teachers at a Danish undergraduate program for teacher education were included in the study. The intervention group had 34 participants, and the waiting list control group had 33. The median age in both groups was 25 years, and the majority of participants were women (71% in the intervention group, and 76% in the control group).³⁷

Maintaining present-moment awareness without passing judgment is known as mindfulness, and it has been shown to greatly improve memory. People can improve their memory and recall of knowledge by learning to focus their attention and minimize distractions through mindfulness practice. The brain can be trained to process information more efficiently and methodically, for instance, by practicing mindfulness meditation techniques like focusing on the breath or physical sensations. This exercise improves working memory, which is essential for learning and making decisions. Additionally, mindfulness promotes emotional stability and improved stress management, which helps

³⁵ Sujato, B. (Trans.). (2012). *The Kosambiya Sutta* (MN 48).

³⁶ Greeson, F. M. (2009): 24 – 31.

³⁷ Franco, M. D., (2021).

lower stress, a major component that degrades memory. Regular mindfulness practice has been linked to better memory, especially when it comes to learning new things and recalling information under pressure, according to studies.

According to the early texts, the conventional definition of mindfulness is the capacity to remember and recall what was done and said long ago.³⁸ Even though this definition identifies a connection between memory and mindfulness, it must be made clear that the two are not interchangeable. One of these is that mindfulness facilitates the recall of pertinent information by cultivating an attitude of open receptivity. What is to be remembered is the subject of mindfulness's second contribution. It will be simpler to recall what happened later if we are more aware of it when it occurs.

Actually, the conventional definition of mindfulness stated above seems to be more interested in what we would now refer to as “episodic memory” than in the ability to recognize things as such, as it refers to the capacity to recollect and remember past actions or words. Research in cognitive psychology has demonstrated that mindfulness training enhances working memory, which has important ramifications for educational environments.³⁹ For tasks like problem-solving, reading comprehension, and following directions, working memory – the cognitive mechanism that temporarily stores and manipulates information – is crucial. Students who receive mindfulness training are better able to process and retain knowledge, which improves their academic performance by increasing working memory.

By fostering mental clarity and lowering cognitive overload, mindfulness can be a useful strategy for improving pupils' episodic memory. Stress and other distractions can hinder the encoding and retrieval processes of episodic memory, making it difficult for students to remember previous lectures. By lowering stress and stabilizing attention, mindfulness exercises like body scans and focused breathing assist students in improving their memory encoding skills.

A teacher might, for instance, start each lecture with a quick mindfulness practice that encourages pupils to clear their minds and concentrate on their breathing. Their brains are primed to process information more efficiently by this activity. In order to help students mentally “rehearse” the content, a guided reflection at the end of the course when they go over the main ideas of the day in a meditative state might strengthen episodic memory.

IV. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Education is such a wonderful cornerstone for nurturing and shaping the bright minds of our future generations, and it's truly vital for the long-term health of any community. Through education, individuals happily gain the values, skills, and knowledge they need to flourish in social, professional, and personal arenas. The path of a nation's economy is greatly swayed by the

³⁸ See, e.g., AN 7.63 at AN IV 111: *Satimā hoti paramena satinepakkhena samannāgato, cirakatampi cirabhāsitaampi saritā anussaritā.*

³⁹ Vant Vugt, (2011): 344 – 353.

quality of education, which plays a key role in ensuring it thrives steadily and sustainably. Plus, education wonderfully lays the foundation for encouraging ethical behavior, social harmony, and a sense of civic responsibility.

Education should gladly adjust to new challenges in an era of exciting technology advancement and global connectivity. Adding wonderful practices like mindfulness and emotional intelligence (EI) training to education can truly boost students' skills in handling stress, forming meaningful relationships, and playing a part in a sustainable and harmonious community. Moreover, education has the incredible ability to change lives and shape the future, making its progress a shared responsibility that is so very important. EI is the amazing ability to understand, control, and maximize our own emotions as well as those of others. It fosters compassion and genuine concern for the well-being of the environment and each other. We can foster kindness and compassion towards ourselves and others if we have a clear understanding of EI and the emotional skills that go with it. Based on this, engaging in mindfulness exercises can be an interesting way to improve our emotional intelligence. Furthermore, curriculum revisions that integrate the development of EI through mindfulness in schools and universities are essential to building a compassionate, peaceful, and sustainable world.

In order to develop responsible, caring, and globally involved citizens with positive value systems for their own, their communities, and the environment's well-being, educational institutions today must provide high-quality, holistic education. Education needs to change in light of the world's enormous poverty, inequality, conflict, human rights abuses, violence against women and children, terrorism, suicide, environmental damage, and vandalism. This calls for a paradigm change in education from the prevailing, mostly analytical, and materialistic viewpoint to one that is systemic, comprehensive, sustainable, and compassionate. To cultivate kindness and emotional intelligence, one must adopt a holistic perspective that promotes a greater knowledge and understanding of oneself as well as a connection to nature and other people.

Barriers related to certain communities' beliefs, cultures, or religions are among the first difficulties faced. Since the mindfulness program has its roots in Buddhism, it will be extremely challenging to implement in multireligious groups, which could lead to resistance or misunderstandings regarding its origins and goals. The second limitation that needs to be mentioned is the allocation of time. Most of the timetable in the curriculum is often overloaded, so arranging a timetable for the mindfulness program must also be considered appropriately. The next issue to think about is how to encourage teachers' and students' voluntary involvement. Mindfulness exercises are not always absorbed by pupils, particularly by older students who could find them unimportant or uninteresting. Last but not least, parents and the community must be interested. In order to encourage their children to actively participate in mindfulness programs, parents must comprehend their significance and advantages. In addition to making the training more successful, the family's encouragement and support will ensure that there will be no resistance from them.

As a final thought, the Buddha's teachings in the Maṅgala Sutta⁴⁰ about the things that bring the highest happiness and benefit in life include learning, living morally, and doing good starting with "avoidance of bad company" which is essential to all moral and spiritual progress, the blessings culminate in the achievement of a passion-free mind, unshakable in its serenity. To follow the ideals outlined in these verses is the sure way to harmony and progress for the individual as well as for society, nation, and mankind.

"Not to associate with fools,
But to associate with the wise,
And to honor those worthy of honor:
This is the greatest good fortune."⁴¹

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⁴⁰ This sutta appears in the *Sutta Nipāṭa* (v. 258ff) and in the *Khuddakapāṭha*. See *Ma-ha-Mangala Jātaka* (No. 453). For a detailed explanation see *Life's Highest Blessing* by Dr. R. L. Soni, WHEEL No. 254/256.

⁴¹ Brahmalī, B. (Trans.). (2005). *The Maṅgalasutta*: 220 – 223.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION: ADVANCING UNITY AND INCLUSIVITY FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

Mindfulness, unity, and inclusivity are fundamental to fostering human dignity and advancing global peace and sustainable development. Rooted in Buddhist teachings, these principles offer a framework for ethical engagement with the world, encouraging individuals and societies to cultivate awareness, compassion, and mutual respect. This paper explores the concept of unity and inclusivity in promoting human dignity through the lens of Buddhist teachings, with a particular focus on mindfulness.¹ These values are fundamental to advancing world peace and sustainable development. Drawing on the insights of Buddhist scholars, the study delves into the historical and philosophical dimensions of mindfulness practice and its role in cultivating shared human values. By exploring the contributions of canonical Buddhist texts and meditation guides, this paper demonstrates how mindfulness can be applied to cultivate unity and inclusivity in the promotion of human dignity. Through an analysis of Buddhist canonical texts, meditation practices, and contemporary applications, this study highlights the transformative potential of mindfulness in strengthening social cohesion and affirming the dignity of all individuals.

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¹ I am primarily quoting texts written by Buddhist scholars-adept from antiquity. All the Indian classical texts cited in this paper are drawn from their Tibetan translations in the Tengyur, a major collection of Indian Buddhist treatises rendered in classical Tibetan, along with some Tibetan texts authored by Tibetans. However, I will also cite the Buddha's direct teachings or sutras, as they are available at this point.

I. INTRODUCTION

Unity and inclusivity, essential for human dignity, are fundamental values that support harmonious societies and sustainable development. These values resonate with Buddhist teachings, particularly the practice of mindfulness, which emphasizes the recollection of a focal object. The connection between mindfulness and recollection or memory is outlined in Asaṅga's *Compendium of Higher Knowledge*². In this way, mindfulness serves as a bridge between personal introspection and collective well-being, providing practical insights for fostering human dignity. However, before exploring the application of mindfulness in this context, it is crucial to understand its historical and philosophical foundations.

Buddhism teaches that all beings are interconnected, emphasizing the principle of interdependence as a fundamental aspect of reality. The doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), articulated in texts such as the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* (MN 1) and the *Mahānidāna Sutta* (DN 15), illustrates that no phenomenon arises independently but is instead contingent upon a web of causes and conditions³. This philosophical insight challenges notions of separateness and division, instead fostering a worldview based on mutual responsibility, shared well-being, and ethical engagement with the world.

The cultivation of mindfulness (*sati*) plays a pivotal role in deepening this understanding. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) describes mindfulness as the practice of observing the body, feelings, thoughts, and mental states with clarity and equanimity⁴. Through disciplined mindfulness practice, individuals cultivate awareness of their own cognitive and emotional processes, allowing them to recognize how their thoughts and actions impact others. This heightened awareness fosters inclusivity, non-discrimination, and a compassionate response to the suffering of others. In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16), the Buddha advises that ethical conduct and mindful awareness serve as the foundation for social harmony and human dignity, reinforcing the principle that inner transformation leads to outward expressions of peace and justice.⁵

Historically, Buddhist traditions have played a crucial role in promoting harmony, ethical leadership, and social responsibility. One of the most notable examples is the reign of Emperor Ashoka (r. 268 – 232 BCE), who integrated Buddhist ethics into statecraft. The Edicts of Ashoka, inscribed on pillars and rocks across his empire, advocate for religious pluralism, social equity, and compassionate governance.⁶ His policies promoted non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), the welfare of all beings, and the protection of marginalized communities,

² Abhidharma-samuccaya, (1982–1985): p. 96: “*dran pa ni gang zhe na / 'dris pa'i dngos po la sems kyi brjed pa med pa ste/ rnam par mi g.yeng ba'i las can no //*” (What is mindfulness? A non-forgetfulness of an object with which the mind is familiar, which functions to prevent mind wandering.)

³ Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 177; Walshe (1987), p. 223.

⁴ Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145.

⁵ Walshe (1987), p. 245.

⁶ Thapar (1997), p. 102

demonstrating that the application of Buddhist mindfulness extends beyond personal practice to structural and institutional reform.

Buddhist monastic institutions have also historically functioned as centers of education, healthcare, and community service, embodying the principle that mindfulness and ethical living must be actively engaged with the world. In Southeast Asia and Tibet, monasteries have long provided not only spiritual instruction but also social services such as literacy programs, medical care, and conflict mediation⁷. These institutions reflect the Buddhist ideal of engaged compassion (*karuṇā*), in which mindfulness and ethical responsibility translate into tangible acts that uphold human dignity and social harmony.

Canonical Buddhist texts provide deep insights into how mindfulness fosters inclusivity and human dignity. The Metta Sutta (SN 1.8) teaches that loving-kindness (*mettā*) should be extended impartially to all beings, breaking down barriers of race, caste, and nationality.⁸ This teaching reinforces the idea that genuine peace arises from an open and compassionate heart, and that mindfulness must be coupled with intentional efforts to dismantle prejudice and cultivate mutual respect. In the Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta (DN 26), the Buddha warns that social decay arises when rulers and individuals fail to uphold justice and ethical responsibility, highlighting the importance of ethical mindfulness in governance and societal well-being.⁹

In modern contexts, mindfulness-based interventions have been integrated into various fields, including education, healthcare, and diplomacy, demonstrating their relevance in fostering unity and human dignity. Studies have shown that mindfulness training enhances emotional intelligence, reduces implicit bias, and improves interpersonal communication.¹⁰ Such findings underscore that mindfulness is not a passive retreat from the world but an active means of engaging with it in ways that promote peace and social equity.

Ultimately, this study argues that mindfulness serves as a bridge between personal transformation and collective well-being. By cultivating awareness, individuals develop the capacity to engage with others in ways that foster unity and inclusivity. Buddhist philosophy teaches that ethical leadership, compassionate action, and social justice arise when individuals and societies commit to the practice of mindfulness, wisdom (*prajñā*), and ethical conduct (*sīla*). As global challenges continue to intensify - ranging from political polarization to environmental crises - the principles of mindfulness offer a vital path toward a more just and harmonious world. Through the integration of mindfulness into governance, education, and community-building efforts, societies can move toward a future where human dignity is recognized as a universal right and unity is embraced as the foundation of sustainable peace. By applying the wisdom of Buddhist teachings to contemporary issues,

⁷ Gethin (1998), p. 237

⁸ Bodhi (2000), p. 56.

⁹ Walshe (1987), p. 395.

¹⁰ Kabat-Zinn (2013), p. 47.

individuals and institutions alike can contribute to a world that values interdependence, inclusivity, and ethical responsibility as essential elements of human flourishing.

II. HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

The origins of mindfulness can be traced to ancient Indian religious traditions that predate Buddhism. In these early practices, mindfulness primarily involved the deliberate memorization and oral transmission of sacred texts, emphasizing exact recall without subjective interpretation. This form of mindfulness served as a means of preserving spiritual teachings, ensuring their integrity across generations. However, with the emergence of Buddhism in the 5th – 4th century BCE, mindfulness underwent a profound transformation, evolving into a comprehensive mental discipline aimed at overcoming suffering and cultivating insight.

According to Buddhist tradition, the Buddha's teachings address eighty-four thousand mental afflictions, each with corresponding counteractive practices. These afflictions (*kleśa*) include greed, hatred, and delusion, which cloud perception and lead to suffering. To systematically address these afflictions, Buddhist teachings were traditionally compiled after the Buddha's passing into a vast body of scriptures known as the Tripiṭaka, or "Three Baskets".¹¹ This tripartite division provides the structural foundation for Buddhist doctrine and practice:

(1) *Sūtra Piṭaka* – Focused on meditative concentration (*samādhi*), mindfulness, and contemplative practice, containing the discourses of the Buddha.

(2) *Vinaya Piṭaka* – Centered on ethical guidelines (*śīla*), governing monastic conduct and moral discipline.

(3) *Abhidharma Piṭaka* – Dedicated to wisdom teachings (*prajñā*), offering a systematic analysis of consciousness and reality.

The dissemination of these teachings beyond India was facilitated by their translation into various classical Asian languages, such as Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan. This historical process not only preserved Buddhist doctrines but also allowed them to adapt to new cultural and philosophical contexts. In the modern era, scholarly efforts continue to translate these

¹¹ Gethin 1998, 40); "According to the accounts of this communal recitation, the Buddha's teachings were remembered as belonging to two primary categories: the sūtras (Pāli: suttas), which contain the general discourses of the Buddha, and the Vinaya, which consists of the monastic code of discipline. Some accounts further suggest the presence of a third category, mātṛkās (Pāli: mātikā), which were mnemonic lists summarizing key doctrinal points. Over time, Buddhist canonical collections came to be structured as the Tripiṭaka or "Three Baskets" (tri-piṭaka), comprising the Vinaya Piṭaka (Basket of Discipline), the Sūtra Piṭaka (Basket of Discourses), and the Abhidharma Piṭaka (Basket of Further Dharma), with the latter's development linked, in part, to the early use of mnemonic lists (mātṛkās)."

texts into English and other languages, ensuring their accessibility to a global audience and reaffirming the enduring relevance of Buddhist wisdom.

Mindfulness as the Path to Liberation

At the heart of Buddhist practice lies the pursuit of liberation from suffering, which is believed to arise from the conditioned mind shaped by afflictive emotions. The Abhidharma Piṭaka provides an in-depth philosophical and psychological exploration of the ontological nature of the mind and self (*cittātmanoḥ sattāsvabhāvaḥ*), offering analytical methods for deconstructing the illusions that perpetuate suffering. Through this process, one develops the wisdom (*prajñā*) necessary to perceive reality as it truly is, free from the distortions imposed by habitual thought patterns.

However, wisdom alone is insufficient. The Buddhist path to liberation is a holistic process that integrates three essential disciplines:

(1) Ethical conduct (*śīla*) – Outlined in the Vinaya Piṭaka, moral discipline serves as the foundation for mindfulness practice. Ethical living ensures that one's actions do not create conditions for further suffering, both for oneself and others.

(2) Concentration (*samādhi*) – Taught extensively in the Sūtra Piṭaka, deep meditative absorption stabilizes the mind, allowing for heightened awareness and insight. Mindfulness (*sati*) plays a key role in this process, fostering a meta-awareness that helps practitioners observe their thoughts and emotions with clarity.

(3) Wisdom (*prajñā*) – Expounded in the Abhidharma Piṭaka, wisdom emerges from the direct realization of the impermanent, non-self, and interdependent nature of existence. This insight ultimately leads to liberation.

The interdependence of ethics, concentration, and wisdom illustrates the integrated nature of Buddhist mindfulness practice. Without ethical grounding, meditation lacks stability; without meditative concentration, wisdom remains intellectual rather than experiential. Together, these disciplines form the Buddhist path to awakening, providing not only a method for personal transformation but also a philosophical foundation for mindfulness as a way of life.

The historical development of mindfulness - from its early role in memorizing sacred texts to its sophisticated integration into Buddhist meditative and ethical training - demonstrates its profound significance as a path to both personal and collective well-being. As mindfulness continues to gain recognition in contemporary psychology, neuroscience, and well-being studies, its Buddhist philosophical roots remain essential for understanding its full transformative potential. The foundational texts of the Tripiṭaka provide not only historical insight but also timeless guidance for cultivating ethical awareness, mental clarity, and liberating wisdom.

By studying and practicing mindfulness in its original Buddhist context, modern practitioners can deepen their engagement with its ethical and philosophical dimensions, ensuring that it remains more than a therapeutic

technique but a profound means of awakening, fostering inner peace, and contributing to a more compassionate world.

III. MANUALS OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Canonical Buddhist texts provide detailed and systematic guidance on the cultivation of mindfulness and meditative stability. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10) in Pāli and its Sanskrit counterpart, the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, outline the four foundations of mindfulness, offering a structured method for developing focused awareness, mental clarity, and deep insight.¹² These foundational texts emphasize mindfulness as both a meditative practice and a way of engaging with reality, presenting a progressive path toward liberation.

In addition to these mindfulness teachings, Buddhist traditions developed specific meditation techniques for attaining deep states of concentration and tranquility, known as Tranquil Abiding (Skt. *śamatha*; Pāli *saṁatha*). The Śrāvakabhūmi, attributed to Aśaṅga (c. 310 – 390), and the Bhāvanākrama by Kamalaśīla (c. 740 – 795), offer comprehensive expositions on the nine-stage process of cultivating meditative absorption (Skt. *dhyāna*). These stages systematically address mental distractions and obstacles, such as restlessness (*auddhatya*), dullness (*laya*), and sensory craving (*tṛṣṇā*), while enhancing single-pointed concentration (Skt. *ekāgratā*)¹³.

This nine-stage path, later elaborated upon in Tibetan traditions, describes the gradual stabilization of the mind, beginning with initial placement (*prathama-sthāpanā*) and culminating in equipoise absorption (*saṁāhita sthiti*), where mindfulness becomes effortlessly sustained.¹⁴ These methods, though originating within Buddhist thought, were recognized in broader Indian contemplative traditions, demonstrating their universal applicability in the pursuit of spiritual development.

Building upon these canonical teachings, Tibetan Buddhist masters further refined and expanded the methodologies for achieving stable mindfulness and profound meditative absorption. The great scholar Tsongkhapa (1357 – 1419) provided one of the most detailed analyses of *śamatha* in his seminal work, the Lamrim Chenmo (The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment). In this text, he synthesizes Indian and Tibetan sources, offering precise instructions on how to recognize meditative imbalances, maintain vigilance against subtle mental distractions, and cultivate the perfect balance of relaxation and alertness.¹⁵

Another influential figure, Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (1556 – 1601/1603), authored the Mahāmudrā: The Moonlight, a comprehensive guide to meditation on emptiness and Tranquil Abiding within the Mahāmudrā tradition. His treatise explores how mindfulness, when combined with

¹² Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (1995), p. 145.

¹³ Kragh (2013), p. 175.

¹⁴ Gyatso (1995), p. 88.

¹⁵ Tsongkhapa (2002), p. 63.

deep insight into the nature of reality, leads to uncontrived awareness and spontaneous wisdom.¹⁶

Similarly, Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713 – 1793), a scholar-practitioner in the Gelug tradition, wrote extensively on mindfulness as a stabilizing force in both meditative absorption and daily activities. His works emphasize that mindfulness must not only be cultivated during seated meditation but must also extend into all aspects of thought, speech, and action, reinforcing its transformative potential beyond the meditation hall.¹⁷

The evolution of mindfulness and Tranquil Abiding from early Buddhist sources to later Tibetan expositions demonstrates the depth and adaptability of these meditative practices. The canonical texts, Indian treatises, and Tibetan commentaries form a continuous lineage of insight, illustrating how mindfulness has been meticulously refined over centuries to serve as a practical tool for personal and spiritual transformation. These teachings remain profoundly relevant today, offering timeless methods for overcoming mental distractions, developing inner stability, and deepening awareness. By studying these classical texts and integrating their wisdom into modern contemplative practice, practitioners can access a proven path to psychological well-being, ethical clarity, and profound spiritual realization.

IV. PRINCIPLES IN MINDFULNESS TRAINING

Mindfulness, as a critical mental factor in Tranquil Abiding meditation (*śamatha*), functions as the deliberate retention of a focal object within the mind.¹⁸ Through repeated recollection, mindfulness evolves from a conscious effort into a habitual and effortless mental process. Just as repeated exposure to a stranger's face eventually leads to automatic recognition, mindfulness prevents forgetfulness and sustains attentional stability. This process is foundational to Buddhist contemplative practices, where the ability to recall and maintain focus on a chosen object serves as the gateway to deep concentration and meditative absorption (*dhyāna*).

Unlike its common interpretation in English as a passive awareness, mindfulness in Buddhist contexts is an active mental factor. The original terms in Pāli (*sati*), Sanskrit (*smṛti*), and Tibetan (*dranpa*) emphasize intentional remembrance and mental continuity, reflecting the active agency inherent in Buddhist mindfulness practice. The role of mindfulness is not merely to observe but to sustain attention, counteract distraction, and reinforce clarity, ensuring that the meditative object remains continuously present in the mind.

¹⁶ Namgyal (1986), p. 137.

¹⁷ Yeshe Gyaltsen (2010), p. 82. My forthcoming paper (Gnon na, Lobsang Tshultrim, April 2025) will introduce the first English translation of Meditation Guide to Tranquil Abiding by Yeshe Gyaltsen. This study examines Tranquil Abiding meditation and features an introductory chapter that contextualizes the translation.

¹⁸ I have published a paper analyzing “Theories and Practice of Tranquil Abiding in Tibet” in the journal Religions (MDPI) (Gnon na, Lobsang Tshultrim, 2022).

As Tsongkhapa notes, most Lamrim sources - classical Tibetan treatises on the stages of the path to enlightenment - assert that the cultivation of Tranquil Abiding requires the application of eight antidotes to eliminate the five mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). These hindrances - sensory desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt - act as obstacles to sustained concentration (*samādhi*).¹⁹

The process of cultivating Tranquil Abiding involves systematically addressing these hindrances, which primarily arise due to attachment and animosity. When the mind is agitated by desire or aversion, it becomes fragmented and unstable. By applying specific antidotes, such as mindfulness, introspective awareness (*samprajanya*), and meditative discipline, one gradually subdues these disturbing mental states, allowing the mind to enter a state of balance and equipoise (*samāhita chitta*). This stabilized mind is then able to maintain an unwavering focus on the intended object, leading to deep meditative absorption and insight (*vipassanā*).

Beyond its function as a technique for deep concentration, the structural framework of Tranquil Abiding meditation provides a valuable model for mental training in ethical and social contexts. Just as mindfulness practice addresses inner obstacles to meditative stability, it can also be applied to overcoming mental barriers that obstruct unity, inclusivity, and human dignity.

In the pursuit of world peace and sustainable development, individuals and societies must confront internal biases, prejudices, and divisive mental tendencies. Mental training in compassion, tolerance, and inclusivity requires the same methodical approach as Tranquil Abiding:

(1) Recognition of hindrances - Identifying the mental and emotional patterns that fuel discrimination, exclusion, and social fragmentation.

(2) Application of antidotes - Cultivating counteractive qualities, such as patience, loving-kindness (*mettā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*), to dissolve biases and foster harmony.

(3) Sustained mindfulness - Ensuring long-term commitment to ethical action by continuously reinforcing positive mental states and remaining vigilant against reactive or harmful thoughts.

By applying this progressive training structure to social and ethical development, mindfulness extends beyond single-pointed meditation to practical strategies for cultivating inclusive mindsets and ethical leadership. Just as overcoming mental distractions is necessary for achieving meditative absorption, overcoming psychological and societal barriers is essential for promoting global cooperation and mutual respect.

The methodology of Tranquil Abiding meditation, rooted in classical Buddhist sources, offers more than just a pathway to meditative concentration; it provides a structured approach for cultivating unity, inclusivity, and human dignity - values that are indispensable for world peace and sustainable

¹⁹ Tsongkhapa (2015), p. 556.

development. By systematically recognizing mental afflictions, applying corrective practices, and sustaining mindfulness, individuals can transform their consciousness and contribute to ethical and harmonious societies.

In this way, mindfulness is not only a personal meditative tool but a global ethical imperative - a discipline that enables both inner peace and collective progress, ensuring that humanity moves toward a future characterized by wisdom, compassion, and universal dignity.

V. UNITY AND INCLUSIVITY FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

The concepts of unity and inclusivity are deeply intertwined in Buddhist thought, contributing significantly to the realization of human dignity. These principles are underpinned by the teachings on interdependence, compassion, equanimity, non-discrimination, and loving-kindness. Together, they promote a vision of a society where every individual is valued, respected, and seen as part of a larger, interconnected whole, emphasizing the shared human values that transcend individual differences.

5.1. Unity and interdependence

In Buddhism, unity (Skt. *Ekatā*) is not merely a social ideal but a recognition of the fundamental interdependence of all beings. The concept of interdependence (*Pratītyasamutpāda*) asserts that no being exists in isolation, and the well-being of each individual is intrinsically tied to the well-being of the whole (Kalupahana, 1975). This understanding dismantles the notion of individuality as separate or autonomous, emphasizing that human dignity is not an isolated quality but one that emerges from our relational interconnectedness. As such, inclusivity arises naturally, as it is grounded in the realization that every person is an integral part of a larger, interconnected collective. When individuals acknowledge their interdependence, they naturally recognize the shared humanity and inherent dignity of others, fostering a sense of unity that transcends differences.

Thich Nhat Hanh echoes this idea in his work *Being Peace*, where he highlights the role of mindfulness and unity in the formation of *saṅghas* (spiritual communities). These communities, composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds, are founded on mutual support and inspiration. Through collective mindfulness, they cultivate peace and compassion, which ripple outward, embracing the broader society.²⁰ In this way, unity in Buddhism does not imply uniformity but rather emphasizes the recognition and appreciation of interconnectedness and shared potential among all individuals, including

²⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh (2005), p. 21 – 36, 97. “This mindfulness training is about reconciliation, the effort to make peace, not only in your family, but in society as well.”

the inherent presence of Buddha-nature, irrespective of their differences.²¹

5.2. Inclusivity and compassion

Buddhist inclusivity is fundamentally rooted in compassion (*karuṇā*), which extends the principle of unity by actively working to alleviate suffering and ensure that every being feels valued and respected. Compassion helps to dismantle the boundaries between “self” and “other,” fostering an inclusive environment where all individuals, irrespective of their backgrounds, are embraced with care and empathy (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1987). This compassionate approach is essential for affirming human dignity, as it seeks to honor the fundamental worth of each individual by ensuring they are not excluded from the compassion that promotes their well-being.

Moreover, equanimity (*upekṣā*) plays a critical role in inclusivity by encouraging individuals to treat all beings impartially, without attachment or bias (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1998)²². This balanced approach ensures that no person’s dignity is contingent upon their social or cultural identity, and all individuals are regarded with equal respect. As the Buddha’s teachings exemplify, non-discrimination directly rejects distinctions based on caste, gender, or social status, fostering a community where human dignity is affirmed through the recognition of shared equality (Rahula, 1974). The Buddha’s creation of the saṅghas, open to all individuals regardless of their social rank, illustrates this radical inclusivity, where unity is formed not by excluding differences, but by embracing them in the pursuit of spiritual and ethical development.

5.3. Loving-kindness and human dignity

Loving-kindness (*mettā*) nurtures an inclusive environment by encouraging individuals to wish for the happiness and well-being of all beings. Just as a mother protects her only child with her own life, this practice cultivates

²¹ Śākyamuni Buddha. ting nge ’dzin rgyal po’i mdo las / bde gshegs snying pos ’gro ba yongs la khyab // sems ni rgya chen mchog tu rab bskyed de // ’gro ba ’di dag ma lus sang rgyas rgyu // ’di na snod min sems can gang yang med // King of Samādhi Sūtra: (The essence of the Sugatas pervades all beings. Cultivate the most vast and exalted intention. For every being possesses the cause of awakening. There is not a single sentient being without this potential.) Accessed on [February 25, 2025] at <https://tinyurl.com/mt44e8bd>

²² Bhikkhu Bodhi (1998) Discussion on Upekṣā. Accessed February 24, 2025, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3nvzr56> (Bhikkhu Bodhi states: The real meaning of upekkha (Pali) is equanimity, not indifference in the sense of unconcern for others. As a spiritual virtue, upekkha means stability in the face of the fluctuations of worldly fortune. It is evenness of mind, unshakeable freedom of mind, a state of inner equipoise that cannot be upset by gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pleasure and pain. Upekkha is freedom from all points of self-reference; it is indifference only to the demands of the ego-self with its craving for pleasure and position, not to the well-being of one’s fellow human beings. True equanimity is the pinnacle of the four social attitudes that the Buddhist texts call the ‘divine abodes’: boundless loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity. The last does not override and negate the preceding three, but perfects and consummates them.)

a boundless heart of unconditional love.²³ At the core of Buddhist teachings is the belief that every individual possesses intrinsic worth and the potential for enlightenment, irrespective of external circumstances. Meditation and mindfulness not only strengthen personal dignity but also cultivate the mental resilience necessary to honor and uphold the dignity of others. By promoting non-harm and fostering peace, Buddhism inherently supports the protection and development of individual dignity through its ethical and spiritual principles.²⁴

Furthermore, loving-kindness bridges the gap between perceived differences by fostering unity and recognizing the shared aspiration for well-being that all beings possess. Extending goodwill to others ensures that every individual's dignity is upheld, contributing to an inclusive society where inherent worth is acknowledged and respected.

VI. CONCLUSION

Buddhist teachings provide profound insights into the interdependent nature of unity, inclusivity, and human dignity, all of which are essential to achieving world peace and sustainable development. At the core of Buddhist philosophy is the principle of dependent origination, which emphasizes that all beings are interconnected and that true harmony arises from recognizing and honoring this interdependence. Human dignity is not an isolated attribute but a quality nurtured through ethical engagement, mutual respect, and compassionate action.

The practice of mindfulness (*sati*) serves as a transformative tool for cultivating compassion, equanimity, and loving-kindness - virtues that form the foundation of an inclusive and just society. By fostering self-awareness, introspection, and moral discernment, mindfulness enables individuals to recognize and transcend personal biases, prejudices, and mental afflictions (*kleśa*) that contribute to social division. As described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10), mindfulness fosters clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), allowing individuals to engage with the world with wisdom and ethical clarity.

Buddhist philosophy teaches that unity and inclusivity emerge from intentional practice rather than passive ideals. The process of overcoming mental obstacles parallels the structure of Tranquil Abiding (*śamatha*) meditation, where distractions are systematically recognized and subdued to develop sustained concentration. Similarly, fostering inclusivity requires acknowledging and addressing societal and psychological barriers, ensuring that values of respect, tolerance, and cooperation are actively cultivated. This principle is reflected in the Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta (DN 26), which asserts

²³ Sn 1.8. "Just as a mother would protect her only child with her own life, even so let one cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings."

²⁴ Nivittigala Sumitta Thero (Bhante Sumitta) The convergence of Buddhist principles and human rights: Embracing human dignity. Dhamma USA. Accessed on February 26, 2025 at <https://tinyurl.com/bme7p3a8>.

that societies thrive when ethical responsibility and justice are upheld at both individual and institutional levels.

As the principles of interdependence, compassion, and ethical responsibility permeate our collective consciousness, they provide a practical framework for fostering harmonious communities, bridging cultural divides, and affirming the intrinsic worth of every individual. The Metta Sutta (SN 1.8) reinforces this vision, urging the extension of loving-kindness beyond personal boundaries, demonstrating that genuine peace is rooted in an expanded perspective that embraces all beings with equal regard.

Thus, the application of mindfulness within Buddhist teachings extends beyond personal well-being, offering a holistic and actionable path toward unity, inclusivity, and the protection of human dignity on a global scale. As the modern world grapples with social fragmentation, environmental crises, and geopolitical conflicts, mindfulness provides an ethical and contemplative approach to sustainable peace and human flourishing. By integrating mindfulness into governance, education, and intercultural engagement, societies can foster a future where wisdom, compassion, and ethical integrity serve as guiding principles for global harmony.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION: BUDDHIST PATHWAYS TO UNITY, INCLUSIVITY, COMPASSION, AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

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Abstract:

Education has long been the foundation of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. However, traditional models often fail to address students' psychological and emotional well-being. This paper explores the role of mindfulness, deeply rooted in Buddhist philosophy, as a transformative educational tool. Mindfulness fosters unity, inclusivity, and compassion while promoting sustainability and human dignity. The study examines how mindfulness enhances emotional resilience, improves student-teacher relationships, and cultivates ethical awareness. By integrating mindfulness practices such as mindful breathing, compassion training, and environmental consciousness, educational institutions can address modern challenges like stress, social division, and ecological degradation. Case studies from global mindfulness initiatives demonstrate the profound impact of these practices in reducing hostility, fostering inclusivity, and empowering students for a sustainable future. The findings suggest that incorporating mindfulness into education fosters holistic development, ethical responsibility, and social harmony. Ultimately, this research advocates for a shift toward an education system that prioritizes emotional intelligence, ethical growth, and environmental stewardship, aligning with Buddhist principles to nurture compassionate and conscientious global citizens.

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Keywords: *mindfulness, Buddhist education, emotional resilience, inclusivity, compassion, sustainability, human dignity, ethical learning, social harmony.*

I. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, education has been considered the most essential foundation for the advancement of humans in all aspects of life, including intellectual, moral, and even spiritual points of view. In the modern globalized and highly globalized world, the traditional models of knowledge delivery fail to meet learners' psychological and spiritual needs. In recent years, the difficulties have grown year by year: mental health issues, social division, and environmental problems require a different approach to education, which is not only 'filling the head' with knowledge. This is where mindfulness imbued with the philosophy of Buddhism reveals methods of positive change. Mindfulness strategy, which is being aware of the present experience without passing any judgments on it, has become prominent as a technique in the current education system. It empowers learners and educators to make sense of life's challenges with understanding, fortitude, and empathy. As much as it might be seen as a way to decrease stress, this practice is built on principles consistent with concepts such as oneness, pluralism, kindness, and stewardship. These principles aligned with Buddhism make it easy for any education system aspiring to promote human dignity and well-being to consider and draw from.

Today's education systems have developed many problems that have never been seen before. Students have to deal with lots of academic stress, social issues, and concerns, as well as an overdose of technology. The recent WHO surveys show that anxiety and depression are on the increase among young people in the present generation. Furthermore, social cleavages and environmental and worldwide disparities require education to produce scholarly but also affective and moral development. In this respect, therefore, mindfulness has emerged as the modern scientifically validated practice for general well-being. A literature review revealed mindfulness improves attention, emotional self-control, and coping, decreasing stress and hostility. Day-by-day mindfulness practice enters the school, starting with breathing exercises and moving to complex programs, including MindUP and the Inner Explorer. These initiatives offer evidence of what a conscious approach can bring about regarding reducing classroom hostility, improving teachers' relationships with students, and achieving educational goals. However, mindfulness in education is not just about introducing an attitude; it includes relaxation. It is an invitation to reimagine the very existence of education, its method, goals, content, and relevance. Buddhist mindfulness is especially interesting here as it offers an ethical and philosophical program that does not involve self-optimization. It invites educators to address foundational questions: In what ways does education respect the dignity of every learner? How could it facilitate the understanding of people as the same kind? While showcasing how it can be developed, its structure, components, and how it can be used: How might it help learners learn in ways that they can positively contribute to the poorly sustainable

future? By asking these questions, it is possible to turn mindfulness based on Buddhist concepts into education that will help people become unified, accepting, compassionate, and sustainable.¹

The cardinal principle underlies Buddhism, is the principle of dependent arising; nothing exists independently of one another. This principle demeans the often competing culture that most educational systems promote in an attempt to thrive. In a society that is all too often divided based on ethnicity, religion, or grounding living in society, mindfulness provides an option to embrace unity. By encouraging this mindful practice, strong student empathy and mutual respect are developed since the students see that they belong to the same group with similar feelings, dreams, and weaknesses. For instance, a listening exercise conducted in class enables one to understand the perceptions of other learners rather than developing prejudicial feelings and stereotypical thoughts. Those schools that promote group work rather than individual competition also uphold this principle of unity, helping foster unity and a sense of togetherness and responsibility. Mindfulness can chat for generational cleavages as well. These practices enrich the learners and educators within intergenerational settings and teach the value within the variance of generations to comprehend and appreciate each other's worth. These interactions can also be related to the concept of *saṅgha*, which is the achievement of Buddhist bliss through interdependent, happy, purposeful interaction.² When walking, the monk discerns: "I am walking." When standing, he discerns: "I am standing." When sitting, he discerns: "I am sitting." When lying down, he discerns: "I am lying down."³

Buddhist mindfulness has its deepest foundations in compassion. It is the remedy for the feeling of isolation and getting into an environment where the unadulterated goal is to out-resource your neighbor, with which attendees of formal learning settings are often associated. In a mindful classroom, being compassionate means people are experiencing compassion and embracing its values. Students are trained to deal with their own and other people's adversities kindly. Thus, it focuses on and strengthens the student's welfare instead of winning. Meditations, like the loving-kindness practice, familiarise students with wishing well to their selves and others. All these practices have been evidenced to address the issues of bullying, peer relationships, and classroom environments. Educators who embody compassion serve as role models, demonstrating that leadership is rooted in care and understanding.⁴

¹ Kabat-Zinn, J., & Goleman, D. (2013). *Mindfulness in education: A review of the literature and implications for practice*. In C. K. Germer, R. D. Siegel, & P. R. Fulton (Eds.), *Mindfulness and psychotherapy: A clinician's guide to evidence-based practices*. Guilford Press, p. 255 - 272.

² Meiklejohn, J. et al. (2012). "Integrating Mindfulness Training Into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students." *Mindfulness*, p. 1 - 12.

³ *Majjhima Nikāya*. (Bodhi, B., Trans.). (2005). *The middle length discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 119, 941.

⁴ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Lawlor, M. S. (2010). "The Effects of a Mindfulness-Based

True mindfulness could only exist where there is sustainability, and therefore, sustainability cannot exist independently of true mindfulness. The last related concept of the contempt of right mindfulness of the Noble Eightfold Path dealt with awareness of the actions and their fruits. I should know this as I fight my generation's environmental crises. Including mindfulness within this context can help promote the adaptation of ecological approaches and spread feelings of stewardship among learners throughout schools. It allows learners to abandon their habitual learning models, opens their minds, and helps them understand that they are part of the Earth and need nature. Other activities include mindfulness in nature or inclusive of nature, such as eco-meditations, which may foster a greater understanding of nature by students. Schools that implement environmentally friendly policies like Waste management or Plant-based diets supplement these lessons and make mindfulness and ecological concern overlap. Sustainability also refers to the health of generations to come. Therefore, cultivating attentiveness enables the learning professionals to guide the students into making moral decisions that are competent within the best interests of the whole rather than fractional benefits. The sense of sustainability in evidence aligns with the Buddhist principles of handling the conditions that create suffering to prevent its recurrence and to strive for the conditions that allow lasting happiness.

Cultivating awareness as an educational philosophy is not an invention of the modern age but an ageless art employing ancient principles. Educators need to aspire to produce students with an ethos that recognizes the value of one and all and a world that is sustainable, cohesive, fair, and kind; thus, ideas of Buddhism for those involved in teaching and learning are most appropriate. Teaching mindfulness in Education as we grapple with responding to the challenges of a globalized world and a new century is a source of hope because it maps ways to a future defined by care, connection, and collective humanity: "Mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit." (MN 118)⁵

II. THE FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS IN BUDDHISM

Sati or mindfulness is thus one of the most fundamental concepts that underpin the Buddhist path and the key ingredient of the Noble Eightfold Path that sets out the route to the termination of suffering. In its simplest form, mindfulness is the ability to pay focused attention with minimal self-criticism to the present experience. It is the process of watching thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations come and go without attachment to them or with the desire to change them. It produces awareness, enhancement of clarity, balance, and insight into the nature of states of affairs in the world. The practice of mindfulness is often associated with the *Satipatthana Sutta*, a foundational

Social and Emotional Learning Program on Teachers and Students." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, p. 1016 - 1029.

⁵ *Majjhima Nikāya*. (Bodhi, B., Trans.). (2005). *The middle length discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 941.

Buddhist text that outlines four areas of mindfulness: the body, also known as 'kāya'; sensations or 'vedanā'; the mind, also referred to as 'citta', and mental phenomena 'dhamma'. These four tenets help the practitioners learn how to develop awareness at a given level that is successively more profound, from observing bodily sensations to patterns of thinking and feelings. This way, mindfulness can be used as a change agent that transforms; a person can go beyond conditioned responses and function more purposefully. Similar to self-awareness, mindfulness also applies presence and acceptance as some of the key qualities. Presence is about the capacity to be grounded in the present moment, and acceptance implies perceiving events and sensations without evaluating and fighting against them. These qualities are developed by exercises like breathing, walking meditation, and full-body scans in which the mind is conditioned to accept whatever is experienced at any given time.⁶

In the contemporary world, mindfulness is one of the many strategies in psychotherapeutic interventions; however, as I will illustrate, mindfulness-based Buddhism instills ethics and philosophy. From these ten, however, compassion (*karuṇā*), the principle of interdependence, and the proper means of livelihood stand out. Compassion means having a heartfelt wish that the suffering of others is minimized in some way. In and of itself, the concentration on the present moment means being conscious of suffering - be it our own or that of others. This recognition promotes empathy, encouraging individuals to behave in ways that have the least adverse effects and will benefit everybody. At their core, some practices, like the loving-kindness meditation (*mettā*), pursue compassion by teaching people to grant good wishes to themselves and others. Mindfulness is supported by such contributing practice as an attitude of care that changes the approach to relationships with oneself and the environment. From the education perspective, being aware and mindful of compassion fosters a positive learning environment where all students can learn.⁷ "All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts and made up of our thoughts." (*Dhp* 1)⁸

In Buddhism, an aspect known as right livelihood, as it is in the Noble Eightfold Path, means making a living in a way that will not harm people and will eventually benefit everyone. Although often related to an occupation, the right livelihood might be understood as living righteously, i.e., by moral rightness standards. Right Effort is supported by mindfulness as it creates ethical awareness and makes one intentional. In academic environments, this principle makes students learn how to look at the resulting consequences of their decision-making processes. Through mindfulness-based lessons,

⁶ Nyanaponika Thera. (1962). *The heart of Buddhist meditation: Satipaṭṭhāna: A handbook of mental training based on the Buddha's way of mindfulness*. Buddhist Publication Society.

⁷ Nyanaponika Thera. (1962). *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: Satipaṭṭhāna: A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness*. Buddhist Publication Society.

⁸ Buddhārakkhita, A. (Trans.). (1985). *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's path of wisdom*. Buddhist Publication Society, p. 3.

educators can influence and encourage learners to forge such directions in their future lives.⁹

In discussing interdependence and right livelihood as segments of mindfulness training, students are guided to think about the moral aspects of the process. For example, if integrated into mindfulness, sustainability or social justice discussions can keep students' awareness and responsibilities in synch.¹⁰ This approach fosters goal-directedness and enhances students' responsibility in accomplishing tasks that have a bearing on their communities. Mindfulness helps the students deal with stress, anxiety, and other factors that cause adverse effects, making the learners more resilient and healthy. Techniques like breath awareness or scanning could be effectively practiced at school or during classes, having a stress-relieving effect and strengthening students' inner spheres when practiced during the lesson. People who use mindfulness in their classrooms also offer valuable assets since they are sources of reassurance and could reignite people's faith in themselves after adverse experiences.

Mindfulness in Buddhism: Searching for best practices in and application for education. When mindfulness activities are learned alongside the principles of compassion, interdependence, and the proper means of livelihood, educators and students foster great personal development environments. The abovementioned practices promote achievement and the formation of value and skills to make the world a better place. As mindfulness continues to gain traction in educational contexts, its Buddhist roots provide a profound source of inspiration and guidance for reimagining the purpose and potential of education.¹¹

III. MINDFULNESS AS A PATHWAY TO UNITY IN EDUCATION

Living in the current society, with globalization enhancing the gaps between people, one of the most significant tasks and, simultaneously, a problem in teaching is to further students' unity and togetherness. Schools can be considered settlements since people from different cultural, socioeconomic, and ideological contexts come to school. Although it adds value and color to the learning process, it brings the possibility of conflict, miscommunication, schisms, etc. Mindfulness as an intentional and empathic way of attending to the world is key to overcoming polarization. Derived from Buddhist precepts and backed by modern science, mindfulness holds great potential to turn classrooms into tolerant, cooperative places where everyone learns together.

Mindfulness and Ways of Creating Unity from Diversity among Student Groups

⁹ Bhikkhu Bodhi. (1994). *The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering*. Buddhist Publication Society.

¹⁰ Magee, R. (2023, March 2). *How mindfulness supports social justice in schools: Q&A with Rhonda Magee*. Mindful. <https://www.mindful.org/how-mindfulness-supports-social-justice-in-schools-qa-with-rhonda-magee/>

¹¹ Lee et al. (2024). *Mindfulness in education: Critical debates and pragmatic contexts*. *British Educational Research Journal*, p. 459 – 478. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3998>

Being mindful helps manage conflict in school zones by increasing self-awareness, student acknowledgment of other people's feelings, and the ability to block undesirable emotions in students and educators. These qualities assist people in dealing with disparities and developing satisfying relationships with other people.

3.1. Enhancing self-awareness

There are two primary components of mindfulness practice: self-awareness. When students learn to keep a watch on their minds, hearts, and actions, they can better identify biases, assumptions, and prejudices. This self-awareness eliminates mindless actions and gives young people enough time to assess people around them with more tact and patience.

For instance, a learner realizing that they experience anger while working on a group assignment would take some time and think why before acting violently. It reduces cases of conflict and promotes friendly relations among the people carrying out the tasks.

3.2. Cultivating empathy

Loving-kindness meditation, a regularly performed mindfulness practice, requires people to develop benevolent attitudes toward themselves and others. Students become more conscious of good intentions and wishes towards each other, especially those classmates with whom they may disagree. Empathy fosters a sense of shared humanity, breaking down barriers created by cultural, social, or ideological differences. The classroom becomes more inclusive and harmonious when students understand and value each other's perspectives.

3.3. Supporting emotional regulation

Students who practice mindfulness are not easily annoyed; this makes few quarrels happen among students. For instance, breathing or a body scan helps the students learn how to deal with emotions like anger, anxiety, or frustration before they build up. Reducing undesirable behaviors that can result in conflict and disruption is one of the benefits of mindfulness since it empowers students to manage the emotional, intellectual, and perceptual contexts they encounter throughout their day.¹² Also, students with good emotional regulation decrease cases of destructive behaviors when solving problems and making decisions, hence improving class harmony - some Recommendations of Actions or Processes that Foster Cooperation and Minimise Conflicts.

They give up divisive speech. They don't repeat in one place what they heard in another so as to divide people against each other. Instead, they reconcile those who are divided, supporting unity, delighting in harmony, loving harmony, and speaking words that promote harmony.¹³

¹² Franco et al. (2016). Effect of a mindfulness training program on the impulsivity and aggression levels of adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1385. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01385>

¹³ . Bodhi, B. (Trans.). (2005). *The middle-length discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, (41) p. 373.

The findings suggest that with proper instruction, faculty and students can take some components of mindfulness and apply them to classroom activities to help minimize conflict between students. Below are some practical examples:

3.3.1. Mindful listening circles

Encouraging and helping structured listening circles allows the students to express themselves and their feelings. In this practice, one person speaks while the others listen without interfering or making any comments. As a result, during this activity, empathy, active listening, and mutual respect are developed since students trust each other's opinions.

For instance, when some students are asked to demonstrate a listening circle, a learner may express how she once felt left out, and other students automatically realize and agree to be more inclusive. It assists in forming better relationships with your coworkers and also helps in solving conflicts, which are in our case.

3.3.2. Cooperative pranayama

Techniques like breathing in and out together help the students identify as belonging to a group. When quieting their breath, students coordinate the process so they become one. This practice is most useful before any group activities, specifically before assignments in groups or any discussion that may be confrontational.

3.3.3. Mindful art projects

Including mindfulness in art, assignments allow students to cooperate when creating works of art and demand self-regulation of their emotions. For instance, in a class setting, students can construct a mural that represents the characteristics of each one, including, in this case, a school's values or goals. For example, mindfulness signals like 'see how all the efforts relate' help to keep the students focused on their roles within the project.

3.3.4. Conflict resolution through mindful dialogue

When conflicts arise, mindfulness-based conflict resolution practices can help students navigate disagreements with respect and understanding. These practices often involve:

- Pausing to regulate emotions before addressing the issue.
- Using "I" statements to express feelings and needs.
- Practicing active listening to understand the other person's perspective.
- Collaboratively exploring solutions that address everyone's concerns.

When conflicts are managed intentionally, such as in a conflict mindset, students benefit from practical conflict-solution strategies, which are more likely to foster unity rather than disagreement.

3.3.5. Gratitude practices

Gratefulness exercises for the student include keeping diaries or expressing themselves by stating things they are grateful for in classroom interactions.

For instance, students might write thank you cards to their classmates for certain nice things done or offered by them. They ensure that the people in the organization embrace and respect each other, hence minimizing the chances of divergence. Examples/Case Studies That Demonstrate How Mindfulness Increases Classroom Cohesion: “Just as the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt, so too, this teaching and discipline has one taste, the taste of freedom.”¹⁴

Many schools and organizations have included mindfulness practice at school, which has given marvelous results for uniting students in a class. Below are a few case studies that illustrate the transformative impact of these programs:

Case Study 1: MindUP programme

The MindUP is a program in the framework of the Goldie Hawn Foundation designed as an approach to integrating mindfulness into the K-12 school environment to improve social-emotional climate and academic outcomes. One of the intervention strategies the program incorporates is called “Brain Break” and entails having students trained to focus on their breathing for several minutes.¹⁵

In a large and inclusionary school district located in America, the proposed MindUP program boosted the culture of classrooms. Respondents of teachers indicated a significant decrease in fights among students and increased humanity among students as well. Several students commented on increased social relatedness and coping resistance, stressing the development of a healthy learning climate.¹⁶

Case Study 2: Inner Explorer programme

Provides audio-guided mindfulness for students and teachers based on stress reduction, emotional self-regulation, and Interconnectedness. In one of the middle schools in California, the program was adopted to combat high incidences of bullying and socially aggressive behaviors.

Within a year, the following changes were observed: disciplinary referrals decreased by 20%, and positive peer relationships among students improved. Teacher interviews showed students were more polite and quieter during such setups, and questionnaires made students realize they gained a better sense of classroom community as much as they participated in group work.¹⁷

14 Ireland, J. (Trans.). (1990). *The Udāna: Inspired utterances of the Buddha* (p. 56). *Buddhist Publication Society*. (Original work ca. 5th century BCE)

15 The Hawn Foundation. (2011). *The MindUP curriculum: Brain-focused strategies for learning - and living* (Grades 3 - 5). Scholastic, p. 15.

16 Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology*, p. 52 – 66. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454>

17 Lawlor, M. S. (2016). Mindfulness in practice: Considerations for implementation of mindfulness-based programming for adolescents in school contexts. *New Directions for Youth*

Case Study 3: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) to students

An Australian high school formulated a half-scale version of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) to cope with increasing student anxiety and interpersonal aggression. For example, it had weekly mindfulness meetings where subjects entertained different types of mindfulness like mindful breathing, mindful scan of the body, and love-kindness meditation.¹⁸

Studies found that students who had been through this program had improved in aspects of emotional health and social relationships. In our study, students participating in peer mediation and trained in mindfulness were able to resolve conflicts more effectively. Teachers also noted a positive change in students' interpersonal relationships as students acted more democratically.

Case Study 4: Quiet time program

Quiet Time, which includes the practice of Transcendental Meditation and attentiveness practice, its pilot is being used in schools across the United States for purposes of stress reduction and effective formation of social-related skills. The program markedly improved the school climate and student interactions in a tiny, low-income high school in San Francisco. Students participating in the Quiet Time program reported feeling more calm and focused, translating into fewer conflicts and greater collaboration during group projects. Teachers highlighted the program's role in fostering a sense of unity among students from diverse backgrounds, as mindfulness practices helped them connect on a deeper level.

Case Study 5: Harmony in Diversity Initiative

Such initiatives are involved in the Harmony in Diversity Initiative by a school in Singapore, which has integrated mindfulness practices into character education. The program included mindful storytelling, gratitude activities, empathy-building workshops, etc. This leads to a reduction in the incidence of discrimination and an increase in cross-cultural friendships in school. They appreciate each other's diverse viewpoints more than before, and teachers mention a more inclusive and respectful environment among students in the classroom. Mindfulness opens the doors of transformation through unity in education within a harmonious, diverse student group, collaboration, and reduced conflict. Mindful listening, gratitude, and conflict resolution are some practices that develop such qualities as empathy, emotional regulation, and mutual respect between the students and their teachers. The success of mindfulness programs in many case studies proves their potential to mold inclusive and cohesive learning environments.¹⁹

Development, 2016 (149), p. 83 – 95. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20163>

¹⁸ Hwang et al. (2019). A systematic review of mindfulness interventions for in-service teachers: A tool to enhance teacher wellbeing and performance. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, p. 102 – 133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102133>

¹⁹ Wong et al. (2024). Primary school teachers' trait mindfulness and inclusive educational attitudes: The mediating roles of empathy and teacher efficacy for inclusive practices.

These schools participate in a more extensive education paradigm that includes learning to be socially well and doing good academically, thus preparing the student for a more interconnected world with compassion, resilience, and the pledge to a community.

IV. INCLUSIVITY THROUGH MINDFULNESS

The world is connected even further today schools are mini-representations of what society looks like regarding nationality and all other forms and aspects that make up human diversity: cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. While diversity adds flavor to learning settings, it also brings some problems: misunderstandings, unconscious bias, or social exclusion. Inclusion in schools is concerned with using the words diverse and creating diversity-from-the-bottom-up empowerment for every student for active participation. Mindfulness - the practice of present-moment awareness with nonjudgmental acceptance-is indeed an arresting medium for creating including educational spaces. With emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and empathy, mindful students and educators better understand and celebrate diversity in the community while building bridges of understanding and compassion: "Just as a mother would protect with her life her son, her only son, so one should cultivate an unbounded mind towards all beings, and loving-kindness towards all the world."²⁰

This section details the understanding of the transforming role of mindfulness in school inclusivity, covering practices, strategies, and applications in schools.

4.1. Mindfulness toward recognizing and accepting diversity at school

Inclusivity starts with awareness of oneself and that of others. Mindfulness promotes this dual awareness, empowering people to understand their thoughts, emotions, and biases while appreciating others' experiences and viewpoints.

4.1.1. Recognition of bias and self-awareness

Mindfulness asks students and teachers to see their thoughts, feelings, and actions based within that faculty as they are, without judgment. Such an exercise is incredibly potent in spotting invisible, unconscious biases in a person's interaction with another individual. For example, a teacher-to-teacher exercise in mindfulness might help an instructor become more conscious of an automatic stereotype-based assumption of a student's abilities within culture. Now that it has been brought to consciousness, the teacher can choose to counter this stereotype and correct it, resulting in a more equitable classroom. Mindfulness lets self-awareness internalize so that students' authority figures can call to reflection. Journaling or mindful breathing are helpful practices

Frontiers in Psychology, 14, Article 1076150. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1076150>

²⁰ *Metta sutta: The discourse on loving-kindness (Sn 1.8)*. Buddhārakkhita, A. (Trans.). (1995). In *The Buddha's words: The Sutta Nipata*. Buddhist Publication Society. Retrieved from <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.budd.html>

that allow students to pause, suspend their internal dialogues, and ponder their thoughts and feelings. Such reflection could help reveal assumptions about schoolmates, thus creating opportunities for deeper understanding and connection.²¹

4.1.2. Celebrating humanity in one another

At its core, mindfulness speaks about interconnections first, with the understanding that all living beings share very similar desires, struggles, and wishes. This premise, firmly rooted in Buddhist teachings, indeed helps break down the walls that generally divide people based on race, gender, or socioeconomic status. When students and teachers practice mindfulness, they create themselves again as a collective humanity-building factor within inclusiveness. Such communal activity as mindful group exercises, for example, practice in an exercise of compassionate listening, builds students' ability independently to identify shared emotional experiences-e.g., fear, happiness, or hope in students-of-different-backgrounds-shared vulnerability which lays a foundation for respect and appreciation of diversity: "All things are interconnected. When this is, that is. When this arises, that arises. When this is not, that is not. When this ceases, that ceases."²²

4.1.3. Empathy perspective taking

Mindfulness increases empathy, which is synonymous with understanding and sharing what others feel. By tuning into their own emotional experiences, students become better able to feel the emotions of their peers. Such empathic awareness is especially needed in classrooms full of students who may meet viewpoints vastly differing from their own. Mindful practices like loving-kindness meditation encourage students to extend goodwill towards themselves and others. This helps mold an attitude of openness and compassion so that students learn to approach differences with curiosity instead of doing so with judgment. A loving-kindness meditating student, for instance, would internally wish happiness and good fortune for their peer from another cultural background, generating an immediate connection and commonality.²³

4.2. Practices that foster emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and empathy for inclusivity

To foster an inclusive environment, schools must enable their pupils to develop skills in emotional and interpersonal dimensions that are critical in coping with diversity. Mindfulness practices are unique since they create emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and empathy.

²¹ Lindo et al. (2020). Mindfulness-based practices for reducing implicit bias: Direct and indirect effects. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 48(8), p. 1101 – 1131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000020951892>

²² Bodhi, B. (Trans.). (2000). *The connected discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Samyutta Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications. Vol. 1, p. 552, 12.61.

²³ Zeng et al. (2015). The effect of loving-kindness meditation on positive emotions: A meta-analytic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 1693. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01693>

Emotional intelligence through mindfulness. Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. Mindfulness promotes these abilities precisely by inviting observation without judgment about one's feelings and a thoughtful response to emotions.

(1) Awareness by attending to breath activity, students learn to focus simultaneously on a feeling, for instance, anger, sadness, or excitement when it occurs, i.e., understand the first step of the process for working with it.²⁴

(2) Self-regulation: Stopping before acting out an impulse during a mindfulness activity as a process; if one feels frustrated by a group activity, the student takes responsibility by breathing deeply to calm down before addressing it rather than the possible confrontation and emphasizes teamwork.

(3) Social Awareness practice: Mindful practices, such as body scans or reflective journaling, prompt students to consider how they affect others through their actions and words; this nuance enhances sensitivity toward other views and experiences.

(4) Relationship management: Mindfulness activities such as active listening and empathy enable students to nurture richer, diverse relationships with their peers. One demonstration is mindfulness circles that promote free communication for students to share thoughts and feelings, offering a safe atmosphere.

Building Self-Awareness is critical since it helps them understand the biases, assumptions, and triggers one creates. Journaling, silent reflection, and mindful movement are some mindful practices that invite students to explore their internal landscapes.

(1) Journaling: Guided prompts such as, "Remember a time you felt excluded. How did it make you feel?" and "Write about a moment when you noticed a bias in yourself. These" can help students explore their thoughts and experiences as they give such students generally a greater understanding of themselves and the chance to empathize with other people.

(2) Silent reflection: Give students a few minutes daily for silent contemplation, where they can sit and observe their thoughts and feelings without being disturbed. It will make them aware of their judgmental or reactive patterns that may block inclusivity.

(3) Mindful movement: Activities like yoga or tai chi direct students toward their bodies and their emotional landscape so that they become engaged and more self-accepting. This kinesthetic awareness translates

²⁴ Broderick et al. (2009). Learning to BREATHE: A pilot trial of a mindfulness curriculum for adolescents. *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion*, 2(1), p. 35 – 46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1754730X.2009.9715696>

to more emotional and social awareness.²⁵

Building Empathy through Mindfulness is very important for empathy to be inculcated within a person, and at last, it is essential to be more inclusive, to be able to put oneself in others' shoes, and to come forward to help others. Mindfulness, which may include the following practices for empathy development:

- (1) Loving-kindness meditation, wherein students repeat phrases preferably such as "May you be happy," "May you be safe," or "May you be well," and send these intentions toward themselves, classmates, and sometimes even those with whom they have conflict. In this way, borders are softened, and openness to compassion is nurtured.
- (2) Perspective-taking exercises: Mindfulness prompts to encourage a student to put himself into other shoes will usually boost empathy. Such meditation may be guided by a teacher to his students while urging them to picture an incarnation of a buddy who speaks a different type of language or practices a different religion.
- (3) Compassionate Listening: Students are split into pairs and discuss within small groups while listening mindfully to each speaker. At the same time, the speaker shares openly, and the listener practices undivided attention, refraining from interrupting or judging. This activity builds trust and mutual understanding.

4.3. Real-life strategies on inclusion through mindfulness

Mindfulness is best given a dose as a school subject, making it part of the daily school routines and activities. Concrete, practical strategies, such as circle time, mindful storytelling, or culture-aware meditative practices, can be valuable means of achieving inclusivity.

Circle time: Creating space for students to talk openly about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences would make circle time have a structure that purports them to be respectful and supportive of each other. This makes the culture inclusive, giving each child the advantage of getting voicing and engaged listening.

- (1) Some examples of "guided sharing" might be: "Share one thing you appreciate about someone in this group" or "Talk about a time when someone's kindness made a difference in your day." Such prompts can lead students to talk about positive interactions and respect.
- (2) Conflict Resolution Circles: This is a measure of circle time where, when there is a conflict, students will share their perspectives, as other members will be listening attentively while they will all be working on

²⁵ Cañabate, D., Martínez, G., Rodríguez, S., & Colomer, J. (2020). The impacts of a physical education intervention on emotional awareness and self-regulation among adolescent students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, p. 1 – 12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17010001>

solutions together: “Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is, hatred appeased. This is an eternal law.”²⁶

(3) Gratitude Circles, or groups through which fellow students end their time in the day, allow a few students to reflect on good things and give appreciation toward others in the spirit of coexistence so that with it grows a sense of belonging.

Conscious narration: Stories are potent in forging people from different backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. Mindful storytelling in education is cognitive imagining married with narrative-cum-narration, allowing the students to think from other perspectives while nurturing empathy.²⁷

(1) Sharing Personal Narratives: Children can narrate the most significant connections, struggles, or transformations. Mindfulness cues would be included so that children could reflect on what they felt and learned from these moments.

(2) New-Telling Broken Narratives: Teachers could introduce diverse stories from other cultural traditions so their students could think mindfully about how the characters in the story experienced and felt. For example, a story about a triumph over painful circumstances in another culture could spark dialogues relating to resilience and empathy.

(3) Sponsored Creative Storytelling: The collaborative activity of storytelling invites children’s involvement in developing a narrative. Mindful pauses throughout the activity allow students to focus and dwell upon their accomplishments and the combined process.²⁸

Culturally Sensitive Tee Meditation. Mindfulness embodies the cultures that make up the various groups of students.

(1) Bringing in Cultural Symbols: Directed meditations can have imported symbols, suggested images, or languages from their cultural practices. For instance, a green-focused meditation might appeal to Indigenous cultures or use affirmations in several languages.

(2) Exploring Universal Values: Meditations on universal themes, such as kindness, gratitude, or resilience, will highlight some things that all cultures share and yet leave space for what particular cultures hold as different.

(3) Creating Together: Students should inform the development of mindfulness practices so that these activities reflect their various voices and needs. This might include co-creating an advised visualization incorporating elements from their own cultures.

²⁶ Buddhārakkhita, A. (Trans.). (1985). *The Dhammapada: The Buddha’s path of wisdom*. Buddhist Publication Society. Verse 5, p. 3.

²⁷ Lisa. (2024, April 18). Mindful storytelling for kids: Fostering empathy and resilience. ABFC. <https://www.abfc.co/mindful-storytelling-for-kids-fostering-empathy-and-resilience/>

²⁸ Edutopia. (2018, April 13). Stories help build a strong classroom culture. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/stories-help-build-strong-classroom-culture/>

Mindfulness is the path that transforms the road to inclusivity in schools. This way, mindfulness nurtures students' self-awareness with an emotional quality embodiment, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Schools can create space for every student to feel counted: circle time, mindful storytelling, and culturally sensitive meditation. Open hearts and minds wouldn't just be a good preparation for students to survive in the multicultural world. It builds minds into society again, with lots of generosity and harmony. With mindfulness becoming integral to school education, its capacity to build bridges and connect souls illuminates further pathways of inclusion and collective well-being.

V. COMPASSION: CREATING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

Compassion is the ability to share a person's experience with suitable care empathetically. It becomes more than a characteristic of human beings; it develops into an environment within which a student must feel valued to be strengthened in potential resilience and successful academic development. Mindfulness, a practice that encourages present-moment awareness and nonjudgmental acceptance, is a critical foundation for developing compassion for oneself and then, naturally, for others. This section analyses the all-encompassing effect of mindfulness in transforming emotional well-being and its connection to academic performance, together with implementing several compassion-focused activities in schools.²⁹ "To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to purify one's mind - this is the teaching of the Buddhas."³⁰

5.1. Self-compassion through mindfulness

Self-compassion entails being as caring and understanding toward oneself as one would be to a friend. Cultivating self-compassion among students would counterbalance the inroads academic pressure, social comparison, and personal self-criticism have made as adverse effects on students' psychological health. Mindfulness exercises, such as loving-kindness meditation, engender self-compassion. By being mindful, students bring into meditation phrases like "May I be happy" or "May I be free from suffering." In these, students are cultivating a positive inner dialogue.³¹

There is much research demonstrating the effectiveness of self-compassion in educational settings. Neff (2003) described that self-compassion is positively related to emotional resilience, lower anxiety, and higher motivation. Such things would be very relevant for students who find their world-changing academically and personally.³²

²⁹ Dundas et al. (2016). Mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological distress in a Norwegian student sample. *Nordic Psychology*, 68(1), p. 58 – 72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19012276.2015.102692>

³⁰ Buddhārakkhita, A. (Trans.). (1985). *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's path of wisdom*. Buddhist Publication Society, Verse 183, p. 53.

³¹ Fong, M., & Loi, N. M. (2016). The mediating role of self-compassion in student psychological health. *Australian Psychologist*, 51(4), p. 207 – 215. <https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Fong2016.pdf>

³² Neff, K. D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude

5.2. Compassion toward others

Mindfulness training also increases compassion for others by encouraging empathy and perspective-taking. Students paying attention to their minds and feelings can sense what others feel more. Guided meditations on sending goodwill to peers and journaling about acts of kindness are practices meant to help students connect through empathy.

It is especially noteworthy that loving-kindness meditation has increased compassion while reducing negative emotions like anger and resentment. These practices create a supportive classroom environment where students feel safe and respected.³³

5.3. Connections of emotional well-being to student performance

The effect went with the performance of students. An emotionally nourished pupil tends to immerse themselves in learning, project a growth mindset, and produce good academic results. Mindfulness-based compassion practices are significant and major players in giving emotional well-being, which translates into academic performance.

5.4. The determining role of emotional resilience

Emotional resilience, which assesses the ability to cope with adversities in terms of disturbance arising due to external stressors, is one of the most important factors for one's academic success. Mindfulness gives students the tools to balance stress, control emotions, and regulate attention, contributing to resilience. For instance, a student practicing mindfulness may be taught to recognize sensations of frustration brought about by solving a particularly tricky math problem. Using mindfulness, this student will recall those sensations and continue to work on that math problem rather than give up.

Evidence reveals that students participating in mindfulness practices have lower stress levels while their academic achievement is significantly higher. Such effectiveness is noted in the work of Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015), where mindful social and emotion-related learning programs in schools tend to show significant improvements in mathematics grades and cognitive control.³⁴

VI. ACADEMIC BENEFITS OF COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOMS

Classrooms where compassion prevailed were naturally environments full of psychological safety for students, substantially reducing anxiety and improving their learning potential. Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) study states that significant emotional support in classrooms enhances student

toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), p. 85 – 101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309032>

³³ Hutcherson et al. (2008). Loving-kindness meditation increases social connectedness. *Emotion*, 8(5), p. 720 – 724. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013237>

³⁴ Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), p. 52 – 66. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454>

engagement and academic success.³⁵

Collaborative learning is also achievable in compassionate classrooms as student pairs or work groups are formed to achieve common objectives. This resource-improving method will improve academic performance whilst developing and strengthening interpersonal skills and community building within the classroom.

6.1. Compassion classrooms as other initiatives or kindness-based mindfulness models

Edge: Going beyond such compassion and mindfulness efforts in the mainstream educational initiative is undoubtedly taking hold worldwide, showing that even budding developments may soon change learning environments. Compassion classrooms or, even more, kindness-based mindfulness practices are superbly practical guidelines for bringing into fruition acts in this regard.

6.2. Compassion Classrooms

“Compassion classrooms” refer to educational environments where emotional well-being and empathy come before academic excellence. In such classrooms, activities would involve all forms of mindfulness practice, social-emotional learning, and kindness-based activities. Such classrooms could be characteristically supportive and inclusive.

(1) Daily Practices of Compassion: Getting today going for one of the compassion class teachers was mindfulness, silence, or a circle of thanksgiving. Over the day, this approaches the already-positive mood and encourages students to consider what they may feel and put into intention their actions.

(2) Peer Support Systems: Activities such as partner check-ins or group problem-solving help organize students’ learning activities in a way that strongly emphasizes peer support in compassionate classrooms. These activities provide a powerful sense of belonging and mutual care among students.

(3) Compassion Projects: Students do teamwork projects of kindness and community service in very active ways, for example, food drives, care packages, building shelters, and many more. Therefore, students learn to show compassion while developing teamwork and leadership skills. “All beings tremble before violence. All fear death. All love life. See yourself in others. Then whom can you hurt? What harm can you do?”³⁶

³⁵ Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), p. 491 – 525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>

³⁶ Buddhakkhita, A. (Trans.). (1985). *The Dhammapada: The Buddha’s path of wisdom* Buddhist Publication Society, Verse 129, p. 37.

6.3. Kindness-based mindfulness practices

These mindfulness practices explicitly cultivate compassion and empathy through intentional gesture and reflection. Examples include:

- (1) Kindness Journals: Students record acts of kindness they experience or perform daily. Reflecting on these accounts reinforces positive behaviors and encourages a compassionate mindset.
- (2) Guided Visualisations: Teachers guide students through meditative visualizations that picture themselves helping or supporting others. For example, students imagine comforting a friend who is upset or helping a classmate with a task.
- (3) Random Acts of Kindness Challenges: Schools introduce some challenges that encourage pupils to do little acts of kindness, such as writing thank-you letters or helping a mate with a homework task.

These challenges create a culture of care and mutual respect. Case Studies of Compassion Initiatives:

- (1) The MindUP Programme: Developed by the Goldie Hawn Foundation, MindUP integrates mindfulness and social-emotional learning to form emotional resilience in children for academic success. This program includes compassion-focused things like gratitude practices and perspective-taking exercises. Studies showed improved emotional control while decreasing behavioral problems with MindUP.³⁷
- (2) The Kindness Curriculum teaches preschoolers how to be Mindful and Kind in Fun Play-based Activities. According to Flook et al. (2015), participation in this programme induced more prosocial behaviour and improved academic performance.³⁸
- (3) The Roots of Empathy Programme: This initiative brings young babies into classrooms to teach students how to empathize and connect emotionally. In tonight's class, through scaffolded discussions and observations, students learn to recognize and react to the emotions of others, thus promoting a compassionate culture within the classroom.³⁹

Compassion facilitates emotional resilience and academic success, which mindfulness can help foster. To empower students to experience challenges through the grace and strength available, mindfulness creates space for self-compassion, empathy, and emotional regulation. Just as compassionate classrooms or kind-based mindfulness initiatives exemplify, mindfulness

³⁷ Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015). Promoting children's prosocial behaviors in school: Impact of the "Roots of Empathy" program on the social and emotional competence of school-aged children. *School Mental Health*, 7(1), p. 42. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-014-9129-1>

³⁸ Flook et al. (2015). Promoting prosocial behavior and self-regulatory skills in preschool children through a mindfulness-based kindness curriculum. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), p. 44 – 51. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038256>

³⁹ Gordon, M. (2005). *Roots of empathy: Changing the world child by child*. The Experiment, p. 67.

can be a transformative force for good in education, where students thrive emotionally and academically. As schools continue to embrace these practices, the isolated good brought forth for a particular student also becomes part of a more significant movement to create a compassionate and connected world. Emotional well-being is linked to an academic performance that speaks and clears the way to prioritizing compassion as part of education, creating a trajectory for a future where all students can ultimately thrive. Sustainability and Mindfulness in Education Increased concern with sustainability in education has played an important role in confronting environmental crises in their respective societies. Schools are understood to largely contribute to cultivating environmentally conscious and active people with sustainable practices. The intentionality of mindfulness acts in support of the principles of sustainability. Mindfulness further nurtures connections- that of oneself, of others, and the natural world nurture behaviors of ecological well-being, not for immediate gratification. This document considers the perspective of mindfulness as one of the sustainable practices. It highlights the role of mindfulness in promoting environmental awareness among students, with practical examples of eco-mindfulness in education.

6.4. Mindfulness and sustainable practices

Mindfulness generates an attitude of care, intentionality, and interconnectedness- characteristics necessary for sustainable living. With the understanding of the present moment, mindfulness allows an individual to be aware of actions that reap consequences on the environment. It thus provides decision-making that aligns with ecologically sound values.

6.5. Interconnectedness and environmental embeddedness

Understanding interconnectedness is a vital tenet of mindfulness, namely that all life and ecosystems are inextricably tied together. This understanding helps one conceive oneself as part of a bigger whole and gives rise to a sense of ownership and responsibility for the planet. For example, when students practice mindfulness, they might become more attentive and conscious of environmental repercussions associated with actions such as using disposable plastics and wasting food.

According to Kabat-Zinn (1990), mindfulness increases awareness of how actions ripple outward into the lives of others and the environment (salient portion 67). So much of this awareness sustains behaviour, closing the lock between intention and action.⁴⁰

6.6. Mindfulness and values alignment

Mindfulness thus creates reflection spaces towards the values-formed choices. Those students would typically have choices aligned with ecological and ethical principles such as the use of refillable water bottles, waste-diverting recycling programs, and pro-environmental advocacy under sustainable school

⁴⁰ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delacorte Press. p. 67.

policy policies decisions that are non-judgmental.

Such an assumption relates mindfulness to pro-environmental behaviors. According to Amel Manning and Scott (2009), “those who spend time nurturing mindfulness tend to exhibit action” to behaviors that concern sustainability and conservation of energy by reducing waste (107). Schools can help students learn such values early through learning via the mind at an early age.⁴¹

6.7. Mindfulness promotes environmental awareness and sustainable behavior in schools

Mindfulness helps develop environmental awareness through connection to the natural world and all deliberate actions to promote sustainability initiatives. Schools, therefore, can utilize this to create environmentally-inclined learning spaces.

6.8. Deepening connection to nature

Mindfulness practices that are conducted outside renew their connection to the natural world in students. Movements such as mindful walking, observation of nature, and eco-meditations encourage students to engage their senses in acquiring the environment in their bones.

For example, a mindful nature walk can be constructed to focus on appreciating the textures of tree bark, the sound of songbirds, or the scent of flowers. Experiences like these develop into wonder and gratitude toward nature and incite a commitment to its preservation. Louv (2008) speaks of how mindfulness can be used as an antidote to the so-called “nature-deficit disorder” by reconnecting the student with the environment (34).⁴²

Promoting Sustainable Behaviours: Mindful students foster and develop self-regulation, directionality, and intentionality associated with such behaviours.

- (1) Reducing Waste: With mindfulness, students learn to realise their consumption, such as only serving the required food portions when dishing up their lunchtime meal or reusing materials during art projects.
- (2) Energy Conservation: Mindful awareness of energy usage, turning out the lights to unplugging devices, is a natural extension of mindfulness practice.
- (3) Eco-friendly Choices: Through mindfulness, students learn to stop and reflect: how do consumer choices of what to have for transportation or what school supplies affect the environment?

⁴¹ Amel et al. (2009). Mindfulness and sustainable behavior: Pondering attention and awareness as means for increasing green behavior. *Ecopsychology*, 1(1), p. 14 – 25. <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2008.0005>

⁴² Louv, R. (2008). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder* (Rev. ed.). Algonquin Books, p. 34.

According to Barbaro and Pickett (2016), mindfulness practices foster intrinsic motivation to act pro-environmentally, rendering such actions rewarding and meaningful (p. 190).⁴³

6.9. Building compassion toward the planet

Mindfulness breeds compassion within oneself and between collectives, including to the Earth. Loving-kindness, for example, can extend its intentions to the environment, such as wishing rivers and forests well, even wild animals. This compassionate perspective backs an individual's stewardship and care of their planet-'product'.

Stories/ Programmes Use Eco-Mindfulness: Various institutions and schools have established the efficacy of mindfulness in rendering support to sustainability education. The curriculum integrates eco-mindfulness with valuable examples that can practically show such applications.

Green School Bali: The Reference Model on Sustainability and Mindfulness International

Green School Bali is an example of how an international school approves such an integration-cum-sustainability-with-mindfulness concept into learning. To breathe in the environmental aspect while embedding mindfulness practices, the curriculum is designed to provide education in the environment and include mindfulness practices.⁴⁴

(1) **Mindful: Gardening:** In gardening, students will do mindfully planting, watering, and harvesting activities. This gives an experience that connects the students with the respect of natural resources deep into the ground and for nature.

(2) **Sustainable Building Projects:** Students are engaged in green designs, creating buildings through eco-friendly materials like bamboo, for which the contribution of mindfulness will come from reflection on resource use and environmental impact.

(3) **Eco-Meditations:** Guided meditations with such themes as gratitude for the Earth and envisioning a sustainable future will impel students imaginatively into hands-on action toward conserving the environment.

The programme: "Mindful Climate Action"

Developed by the University of Wisconsin, the Mindful Climate Action (MCA) programme combines mindfulness training with education on climate change and sustainability to create awareness and intentionality in

⁴³ Barbaro, N., & Pickett, S. M. (2016). Mindfully green: Examining the effect of connectedness to nature on the relationship between mindfulness and pro-environmental behavior. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 93, p. 137 – 142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.05.026>

⁴⁴ Green School Bali. (2022). *Primary school curriculum overview 2022-2023*. Green School Bali. <https://www.greenschool.org/bali/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/08/Green-School-Primary-School-Curriculum-Overview-2022-2023.pdf>

participants, who will, in turn, transform their lives to conserve resources and the environment.⁴⁵

- (1) Mindfulness Workshops: Mindfulness practices benefit participants by making them conscious of their consumption patterns and the impact such behaviours have on the environment.
- (2) Climate Education: This will incorporate science ideas about climate change and what it means to engage in sustainable activity.
- (3) Behavioural Change: With mindfulness, the participant is now awake to day-to-day actions that need aligning to the sustainability goals, for example, reducing carbon footprints or promoting renewable energy initiatives.⁴⁶

Out-of-door Mindfulness Programmes in Schools

Schools all over the world run outdoor mindfulness programmes to raise awareness related to the environment. These programmes combine mindfulness practices with ecological education and, thus, give immersive learning experiences.

- (1) Mindful Nature Journaling: Students observe and document changes in their local ecosystems, reflecting on their observations through writing and art. This activity fosters curiosity and responsibility for the environment.
- (2) Forest Schools: Adapted from Scandinavian education models, forest schools have nature itself as the classroom. Mindfulness is integrated into building shelters, exploring wildlife, and meditating in natural settings.
- (3) Eco-Art Projects: Students make art out of recycled materials by combining mindfulness with creative expression. Such projects highlight the importance of reducing waste and rescuing resources.

Case Study: Garrison Institute's Contemplative Teaching and Learning Initiative

Garrison Institute's Contemplative Teaching and Learning Initiative supports educators in integrating mindfulness and sustainability into their teaching. Initiatives will provide resources and training for:

- (1) Mindfully Environmental Advocacy: Preparing students to develop skills and confidence to advocate for environmental policies.
- (2) Mindfulness Practices with Sustainability Themes: Activities providing links between mindfulness and ecological themes, such as breathing natural rhythms in cycles.

⁴⁵ Barrett et al. (2016). Mindful Climate Action: Health and environmental co-benefits from mindfulness-based behavioral training. *Sustainability: The Journal of Record*, 9(6), p. 317 – 324. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8101040>, p. 318.

⁴⁶ Rosenberg, et al. (2019). The Mindfulness and Sustainability Connection. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 28, p. 22 – 26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.10.021>.

(3) Projects that Involve the Community: Applying mindfulness with sustainability principles for real-world challenges, such as hosting recycling or clean energy promoting.

Sustainability and mindfulness are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, they become a medium to instill earth-loving humans who will embrace this soil by saving it. Schooling in interconnectedness, encouraging intentional doing, and weaving eco-mindfulness into education are ways schools can give students a nudge toward living sustainable lives. Programs like Green School Bali, the Mindful Climate Action program, and outdoor mindfulness initiatives have shown the power and potential of merging Mindfulness with Sustainability Education. Such practices make students conscious of environmental issues and empower them to take action for a sustainable future. It becomes broader cultural movement significance as schools pick up mindfulness and sustainability. They nurture mindful-environmental leaders in the future, where education turns into a powerful tool against the world.⁴⁷

VII. FOSTERING HUMAN DIGNITY

Dignity is an inherent value standard of equality, respect, and compassion. The potential for such enlightenment within the realm of interconnectedness has been claimed from a Buddhist point of view as an essential truth of inherent dignity in every being. The education system would require genuine efforts to forge an inclusive, respectful, and empowering environment so that all students flourish. Mindfulness, which calls for self-awareness, compassion, and nonjudgmental presence, forms a deep channel for respecting oneself and others. The Buddhist perspective in this section speaks to the dignity inherent in all beings, how mindfulness fosters students' abilities to honor that dignity, and examples of mindfulness interventions for restoring dignity among impoverished communities.

Perspective of Buddhism on the Inherent Dignity of All Beings

Buddhism emphasizes all living beings' intrinsic value and dignity, based on a belief in interconnectedness (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and the potential for enlightenment (*bodhi*). This paradigm seeks to liberate individuals from hierarchical and discriminatory perceptions and enjoins values of compassion, equality, and mutual respect.⁴⁸

Interconnectedness: The Foundation for Dignity

Every being's dignity is closely linked to the dignity of other beings. This is illustrated in the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination, which asserts that all phenomena arise from dependence on others. Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) defines inter-becoming: it teaches that awareness nurtures compassion and

⁴⁷ Barrett et al. (2016). Mindful Climate Action: Health and environmental co-benefits from mindfulness-based behavioral training. *Sustainability: The Journal of Record*, 9 (6), p. 317 – 324. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8101040>

⁴⁸ Ikeda, D. (2025). *About Buddhist humanism*. Soka Gakkai International - USA. from <https://www.sgi-usa.org/about-buddhist-humanism/>

respect for all beings once one recognizes the interdependent nature of life.⁴⁹

Potential Enlightenment

Every being has the potential for enlightenment in Buddhism, which is the highest perfection of wisdom and compassion. This implies that all people's value is intrinsic, no matter their situation. The teachings of Buddha argue that we should see beyond mere superficial differences and realize the standard ability to grow and transform.

Practical Implications in Education

Thus, in the classroom, Buddhism translates into practices that honor individual learners' experiences, gifts, and aspirations. These principles can be of great importance to a teacher wishing to create environments where every student feels valued and well-supported.

How Mindfulness Empowers Students to Respect Themselves and Others

Mindfulness creates the basic requirements for respect for oneself and the other by fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassion. Mindfulness helps students to connect with their inner experiences and develop empathy, laying the groundwork for recognizing and honoring human dignity.

Developing Self-Respect Through Mindfulness Self-respect begins with self-awareness- the ability to recognize and accept one's thoughts, emotions, and experiences without taking judgment. This activity will also reduce bias and develop mutual understanding so that dignity and respect may thrive. Some of the Mindfulness Interventions That Restore Dignity in Underprivileged Communities Mindfulness interventions have powerful means of restoring dignity to underprivileged communities; they make the trauma healing extend to self-empowerment and develop resilience. Below are a few examples of programs/ interventions showcasing the transformative impact:

The Holistic Life Foundation of Baltimore, Maryland: The Holistic Life Foundation is a nonprofit organization that brings mindfulness practices to underprivileged communities in Baltimore. Indeed, programs aim to empower young ones, primarily by using yoga, meditation, and self-care programs.

(1) Mindful Moment Programme: A program that implements initiatives to make mindfulness sessions available in schools so children learn to cope with stress and develop emotional resilience. In turn, improved reports from teachers observing the lesser incidence of conflicts and increased concentration of students are evident in these reports.⁵⁰

(1) Youth Empowerment Initiatives: The HLF programmes assert personal respect and create a healthy community. Here, the student learns to appreciate himself as well as that of his peers, thus creating dignity and belonging.

⁴⁹ Hanh, T. N. (1999). *The heart of the Buddha's teaching: Transforming suffering into peace, joy, and liberation*. Broadway Books, p. 87.

⁵⁰ Holistic Life Foundation. (2016). *Mindful moment program: Transforming school culture through mindfulness and meditation*. Holistic Life Foundation. p. 14.

Mindfulness-Based Initiatives for Refugees: Significant trauma and stigmatisation characterise refugee populations, cases which take away a large portion of their dignity. Mindfulness-based intervention for refugees focuses on processing traumas and rebuilding self-worth.

(1) Mindfulness Without Borders Initiative: This programme offers mindfulness training for refugees to strengthen their emotional regulation and stress reduction skills. Participants also report feeling more grounded and more potent in tackling their challenges.⁵¹

(2) Mindful Arts for Healing: This program can allow participants to unleash their self-expressions and personal identity issues in a safe and secure environment. Once again, in restoring agency and dignity, the focus is on strengths and resilience as they bring attention back to the individual. Using Mindfulness in correctional facilities, an incarcerated individual would exist under specific stigmatization and dehumanization, which deprives him of dignity. Mindfulness training in correctional facilities aims to restore self-awareness, emotional regulation, and personal growth, which these practices tend to deny.

(1) The Prison Mindfulness Institute: This institution offers mindfulness exercises to incarcerated individuals to build skills for self-reflection and rehabilitation. According to the participants, there is increased self-esteem and development in interpersonal relationships.⁵²

(2) Insight Prison Project: This program instills accountability and empathy by empowering incarcerated individuals with mindfulness practices and restorative justice. Participants will take personal responsibility for their actions while accessing an inner and inherent worth, returning a firm sense of dignity and purpose.

The Holistic Life Foundation: Baltimore, Maryland.

Holistic Life Foundation (HLF) is a non-profit organization that brings mindfulness programming to disenfranchised communities in Baltimore. Programs specifically aimed at empowering the youth through yoga, meditation, and self-care techniques include:

(1) Mindful Moment Programme: Mindfulness within schools impart sessions for children to manage their stress and develop coping skills toward emotional resilience. Therefore, teachers note fewer conflicts and a higher concentration of involvement in the subjects of such reports.⁵³

(2) Programmes like Youth Empowerment Initiatives focus on self-respect

⁵¹ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2018). *Meditation is not what you think: Mindfulness and why it is so important*. Hachette Books. p. 203.

⁵² Shapiro, S. L. (2014). *The art and science of mindfulness: Integrating mindfulness into psychology and the helping professions*. American Psychological Association. p. 156.

⁵³ Holistic Life Foundation. (2016). *Mindful Moment Program: Transforming school culture through mindfulness and meditation*. Holistic Life Foundation. p. 14. Retrieved from <https://holisticlifefoundation.org/mindfulmoment>.

and community building as much as possible, where they help students learn how to value themselves as peers.

Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Refugees

The refugee populations grapple mainly with traumatic experiences and extreme marginalization, which ultimately rob them of their dignity. The programs based on mindfulness, specifically designed for refugees, give them vast potential to understand and heal traumatic experiences and rebuild self-worth.

(1) Mindfulness Without Borders Programme: This program gives mindfulness training to refugees focused on emotional regulation and reducing stress. The reported changes observed by participants included an increased sense of being grounded and empowered to confront their specific challenges.⁵⁴

(2) Mindful Arts for Healing: Art-based mindfulness programs encourage creative expression, allowing participants to explore their identities and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. These activities restore a sense of agency and dignity by emphasizing personal strengths and resilience.

Here, a case study called “An Investigation Into The Programme- Dignity Through Mindfulness”: The essay shows the importance of mindfulness in restoring dignity to marginalized communities. The program combines mindfulness with community action initiatives under the themes of: 1) Trauma Healing - Mindfulness helps participants prepare to process their past trauma and build resilience in their emotional lives. 2) Community Empowerment - Group mindfulness sessions enable mutual support and collaborative effort in problem-solving. 3) Cultural sensitivity practices are adapted to respect cultural values and traditions among participants, emphasizing relevance and inclusivity.⁵⁵

All education endeavors to create human dignity, which comes from knowing each individual's value. Dignity, stressed in Buddhist traditions, derives from being brought together regarding enlightenment possibilities. Shared aspects of that view are very resonant in education. However, mindfulness provides a practical means of instilling self-respect and expectation into students and laying avenues for self and others.

Mindfulness studies for poor communities, refugee programs, and prisons illustrate intervention potential for restoring dignity or resilience via mindfulness. Mindfulness has an abnormally high capacity for valuing and supporting each school member in establishing a compassionate and just society.

Challenges and Criticisms

The interest in integrating Buddhist-derived mindfulness into secular

⁵⁴ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2018). *Meditation is not what you think: Mindfulness and why it is so important*. Hachette Books. p. 203.

⁵⁵ Van der Kolk, B. (2015). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. Penguin Books. p. 276.

education has been very high over the last few decades. The focus on increased emotional well-being, concentration, and compassion has made mindfulness a much sought-after tool for educators looking to help address students' holistic needs. However, embedding Buddhist mindfulness practices in secular, multicultural education has its challenges: cultural sensitivity, misinterpretation of mindfulness practices, and stakeholder resistance in this endeavor. It echoes some of the serious issues involved in this tremendous undertaking. This section moves into challenges and uncovers the causes underlying this nonconstructive strain, followed by solutions that respect multilayered beliefs while retaining the transformational benefits of mindfulness.

Integrating Buddhist mindfulness into secularity in education poses a significant challenge: the tension between the religious origin and neutrality demanded in public institutions. Even though substantial amounts of secularisation have been done to mindfulness, it will continue to raise concerns of indoctrination or favoritism to sought-after denominations because of its association with Buddhism. Resistance to mindfulness programs usually comes from parents, educators, and community members, who may worry that such activities will interfere with their religious or cultural values. They are generally aggrieved in well-known areas for their religious identities or histories of conflict between groups. For example, some conservative Christian organizations in the USA have also rejected mindfulness, arguing that "it confuses people and encourages a non-Christian, non-ordinary spirituality under the guise of mental health".⁵⁶

Cultural sensitivity is still another major issue. Schools may belong to affluent or average communities, and the students bring diverse cultural and religious perspectives with them and their families. Introducing mindfulness practices without considering these perspectives may alienate or marginalize some groups accidentally. For instance, the use of Buddhist terminology or imagery may be uncomfortable or unwelcoming to students from non-Buddhist backgrounds; conversely, over-secularising it may also subject mindfulness to cultural appropriation where such practices lose their cultural and historical contexts and are repurposed for commercial or institutional gain. Treading this thin line between inclusivity and authenticity presents a considerable challenge for educators or program developers.

Resistance from educators themselves also poses a barrier. Teachers are often the principal implementers of mindfulness programmes. However, they usually lack the training and resources or, more often, the personal interest in bringing mindfulness into their classrooms. Absent proper support, they may see mindfulness as another burden instead of a valuable tool, leading to erratic or superficial implementation.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Thomas, J., & Cohen, M. (2014). *Mindfulness and the transformation of society: Social progress through inner awareness*. Springer. p. 245.

⁵⁷ Jennings, P. A. (2015). *Mindfulness for teachers: Simple skills for peace and productivity in the classroom*. W. W. Norton & Company. p. 93.

Another hindrance specific to pacing the bearers of changes, such as time, overcrowded curriculum, and limited finances, also adds its wretchedness to integrating mindfulness into schools. The already slogging educationists seem so preoccupied with their responsibilities that devoting time and resources to mindfulness becomes impractical or unsustainable. Schools in deprived areas may also be the other side of the coin regarding funding as they can barely afford even training or materials, and this will only worsen the woes in educational equality.

Solutions to Overcoming Challenges While Respecting Diverse Beliefs
Addressing these challenges requires a thoughtful and inclusive approach that balances the benefits of mindfulness with the need to respect diverse beliefs and cultural contexts. It is critical to have a universal, nonsectarian framework for mindfulness programs. The scientifically validated benefits of mindfulness include reduction, enhanced focus, and emotional regulation, which can be emphasized when presenting mindfulness as a practical tool to promote well-being rather than a spiritual or religious practice. This helps reduce resistance and makes mindfulness accessible to individuals from all backgrounds. For example, MindUP, which the Goldie Hawn Foundation created, concentrates on neuroscience and social-emotional learning; it does not blatantly reference Buddhist philosophy yet still encourages compassion and resilience.⁵⁸

Incorporate cultural sensitivity by engaging the affected communities on how much their awareness of mindfulness programs is designed, drawn, and implemented. This engagement can involve consultation with parents, religious leaders, and cultural organizations to identify potential issues and align practices with specific groups. For example, a school in predominantly Muslim communities might alter its mindfulness activities to honor Islamic principles, like gratitude (*shukr*) or being mindful of God (*taqwa*). Indigenous practices, such as land-based meditations or storytelling, can be embedded within mindfulness in Indigenous communities to value their local cultural heritage. Involving stakeholders allows schools to build trust and ensure that mindfulness becomes relevant to them all.

It is another critical step in comprehensive training to get educators all up to speed. Teachers educated in the tenets and practices of mindfulness would also develop their practice and have the resources to integrate mindfulness authentically into their classrooms. Its training programmes should cover both practical aspects of mindfulness and the ethics of mindfulness, enabling educators to present its actual value without misinterpretation or over-simplification. In addition, ongoing support, such as mentoring, peer networks, and access to resources, will help keep teachers practising mindfulness for themselves and allow them to deal with obstacles in implementing mindfulness practices.

⁵⁸ Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), p. 52 – 66. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454>

Schools should also be holistic when addressing the issue of “McMindfulness” to combine mindfulness as part of more extensive SEL approaches. Mindfulness would not be learned as an individual technique but with empathy, conflict resolution, and being an ethical decision-maker. For example, CARE for Teachers combines mindfulness and emotional competence training, helping the educator to facilitate an environment for the students to create a supportive and compassionate classroom environment.⁵⁹ Such broader frameworks for inclusion ground mindfulness in integrity and amplify the impact.

There are also practical options available to address the logistical issues. Practicing mindfulness at morning meetings or during transitions between classes eliminates the need for added time and resources. For example, three minutes of mindful breathing or a quick gratitude practice are easily integrated into the school day without cutting into other activities.

The last of these issues must be clear communication and science-based advocacy about its resistance. Educators/ program developers are given meaningful and scientifically researched information on the benefits of mindfulness practice to the stakeholders. Linking mindfulness to common values-respect, self-awareness, and kindness-helps in the dispelling of myths and engendering support. For example, reducing bullying, increasing focus, and improving mental health would resonate well with parents and educators who care about their children’s well-being and academic success.⁶⁰

Bringing Buddhist mindfulness into secular education has the potential to improve well-being among students and extend to building learning environments that are compassionate and inclusive. It is no easy road, however. Signs of cultural sensitivity, misinterpretation, and resistance show the need for thoughtful and inclusive approaches that would respect diverse beliefs and continue to provide the transformation of mindfulness. Schools can look into strategies such as the universal framework, engaging communities, and proper training and consider the logistical barriers through which these challenges can be effectively surmounted. While mindfulness continues to spread into education, how it gets through should always be under guard, withholding respect and inclusivity and, above all, authenticity to ensure that it becomes the real unifying factor in holistic development through which all students will go.

VIII. THE WAY FORWARD

The movement of mindfulness in education has captured the world increasingly over the recent past. Its effect grows with emerging evidence

⁵⁹ Jennings et al. (2011). Improving classroom learning environments by cultivating awareness and resilience in education (CARE): Results of a randomized controlled trial. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 26 (1), p. 413 – 424. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024115>.

⁶⁰ Weare, K. (2018). *Developing mindfulness with children and young people: A practical guide*. Routledge, p. 112.

that shows that mindfulness potentially boosts students' emotional health, cognitive abilities, and social relationships. However, the above raises an interesting question regarding how mindfulness can be incorporated more widely and well into the educational system to gain the most power in maximizing its effects. To this end, there is more in the future than expanding access to mindfulness; mindfulness is also embedded in a vision of holistic education. It brings out the road map to that vision, policy recommendations, guidelines for the education practitioner and administrator, and community and global partnerships' role in developing mindfulness practice.

Vision for Integrating Mindfulness More Deeply into Education Systems

Therefore, a school system-wide future would be schools characterized as environments that nourish intellectual learning and emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and a sense of interconnectedness. The understanding is that education must address the whole person and how they are being prepared regarding mind, body, and spirit for modern pathways, where realities take place. Mindfulness might be the future asset in this holistic approach-cultivating self-awareness, empathy, and purpose within students.

Mindfulness will become something that should be integrated into every aspect of educational practice: curriculum, teacher training, school policies, and community engagement. This requires students to introduce mindfulness practice into their daily routines - like starting the day at school with a few minutes of silence or making breathing mindful movement a part of physical education classes. It involves equipping teachers with skills and resources to model mindfulness and create a supportive classroom environment. For administrators, it consists of developing policies prioritizing well-being and resource allocation for mindfulness programs.

Graduate schools will engender such a culture about students and everything that relates to them when practices that teach presence, compassion, and resilience are not put into isolated programs but are present in every school or educational experience. In this culture, students learn not only to excel through grades but also are prepared to face the world with the challenges life throws at them - all with tenderness, thus contributing to a more compassionate and sustainable world.

Policy Recommendations or Frameworks for Educators and Administrators

Such a vision requires a strong framework that gives clear guidance to educators and administrators but allows them the necessary flexibility to contextualize mindfulness programs in local contexts. Below are the main policy recommendations and frameworks to facilitate the inclusion of mindfulness in education systems.

(1) Institutionalising Mindfulness in Curriculum Design Given that schools should infuse mindfulness into all core curricula so that every student gets its benefits, this can involve producing age-appropriate mindfulness modules across grades on emotional regulation, stress management, and ethical decision-making. For example, younger children can do playful mindfulness

activities such as mindful breathing and sensory games. At the same time, older students might be exposed to more sophisticated mindful practices such as journaling, body scans, and loving-kindness meditation.⁶¹

Mindfulness can be further democratized by integrating it into existing subjects. Thus, for example, neuroscience might feature in science lessons on mindfulness and relevant sources, while literature workshops could include themes such as self-awareness and empathy found in classic works. Thus, by embedding mindfulness into various disciplines, schools can demonstrate how mindfulness effectively relates to learning and life in many forms.

(2) All-inclusive Teacher Training The linchpin of mindfulness education is the teacher, and most of these teachers are hardly trained or do not even summon the courage to execute the practices. Training should include the theoretical and practical aspects necessary for teaching mindfulness, consisting of workshops, e-learning opportunities, and mentoring that incorporate mindfulness principles, classroom integration, and techniques for coping with a headwind into the entire program.⁶²

Additional aspects entail support for teachers' mindfulness practices; practicing mindfulness in their daily lives allows them to model its benefits for their students effectively. They might include offering such resources as mindfulness retreats, peer support networks, or access to mindfulness applications.

(3) Establishing Dedicated Mindfulness Coordinators Schools should appoint dedicated mindfulness coordinators who will oversee initiatives of mindfulness practice in schools to ensure that mindfulness programs are well implemented. These coordinators can serve as links between school administration, teachers, and the community as stakeholders in ensuring that the programs are aligned with the overall goals and values of the school. These also include continuing support and troubleshooting to keep the initiative going and dealing with the challenges as they arise.⁶³

(4) Allocating Resources Towards Mindfulness Programmes Funding is one necessary thing that helps in making a mindfulness initiative work. Budgeting should thus include an allocation for training, materials, and program evaluation. NPOs, businesses, and very philanthropic foundations may be supplemented with public funding to further access towards mindfulness programs in underprivileged schools. For example, MindUP and Inner Explorer have established effective partnerships with schools to offer

⁶¹ Broderick, P. C. (2013). *Learning to BREATHE: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance*. New Harbinger Publications, p. 45.

⁶² Jennings, P. A. (2016). *Mindfulness for teachers: Simple skills for peace and productivity in the classroom*, W. W. Norton & Company, p. 132.

⁶³ Weare, K. (2018). *Developing mindfulness in schools: A training handbook for teachers and practitioners*. Routledge, p. 98.

little or no mindfulness resources.⁶⁴

(5) Assessing and upscaling Programmes: School authorities should set mechanisms for regularly evaluating the programs concerning mindfulness. Such evaluations should entail data on student outcomes, teacher feedback, and implementation into the program. This will ultimately help to develop best practices and co-creating programs designed by evidence through collaboration with researchers and educational institutions. Successful models will then be upscaled into new schools, creating a ripple effect of positive change.⁶⁵

The Role of Community and Global Partnerships in Promoting These Practices

Community and global partnerships are key to moving the whole system closer to mindfulness in education, with resources, expertise, and a platform for collaboration. This bridges gaps in funding, training, and advocacy that would ensure mindfulness programs reach diverse populations and sustain their impact in the long run.

(1) Engaging Parents and Caregivers Parents and caregivers are essential partners to turn to on the quest for mindfulness, as their attitudes and behavior significantly affect students' experiences. Schools can invite families to participate in mindfulness activities by offering workshops, providing resources, and encouraging mindfulness practice at home. For instance, a school may organize a family mindfulness night where parents and children do activities like guided meditations or gratitude exercises together. It reinforces learning for the student while also building family connections and wellness outside the school walls.⁶⁶

(2) Collaborating with Local Organisations Partnership with local organizations, such as community centers, faith groups, and cultural associations, would make place-based mindfulness practices appear more relevant and include more voices in the programs. They would allow schools to fine-tune practices according to cultural values and needs within communities, making mindfulness a shared resource rather than an imposition from the outside. For example, a school in a community with a predominance of Indigenous people might partner with local elders to include traditional mindfulness practices, such as land-based meditations or storytelling, as part of the school's curriculum.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015). Mindfulness in education: What does the research say? In K. W. Brown, J. D. Creswell, & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of mindfulness: Theory, research, and practice*. The Guilford Press, p. 150 – 166.

⁶⁵ Weare, K. (2018). Evidence for the impact of mindfulness on children and young people. In K. Weare (Ed.), *Developing mindfulness in schools: An evidence-based approach*. Routledge, p. 89 – 114.

⁶⁶ Weare, K. (2018). Engaging parents and carers. In *Developing mindfulness in schools: An evidence-based approach*. Routledge, p. 102.

⁶⁷ Coholic, D. (2011). Partnering with communities for culturally relevant mindfulness practices. In *Arts activities for children and young people in need: Helping children to develop mind-*

(3) Building Global Networks Global partnerships increase the scope of mindfulness education because they promote the cross-border exchange of ideas, resources, and practices. Organizations such as the Mindfulness in Education Network (MiEN) and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) act as platforms to facilitate the sharing of knowledge by educators and researchers. Such networks will be able to carry the message to policymakers so that the awareness of the benefits of mindfulness is more widely raised and governments and international bodies can get involved.⁶⁸

(4) Leveraging Technology for Global Reach Technology offers effective means through which mindfulness education can be extended and made less exclusive. Online platforms, apps, and virtual training initiatives should be able to reach students and educators in the most remote or underserved areas. Thus, barriers to participation in the program are broken. For example, the Smiling Mind app costs nothing and runs evidence-based mindfulness programs for schools so teachers can use mindfulness in their classrooms. Global partnerships can democratize mindfulness education and ensure that most people benefit.⁶⁹

Systemic change advocacy. Systemic change can be driven through community and global partnerships by evidence-based mindfulness advocacy as part of education policy. This means raising awareness among policymakers, galvanizing public support, and showing the long-term benefits of mindfulness for people and society. Collaborative actors could result in a national and international comprehension of mindfulness frameworks as part of their more extensive educational reform and social justice agendas.⁷⁰

Integrating mindfulness technology into education systems transforms the broader purpose and practice of 21st-century education. Mindfulness creates awareness, compassion, and resilience among students to face daily life challenges, directs them to excellence in academics, and teaches them to navigate their lives through the wisdom of empathy. This would take an all-around approach to policy frameworks, strong training programs, and healthy partnerships with communities and global organizations.⁷¹

IX. CONCLUSION

Integrating Buddhist-inspired mindfulness into education represents such

fulness, spiritual awareness and self-esteem. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, p. 87.

⁶⁸ Weissberg et al. (2004). What works in school-based social and emotional learning programs. *The CEIC Review*, 13 (6). Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Retrieved from <https://www.casel.org>, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Hassed, C., & Chambers, R. (2014). Mindfulness in the digital age. In *Mindful learning: Reduce stress and improve brain performance for effective learning*. Exisle Publishing, p. 150.

⁷⁰ Hyland, T. (2017). The origins of mindfulness: How mindfulness has been integrated into education. In *McMindfulness: The mindfulness phenomenon in education*. Routledge, p. 98.

⁷¹ Roeser, R. W., & Eccles, J. S. (2015). Mindfulness and compassion in human development: Introduction to the special section. *Developmental Psychology*, 51 (1), p. 1 – 6. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038453>

a deep-seated change in concept that one can hardly regard it as an event or phenomenon; it is a profound structural shift in attitudes toward the ultimate purposes and practices of teaching and learning. At the core, education is not subject matter or workforce preparation; it is an enterprise involving nurturing for life achievement- individuals able to succeed personally, contribute meaningfully to society, and enrich their ways of living with harmony, sustainability, and justice in mind. Such goals can be achieved through a transformative vision formed by Buddhist mindfulness, which implies self-awareness, compassion, and interconnectedness. As we conclude this investigation, it is important to recap the primary arguments, showcase fullness, and make a case for the groundbreaking potential of mindfulness in education, issuing the call for action for commitment by all participants on these pathways.⁷²

Mindfulness involves the ability to be present and aware, and it is identified as a practice rooted in Buddhist philosophy. It encourages people to be curious about observing their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors without any judgmental acceptance. One will find various fruits in educational environments- nurturing emotional intelligence or academic excellence or providing resilience and inclusiveness.

It lays the groundwork for a lifelong experience in learning and development by helping students learn how to approach difficult situations through clarity and compassion. During the discussion, we experienced how mindfulness addresses critical dimensions of education. From enhancing human dignity, inclusiveness, and emotional resilience, all through encouraging sustainable behaviors, it relates seamlessly with the broad goals of the holistic organization. For example, in exploring inclusiveness, we saw how the practices of mindfulness support students in developing empathy and appreciation of different perspectives, thus creating classrooms that celebrate rather than fear.⁷³

On the other hand, concerning sustainability, mindfulness provides a more profound experience with the natural world, encouraging students to adopt ways beneficial to future generations. This is where mindfulness most alluringly transforms the relationships between educators and students with themselves and one another. Mindful teachers become very attuned to their needs and emotions, bringing more balance and personal authenticity to their work. This, in turn, creates a ripple effect, with students benefiting from being taught by more mindful educators. Students feel safer, more supported, and more willing to participate in learning in such a classroom environment.⁷⁴ Emotional safety is one of the cornerstones of good education because it makes students willing to risk things, to be themselves, and to experiment with new ideas without fear of being cursed or judged.

⁷² Haynes, D. (2013). *Contemplative practices in higher education: Powerful methods to transform teaching and learning*. Jossey-Bass, p. 46.

⁷³ Langer, E. J. (2016). *The power of mindful learning* (2nd ed.). Da Capo Press, p. 105.

⁷⁴ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness* (Revised ed.). Bantam Books, p. 432.

Implications of mindfulness in education likewise extend to the whole of society. Most notably, in a world torn apart by polarisation, inequality, and environmental degradation, values like compassion, interconnectedness, and ethical responsibility are most needed today- the same values cultivated through mindfulness. Therefore, students who internalize such values are better equipped to handle the pressing challenges of our time, from social justice advocacy to leadership in climate action. On the other hand, training a generation of mindful leaders means that such training contributes not only to the individual well-being of the individual learner but also to society's collective.⁷⁵

Yet, various factors make the merging of mindfulness with education difficult. As previously underlined, there are fears of an exodus from one culture to another by misinterpretation and resistance from various stakeholders, among many others, that distinguish an ineffective, inauthentic, or exclusive mindfulness program. For instance, secularising mindfulness, while very often required for its adoption in public education, ends up indecorously diluting its more profound philosophical and ethical aspects. McMindfulness thus indicates the phenomenon of turning mindfulness into ways of reducing stress without the possibility of transforming lives through compassion and interconnectedness. This would require dedication to protecting the integrity of mindfulness while translating it to a broad cultural and institutional context.

It is thoughtful policy option design and implementation that further enables the navigation of these challenges. These efforts involve designing holistic policies that encourage integrating mindfulness into the educational fabric while respecting diverse beliefs and values. These would include funding teacher training, finding pathways to incorporate consciousness into existing curricula, and developing a toolbox to evaluate the impact of these programs. For example, the MindUP program and the platform Inner Explorer are two initiatives that showcase the innovations that make it possible to scale mindfulness practices in schools. They furnish educators with highly structured resources to integrate easily into their teaching contexts while ensuring access and consistency across different settings.⁷⁶

Another key strategy is to foster 'bridges' between schools, communities, and global organizations. Collaboration plays a role in trust building, resource sharing, and lending to magnify the impact of mindfulness education. For example, schools might collaborate with local cultural and religious leaders to ensure that sound mindfulness practices are relevant and highly inclusive within their settings. At the global level, the Mindfulness in Education Network (MiEN) and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) have provided platforms that have proven helpful for educators who wish to exchange and share ideas, access training, and lobby for

⁷⁵ Hyland, T. (2017). *The philosophy of mindfulness: Integrating philosophy and practice*. Bloomsbury Academic, p. 198.

⁷⁶ Schonert-Reichl et al. (2016). *Handbook of mindfulness in education: Integrating theory and research into practice*. Springer, p. 327. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3506-2>

systemic change. Through these linkages, schools will be sure that mindfulness education is moving forward while equipping themselves to be innovative in learning from best practices.

Arguably, the height of technology promotion in mindfulness education wouldn't be more than this. The tools of digital entry, be they an app, online courses, or virtual training modules, transform mindfulness practices as compared to before and become more accessible than ever, especially for remote communities. For instance, the free, evidence-based mindfulness programs offered through the Smiling Mind app will benefit various age groups and enable under-resourced schools to impact their students through mindfulness. Likewise, online mindfulness retreats and webinars have allowed educators to advance their practice without being pushed by time and travel. The possibilities for technology to democratize mindfulness education will grow as technology grows, ensuring its reach to ever more remote and marginalized populations.

There's a visionary future for integrating mindfulness into educational systems. As much as it may sound, mindfulness culture should also become as much a creation of schools- an environment not with isolated interventions as guiding principles shaping every aspect of the educational experience. This includes curricula, teacher training, school policies, and community. For students, this means learning to live life from the lens of presence, curiosity, and ethical responsibility. For educators, it involves learning to model mindfulness and establishing environments where every student feels well-supported and valued. For policymakers, this entails taking mindfulness into the fold of holistic education and focusing on creating resources for its sustenance.

The call to action for educators is to practice mindfulness as a transformative instrument for teaching and learning. Whether through simple practices such as mindful breathing or extensive programs incorporating mindfulness into all subjects, from science to history, classrooms can be established where students will flourish as the head of humanity and meet all challenges. The role of policymakers is to support the effort by developing policies that focus on well-being, providing funding for mindfulness training, and ensuring programs are inclusive and evidence-based. Likewise, communities have a critical, albeit different, role to play in advocating mindfulness programming, joining training initiatives, and extending the culture of mindfulness outside the classroom walls.

Mindfulness is going to revolutionize education and the learning experience for millions. Mindfulness promotes self-awareness, keeps one compassionate, and builds resilience. It teaches a child how to live in difficult circumstances with wisdom and empathy. It also helps one with academic excellence and all other duties as a citizen in an increasingly interconnected world. In an age when a lot is happening in modern society, creating a space for presence and connection may be compromised. Therefore, mindfulness addresses that by asking us to slow down, reflect, and get in contact with what matters.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Egan et al. (2021). Mindfulness, self-compassion, resiliency and wellbeing in higher

Buddhist-influenced mindfulness finds a place in opportunity and necessity for creating a more compassionate, including, and sustainable future in education. Mindfulness as a resource that crosses boundaries could spur the world's development into an environment for thriving, contributing, and fulfilling satisfaction for every individual in it. Let intention and commitment manifest into these endeavors to ensure that mindfulness remains a lasting foundation for education and society.

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PRACTISING MINDFULNESS IN DEVELOPING LEARNING ADAPTATION AND EDUCATIONAL GOALS OF STUDENTS

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Abstract:

One of the main challenges educators and coaches face in schools is helping students adapt to their educational environments. The middle school years play a crucial role in the transition to higher education, significantly influencing student's activities and academic progress. Therefore, this research aimed to enhance academic adaptation and hope while reducing academic issues through mindfulness training. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measures, including a control group. The participants were O/L students from D.S. Senanayake College in Colombo. Initially, 50 students were selected for the training program, but due to various factors such as administrative input, student compliance, and other issues, adjustments were made to the sample. Both the experimental and control groups completed questionnaires at three stages: Pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. The experimental group participated in 45-minute mindfulness training sessions. Data analysis revealed that mindfulness training significantly improved academic adaptation and hope while reducing academic anxiety. The findings suggest that integrating mindfulness into educational settings leads to positive changes and optimizes the learning environment. The training program proved effective by enhancing participants awareness and non-judgmental attention, helping them approach challenges with greater self-acceptance and reduced reactivity. This model can assist school counselors in improving students' learning adaptation, fostering hope, and reducing academic anxiety.

Keywords: *Academic adaptation, mindfulness training, hope, academic anxiety, learning environment.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Regular difficulty for teachers and educators in educational environments is helping students to adapt and modify their learning environment.¹ Given the significance of the change from high school to university, it is vital to identify the components determining student's adaptability during this pivotal phase.² This level is all about requiring students to work against the change from high school to university requiring major academic adjustment.³ The academic adjustment refers to the process by which students manage their degree of satisfaction associated with the university as well as their degree of expectation of their education.⁴ Academic adaptability refers to people's ability to learn successfully, their motivation and tools of reaching goals.⁵ The process of adaptation is psychological, as well as behavioral, because, as students satisfy academic, behavioral and psychological criteria, and match their academic environment and perform to their learning goals.⁶ The spectrum of reactions that allow them to adapt their behavior to the environment in which they find themselves in their classroom is academic adaptation.⁷

Adolescence is a highly difficult period⁸ and teenage women in particular usually deal with considerable stress as they get ready for future phases of life, which can lead to worry and despair. Researchers are examining the factors and variables affecting numerous aspects of adaptability in learning environments in order to enhance them.⁹ Academic adaptation has several advantages;

¹ Varstenia, M., & Ojinejad, A. (2022). Predicting academic achievement motivation through academic adjustment, academic burnout and test anxiety. *Educational and educational studies*, 11 (1), p. 505 - 531.

² Abdollahi, M., Darbani, S. A., & Parsakia, K. (2022). Structural equations the effect of logical-critical thinking style with academic achievement with the mediating role of action control in high school students. *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling*, 4 (3), p. 64 - 78.

³ Mettler, J., Khoury, B., Zito, S., Sadowski, I., & Heath, N. L. (2023). Mindfulness-based programs and school adjustment: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of school psychology*, p. 43 - 62.

⁴ Li, L., Wang, X., Gao, F., & Chen, Y. (2019). Shyness and academic adjustment in Chinese high school students: The mediating role of self-focused attention model. *Current Psychology*, p. 39, p. 1 - 10.

⁵ Liran BH, & Miller P. The role of psychological capital in academic adjustment among university students. *J Happiness Stud* 2019, p. 51 - 65.

⁶ Valka, S. (2015). Management of international students' academic adjustment: challenges and solutions. *European Scientific Journal*, p. 17 - 36.

⁷. Paramo, M. F., Cadaveira, F., Tinajero, C., & Rodríguez, M. S. (2020). Binge drinking, cannabis co-consumption and academic achievement in first year university students in Spain: academic adjustment as a mediator. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, p. 542 - 555.

⁸ Yadalahi, Pourhossein, Sadat, & Mirsabehan. (2020). Stress and its consequences on adolescent health: a meta-analytic review. *Roish Scientific Journal of Psychology*, 9 (2), p. 1 - 14

⁹ Schenke, K., Lam, A. C., Conley, A. M., & Karabenick, S. A. (2015). Adolescents help

hence it is important to know and investigate. Usually combined with a fear of failing, anxiety generates unpleasant feelings and discomfort during tests or evaluations.

A fast pulse, restlessness, tiredness, trouble sleeping, impatience, shortness of breath, minor gaps in memory, and problems with focus and recall define common anxiety symptoms.¹⁰ Academic anxiety combines emotional, behavioral, physical, and physiological responses linked to concerns about negative social consequences and inappropriate responses in academic environments, such as failing an exam.¹¹

Academic anxiety is marked by five primary stress factors: pressures, conflicts, failures, self-imposed stress, and changes, and it triggers four types of reactions: physiological and physical, behavioural, cognitive, and emotional.¹² This anxiety includes different forms such as learning anxiety, class anxiety, and test anxiety.¹³ For example, during test anxiety, individuals might experience emotional discomfort and tension (emotional aspect), worry (cognitive aspect), avoidance tendencies (motivational aspect), and visible physical symptoms and facial expressions.¹⁴ Studies reveal that exam anxiety, academic failures and low performance, together with other factors, greatly influence the several academic difficulties and student maladjustment. Moreover, research has revealed a connection between low mindfulness among teenagers and more problems connected to anxiety. Although worry can be a normal and adaptive reaction that helps people adjust, too much and persistent anxiety can interfere with functioning, lower independence, cause maladjustment and anxiety disorders.¹⁵ Many times, serving as a survival tool, anxiety causes one to avoid particular events and responsibilities.¹⁶ Conversely, academic hope

seeking in mathematics classrooms: relations between achievement and perceived classroom environmental influences over one school year. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 41 (4), p. 133 - 146.

¹⁰ Lian, L., & Budin, M. (2014). Investigating the Relationship between English Language Anxiety and the Achievement of School based Oral English Test among Malaysian Form Four Students. *Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, p. 67 - 79.

¹¹ Bandura, A. (2007). Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory. (4th Ed.) Englewood cliffs. NJ: Prentice-Hall.

¹² Dundas, I., Thorsheim, T., Hjeltne, A., & Binder, P. E. (2016). Mindfulness based stress reduction for academic evaluation anxiety: a naturalistic longitudinal study. *Journal of college student psychotherapy*, 30(2), p. 114 - 131.

¹³ Pekrun, R. (2006). The control- value theory of achievement emotions: assumptions, corollaries, and implication for educational research and practice. *Educational Psychology Review*, p. 315 - 341.

¹⁴ Kadivar, P., Farzad, W. E., Kausian, J., & Nikdel, F. (2009). Adaptation of Pakran's Academic Emotions Questionnaire. *Educational Innovations Quarterly*, 32 (8) p. 7 - 38.

¹⁵ Adwas, A. A., Jbireal, J. M., & Azab, A. E. (2019). Anxiety: Insights into signs, symptoms, etiology, pathophysiology, and treatment. *East African Scholars Journal of Medical Sciences*, 2(10), p. 580 - 591.

¹⁶ Tush, A., Wasilewski, S. H., & Wiltshire, E. (2015). Managing anxiety. *Family Engage-*

is defined as the expectation of obtaining favorable educational results.¹⁷ It represents optimism about opportunities, competence, and skills.¹⁸ According to the control-value theory, academic hope is seen as a forward-looking emotion that promotes positive results.

As people work towards their goals, motivation greatly affects how they view both success and failure.¹⁹ Hope includes the formation of plans to reach a goal as well as the vision of that goal and the inspiration to pursue it. Hope requires two fundamental kinds of thinking: agentic thinking²⁰ and strategic thinking. Whereas agentic thinking, the motivating component, relates to the drive to carry out those goals, strategic thinking, the cognitive component of hope, entails the capacity to plan a course of action.²¹ High degrees of hope so inspire people to keep on their endeavors.²² Research indicates that mindfulness training can raise academic hope.²³

Mindfulness training has been underlined in many studies as improving academic adaptability²⁴ mindfulness training affects academic performance, as is well known.²⁵ Within the field of positive psychology, the interaction between academic adjustment, mindfulness, and hope is routinely investigated.²⁶ Furthermore, mindfulness reduces stress and anxiety, therefore indirectly influencing academic performance.²⁷ Though some view mindfulness as

ment Parent Workshop.

¹⁷ Yotsidi, V., Pagoulatou, A., Kyriazos, T., & Stalikas, A. (2018). The role of hope in academic and work environments: An integrative literature review. *Psychology*, 9 (3), p. 385 - 402.

¹⁸ Khormai, F. & Kemari, S. (2016). Constructing and examining the psychometric properties of the hope of education scale. *Cognitive strategies in learning bi-quarterly*, 5 (8), p. 16 - 37.

¹⁹ Barani, H., Fouladcheng, M., & Derakhshan, M. (2018). The relationship between mindfulness and academic dishonesty: the mediating role of academic hope. *Journal of Teaching and Learning Studies*, 11 (2), p. 50 - 75.

²⁰ Snyder, C. R. (2000). *Handbook of hope: measures, and applications*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press

²¹ Alexander, E. S., & Onwuegbuzie, J. A. (2007). Academic procrastination and the role of hope as a coping strategy. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42 (7).

²² Pekrun, R. (2006). The control- value theory of achievement emotions: assumptions, corollaries, and implication for educational research and practice. *Educational Psychology Review*, p. 18.

²³ Gallagher, M. W., Marques, S. C., & Lopez, S. J. (2017). Hope and the academic trajectory of college students. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 18 (2), p. 341 - 352.

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²⁶ Santisi, G., Lodi, E., Magnano, P., Zarbo, R., & Zammitti, A. (2020). Relationship between psychological capital and quality of life: The role of courage. *Sustainability*, 12 (13).

²⁷ Teodorczuk, K., Guse, T., & Du Plessis, G. (2013). *Mindfulness and academic achieve-*

a mental state, others see it as a set of tools and strategies.²⁸ With an eye on mindfulness interventions to lower anxiety in recent years, it is acknowledged as a successful method for alleviating anxiety, discomfort, and psychological distress. Mindfulness is purposefully, non-judgmentally concentrating on the present moment including constant awareness of physical sensations, perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and mental images Strömeyer, 2020 says, free from judgment.²⁹ Drawing on Kabat-Zinn (1994), Carl Weisscher (2020) defines mindfulness as deliberate, non-judgmental attention to the present.³⁰ This approach encourages conscious responses over instinctive reactions, helps people see negative emotions as transient rather than natural features, and strengthens personal relationships.³¹ Mindfulness helps people to control demanding circumstances adaptably and positively³²; it also promotes productive reactions and a good attitude by means of which one can manage stressful events. It also increases self-confidence and resilience in tackling environmental problems.³³ Mindfulness training has been shown to lower academic anxiety.³⁴ Recent studies stress the need for academic adaptation, anxiety, hope, and mindfulness and their relevance to student achievement. Improving academic achievement depends on addressing these elements, particularly throughout changes such as middle school to college. With the hypothesis that mindfulness training benefits these areas among students at D. S. Senanayake College, this study intends to promote academic adjustment and hope while reducing academic anxiety.

1.1. Research problem

To what extent the mindfulness training can be applied to increase Learning Adaptation and Educational Expectations of Students

ment in South African university students Doctoral dissertation, Doctoral dissertation. Johannesburg University.

²⁸ Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18 (4), p. 211 - 237.

²⁹ Strohmaier, S. (2020). The relationship between doses of mindfulness-based programs and depression, anxiety, stress, and mindfulness: A dose-response meta-regression of randomized controlled trials. *Mindfulness*, 11, p. 1315 - 1335.

³⁰ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. Hyperion.

³¹ Dehghani, Ismailian, Akbari, Hassanvand, Marjan, & Nikmanesh, (2014). Examining the psychometric properties and factor structure of the five-faceted mindfulness questionnaire. *Thought and behavior in clinical psychology*, 33(8), p. 77 - 87 .

³² Keng, S. L., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31 (6), p. 1041 - 1056.

³³ Monshat, K., Khong, B., Hassed, C., Vella-Brodrick, D., Norrish, J., Burns, J., & Herrman, H. (2013). A conscious control over life and my emotions: mindfulness practice and healthy young people. A qualitative study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 52 (5), p. 572 - 577.

³⁴ Dundas, I., Thorsheim, T., Hjeltne, A., & Binder, P. E. (2016). Mindfulness based stress reduction for academic evaluation anxiety: a naturalistic longitudinal study. *Journal of college student psychotherapy*, 30 (2), p. 114 - 131

1.2. Objectives

1.2.1. General objective

To study the applicability of mindfulness training for enhancing Learning Adaptation and Educational Expectations of School Students

1.2.2. Specific objectives

To study the mindfulness training techniques. To identify the Educational Expectations of School Students. To evaluate how mindfulness trainings, influence the Children's adapt to academic Challenges.

II. RESEARCH METHOD AND MATERIALS

The current study utilized a quasi-experimental design featuring both pre-test and post-test measures along with a control group. The study's population comprised O/L students from D.S Senanayake Collage during the 2023 academic year. Initially, after securing permission from this education authority and selecting a high school, 50 students were chosen from volunteers to take part in the training sessions through a convenience sampling method. Due to entry and exit criteria, as well as other factors (such as input from the principal, teachers, and counselor regarding academic suitability and the need for student participation, along with lack of cooperation from some participants), 40 students remained. These 40 students were then randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group.

The research methodology involved several key steps. Initially, participants were identified within a designated time frame. Most interviews took place at schools, with some held in common parks. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes and aimed to cover all aspects the participants deemed significant. Each interview was analyzed immediately, and any unclear points were clarified by revisiting the original content or contacting the participant for further explanation.

III. MATERIALS

Pekaran et al.'s AEQ (2002) academic emotions scale: This scale includes eight subscales: Pleasure, hope, pride, anger, anxiety, shame, disappointment, and fatigue. For this research, the focus was on the subscales for academic hope and academic anxiety. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Pekaran et al. (2002) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.95 for the different subscales. The academic hope subscale has 14 items divided into two factors: 8 items on classroom hope and 6 items on learning hope, with scores ranging from 14 to 70; higher scores reflect greater academic hope. The academic anxiety subscale includes 19 items, split into two factors: 8 items on class anxiety and 11 items on learning anxiety, with higher scores indicating more academic anxiety.³⁵

³⁵ Pekrun, R., Götz, T., Titz, W., & Perry, R. P. (2002). A social cognitive, control-value theory of achievement emotions: Social antecedents and achievement effects of students' domain-related emotions.

Mindfulness training: The mindfulness training program was based on a theoretical model that promotes focusing on one's current feelings, experiences, and events while adopting a non-judgmental attitude toward these present-moment experiences.³⁶ The researcher, who knew the course and its sessions, led the training, she also included follow-up one month after completion. Table 1 lists the sessions of mindfulness training given to the experimental group.

Table 1 - Mindfulness training sessions

Session	Content
1	Administering the pre-test: Introducing the participants and guiding them in becoming familiar with one another dominated this session. It covered defining the study goals, stressing the need of mindfulness, and elucidating important ideas such hope, flexibility, and worry. Along with other activities, participants considered their own strengths and shortcomings, practiced mindful eating with raisins, and worked on a project whereby they compared their own performance to that of others. Top of Form Bottom of Form
2	Reviewing previous sessions and assignments: This session had been the previous talks and assignments covered, body scan to raise physical awareness, and mindfulness to address challenges. Participants looked at their thoughts and feelings without evaluating them and talked about how to deal with nonjudgment. The program included a homework in which body scan skills and mindfulness experiences were brought to writing, along with breathing oriented meditation.
3	Recapping previous sessions and assignments: This session included reviewing earlier talks and assignments, practicing meditation in multiple postures, stressing breathing and physiological sensations during seated meditation, practicing mindful movements and assigning meditation techniques for various positions.

³⁶ Abedi, F., & Khademi Ashkazari, M. (2016). The effect of cognitive training based on mindfulness on the dimensions of psychological well-being of students, *Psychological Studies*, 13(3), p. 1136 - 510.

4	Recapping prior sessions and assignments: This session includes seated meditation, reviewing past conversations and assignments, with an eye towards ‘breathing, body sensations, surroundings. There was also a talk on stress, how we react to trying circumstances and investigating a few answers. The participants had to spy their bodily activity and separate real stress from real relaxation.
5	Recapping prior sessions and assignments: Reviewing past conversations and assignments, teaching mindfulness techniques related to ideas, meditating with an eye towards bodily awareness and intentional movements, and using prescribed exercises to challenge illogical ideas and behaviors comprised this session.
6	Reviewing previous sessions and assignments: This session concentrated on breath-cantered meditation, ongoing debates on ideas and their content, handling hypothetical problems, criticizing ideas, and suggesting answers.
7	Recapping previous sessions and assignments: This workshop covered techniques for self-care, planning and differentiating between pleasurable and unpleasant daily tasks, sitting meditation and open awareness, and developing kindness and self-compassion. The project asked participants to find and enjoy leisurely pursuits.
8	Reviewing and summarizing sessions and assignments: This final session involved evaluating the overall training, gathering feedback, and conducting a concluding assessment.

IV. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Academic adaptation is the process and capacity of students to successfully meet the expectations of their learning environment. It covers several facets of student’s performance and coping mechanisms in academic environments. Academic adjustment consists mostly in the following elements:

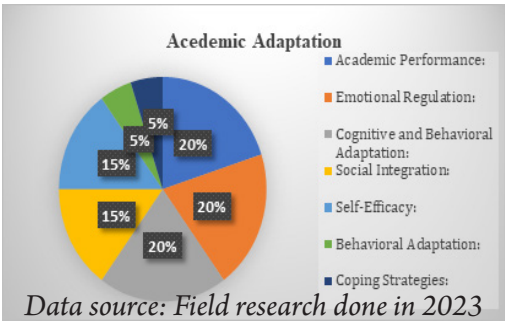
Information supplied by contributor regarding academic adjustment:

Table 2 - Regarding academic adjustment

Academic Adaptation	Percentage
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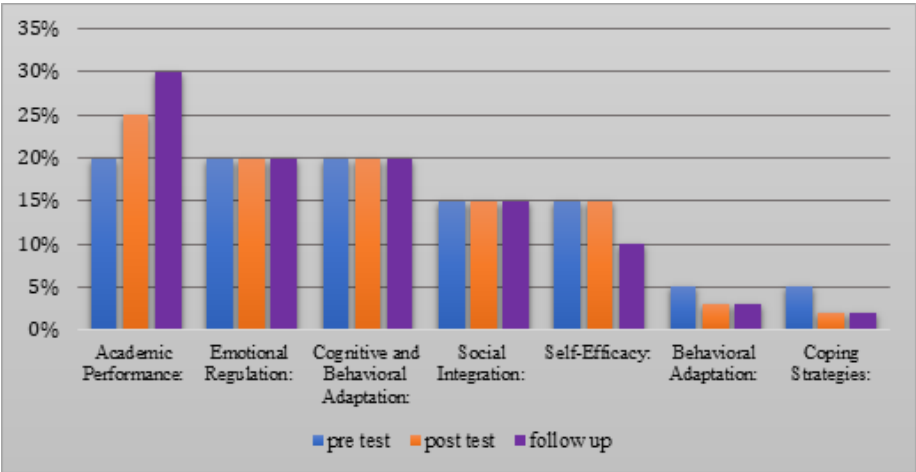
1. Academic performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades and achievements: Effective adjustment often results in improved grades and academic achievements. 12% • Quality of work: Ability to produce high-quality assignments, projects, and exams. 8% 	20%
2. Emotional regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress management: Capability to handle academic stress and pressure without significant distress. 11% • Anxiety reduction: Ability to manage academic related anxiety and maintain emotional balance. 9% 	20%
3. Cognitive and behavioral adaptation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study skills: Development of effective study habits, time management, and organizational skills. 10% • Problem-solving: Ability to tackle academic challenges and find solutions to problems. 10% 	20%
4. Social integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer relationships: Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with peers and instructors. 11% • Participation: Active engagement in classroom activities, group work, and school events. 4% 	15%
5. Self-efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence: Belief in one's abilities to succeed academically and handle challenges. 12% • Motivation: Drive to pursue academic goals and overcome obstacles. 3% 	15%
6. Behavioral adaptation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance and punctuality: Regular attendance and punctuality in classes. 3% • Compliance: Adherence to academic rules, deadlines, and expectations 2% 	5%
7. Coping strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience: Ability to bounce back from setbacks and adapt to changing academic demands. 3% • Mindfulness and stress management techniques: Using strategies like mindfulness to manage academic pressures. 2% 	5%

Information supplied by contributor regarding academic adjustment



The chart shows that academic performance, emotional regulation, and cognitive and behavioural adaptation are equally important, each comprising 20% of the overall academic adjustment. Social integration and self-efficacy contribute 15% each, while behavioural adaptation and coping strategies contribute 5% each.

Information on academic adjustment following mindfulness training



Data source: Field research done in 2023

According to the chart, each of academic performance, emotional control, cognitive and behavioral adaptation contributes equally to total academic adjustment prior to the intervention. Self-efficacy and social integration each add 15%, behavioral adaptability and coping mechanisms both add 5%. This distribution emphasizes in the initial state the balanced relevance of various elements. The post-test chart shows changes in the relevance of academic modification elements after the intervention. At 25%, academic performance now dominates; at 20% and 15%, respectively, emotional control, cognitive and behavioral adaptation, social integration, and self-efficacy still hold great importance. Reduced to 3% and 2%, respectively, behavioral adaptation and coping mechanisms suggest that these features either have improved or become less important. The follow-up chart shows the long-lasting results of the intervention. Academic performance, which now stands at 30%, has shown its continuous relevance. Cognitive and behavioral adaptability and emotional

control each account for 20%, social integration still comes at 15%. Self-efficacy has declined somewhat to 10% with behavioral flexibility and coping strategies still low at 3% and 2%, respectively. This distribution highlights the continuing significant influence of core adjustment areas and academic performance on one another.

Today, academic performance (which comprises 25%) becomes the main academic progress after mindfulness training. Emotional control and cognitive behavioral adaptability is still pretty important for 20%, and social integration always comes in steady at 15%. Self-efficacy has fallen to 10 per cent and behavioural adaptability and coping mechanisms have fallen to 3 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively. The results of these suggest areas of further investigation and the extent to which mindfulness training enhances academic performance.

Information supplied by contributor regarding academic anxiety

Academic Anxiety	Percentage
1. Performance anxiety <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fear of failure: Worrying about not meeting academic expectations or failing exams. 12%• Test anxiety: Nervousness or panic before and during exams, which can affect performance. 8%	20%
2. Time management anxiety <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procrastination: Stress related to not completing assignments on time due to delaying work. 14%• Overwhelm: Feeling anxious about managing multiple tasks or deadlines simultaneously. 6%	20%
3. Self-perception and confidence issues <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-doubt: Lack of confidence in one's abilities to succeed academically. 8%• Perfectionism: High self-expectations and fear of making mistakes. 7%	15%
4. Social comparison <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peer pressure: Anxiety stemming from comparing oneself to peers who seem more successful. 4%• Social evaluation: Worrying about how others perceive one's academic abilities. 6%	10%

5. Academic expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parental expectations: Stress due to high expectations from parents or guardians. 10%• Institutional pressure: Pressure to meet the standards set by educational institutions or scholarships. 5%	15%
6. Cognitive factors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catastrophizing: Thinking of the worst possible outcomes and fearing academic failure. 5%• Ruminating: Overthinking past academic experiences and their negative implications. 5%	10%
7. Physical symptoms <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Somatic symptoms: Physical manifestations of anxiety such as headaches, stomachaches, or fatigue related to academic stress. 10%	10%

Table 3- Regarding Academic Anxiety

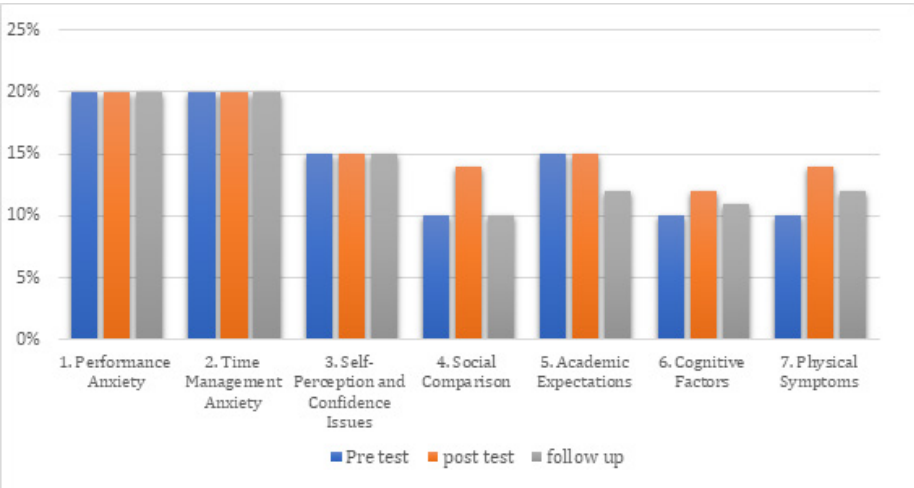
Impact of Academic Anxiety	Percentage
1. Academic performance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced concentration: Difficulty focusing on studies or tests. 9%• Lower grades: Poor performance due to anxiety affecting study habits and test-taking abilities. 6%	15%
2. Emotional well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased stress: Persistent anxiety can lead to chronic stress and mental health issues. 13%• Depression: Long-term anxiety can contribute to feelings of hopelessness and depression. 7%	20%
3. Behavioral changes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoidance: Avoiding academic tasks or situations due to fear of failure.12%• Withdrawal: Social withdrawal and reduced participation in academic or extracurricular activities. 10%	22%

Table 4 - Impact of academic anxiety

Strategies to Manage Academic Anxiety	Percentage
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1. Mindfulness and relaxation techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep Breathing: Using breathing exercises to calm the mind. 12% • Meditation: Practicing mindfulness to manage stress and stay present. 8% 	20%
2. Time management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational Skills: Developing effective study habits and time management strategies. 10% • Prioritization: Breaking tasks into manageable parts and prioritizing responsibilities. 10% 	20%
3. Cognitive behavioural techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Self-Talk: Replacing negative thoughts with positive affirmations. 11% • Goal Setting: Setting realistic and achievable academic goals. 9% 	20%
4. Support systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling: Seeking professional help from school counsellors or therapists. 10% • Peer Support: Talking to friends or classmates about academic pressures. 5% 	15%
5. Physical health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise: Engaging in regular physical activity to reduce stress. 10% • Healthy Diet: Maintaining a balanced diet to support overall well-being. 5% 	15%

Table 5- Strategies to Manage Academic Anxiety
Information on academic anxiety following mindfulness training



Data source: Field research done in 2023

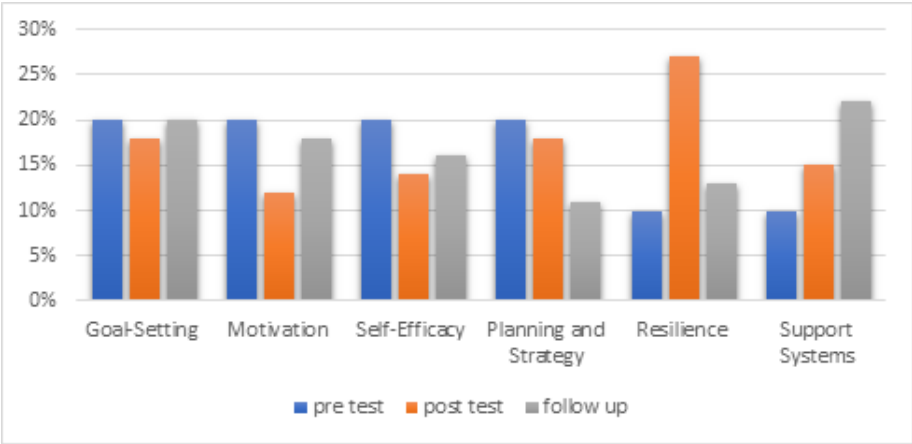
Academic Anxiety is the spectrum of stresses related to academic performance and obligations that harms student’s emotional and physical state as well as their academic growth. Effective management uses psychological techniques, useful skills and support networks to enable pupils to manage and lower anxiety. These distributions suggest that relevance of many aspects of academic anxiety as constant over different phases since they indicate a consistent impact of performance anxiety, time management problems and other such, on these dimensions throughout time.

Information supplied by contributor regarding academic hopes

Academic Hopes	Percentage
1. Goal-setting <ul style="list-style-type: none">Clarity of goals: The ability to set specific, realistic, and achievable academic goals. 10%Future orientation: Looking forward to future academic achievements and milestones. 10%	20%
2. Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none">Drive and determination: The internal motivation to pursue academic goals and overcome obstacles. 10%Persistence: The willingness to keep working toward goals despite difficulties. 10%	20%

3. Self-Efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belief in abilities: Confidence in one’s own academic abilities and potential for success.12%• Self-confidence: Assurance in one’s capability to handle academic challenges. And fear of making mistakes. 8%	20%
4. Planning and strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action plans: Developing strategies and action plans to achieve academic goals. 11%• Problem-solving: Ability to navigate obstacles and find solutions to academic challenges. 9%	20%
5. Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coping with setbacks: The ability to bounce back from academic failures or disappointments. 6%• Adaptability: Flexibility in adjusting strategies or goals in response to changing circumstances. 4%	10%
6. Support systems <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social support: Seeking encouragement and assistance from peers, family, and educators.5%• Resources utilization: Making use of available academic resources and support services 5%	10%

Table 5 - Regarding academic hopes
Information on academic anxiety following mindfulness hopes



Data source: Field research done in 2023

Analyzing academic expectations in the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages reveals unambiguous changes in focus among numerous elements. First, all stressed equally at 20% in the pre-test: goal setting, motivation, self-efficacy, planning, and strategy, thereby highlighting their basic importance in academic hope. Following the intervention, motivation and self-efficacy experienced considerable declines 12% and 14%, respectively indicating a temporary dip in their perceived significance. Planning and strategy also somewhat dropped to 18%, but resilience grew to 27% and showed more attention on coping and adaptation right after the intervention. Rising awareness of their significance, support systems climbed from 10% to 15%. Although goal setting had returned to 20% by the follow-up period, maintaining its essential role, motivation and self-efficacy had only partially recovered to 18% and 16%, respectively. Resilience dipped to 13% but stayed above its starting level, planning and strategy dropped noticeably to 11%, implying a declining priority over time. Support Systems kept rising, reaching 22%, therefore underlining their increasing relevance. All things considered, these developments show a dynamic change in academic expectations as attention on elements depending on their immediate and long-term influence shifts.

V. SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Enhancing self-efficacy

Confidence building workshops: Arrange regular lectures to raise confidence and self efficacy. The students need to grow and grow in confidence, and these lectures should involve seeing, goal setting and positive reinforcement. **Mentorship programs:** Kids should be established in mentoring programs with one another or their teachers in which they can get direction and encouragement. This support will only increase their passion and self belief.

Maintaining behavioral adaptation and coping strategies: Ongoing refresher sessions: These behavioral adaptabilities and coping mechanisms assist students in maintaining and growing their gains in attendance, punctuality, and resilience. **Integration of coping techniques:** To maintain these abilities front and first among the academic experiences of the students, make sure the curriculum routinely addresses coping mechanisms including time management and stress management techniques.

Managing academic anxiety: Customized anxiety management programs: Designed specially to handle several types of academic anxiety, including performance anxiety, time management problems, and self-perception concerns, develop and carry out programs. These sessions should provide useful tools and techniques for properly controlling these fears. **Consistent stress relief activities:** Secondly, add to the academic calendar, in consistent amounts, stress reducing events such as mindfulness seminars, relaxation techniques and cognitive behavioural seminars to make students reduce stress and the general health status.

Strengthening academic hopes and resilience: Goal setting and planning

workshops: Keep students focused on their academic and personal goals by offering ongoing lectures on strategic planning and goal setting. These sessions should provide doable actions and regular progress evaluations. (2) Enhanced support systems: Boost support systems by means of enhanced access to peer support networks, academic advisers, and counseling services. Emphasize the need for outside resources and inspire pupils to ask for help when necessary.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation: Regular assessment: Create a mechanism for continuous assessment of mindfulness training success. Review intervention efficacy and guide required changes by means of student comments. Long-term tracking: Track student's academic achievement, emotional health, and coping mechanisms throughout time to assess the long-term effects of mindfulness training and steer further development.

Incorporating mindfulness practices: Curriculum integration: Embed mindfulness practices into the academic curriculum by incorporating meditation and mindfulness exercises into regular classes or extracurricular activities. Faculty training: Train faculty and staff on mindfulness techniques and how to support students in managing stress and enhancing academic performance.

Promoting a balanced approach:

Holistic support: Make sure that a thorough support system including academic counseling, mental health treatment, and peer support includes mindfulness training. This method takes care of several domains of students' intellectual and personal lives. (2) Encouraging a growth mind-set: Promote a growth mind-set within the academic environment, encouraging students to view challenges as opportunities for learning and development. (3) Application of the above recommendations will help the educational institutions to derive the best out of the mindfulness training, address areas that need improvement and build a more effective and engaging class for the students.

VI. CONCLUSION

Emphasizing its main impact in enhancing academic performance and lowering related stress, the full study of academic performance, anxiety, and aspirations both before and after mindfulness training stresses. At first, each of the fundamental components of academic adaptation academic performance, emotional control, cognitive and behavioral adaptation accounted for 20% of the total adjustment and was equally vital. Academic performance substantially improved to 25% following the intervention, indicating that mindfulness training has greatly improved student's capacity to attain better grades and generate higher-quality work.

Maintaining their 20% share, emotional control and cognitive-behavioral adaptation remain vital since they show the success of the training in enabling students to control stress and create good study practices. Remarkably constant at 15%, social integration shows that kid's academic experiences were stable in terms of preserving good relationships with peers and teachers. Self-efficacy

dropped somewhat to 10% following the intervention, though, suggesting that continuous efforts to raise student's confidence and motivation are needed. Coping techniques and behavioral adaptation dropped to 3% and 2% respectively. Thanks to mindfulness training, this decline could be a reflection of improvements in these areas that lead to improved resilience, punctuality, and attendance as well as resilience. Still, it's crucial to keep giving these areas top priority if we are to keep developing. Regarding academic anxiety, problems with performance, time management, and self-perception persisted in importance influencing focus, marks, and general well-being. Mindfulness training effectively addressed these concerns by means of mindfulness, relaxation activities, time management, and cognitive-behavioral methods, so, anxiety was reduced and academic performance and emotional health improved.

At first, academic studies discovered that motivation, goal setting and self-efficacy were all equally underscored. Especially after the intervention, resilience rose which means excelling at overcoming obstacles and adapting to what is expected. They suggested that even more outside, around the sources and assistance turned into increasingly more significant. In the follow up stage goal setting and planning came to the fore whilst support networks and resilience continued to be of paramount importance. Mindfulness training, however, has had a major and long enduring impact on increasing academic adaptability and hope. It has contributed so much by doing so, to build resilience and to greatly improve emotional control and academic performance. These results enhance the point that we should incorporate such mindfulness techniques in academic assistance programs to assist adaptation, minimize stress and create a more conducive academic environment. These achievements should form the basis for future projects that entail students' route of learning around academic brilliance and personal wellbeing.

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MINDFULNESS IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LEARNING

Thich Hanh Quy*

Abstract:

This exploratory study investigates the transformative potential of mindfulness in promoting sustainable learning, bridging philosophical traditions with contemporary educational paradigms. Rooted in Buddhist philosophical foundations, particularly Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions, the research examines how mindfulness practices can fundamentally reshape educational approaches to address 21st-century global challenges. By analyzing the intricate connections between mindfulness, interconnectedness, and sustainable education, this study demonstrates how contemplative practices can enhance academic performance, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making. The research reveals that mindfulness offers a holistic framework for cultivating awareness, resilience, and pro-environmental behaviors, ultimately positioning education as a critical platform for sustainability. Through a comprehensive exploration of theoretical foundations and practical applications, this study provides insights into how mindfulness can empower learners to develop innovative, compassionate, and systemic approaches to complex global issues.

Keywords: *Mindfulness in education, sustainable learning, Buddhist philosophical foundations, emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by unprecedented global complexity, rapid technological change, and mounting ecological challenges, traditional educational models are increasingly inadequate for preparing learners to navigate and address multifaceted societal issues. This research emerges from a critical

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recognition that education must transcend mere knowledge transmission, evolving into a transformative process that cultivates holistic awareness, ethical responsibility, and sustainable thinking.

Mindfulness, with its rich philosophical roots in Buddhist traditions, offers a profound alternative to conventional educational paradigms. More than a meditative technique, mindfulness represents a comprehensive approach to learning that emphasizes present-moment awareness, emotional regulation, and deep interconnectedness. By integrating mindfulness into educational frameworks, we can reimagine learning as a dynamic, compassionate, and socially responsive endeavor.

The primary objective of this study is to explore how mindfulness can serve as a fundamental pathway to sustainable learning. This investigation is driven by several key research questions: (1) How do the philosophical foundations of mindfulness, particularly from Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions, inform contemporary educational practices? (2) In what ways can mindfulness practices enhance students' cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, and capacity for systemic thinking? (3) What practical methodologies can effectively integrate mindfulness into educational curricula to promote sustainability and ethical engagement?

By examining these questions, the research seeks to bridge theoretical insights with practical applications, demonstrating how mindfulness can transform education from a knowledge-transfer model to a holistic, transformative experience. The study draws upon interdisciplinary perspectives, combining philosophical analysis, educational theory, psychological research, and empirical case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of mindfulness in sustainable learning.

The significance of this research extends beyond academic discourse. In a world facing complex challenges such as climate change, social inequity, and technological disruption, education must evolve to nurture not just intellectual capabilities, but also emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and a profound sense of interconnectedness. Mindfulness emerges as a powerful tool in this transformation, offering strategies to cultivate learners who are not just knowledgeable, but deeply compassionate, critically reflective, and committed to sustainable futures.

II. MINDFULNESS AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS

2.1. Philosophical foundations of mindfulness

The Chan tradition is renowned as the “meditation” school of East Asia. Indeed, the Chinese term *chan* 禪 (Jpn: *zen*) is an abbreviated transliteration of *dhyāna*, the Sanskrit term arguably closest to the modern English word “meditation.” Scholars typically date the emergence of this tradition to the early Tang dynasty (618-907), although Chan did not reach institutional maturity until the Song period (960-1279). In time, Chinese Chan spread throughout East Asia, giving birth to the various Zen, Son, and “*Thiền*” lineages of Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, respectively. Today these traditions continue to promote, at least

in theory, meditation practices, and these have been the subject of considerable scholarly interest.¹

Kabat-Zinn states “Meditation does not involve trying to change your thinking by thinking some more. It involves watching thought itself.” Meditation is a method to gain mindfulness. Our brains are designed to think; we can’t stop this function, but we can learn to use it more effectively in our lives, for example, in study, work, and communication. Watching thought is not enough to understand what it is; we need to collect knowledge and cultivate a clear, bright mind, free from the dust of distraction. Just as your eyes see clearly through a clean glass, so too can your mind perceive thought when it is clear and focused. Buddha said:

The *Madhyama Āgama*: “Furthermore, a virtuous disciple studies extensively, memorizes well, accumulates vast knowledge, and constantly practices mindfulness. They attain the right mindfulness, which is well-established, long-practiced, and constantly remembered. This is the virtuous disciple’s attainment of the Five Good Dharma. Furthermore, a virtuous disciple consistently practices mindfulness, cultivating righteous thoughts. Remembering past teachings, they attain the Six Good Dharma. Furthermore, a virtuous disciple cultivates wisdom, observes the rise and fall of phenomena, and attains such wisdom. They are wise, discerning, and able to distinguish right from wrong. This is the virtuous disciple’s attainment of Seven Good Dharma.”² This progression reflects a holistic approach to mindfulness development, moving from foundational practices like study and memorization (Five Good Dharma) to the integration of mindfulness and righteous thoughts (Six Good Dharma), and culminating in the cultivation of wisdom and discernment (Seven Good Dharma). This approach extends beyond mere observation to encompass ethical cultivation and intellectual growth. The Buddhist tradition of learning from scriptures and practicing meditation emphasizes the importance of studying widely, memorizing well, and constantly practicing mindfulness. The concept of “right mindfulness” (*samyak-smṛti*) is central to Buddhist practice. It involves being aware of one’s thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations in the present moment. This practice helps to cultivate equanimity and clarity of mind. The importance of developing wisdom (*prajñā*) also be stressed. This involves understanding the nature of reality, including the impermanence and interconnectedness of all things. By cultivating wisdom, a virtuous disciple

¹ Robert Sharf, *Mindfulness and Mindlessness in Early Chan*, accessed on [October 4, 2014], available at: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/558818>

² English translation from Chinese by the author, original text 《中阿含經》「復次，聖弟子廣學多聞，守持不忘，積聚博聞，所謂法者，初善、中善、竟亦善，有義有文，具足清淨，顯現梵行，如是諸法廣學多聞，翫習至千，意所惟觀，明見深達，是謂聖弟子得五善法。復次，聖弟子常行於念，成就正念，久所曾習，久所曾聞，恒憶不忘，是謂聖弟子得六善法。復次，聖弟子修行智慧，觀興衰法，得如此智，聖慧明達，分別曉了，以正盡苦，是謂聖弟子得七善法也。」 (CBETA 2024.R2, T01, no. 26, p. 423a24-b4).

can discern what is true and what is not, and act accordingly. In modern terms, this could be likened to acquiring theoretical knowledge before applying it in practice. Here, mindfulness is not an isolated skill but one that is intertwined with learning, ethical behavior, and reflective observation. The ultimate attainment described – the ability to observe the rise and fall of phenomena and distinguish right from wrong – signifies a profound transformation of perception and a heightened sense of moral clarity. This aligns with the Buddhist goal of cultivating insight (*vipaśyanā*) to transcend ignorance and attain wisdom.

The Seven Good Dharma, with its emphasis on cultivating wisdom through observing the impermanence of all phenomena, offers profound insights into enhancing critical thinking and decision-making. This perspective aligns with Bhikkhu Bodhi's emphasis on mindfulness as a means of developing the "right view," a crucial component of the Noble Eightfold Path. By cultivating mindfulness, we become more attuned to the ever-changing nature of reality. We begin to observe how thoughts, emotions, and external circumstances arise, abide, and then pass away. This awareness of impermanence fosters detachment from clinging to fixed ideas or outcomes. When faced with challenges, instead of reacting impulsively based on fear or attachment, we can pause, observe the situation with clarity, and respond wisely. Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on interdependent reality further illuminate this connection. He emphasizes that all things are interconnected and constantly influencing each other. By recognizing this interconnectedness, we can develop a more holistic understanding of any given situation. Instead of isolating a problem, we see it within the larger context of its causes and effects. This broader perspective allows for a more nuanced and insightful analysis, leading to more effective and compassionate decision-making.

Furthermore, the practice of mindfulness cultivates a sense of equanimity and non-judgment. By observing our thoughts and emotions without labeling them as "good" or "bad," we develop a more objective and balanced perspective. This detachment from emotional reactivity allows us to analyze situations more clearly, free from the biases and distortions that often cloud our judgment. Drawing from the *Madhyama Āgama*, mindfulness is presented not merely as a tool for stress reduction or focus but as a transformative practice encompassing study, ethical cultivation, and wisdom. The progression from the Five Good Dharma to the Seven Good Dharma highlights a holistic framework in which mindfulness, coupled with extensive learning and ethical thought, leads to the development of discernment and wisdom. This ancient teaching resonates with contemporary research, which demonstrates how mindfulness-based interventions in education not only improve cognitive skills but also foster emotional resilience and moral clarity. Moreover, the cultivation of wisdom through observing the rise and fall of phenomena aligns with modern efforts to address sustainability challenges, where ethical and mindful decision-making is critical. By integrating these insights, mindfulness emerges as a bridge between ancient wisdom and modern applications, offering a pathway to sustainable learning and living.

The *Madhyama Āgama*: “The Tathagata said, *gāmaṇi*, do not doubt. Why is that? Because when there is doubt, there is hesitation. *Gāmaṇi*, when you do not have pure wisdom, do you think there is an afterlife or not? *Gāmini*, when you also do not have pure wisdom, do you think your actions are good or bad? *Gāmaṇi*, there is a state of concentration with dharma called ‘distance’, due to attaining this state will allow you to attain the right mindfulness, and you can obtain one-pointedness of mind. In this way, you can cut off doubt in the present life and make progress.”³ The *Madhyama Āgama* provides profound insights into how mindfulness supports the cultivation of mental clarity, emotional resilience, and wisdom. The Buddha identifies doubt as a significant hindrance to spiritual progress, emphasizing that it leads to hesitation and indecision, preventing individuals from advancing on the path to enlightenment. He recommends mindfulness meditation as a means to overcome doubt, as it cultivates clarity of mind and eliminates uncertainty. This teaching aligns with contemporary discussions on mindfulness, which highlight how doubt – like anxiety or uncertainty – disrupts decision-making and personal growth. Mindfulness practices provide tools to observe and understand these mental states without becoming entangled in them.

The concept of “distancing” (遠離) is central to the Buddha’s teachings in this passage. Distancing refers to a state of mental detachment from worldly desires, emotions, and distractions – not as an escape, but as a skillful means to quiet the mind and enable deeper states of concentration and insight. By distancing oneself from the root causes of suffering, such as craving, aversion, and ignorance, one can alleviate mental distress and attain inner peace. This process allows the mind to remain calm and focused, unclouded by emotional turmoil, and better equipped to discern the true nature of reality. The Buddha’s reference to “one-pointedness of mind” underscores the transformative role of mindfulness in achieving concentration and insight. Mindfulness serves as the foundation for stabilizing attention, focusing on the present moment, and eliminating distractions. This teaching has practical applications in modern contexts, such as education and work. Research demonstrates that mindfulness improves cognitive abilities, reduces mind-wandering, and enhances productivity.

Ultimately, the goal of mindfulness and distancing is to cultivate wisdom and transcend the ego. The Buddha teaches that by realizing the impermanent and illusory nature of the self, one can overcome the limitations of the ego and attain liberation. In modern contexts, this insight fosters self-awareness, emotional regulation, and a broader, interconnected perspective. Mindfulness practices have been shown to reduce egocentric tendencies, enhance

³ English translation from Chinese by the author, original text 《中阿含經》卷4：「世尊告曰：「伽彌尼！汝莫生疑惑。所以者何？因有疑惑便生猶豫。伽彌尼！汝自無淨智，為有後世，為無後世？伽彌尼！汝又無淨智，所作為惡，所作為善？伽彌尼！有法之定，名曰遠離，汝因此定，可得正念，可得一心。如是，汝於現法便斷疑惑，而得昇進。」」（CBETA 2024.R2, T01, no. 26, p. 447a22 - 27).

gratitude, and promote prosocial behavior. This transformative process not only supports personal growth but also contributes to a sustainable and compassionate society. By integrating these teachings with contemporary research, mindfulness emerges as a critical tool for addressing psychological barriers, developing emotional resilience, and fostering wisdom. The Buddha's identification of doubt, distancing, and one-pointedness of mind provides a timeless framework that remains relevant in addressing the challenges of modern life. Together, these practices enable individuals to cultivate clarity, emotional balance, and an interconnected understanding of reality, ultimately advancing on the path to enlightenment and contributing to the greater good.

2.2. Transition from discursive thinking to concentration

The connecting and sustaining aspects of *vitarka-vicāra* are fundamental to the initial stages of *dhyana* practice, as they facilitate the focused direction of attention towards a meditation object, thereby establishing a strong foundation for concentration. *vitarka-vicāra* The Sanskrit terms describing “thought and investigation,” are essential concepts in understanding the progression of meditative states, particularly in the context of *dhyana*. *Vitarka* (from Sanskrit root *tarka*, meaning “to think” and *Vi* is the prefix wide/broad)⁴ means “reflection, thought, thinking, or initial application of mind.” *Vicāra* (from Sanskrit root *car*, “move”) means investigation, examination, consideration, deliberation, or sustained application. According to Shankman, “Two distinct meanings are suggested from these various renderings one indicating mental activities such as thinking, reflecting, and so on, and the other referring to the mental activity of connecting and sustaining the attention on a meditation subject.”⁵ *Vitarka* refers to the initial application of the mind to an object of meditation. It involves deliberately directing attention to a meditation subject, such as the breath or a mantra. The term reflects the act of “connecting” the mind with the object of focus. *Vicāra*, on the other hand, signifies sustained attention and the investigative quality of the mind. It represents the continuous engagement or “dwelling” on the object of meditation, allowing for deeper exploration. These terms collectively describe the mental activities required to establish and maintain focus during the first *dhyāna* (absorption state). They highlight two aspects of mindfulness: initial focus and sustained investigation, which are crucial for progress in meditation.

In the initial stages of meditation, *vitarka-vicāra* represents the active engagement of the mind with the meditation object. This phase is crucial for anchoring the attention and developing stability of the mind. Over time, as concentration deepens, the effort associated with *vitarka-vicāra* subsides, allowing for the emergence of tranquility (*prasrabhi*) and rapture (*Prīti*)

⁴ Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Donald S. Lopez, Jr., The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 983.

⁵ Richard Shankman, The Experience of *samadhi*, Shambhala Publications, accessed on 2008, p. 39, available at: https://ahandfulofleaves.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/experience-of-samadhi_shankman.pdf

characteristic of deeper meditative states. Mindfulness involves being fully aware of the present moment without judgment. The deliberate application *vitarka* and sustained attention *vicāra* to an object of meditation are foundational skills for cultivating mindfulness. By repeatedly practicing *vitarka-vicāra*, meditators develop the ability to notice when their mind has wandered and bring it back to the present. This is a cornerstone of mindfulness training. *Vicāra*, as a sustained investigation, facilitates insight into the nature of phenomena. For example, through focused attention on the breath, meditators may observe the impermanence (*anitya*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anātman*) of their experiences. This investigative quality is a precursor to *vipaśyanā* (insight meditation), where deeper truths about reality are realized. Before entering the *first dhyana*, *vitarka-vicāra* are employed as tools to stabilize the mind and overcome distractions. They are essential for bridging the gap between ordinary discursive thinking and the one-pointed concentration (*Ekāgratā*) necessary for absorption. Once the *first dhyana* is attained, *vitarka-vicāra* become intrinsic qualities of the meditative state. They no longer involve active mental effort but instead manifest as refined mental phenomena supporting stability and clarity.

The analysis of *vitarka-vicāra* is crucial for understanding the mechanics of mindfulness and meditation. These two factors represent the foundational stages of meditative focus, bridging the gap between scattered mental activity and deep concentration. By developing *vitarka-vicāra*, meditators cultivate the essential qualities of mindfulness – awareness, focus, and insight – that lead to both personal well-being and spiritual progress.

2.3. Challenges in interpretation

The terms *vitarka* and *vicāra* are complex and have been interpreted differently across Buddhist traditions: Theravāda Interpretation and Mahāyāna and Chan/Zen Perspectives. In Theravāda Buddhism *vitarka* and *vicāra* are viewed primarily as *dhyana factors* (mental qualities) that facilitate the attainment of meditative absorption (*dhyana*). Their interpretation emphasizes practical aspects of calming the mind and developing deep concentration. *Vitarka* is an initial application of thought, the act of directing the mind toward the meditation object (e.g., the breath, a kasina, or a mantra). It functions as the “mental energy” needed to engage the mind and overcome distraction. It is like setting a compass and aligning the mind with the chosen focus. *Vicāra* is a sustained application of thought, that involves keeping the mind steadily engaged with the meditation object. It refines the attention initiated by *vitarka*, moving the mind away from coarse engagement to subtler forms of awareness. *Vicāra* is like adjusting and fine-tuning the compass to maintain the correct heading.

Vitarka and *vicāra* are present in the *first dhyana* but drop away as the meditator progresses to deeper *dhyana*. They are considered preparatory factors that help overcome the initial “noise” of mental distraction, paving the way for tranquility (*prasaṃbhi*) and deeper concentration. Theravāda views *vitarka-vicāra* in a pragmatic light, emphasizing their function in cultivating *samatha* (calm abiding) rather than as tools for insight or philosophical inquiry.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, particularly in the Chan/ Zen tradition, the interpretation of *vitarka* and *vicāra* expands beyond their role as preparatory meditative factors to include a broader analytical and investigative function. This reflects the Mahāyāna emphasis on *prajñā* (wisdom) and the integration of insight into meditative practice.

Vitarka is deliberative inquiry, associated with actively engaging in questioning or investigating the nature of reality, such as reflecting on the nature of impermanence, emptiness (*śūnyatā*), or interconnectedness. It is not merely about focusing on an object but also about examining phenomena to uncover deeper truths. *Vicāra* is sustained contemplation and represents an ongoing process of inquiry or “dwelling upon” insights gained during meditation. It includes investigating conceptual frameworks, like the two truths (ultimate and conventional reality), and experiencing their integration in direct awareness.

Vitarka-vicāra in the Chan/ Zen tradition may be seen as tools for developing both *samatha* (calm) and *vipāśyanā* (insight). While Theravāda emphasizes the abandonment of conceptual thought to attain deeper states of concentration, Chan/ Zen often uses thought and investigation as pathways to transcend dualistic thinking altogether, ultimately leading to non-conceptual awareness. For example, *Hua Tou* (話頭) is part of a form of Buddhist meditation known as Gongfu 工夫, and *koan* inquiry requires *vitarka* (initial questioning) and *vicāra* (sustained contemplation) to exhaust conceptual reasoning and reveal the limitations of intellectual understanding. This process is not about stilling the mind entirely but breaking through conventional views to experience reality as it is.

Aspect	<i>Theravāda</i>	<i>Mahāyāna/ Chan (Zen)</i>
Focus	Practical tools for calming the mind and achieving <i>dhyana</i> (concentration).	Tools for insight into the nature of reality, often integrated with <i>prajñā</i> (wisdom).
<i>Vitarka</i>	Directing the mind to the object of meditation.	Engaging in inquiry and initial reflection on ultimate truths.
<i>Vicāra</i>	Sustaining attention on the meditation object.	Deepening investigation and sustained contemplation of insights.
Role in Progression	Abandoned as concentration deepens into higher <i>dhyana</i> .	Used as methods to transcend conceptual thought and realize non-duality.

Aspect	<i>Theravāda</i>	<i>Mahāyāna/ Chan (Zen)</i>
Meditative Goal	Attainment of <i>sa-matha</i> (calm) and later <i>vipaśyanā</i> (insight).	Integration of <i>samatha</i> and <i>vipaśyanā</i> , often emphasizing direct experiential wisdom.

Understanding the distinctions between *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna/ Chan* interpretations of *vitarka-vicāra* is crucial for appreciating how meditation is practiced and taught across Buddhist traditions. It allows us to recognize the functional diversity of meditative tools and their application to different spiritual goals. People can see how historical and philosophical contexts shape meditative practices. Drawing insights that can enrich contemporary mindfulness approaches by integrating elements of calm and inquiry.

III. THE ROLE OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS IN SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

3.1. Introduction to interconnectedness

When any jewel in the net is touched, all other jewels in the node are affected. This speaks to the hidden interconnectedness and interdependency of everything and everyone in the universe and has an indirect reference to the concept of “Dependent Origination” in Buddhism.⁶ Interconnectedness, known as *pratityasamutpāda*, 緣起 (dependent origination), is a fundamental concept in Buddhist philosophy that underscores the interdependence of all phenomena. This doctrine suggests that nothing exists independently; everything arises due to specific conditions and ceases when those conditions change. Understanding this principle is essential for addressing the ecological and ethical challenges of sustainability, as it emphasizes humanity’s responsibility to live harmoniously with nature and society.

Ignorance action consciousness name-and-form six sense contact feeling craving clinging becoming birth aging and death suffering.⁷

The *Madhyama Āgama* mentioned a concise explanation of the twelve *nidānas*, a core concept in Buddhist philosophy. The twelve *nidānas* describe the causal chain of conditions that lead to suffering (*dukkha*). It’s a cyclical process, often visualized as a wheel, where each link is dependent on the preceding one. (1) Ignorance (*avidyā*): The fundamental ignorance of the true nature of reality. (2) Action (*saṃskāra*): Volitional actions, both physical and mental, fueled by ignorance. (3) Consciousness (*viññāna*): The arising of consciousness, linked to previous actions. (4) Name and form (*nāmarūpa*): The mental and physical

⁶ Sand, *Indra’s Net*, accessed on [Jun 4, 2024], available at: <https://scienceandnonduality.com/article/the-indras-net/>

⁷ English translation from Chinese by the author, original text 《中阿含經》卷10：「是為緣無明行，緣行識，緣識名色，緣名色六處，緣六處更樂，緣更樂覺，緣覺愛、緣愛受，緣受有，緣有生，緣生老死，緣老死苦。」(CBETA 2024.R2, T01, no. 26, p. 447a, 22 - 27).

phenomena that come into existence. (5) Six sense bases (*ṣaḍāyatana*): The six senses: are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. (6) Contact (*sparsā*): The interaction between the senses and their objects. (7) Feeling (*Vedanā*): The experience of pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensations. (8) Craving (*trṣṇā*): The desire for continued existence or pleasurable experiences. (9) Clinging (*upādāna*): The grasping at existence or experiences. (10) Becoming (*bhava*): The process of becoming, the continuation of existence. (11) Birth (*jāti*): Rebirth into a new existence. (12) Old age and death (*jarāmaraṇa*): The inevitable aging and death of all compounded things.

Eye consciousness arises dependent on the eye and sights. The meeting of the three is contact. Contact is a condition for feeling. What you feel, you perceive. What you perceive, you think about. What you think about, you proliferate. What you proliferate about is the source from which a person is beset by concepts of identity that emerge from the proliferation of perceptions. This occurs concerning sights known by the eye in the past, future, and present.⁸ The same process is then repeated with the other six sense bases. This process is happening constantly, and it's the foundation for our sense of who we are and what the world is like. However, the Buddhist perspective is that this sense of self is ultimately an illusion, as it's based on a series of conditioned and impermanent phenomena. The sense of self that arises from this process is not a fixed and unchanging entity, but rather a constantly shifting and changing construct. This understanding of the process of perception and the nature of self is fundamental to Buddhist practice, as it helps us to see through the illusion of self and cultivate a more balanced and enlightened perspective.

These obstacles are our ideas and concepts concerning birth and death, defilement, immaculateness, increasing, decreasing above, below, inside, outside, Buddha, Mara, and so on. Once we see with the eyes of interbeing, these obstacles are removed from our mind and we overcome fear, liberating ourselves forever from illusion, and realizing perfect *nirvāṇa*. Once the wave realizes that it is only water, that it is nothing but water, it realizes that birth and death cannot do it any harm. It has transcended all kinds of fear, and perfect *nirvāṇa* is the state of non-fear. You are liberated, you are no longer subject to birth and death, defilement and immaculateness. You are free from all that.⁹ This text beautifully captures the essence of Buddhist teachings, particularly the concept of interbeing and the path to liberation. It highlights how our limiting beliefs and concepts, such as the notions of birth and death, self and other, can create obstacles to our spiritual growth. The metaphor of the wave and the water is particularly powerful. The wave, though seemingly distinct, is ultimately inseparable from the water. Similarly, our individual selves are inseparable from the interconnected web of existence. By recognizing this, we

⁸ *Suddhāso Bhikkhu, MN. 18, accessed on [2016], available at: <https://suttacentral.net/mn18/en/suddhaso?lang=en&reference=none&highlight=false>*

⁹ *Thich Nhat Hanh, The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra, Parallax Press, 1988, p. 60.*

can transcend the limitations of our egocentric perspective and experience the freedom and peace of *nirvāṇa*. *Nirvāṇa* is a central concept in Buddhism, often translated as “enlightenment” or “awakening.” It signifies a state of perfect peace and tranquility, free from suffering (both physical and *mettā*), and the cycle of rebirth then the attainment of ultimate freedom. *Nirvāṇa* in the Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*¹⁰ with the root “*vāṇa*” literally means “to blow out”, and the prefix “*nir-*” means “away” to emphasize the action of blowing out. So, “*nirvāṇa*” can be interpreted as this image suggests the extinguishing of a flame, symbolizing the cessation of the fires of desire, craving, and ignorance. It implies the complete eradication of all desires and attachments that lead to suffering. When an oil lamp runs out of oil, the flame naturally extinguishes. Similarly, when the fuel of desire and ignorance is depleted, the mind attains a state of peace and liberation. *Duḥkha* (Suffering) refers to the fundamental dissatisfaction and suffering inherent in human existence. *Nirvāṇa* is the ultimate liberation from *duḥkha*. It is a state of freedom from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, and the associated suffering.

3.2. Responsibility toward sustainable education

The Buddhist principle of interconnectedness emphasizes that individual actions inevitably influence others and the broader environment. Recognizing this interdependence encourages ethical behavior and mindful living, fostering harmony within the larger ecological and social web. By understanding that all beings and phenomena are mutually dependent, individuals are inspired to adopt sustainable practices, such as conserving resources, minimizing waste, and advocating for renewable energy. These practices resonate with Buddhist teachings on non-harming (*ahimsā*) and ethical livelihood (*samyak-ājīva*), while promoting empathy and compassion. Such values highlight how alleviating the suffering of others contributes to collective well-being.

In the context of higher education, this perspective provides a robust framework for sustainability-focused learning. By integrating the concept of interdependence into academic curricula, educational institutions can cultivate a sense of shared responsibility among students. Courses that bridge environmental ethics, systems thinking, and contemplative practices, for instance, encourage learners to appreciate the interconnected nature of social and environmental challenges. Mindfulness-based practices rooted in present-moment awareness can help students make intentional, eco-conscious decisions while fostering personal well-being.

The principle of dependent origination, which underscores that no phenomenon exists in isolation, offers a model for addressing global issues such as climate change and inequality. Universities can encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, enabling students to approach sustainability challenges through a systemic lens rather than fragmented solutions. This understanding empowers students to take on leadership roles that prioritize

¹⁰ Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 191

ecological responsibility, ethical governance, and compassion. By promoting practices such as meditation on interdependence or mindful self-reflection, institutions can cultivate qualities like self-awareness, resilience, and empathy essential traits for addressing the complex issues of our times.

3.3. Fostering social and academic harmony

The idea of mutual interdependence extends beyond environmental concerns, offering transformative implications for academic and social relationships within educational communities. Institutions can embody these values by adopting sustainable campus practices, such as reducing energy consumption, championing zero-waste initiatives, and embedding long-term sustainability goals into their strategic policies. Such initiatives allow universities to serve as living examples of the values they aim to instill in their students.

A sustainability-focused education informed by the principle of interdependence emphasizes not only intellectual achievement but also emotional, ethical, and environmental well-being. For instance, mindfulness programs in universities can connect students' personal growth with their global responsibilities, helping them see their studies as a means to contribute meaningfully to society. This approach encourages learners to move beyond the pursuit of individual gain and focus on collective flourishing.

Moreover, the recognition of interconnectedness helps dissolve artificial divisions such as those based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion by fostering inclusivity and respect for diversity. These principles provide the foundation for creating equitable and collaborative learning environments. Through group projects, service-learning, and interdisciplinary initiatives, students can actively experience the interconnected nature of knowledge and solutions. Such collaboration not only deepens understanding but also builds resilience and empathy, reducing conflict and fostering mutual respect in both academic and social settings.

The integration of contemplative practices into higher education helps reframe modern learning, which often prioritizes competition and material success, into a path of meaningful contribution. By understanding the broader networks that support their education teachers, peers, and natural resources students can cultivate gratitude and a sense of stewardship. This fosters a desire to give back to their communities and care for the world around them.

To institutionalize these values, universities can integrate frameworks of interdependence and contemplative awareness into their curricula. Offering programs that blend sustainability practices, ethical leadership, and reflective inquiry ensures that students are equipped to address real-world challenges. Furthermore, leaders within educational institutions can create policies that emphasize collective well-being over profit-driven objectives, fostering both personal and planetary health.

3.4. Contributions of interconnectedness

The principles of interconnectedness and mindfulness offer transformative contributions to higher education, especially in promoting sustainability and

holistic learning. Interconnectedness emphasizes the interdependent nature of all phenomena, underscoring that individual and collective actions are inseparably linked to societal and environmental well-being. This perspective reframes education not merely as a means of personal advancement but as a pathway to fostering global responsibility, ethical decision-making, and compassionate leadership.

In practice, integrating interconnectedness into education provides a framework for embedding sustainability principles across curricula and institutional policies. For example, courses can combine systems thinking, environmental ethics, and mindfulness practices, while campus policies can prioritize ecological stewardship and inclusivity. Such initiatives equip students to address global challenges such as climate change, social inequities, and resource management with creativity, compassion, and resilience.

The Buddhist concept of interconnectedness, rooted in the doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), further enriches this framework by highlighting the interdependent causes and conditions that shape all existence. Recognizing this interdependence inspires a shift from self-centered perspectives to collective well-being, encouraging ethical practices, mindfulness, and compassion. It also provides philosophical and moral tools to address contemporary global issues, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collaboration.

This approach can be symbolized by the metaphor of the wave and the ocean. Just as a wave cannot exist independently of the ocean, individuals are inseparable from the broader web of life. This realization reduces attachment and fear, fostering a state of harmony and peace. In the context of education, it inspires students to align their personal well-being with global responsibility, cultivating leaders capable of transformative action.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that interconnectedness and mindfulness are not abstract ideals but practical tools for reimagining education. By bridging personal growth with societal and ecological responsibility, they contribute to a compassionate and sustainable future. This philosophical foundation encourages institutions to create mindful and socially responsible educational environments, equipping learners with the skills, awareness, and ethical orientation needed to address contemporary challenges.

IV. SUSTAINABLE LEARNING

4.1. Principles and pathways of sustainable learning

The modern educational landscape is rich with information, yet it often falls short in equipping learners with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate complex challenges. Sustainable Learning offers a holistic framework that aims to address this gap by fostering a healthy learning ecosystem. This approach emphasizes the importance of co-creation, reflection, and adaptation in response to evolving needs. Sustainable Learning is a comprehensive approach to education that prioritizes the creation of healthy, resilient, and equitable learning environments. By focusing on community, reflection, and adaptation, this framework empowers

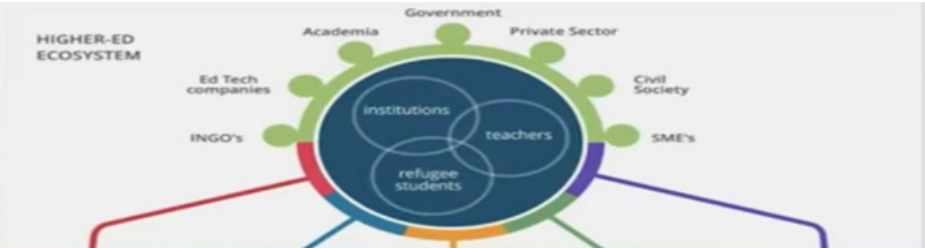
learners and educators to thrive in an ever-changing world.

By contrast, second order change and learning involves critically reflective learning, when we examine the assumptions that influence first-order learning. This is sometimes called ‘learning about our learning’ or ‘thinking about our thinking’. At a deeper level still, when third-order learning happens we are able to see things differently. It is creative, and involves a deep awareness of alternative worldviews and ways of doing things. It is, as Einstein suggests, a shift of consciousness, and it is this transformative level of learning, both at individual and whole society levels, that radical movement towards sustainability requires.¹¹ According to this Sustainable Learning model by Dr. Diana Wools:

Purposeful Pedagogy	Systems Thinking	Looped Learning	Democratic Engage-ment	Digital Geog-raphies
WHAT’S NEEDED				
Continuous, Practice-Based Professional Development	Collective planning and design to enable teaching that reflects the contexts	Feedback tools and protocols for faculty and institu-tions	Resources to Convene, Connect and Co-Create Instructional Tools and Materials	Teaching and teach-er-informed education technology
PATHWAY				

¹¹ Stephen Sterling, *Sustainable Education – Re-visioning learning and change*, Schumacher Briefing Press, 2001, p. 9.

<div>Prioritize Professional Development</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• online course design• online assessment of student work• getting and keeping students engaged• selecting and integrating digital tools• identifying and supporting displaced learners• discipline-specific digital pedagogies and teaching</div>	<div>Map Your System</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• collectively define digital fluency• establish the challenges and opportunities for achieving digital fluency• identify leverage points to address opportunities and challenges</div>	<div>Make Teaching Visible</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• develop a theory of change• provide mechanisms for reflection• provide incentives for faculty for reflective activities</div>	<div>Create the Conditions for Engagement</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• create foreign language open education resources (OER)• assess faculty needs, behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes toward digital pedagogies• convene focused, facilitated discussions on digital pedagogies</div>	<div>Ed-tech functionality that facilitates good pedagogy and reflective teaching</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• ed-tech selection and design includes teachers• use ed-tech to connect content, people, and data• use tech to verify efficacy of student work and student safety</div>
<div>This Sustainable Learning model by Dr. Diana Wools, Center for Learning in practice, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license</div>				



At the heart of Sustainable Learning lies a commitment to fostering strong communities of learners. By prioritizing collective creation and sharing of knowledge, this principle encourages collaboration among learners, educators, and community members. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose, creating a supportive environment where

everyone can contribute and learn from one another. Sustainable Learning emphasizes the importance of reflection as a tool for personal and professional growth. By encouraging self-awareness and critical thinking, reflective practice empowers individuals to examine their beliefs, values, and assumptions. This ongoing process of evaluation and improvement leads to more effective teaching and learning practices. Additionally, it cultivates a growth mindset, inspiring learners and educators to embrace challenges as opportunities for learning and development. In today's rapidly changing world, the ability to adapt to new circumstances is essential. Sustainable Learning embraces change and uncertainty as opportunities for innovation. By responding to emerging needs and challenges with flexibility and creativity, this principle fosters resilience and adaptability in learners and educators. This approach equips individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate complex problems and create a better future.

By embracing these core principles, educators can create more engaging, effective, and equitable learning experiences. Sustainable Learning empowers learners to become active, critical thinkers who are prepared to address the challenges of the 21st century.

4.2. Integrating mindfulness into sustainable learning: A holistic approach

Mindfulness, the practice of being present and fully engaged in the moment, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of sustainable learning. By incorporating mindfulness techniques into educational practices, educators can create more engaging, supportive, and transformative learning environments.

Effective teaching involves cultivating mindful interactions between educators and learners. By actively listening to students' thoughts and feelings, educators can foster a sense of empathy and understanding. Mindful questioning can stimulate critical thinking and encourage deeper reflection. Additionally, incorporating physical activities like yoga into the classroom can promote relaxation and focus, enhancing students' overall well-being and cognitive function. A mindful curriculum can be designed to explicitly teach mindfulness skills and integrate them into various subjects. Formal mindfulness instruction, such as meditation and breathing exercises, can provide students with practical tools for managing stress and improving emotional regulation. By integrating mindfulness into subjects like literature, art, and science, educators can enhance students' learning experiences and foster a greater appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things. The physical learning environment plays a crucial role in supporting mindfulness practices. Creating designated quiet zones provides students with a space to practice relaxation techniques and reflect on their learning. Nature-based learning experiences, such as outdoor classrooms or nature walks, can promote mindfulness and reduce stress. Additionally, designing classrooms that are aesthetically pleasing, clutter-free, and conducive to focused learning can enhance students' overall well-being and academic performance. Mindful assessment practices can promote self-awareness, empathy, and a growth mindset. Encouraging students to engage in self-assessment allows them to reflect on their own learning process and set

personal goals. Peer assessment can foster collaboration, empathy, and critical thinking skills. Finally, a holistic approach to grading that values both academic achievement and personal growth can reduce stress and anxiety, promoting a more positive and supportive learning environment.

By implementing these strategies, educators can foster a culture of mindfulness in their classrooms. This, in turn, can lead to a more positive and supportive learning environment, where students feel empowered to reach their full potential.

V. MINDFULNESS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO HIGHER EDUCATION

5.1. The concept of *sati* and its connection to mindfulness

Mindfulness, the practice of cultivating present-moment awareness with an attitude of non-judgment, has become a transformative tool in modern education. Its origins lie in Buddhist teachings, particularly the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, where mindfulness (*sati, smṛti*) is presented as the path to understanding and liberation. In the context of higher education, mindfulness addresses challenges like student disengagement, stress, and a lack of ethical grounding, fostering holistic learning experiences.

Here, *sati* is equated with *upaṭṭhāna*, but this does not mean that the meditator is “establishing mindfulness”. Rather, it means that mindfulness itself is an act of establishing the present moment. Mindfulness establishes the presence of the object of attention, allowing it to be examined and identified by the meditator. Bhikkhu Bodhi¹² believe that this aspect of *sati* connects the two primary meanings of *sati* found in the *Tripitaka*:

(1) memory, and (2) clear awareness of the present moment. *Sati* allows the object of attention to appear clearly and distinctly in the mind. When the object of cognition belongs to the past - when it is understood as something done, felt, or said in the past - its clear presentation takes the form of memory. When the object is a physical phenomenon such as in-breath, out-breath, or walking back and forth, or when it is a mental activity such as feeling or thinking, the clear presentation of *sati* takes the form of clear awareness of the present moment.¹³ The text presents a compelling argument for the relevance of mindfulness in higher education. It effectively connects the ancient Buddhist concept of *sati* with contemporary understanding of mindfulness, highlighting its potential to address modern challenges faced by students.

Mindfulness as an act of establishing presence, a bridge between past and present and a tool for holistic development. This interpretation of *sati* as

¹² Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi is an American Buddhist monk from New York City, born in 1944. He obtained a BA in philosophy from Brooklyn College (1966) and a PhD in philosophy from Claremont Graduate School (1972).

¹³ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *What does mindfulness really mean? A canonical perspective*, accessed on [May 1, 2011], p. 25, available at: https://ibc-elibrary.thanhxiang.org/files/public/01_mindfulness_canonical_bhikku_bodhi.pdf

upaṭṭhāna emphasizes the dynamic nature of mindfulness. It's not just a passive state of awareness but an active process of bringing attention to the present moment. This active engagement can help students focus, reduce stress, and enhance their overall learning experience. *Sati* facilitates both remembering the past and being fully present in the moment. This dual function can be beneficial for students, allowing them to reflect on past experiences while remaining grounded in the present. By fostering present-moment awareness, mindfulness can contribute to students' emotional, cognitive, and social well-being. It can help them manage stress, improve concentration, and develop empathy and compassion. Understanding emotions allows individuals to observe their own emotions without judgment. This self-awareness helps them understand the root causes of their feelings, leading to greater emotional intelligence. By paying attention to thoughts and feelings, individuals can identify recurring patterns and habits that might be hindering their relationships. Practicing self-compassion, a key element of mindfulness, helps individuals treat themselves with kindness and understanding, fostering a sense of self-worth and empathy for others.

According to self-determination theory, mindfulness meditation practice heightens mental clarity and self-awareness (e.g., of one's interests, values, needs, desires). It frees people from mindless, compulsive, and automatic behaviors. Mindfulness promotes and facilitates the pursuit of intrinsically valued goals (i.e., naturally interesting, challenging, or satisfying goals), as opposed to extrinsically motivated goals (e.g., money, prizes). Such awareness allows the individual to experience a sense of choice and freedom in choosing how to behave, reducing the need for pure willpower to resist temptations.¹⁴ Self-determination theory (SDT) is a psychological theory that suggests that humans have three innate psychological needs: Autonomy, competence, and relatedness, provides a robust framework for understanding human motivation and well-being. When applied to mindfulness meditation, the theory offers compelling insights into its benefits for higher education. This self-awareness can lead to a stronger sense of intrinsic motivation, driving them to pursue their studies out of genuine interest and curiosity. By becoming more mindful, students can become less reliant on external rewards, such as grades or praise, to motivate themselves. This can help them develop a more sustainable and fulfilling approach to learning. By cultivating a sense of self-awareness and self-acceptance, mindfulness can boost students' self-efficacy, or belief in their ability to succeed. This can lead to increased persistence and motivation. By incorporating mindfulness practices into higher education, institutions can create a more supportive and nurturing learning environment that fosters student well-being, academic success, and ethical development.

The integration of mindfulness practices into higher education offers a promising approach to addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by

¹⁴ Arash Emamzadeh, *Mindfulness Meditation Can Increase Goal Motivation*, accessed on [December 20, 2021], available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/finding-new-home/202112/mindfulness-meditation-can-increase-goal-motivation>

students today. By cultivating present-moment awareness and fostering a non-judgmental attitude, mindfulness can significantly enhance various aspects of student life. Incorporating mindfulness into higher education can create a more supportive and nurturing learning environment that fosters student well-being, academic success, and ethical development. By providing opportunities for students to practice mindfulness, institutions can empower them to reach their full potential and contribute positively to society.

5.2. Connection between mindfulness and academic success

Mindfulness practices have demonstrated a range of cognitive benefits that align directly with the goals of higher education. Key advantages include enhanced working memory, improved adaptability, and creative problem-solving skills. Research by Mrazek et al. (2013)¹⁵ the findings of reduced mind wandering are consistent with recent accounts that mindfulness training leads to reduced activation of the default network, a collection of brain regions that typically show greater activation at rest than during externally directed cognitive tasks. Both long-term meditators and individuals who have completed 2 weeks of mindfulness training showed reduced activation of the default network. The findings showed that mindfulness can reduce mind-wandering and improve attention, which are critical for retaining information and solving complex academic problems. These benefits support a student's ability to think flexibly and approach challenges creatively, leading to more effective learning and academic success.

In terms of empirical evidence, studies have documented the positive impact of mindfulness interventions on academic performance. For example, a meta-analysis found a moderate correlation between mindfulness and higher academic achievement, such as improved exam scores and better grades¹⁶ meta-analysis found MBIs for college students with a greater number of mindfulness sessions (eight or more) showed greater reductions in anxiety, interestingly however, session duration and the overall amount of time spent meditating was not significant. In another study, the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) scores of middle school and university students were positively correlated with higher GPAs and standardized test results. Greater levels of mindfulness, as measured by the MAAS, were associated with better academic outcomes for over 2,000 urban U.S. students in Grades 5–8 as measured by GPA and statewide tests of English Language Arts and Mathematics achievement, as well as better attendance and fewer suspensions. This relationship continued to hold when accounting for demographic characteristics and previous academic performance, signaling that mindfulness captures distinct variance in academic

¹⁵ Michael D. Mrazek et al., *Mindfulness Training Improves Working Memory Capacity and GRE Performance While Reducing Mind Wandering*, accessed on [2013], available at: <https://dominatetheregre.s3.amazonaws.com/Mindfulness-Improves-GRE-Focus-Mrazek-et-al.-2013.pdf>

¹⁶ Jennifer Chung et al., *An Evaluation of an Online Brief Mindfulness-Based Intervention in Higher Education: A Pilot Conducted at an Australian University and a British University*, accessed on [October 28, 2021], available at: [PDF] frontiersin.org

achievement outcomes beyond these individual student factors.¹⁷ This suggests that cultivating mindfulness not only enhances cognitive functions but also translates directly into measurable academic success.

Mindfulness also plays a pivotal role in fostering ethical and emotional development among students. It helps individuals cultivate self-awareness and emotional regulation, which are essential for ethical reasoning and moral decision-making. By encouraging non-judgmental observation of thoughts and emotions, mindfulness reduces impulsive behaviors that can lead to academic dishonesty or bias. This reflective process fosters integrity and a deeper sense of empathy. Real-world examples demonstrate these effects. Programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness training initiatives in universities have shown improvements in students' emotional resilience and interpersonal relationships. For instance, this supports the hypothesis that emotional resilience partially mediates the relationship between mindfulness and academic well-being. The results suggest that mindfulness is positively associated with academic well-being among university students, and this relationship is partially mediated by emotional resilience. Specifically, mindfulness enhances students' ability to manage stress and adapt to academic challenges, which in turn leads to better academic outcomes. While mindfulness directly improves academic well-being, a significant portion of its impact is channeled through the development of emotional resilience. This highlights the importance of fostering resilience alongside mindfulness to maximize the academic success and well-being of university students.¹⁸ Such programs not only help students build better social connections but also address ethical challenges such as collaboration and fairness in academic environments.

Mindfulness offers transformative potential for higher education by enhancing cognitive abilities, promoting ethical awareness, and strengthening emotional resilience. Through practical implementation such as mindfulness workshops, curriculum integration, or structured programs educational institutions can create supportive environments that foster academic success and personal growth. The evidence demonstrates that mindfulness is not just a tool for stress management but also a foundation for holistic development, enabling students to thrive intellectually, ethically, and emotionally.

Mindfulness represents a profound opportunity to transform higher education. By cultivating present-moment awareness, students can enhance their cognitive functioning, reduce stress, and develop a deeper sense of

¹⁷ Camila Caballero et al., *Greater Mindfulness is Associated With Better Academic Achievement in Middle School*, accessed on [2019], available at: <https://www.cmhp.ucsb.edu/sites/default/files/2019-06/Caballero%20et%20al.%20%282019%29%20Mindfulness%20and%20achievement%20in%20middle%20school.pdf>

¹⁸ Saranjam, R. & Rasouli, S. (2024). Exploring the role of mindfulness in university students' academic wellbeing mediating role of emotional resilience. *Iranian Journal of Educational Research*, 3 (2), p. 239 - 250, available at: <https://ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir/article-1-282-en.pdf>

purpose. Beyond academics, mindfulness fosters emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and compassion, addressing critical gaps in traditional education. Self-determination theory further illustrates how mindfulness supports intrinsic motivation, empowering students to engage with learning as a meaningful and fulfilling process. Institutions that integrate mindfulness into their curricula and culture can create supportive environments that not only enhance academic performance but also prepare students to face the complexities of the modern world with resilience and empathy. Through its emphasis on ethical grounding and self-awareness, mindfulness offers a pathway to holistic personal and professional growth, enabling graduates to contribute positively to society. By embedding mindfulness into higher education, we move closer to an educational model that nurtures well-rounded, socially conscious, and intrinsically motivated individuals critical for fostering a sustainable and compassionate future.

VI. MINDFULNESS AS A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABILITY

6.1. Defining mindfulness and its connection to sustainability

Mindfulness is the practice of cultivating present-moment awareness with an attitude of openness and non-judgment. It involves attention regulation, emotional regulation, and a deepened sense of self-awareness. Kabat-Zinn describes mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: On purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”¹⁹ Mindfulness supports sustainability by encouraging intentional living and fostering a sense of connection to the broader ecosystem. It helps individuals recognize the consequences of their actions, thereby promoting behaviors that align with sustainable values such as minimalism, empathy, and environmental stewardship.²⁰

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist teachings, particularly the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), which emphasize awareness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena. From a Tiantai perspective, mindfulness can be seen through the lens of “止觀” (*zhǐguān*) calming and insight. This practice emphasizes a balance between meditative stability (calming the mind) and analytical observation (gaining insight), leading to a deeper understanding of interdependence and compassion. In the context of education, Tiantai teachings on interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*) align with sustainability principles by encouraging individuals to see their role within interconnected systems. This worldview nurtures a sense of collective responsibility, which is critical for addressing global challenges like climate change.

In educational settings, mindfulness is applied to enhance emotional intelligence, reduce stress, and improve attention among both educators and

¹⁹ Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 3, 4.

²⁰ Fisher, A. (2017). *Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life*. SUNY Press.

students.²¹ Programs like MindUP or CARE for Teachers integrate mindfulness to foster reflective practices and emotional resilience, which are critical for cultivating sustainable and compassionate classrooms.

6.2. Application in education

Mindfulness practices encourage educators and students to develop a deeper awareness of their interconnectedness with others and the environment. Activities such as mindful breathing, body scans, and gratitude practices help students recognize their shared humanity and interdependence with the natural world.²² For example: (1) Interdependence: Students learn to see how their choices (e.g., consumption habits) impact the environment and society. (2) Empathy: Mindfulness fosters an open-hearted awareness, encouraging compassion for others's experiences and challenges. (3) Responsibility: By slowing down and reflecting, individuals can make more ethical and sustainable decisions.

Case Studies and evidence: (1) Mindfulness and sustainable habits: mindfulness training increases pro-environmental behaviors, such as recycling, reducing consumption, and supporting sustainable initiatives.²³ Participants reported heightened awareness of their ecological footprint and a greater sense of connection to nature. (2) Critical thinking and decision-making: mindfulness programs in schools improve cognitive flexibility and critical thinking.²⁴ These skills are essential for addressing complex sustainability challenges, such as balancing economic growth with ecological preservation. (3) Mindfulness-based environmental education (MBEE): Programs integrating mindfulness and environmental education have shown success in fostering eco-conscious behaviors. For example, the "EcoMeditation" initiative helps students reflect on their consumption patterns and develop sustainable habits through mindful observation of natural ecosystems.

By linking mindfulness with sustainability, educators can create transformative learning experiences that prepare students to navigate and address 21st-century challenges.

6.3. Practical implementation

Mindful breathing is an effective practice to enhance focus and reduce stress in educational settings. A simple activity involves dedicating 5–10 minutes at

²¹ Lomas, T., Medina, J. C., Ivztan, I., Rupprecht, S., & Eiroa-Orosa, F. J. (2017). Mindfulness-based interventions in the workplace: An inclusive systematic review and meta-analysis of their impact upon wellbeing. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(6), p. 573 – 584.

²² Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). *The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84 (4), p. 822 – 848.

²³ Wamsler, C., et al, 2018. Mindfulness in sustainability science, practice, and teaching. *Sustainability Science*, 13 (1), p. 143 – 162.

²⁴ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., et al (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children. *Developmental Psychology*, 51 (1), p. 52 – 66.

the start of each class for students to focus on their inhalations and exhalations. By guiding students to anchor their awareness in the present moment, mindful breathing fosters calmness and improves concentration, creating a conducive learning environment. An example of its implementation can be found in the MindUp Program, which integrates short mindfulness practices into the classroom to enhance self-awareness and attention. This program has been shown to improve emotional regulation and academic performance among students.²⁵

Gratitude journaling is another impactful activity that encourages students to reflect daily on three aspects of their lives for which they are grateful, with a focus on their relationships and the environment. This practice cultivates a positive mindset and fosters an appreciation for interconnectedness, strengthening emotional resilience and social cohesion. Research supports the benefits of gratitude journaling in enhancing emotional well-being and fostering ethical decision-making. Emmons and Ster found that gratitude practices help individuals develop empathy and a greater sense of responsibility, which are foundational for ethical and sustainable behavior.²⁶

Mindful nature walks involve organizing silent walks where students observe their surroundings, reflect on the interdependence of living organisms, and consider their role within the ecosystem. This activity deepens students' environmental awareness and fosters a sense of responsibility toward preserving natural resources. The Eco Meditation program exemplifies this approach by integrating mindfulness with environmental education. Participants report a heightened connection to nature and the development of sustainable habits through this practice.²⁷

Facilitating mindful decision-making exercises encourages students to evaluate ethical dilemmas using mindfulness techniques. For instance, students might reflect on the trade-offs between personal convenience and environmental impact when considering consumption habits. These exercises promote critical thinking and ethical awareness, enabling students to make more intentional and values-driven decisions. This approach aligns with the principles of mindfulness, which emphasize the importance of thoughtful, non-reactive responses to challenges. By engaging in such practices, students develop the ability to navigate complex social and environmental issues with greater clarity and compassion.

Collectively, these mindfulness-based activities and programs strengthen emotional intelligence, foster critical thinking, and nurture ethical

²⁵ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., et al. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children. *Developmental Psychology*, 51 (1), p. 52 – 66.

²⁶ Emmons, R. A., & Stern, R. (2013). Gratitude as a psychotherapeutic intervention. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69 (8), p. 846 – 855.

²⁷ Gifford, R., & Nilsson, A. (2014). Personal and social factors that influence pro-environmental concern and behavior: A review. *International Journal of Psychology*, 49(3), p. 141 – 157.

responsibility among students. By integrating these practices into educational contexts, educators can prepare learners to navigate the multifaceted challenges of sustainability with clarity, compassion, and innovation.

Reflective practices play a pivotal role in cultivating a growth mindset, wherein challenges are perceived as opportunities for learning rather than failures. By engaging in reflective activities, students develop the resilience to navigate setbacks and the adaptability to approach problems with innovative solutions. An example of such a practice is journaling, where students are prompted to respond to questions like, “What did I learn from this experience?” after completing each class or project. This activity fosters self-awareness and encourages a constructive approach to personal and academic development. Research by Dweck highlights the importance of a growth mindset in enhancing resilience and adaptability qualities that are critical for addressing the complex challenges of global sustainability.²⁸ Reflection also enables learners to examine the broader implications of their actions, promoting ethical decision-making and a greater sense of responsibility. Guided reflections, such as “How does this decision align with my values and the well-being of others?” prompt students to think deeply about their choices and their potential impact on the environment and society. Evidence supports the effectiveness of reflective practices in reducing impulsive decision-making and increasing awareness of social and environmental consequences. Brown and Ryan demonstrated that mindfulness-based reflection enhances the ability to make intentional, value-driven decisions, laying the groundwork for more sustainable and ethical behaviors.

6.4. Link to sustainability goals

Mindfulness practices significantly enhance emotional intelligence, focus, and collaborative skills, contributing to inclusive and equitable learning environments. Programs like CARE for Teachers equip educators with mindfulness-based strategies to support diverse learners effectively. Research by Jennings highlights how such interventions enhance emotional resilience and foster improved classroom dynamics.²⁹

By raising awareness of the environmental and social implications of choices, mindfulness encourages intentional consumption. Through guided reflection, students can assess their habits such as food waste or energy use, and develop actionable strategies to align their behaviors with sustainable practices. Additionally, mindfulness cultivates a holistic understanding of interconnected systems, enabling learners to reflect on the ripple effects of their actions, such as the global impact of single-use plastics. This systems-based perspective empowers individuals to approach sustainability challenges thoughtfully and proactively. Furthermore, mindfulness strengthens

²⁸ Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Random House.

²⁹ Jennings, P. A., et al (2011). Improving classroom learning environments by cultivating awareness and resilience in education (CARE): Results of a randomized controlled trial. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 26(3), p. 189 – 201.

emotional regulation, helping individuals navigate uncertainty and adversity with composure. Practices like body scans or mindful pauses equip students with tools to remain calm and focused in high-pressure situations. Mindfulness training significantly enhances adaptability and resilience, vital for addressing complex global challenges. Lastly, mindfulness fosters openness and curiosity, essential for creative problem-solving. By enhancing cognitive flexibility, it equips learners with the skills to devise innovative and practical solutions to sustainability issues. For example, students can approach challenges, such as designing sustainable products, with a reflective mindset that prioritizes novel and effective outcomes. Most research underscores mindfulness's role in promoting cognitive flexibility and fostering innovation.

Through the integration of mindfulness into education, students and educators can actively contribute to achieving sustainability goals. These practices nurture critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and a sense of interconnectedness, laying a strong foundation for addressing the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the role of mindfulness in promoting sustainable learning, with particular attention to its philosophical roots, practical applications, and alignment with sustainability goals. Drawing from Buddhist traditions, mindfulness offers a profound framework for fostering awareness, interconnectedness, and ethical responsibility in education. By cultivating present-moment awareness, emotional regulation, and cognitive flexibility, mindfulness empowers learners and educators to engage with global challenges thoughtfully and compassionately.

The philosophical foundations of mindfulness, rooted in Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism, highlight its transformative potential in transcending discursive thinking and fostering deeper concentration and insight. The concept of interconnectedness, central to Buddhist teachings, underpins sustainable education by encouraging collective responsibility and awareness of the ripple effects of individual actions. This awareness fosters social and academic harmony, preparing learners to navigate the complexities of modern life with resilience and empathy.

The integration of mindfulness into sustainable learning offers a holistic pathway for addressing 21st-century educational challenges. Practical applications such as mindful breathing, gratitude journaling, and reflective practices promote emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, and pro-environmental behaviors. Case studies and research evidence demonstrate that mindfulness-based interventions not only enhance academic performance but also nurture values essential for sustainability, such as empathy, environmental stewardship, and adaptability.

In higher education, mindfulness bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation, equipping students with the skills to balance personal well-being with societal and ecological responsibilities. By

fostering critical thinking and systems-based approaches, mindfulness enables learners to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to pressing global issues.

Ultimately, mindfulness serves as a powerful tool for transforming education into a platform for sustainability. By embedding mindfulness practices into curricula, educators can cultivate inclusive, equitable, and sustainable learning environments. This approach not only prepares students to face the complexities of an interconnected world but also empowers them to contribute meaningfully to the creation of a compassionate and sustainable future.

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名色，緣名色六處，緣六處更樂，緣更樂覺，緣覺愛、緣愛受，緣受有，緣有生，緣生老死，緣老死苦。」(CBETA 2024.R2, T01, no. 26, p. 447a, 22 - 27).

惑。所以者何？因有疑惑便生猶豫。伽彌尼！汝自無淨智，為有後世，為無後世？伽彌尼！汝又無淨智，所作為惡，所作為善？伽彌尼！有法之定，名曰遠離，汝因此定，可得正念，可得一心。如是，汝於現法便斷疑惑，而得昇進。」(CBETA 2024.R2, T01, no. 26, p. 447a, 22 - 27).

積聚博聞，所謂法者，初善、中善、竟亦善，有義有文，具足清淨，顯現梵行，如是諸法廣學多聞，翫習至千，意所惟觀，明見深達，是謂聖弟子得五善法。復次，聖弟子常行於念，成就正念，久所曾習，久所曾聞，恒憶不忘，是謂聖弟子得六善法。復次，聖弟子修行智慧，觀興衰法，得如此智，聖慧明達，分別曉了，以正盡苦，是謂聖弟子得七善法也。」(CBETA 2024.R2, T01, no. 26, p. 423a, 24-b4).

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PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF *VIPASSANĀ* MEDITATION UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF VENERABLE ASHIN OTTAMATHARA MYANMAR

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Abstract:

Vipassanna is considered a non-method, non-school technique, the way to self-transform by observing. The whole path of systematical *Vipassanā* practice applies to all religious or non-religious subjects, regardless of school. For this reason, it is developed by everyone, anytime, anywhere, without being governed by beliefs, customs, dogmas, or institutions. *Vipassanā* likewise demonstrates that everyone can gain equal profits. The respected Buddhist monk and meditation teacher Sayadaw U Sayadaw Ottamathara is one of the most famous in Myanmar and worldwide, specializing in teaching *Vipassanā* Meditation in the *Theravāda* Buddhist tradition. He is not only fluent in English but also has interdisciplinary knowledge in many fields, being named “Tsunami *Vipassanā* Meditation Master” for his “excellent” and “rare” teaching; and “superior” religious commitment.

Keywords: *Vipassanā, Ottamathara, Myanmar, meditation, value.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Vipassanā is the most ancient Indian Buddhist meditation technique taught by the Buddha 2600 years ago. *Vipassanā* meditation is one of the critical practices in Buddhism as it aids in transforming the mind for purely adapting to adversities, raising a perfectly calm mind and a healthful body, and less disease. *Vipassanā* treats it as a productive instrument to achieve genuine happiness and bring that pure wholesomeness to survive naturally and spread those around them, making society better.

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Vipassanā meditation is popular in schools in Myanmar. His *Vipassanā* meditation practice is perfect, knowledgeable about *Dharma* and *Dharma* practice. He was more deeply interested in practical application. The name *Thabarwa* since 2007 has been very familiar to the people of his “state religion” as well as in many Buddhist and non-Buddhist countries in the world. *Vipassanā* Meditation Master Ottamathara has great merit in founding *Thabarwa* Meditation Centers in the spirit of thoroughly understanding No-Self-Dependent Origination and through his ability to thoroughly contemplate the working of the principle of conditioned things. He is also the originator of the establishment of the *Dharma* Hospital with the meaning of “entering the world” to actively serve sentient beings, embodying the ideal of Bodhisattva’s conduct. He is also the proponent of practicing the *Dharma* applied “unlimitedly” – merit activities.

The meditation of Ottamathara does not distinguish between monasticism or lay life, gender; regardless of sects, regions, countries... He came to life by practicing and thoroughly understanding the teachings of the Buddha; to benefit sentient beings voluntarily, naturally, without standing; overcome the world’s attachments and still be in harmony in the Precepts - Concentration - wisdom; harmonization and worldly consummation and transcending the world. With his particularly profound teaching style, great wisdom, and vast compassion, *Vipassanā* Meditation Master U Ottamathara is becoming more and more famous nationally and internationally. He has been teaching insight meditation in many monasteries, institutions, schools, hospitals, homes, and public places in Myanmar as well as in many other countries. Every year, he has arranged time and busy work in the country to give lectures and meditate in Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, USA, and some European countries...

II. INTRODUCTION OF VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION

Vipassanā Meditation means to “see everything as it really is” by being mindful, awakening, and observing thoughts, and feelings without judgment; seeing the nature of things thoroughly as *dukkha* (unsatisfaction), *anatta* (non-self), and *anicca* (impermanence). “Who lives for a hundred years/ Does not see the birth and death of *Dharmas*/ It is not equal to living a day/ Seeing the birth and death of *Dharmas*”.¹ These three characteristics in *Theravāda* (School of Elders - Buddhism’s oldest existing school) are similar to the Emptiness/ Buddha nature in *Mahayana* (Great Vehicle). For the Vietnamese, *Vipassanā* is also known as Meditation for Inner Wisdom or Insight Meditation.

Vipassanā Meditation was discovered and taught by the Buddha himself as the core teaching during his 45-year propagation. He realized the principle of Dependent Origination “Because this exists, that exists/ Because this arises that arises/ Because this does not exist, that does not exist/ Because this ceases,

¹ *Dhammapāla*, Thich Minh Chau (2012) (translated), Hong Duc Publishing House, Vietnam, p. 81.

that ceases”.² This preaching was delivered in “*Mahāsātipatthana Sutta*” (the Great Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness) - the Long Discourses of the Buddha, “*Sātipatthana Sutta*” (the Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness), “*Annapanassatisutta*” (Breath-Mindfulness Discourse) - the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. Objects of *Samatha* – Concentration practice (40 objects) and *Vipassanā* – Wisdom practice (16 *Vipassanānāṇa*) in *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) exist in Tipitaka. The Buddha once said that: “in the past as in the present, I speak only of suffering and the cessation of suffering”.³ “The *Dharma* we speak is like a raft crossing a river, the *Dharma* must also be abandoned, let alone illegal (*Vajracchedika Sutra*)”.⁴ *Vipassanā* practice in *Theravāda* was reintroduced in Toungoo and Konbaung, Myanmar, in the century of XVIII, based on the current content in *Sātipatthana Sutta*, *Visuddhimagga*, and other documents.

Many *Theravāda Suttas* have emphasized that *Vipassanā* meditation is closely associated with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and “brightening and clarity.” It is intended to help practitioners cleanse their minds, uproot the defilements, cease the round of birth and death, and realize the fruit of deliverance, enlightenment, and *Nibbana*. Buddhism was divided it into hundreds of *dharmalakṣaṇa* including 8 Consciousness (心法; *s: cittadharmā*), 11 Matter Literally Form or Shape (色法; *s: rūpadharmā*), 51 Mental Factor (心所有法; *s: caitasikadharmā*), 24 Non - Associated Compositional Factor (心不相應行法; *cittaviprayukta-saṃskāradharmā*), and 6 Uncompounded Phenomenon (無爲法; *asaṃskṛtadharmā*).⁵ This meditation is the path to complete awakening, transcending time and space, appreciated by the wise and practical in the present.

Vipassanā is pondered as a subtle approach that comprehensively cultivates the mind. *Vipassanā* practice highlights direct awareness, as opposed to knowledge accumulated from reasoning or arguing; it is “the superior way of seeing,” “seeing the core nature,” apparent and precise, seeing discerningly, with an alert and lucid mind to penetrate reality accurately.

Vipassanā is genuinely a method of Insight Meditation, not Tranquility Meditation. Tranquility Meditation fails to result in liberation as it does not generate insight, but it has the ability to assist insight meditation. Most meditation systems attach substantial significance to *Samatha* (Concentration), but only *Vipassanā* meditation can break the illusion of self-grasping to experience reality vividly to attain emancipation. *Vipassanā* (Insight) is always associated with *Samatha* (Concentration), the true Noble Eightfold Path

² Thich Chan Thien (2009), *Buddhist Studies Concept*, Oriental Publishing House, p. 21.

³ Nārada Mahā Thera (2013), *The Buddha and the Dharma*, Pham Kim Khanh (translated), Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, p. 285.

⁴ Thich Thien Sieu (2003), *Lectures on the Lotus Sutra*, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 173.

⁵ Thich Thien Hoa (1992), *The Consciousness-Only*, Ho Chi Minh City Buddhist Association Publishing House, Vietnam, p. 9.

of the Middle Way. *Samatha* is regarded as present stillness, stabilizing and concentrating the mind. *Vipassanā* means insight, seeing, discovering, and distinguishing the phenomena of dependent origination on the five aggregates among body, mind, and objects, particularly incentivizing the intimate mind-body relationship.

Numerous people around the world are currently concerned and practicing *Vipassanā* meditation every day to reap benefits, such as (1) helping to regulate the mind and fostering concentration to produce insight, leading to enlightenment; (2) as an effective medicine for the common ailments of mankind; (3) helping practitioners correct their long-standing habits of attachment and ignorance; (4) resulting in accepting all changes of conditions with a tranquil mind; (5) building a healthy and peaceful inner life and internal purification; (6) promoting focus and memory; (7) relieving tension, stress and combatting symptoms of depression, anxiety disorders; (8) supporting the mind in being manifest, aware, and not drowsy; (9) boosting immunity; (10) prevention of cardiovascular diseases or blood pressure; (11) slowing the aging process; (12) eliminating the three fundamental roots of suffering: desire, aversion, and delusion.

It can be stated that the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation is likened to a surgery that deeply explores the unconscious mind of each person, pulling out mental impurities, afflictions, and unskilled qualities to purify and abandon them gradually.

III. LIFE AND PRACTICE OF VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION MASTER OTTAMATHARA

Ashin Ottamathara was born in Katha, Myanmar on Sunday, October 26, 1969 (the full moon day of Thadingyut) in Sagaing State, Northern Myanmar. He is the eldest son in a family of three children. His parents are Myanmar Chinese. His father is U Tin Maung, a mining engineer. Her mother is Mrs. Daw Khin Khin Myint, who was a small merchant. His father and mother's nature were inherently compassionate, business-minded, sound intellectual, straightforward, and sincere. When they heard that he was willing to leave home, they were sad to prevent him because they wanted to orient him to inherit "a rich inheritance". But later, thanks to his guidance, the whole family took refuge in the Three Jewels and protected him with one mind.

Born into a family with a rich economic background, he was well-educated and had a clear future orientation. His nature is inherently intelligent, long remembered, and profound. He always considers a problem that can be covered and guessed correctly. He has an organized mind and the ability to deal with matters very quickly.

In 1986, he passed the university entrance exam with an excellent score.

In 1992, he received a B. A. (English) with excellent division from Yangon University.

From 1992 to 1999, he was a young business owner and a successful businessman at that time.

However, with the origination of the enlightened seed from many previous generations, although life was favorable in all aspects, he could not keep his aspiration to become a monk. Since 1999, he began to approach many methods of *Vipassanā* meditation practice of blissful meditation masters, such as Ledi, SunLun, Mahasi, Mogok, and TheInnGu... After experiencing and practicing meditation seriously and enthusiastically at Mogok Meditation Centers (HQ) of U Ba Khin's International Meditation Center, S. S.'s *Vipassanā* Goenta Meditation Center...; He became more and more knowledgeable about the Buddha's teachings and the theory of No-self; After only 3 years of meditation, he realized the basic truth. On October 21, 2002, the full moon day of *Thadingyut*, he donated all his possessions, officially ordained, and ordained a *bhikkhu*. With great respect for the Buddha and his teachers, he began to teach *Vipassanā* meditation; wishing to help more people get access to the Absolute Truth.

IV. THE OUTSTANDING “TSUNAMI” BUDDHIST ACTIVITIES OF *VIPASSANĀ* MEDITATION MASTER OTTAMATHARA

Since entering the monastic life, Ottamathara has always been respectful, devoted himself to serving the Three Jewels, guiding people to discharge evil and do good, and improving the quality of life with the blessings of body-mouth-mind in a selfless manner; The path of renunciation of the Middle Way, Selflessness and Altruism is always promoted and encouraged by His disciples.

In 2002, under the appointment of *Vipassanā* Meditation Master U Nayyasagara, Ottamathara began to teach *Vipassanā* meditation. He became famous in the Buddhist community as well as the community of other religions in Myanmar. He founded the organization “From *Avijja* to *Vijja*” (From Ignorance to Wisdom) - the Foundation for the Spread of Wisdom to lay the first foundation for the Dhammadut journey - and later trips to propagate the *Dharma* at home and abroad. This organization quickly became one of Myanmar's most important sources of *Vipassanā* school.

In 2005, he became known as “Tsunami *Vipassanā* Meditation Master” (Tsunami Sayadaw) after a series of VCDs teachings on the causes of tsunamis and lessons for humanity.

In two years: 2007, and 2008, he established the Meditation Center at 45th Street, downtown Yangon (2007) and *Thabarwa* Meditation Center, Thanlyin (2008). These two *Thabarwa* centers: are the 45th Street Meditation Center in the inner city of Yangon and Thanlyin Center in the suburbs of Yangon.

In 2009, he started international tours to teach mindfulness and renunciation and guide the *Vipassanā* meditation.

In 2012, intending to provide quality education to disadvantaged children, he established the first “*Baka School*” in the 15th Goodwill Village. Since then, many new *Baka* schools are currently in different stages of development across Myanmar.

In 2013, he began to support the Buddhist monasteries for monks, nuns, and orphanages who require materials; and help local communities with difficulty in building roads, bridges, schools, clinics, dormitories, temples,

main halls, public toilets, manual wells, and water purifiers (to provide clean water) etc.

In 2015, there were many great *Dharma* activities under his direction. First of all, he established the Buddhist School for monks and nuns at *Thabarwa* Center (Thanlyin). Also in 2015, to inspire good deeds, practicing social welfare, and social security, and supporting emergencies, such as natural disasters, refugees, and anyone in need; Therefore, the first Charity model was born, encouraging everyone to join hands to “create unlimited merit”, temporarily called “Benevolence Bank”, which was inaugurated on August 29, 2015. This is one of the highly appreciated activities of *Thabarwa* Center. Several new “Blessed Banks” are also developing across Myanmar. Also in 2015, His Holiness established the first Animal Sanctuary in Hlegu and plans to establish a Wildlife Sanctuary in the south of Myanmar.

In 2016, under his guidance, the 4-story *Dharma* Hospital in the central campus of *Thabarwa* (Thanlyin) was opened and put into operation very effectively; helped many people, and solved many difficulties for those who needed help from heavy to light; especially in the current situation of Myanmar.

In 2017, there were also consecutive great *Dharma* activities under His Holiness’s decision. First: He established the 6-storey *Dharma* Ending Life Convalescence Hospital at the campus of *Thabarwa* Center (Thanlyin). This construction was funded mostly by the Kun Kho Yar Foundation. Second: Establishment of the first drug addiction treatment center in Tarchileik, East Shan State in Myanmar. And is currently planning to establish a number of other such Centers in Myanmar. Third: Established *Thabarwa* Nature Center in some Western countries. Bringing *Vipassanā* Meditation to wide application in the world; joining hands for peace and progress of mankind; aims to help humanity end suffering, and live a peaceful, free, and good life, in the spirit of the Buddha’s words.

V. MASTER OTTAMATHARA’S PLAN TO PROPAGATE THE DHARMA AT HOME AND ABROAD

To meet the physical, and mental needs as well as understanding of the growing number of meditators, *Vipassanā* Meditation Master Ottamathara planned to set up branches of *Thabarwa* Center throughout Myanmar and other countries.

Facing the circumstance of the increasing number of elderly people and patients in need of shelter at *Thabarwa* Center, *Vipassanā* Meditation Master Ottamathara is planning to build a 16-storey *Dharma* Hospital, establishing a 15ft Goodwill Village (Thanlyin, 2012) and Thitnipin Goodwill Village (Hlegu Town, 2014). The plan is that plots of land are distributed free of charge to the needy, displaced, and homeless households and individuals. At the same time, several new Goodwill Villages are currently in the process of forming and developing throughout Myanmar. Notably, the main center of *Thabarwa* (Thanlyin) - Yangon, currently has about 3,000 students from all over Myanmar and the world studying. At this *Vipassanā* Meditation Center,

he often guides meditation practice for more than 1200 Myanmar monks and nuns on average. The center takes care of more than 1000 patients at *Dharma Hospital*. Moreover, the center is responsible for taking care of about 2500 elderly people, single mothers, and a group of 50 orphans. The *Thabarwa* Center creates security for the number of about 200 laymen and women volunteers. “Man creates everything, all sorrows and pains and his unhappiness as well as his happiness and success”.⁶ The main *Thabarwa* Center is considered “a village/ a community for commoners” with the spirit of karma, harmony, sharing, love, empathy, less desire, contentment, and purity of mind. There is often mutual support between *Thabarwa* Centers; and also among the *Thabarwas* in the world. The spirit of practicing and serving Buddhism shows: “Religious policy is associated with the promotion of morality but must have freedom, equality, and sincere love; (4) “Religion is not sanctifying or performing a virtue out of poverty”.⁷ According to Buddhism, “all unjust in caste is caused by the inevitable consequences of past karma”.⁸ Buddhism offers the law of karma, reincarnation, cause, and effect is the law that governs all sentient beings. “Where the *karma* is matured, there the resultant result of that *karma* is felt in the present or in the next life or in a life to come.”⁹ Brahmins divided Indian society into four varna (caste system) i.e., the Brahmin (cleric, priest), Kshatriya (king), Vaishya (merchant), and Shudra (servant, slave).¹⁰ There is also the Dalit class discrimination. Of the four castes, the Buddha “confirms that in the Sangha, there is no distinction between brahmins (scholars, priests, and teachers) and Kshatriyas (warriors and aristocracy), or between masters and servants. Anyone who has been admitted to the Sangha has the same opportunity to learn and practice”.¹¹ And “No parents, heaven or earth or anyone else make them noble or low, only their actions make them noble or low; It is not someone else who makes us polluted or clean, but only because we make us polluted or clean”.¹² If people practice the *Dharma*, one will be able to create happiness for themselves and others, due to “being aware that humans can control and overcome suffering. It is determined that one can put an end to suffering by training in virtue, concentration meditation, and discernment”.¹³

⁶ Narada Thera, *The Buddha and the Dharma*, Pham Kim Khanh (1998) (translated), General Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, p. 209.

⁷ Ambedkar's citation from *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, p. 49.

⁸ Vien Tri (2005), *Indian Buddhist History*, Oriental Publishing House, Vietnam, p. 28.

⁹ *Anguttara Nikāya*, Thich Minh Chau (1996) (translated), Volume II, Chapter III Bhandagata, 05, Hanoi Religious Publishing House, Vietnam, p. 79.

¹⁰ Sangharakshita, *Ambedkar and Buddhism*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 1986, p. 56.

¹¹ Junjiro Takakusu, *The Essence of Buddhist Philosophy*, Tue Sy (2007) (translated), Oriental Publishing House, Vietnam, tr. 34.

¹² Thich Quang Nhuan (2005), *Theory of Buddhism*, volume 2, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, Vietnam, p. 148.

¹³ Dalai Lama (2007), *How to practice to have a meaningful life*, Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, Vietnam, p. 69.

Buddhism takes ethics or morality practice as the standard measure of equality. “The luxury and cowardice of man are due to his personality, not his family base; for ethics or morality practice, lineage has absolutely no meaning at all, but the only difference is whether you are enthusiastic or not in advancing in cultivation”.¹⁴ *Thabarwa* Meditation Center Myanmar everyone lives together equally in the spirit of Buddha’s words under the guidance of Master U Ottamathara. “The Buddha declared justice and the Buddha was strong against the caste system”.¹⁵ *Thabarwa* Centers are always ready to welcome all people when they need help. “Cause and effect in the Buddha’s teachings are both dependent-arising, they are selfless; they always need to be seen in the light of dependent origination”.¹⁶ Following the teachings of the *Vipassanā* Meditation Master, *Thabarwa* Thanlyin provides shelter and health care for all people with any circumstances for the rest of their lives. This place has housed all types of people regardless of age, occupation, qualifications, circumstances, and economic abilities, such as the elderly, the homeless, orphans, single mothers, the unemployed, sick, disabled, mentally ill, people with chronic or terminal illnesses (including tuberculosis and AIDS) and those facing complex health, social or financial challenges. The center also actively protects the environment, treats waste, and lives in harmony with nature. “The Buddhist revival in India has the advantage that the Buddha”.¹⁷ “Wisdom is a prerequisite for overcoming suffering, eliminating delusion; is peace in the present life and the future”.¹⁸ In modern times, the actions and practices of Meditation master Ottamathara are also contributing to the revival and development of Buddhism in Myanmar and in the world in general, contributing to world peace.

VI. FEATURES AND THE VALUE OF VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION MASTER OTTAMATHARA’S

Today, Ottamathara teaches *Dharma* and conducts *Vipassanā* meditation at many research institutes, schools, and hospitals at home and abroad. In particular, he is willing to face difficulties, willing to come to preach the *Dharma* to many patients even when they are far away. His teachings are leading people from attachment to renunciation, from anger to compassion, from ignorance to wisdom, etc. through the power of doing *kusala* and true understanding of the nature of not-self. Through his teachings, many people, whether young or old, sick, or healthy, can access the practice to transform: “From Ignorance to Knowledge”, “From Craving to Compassion”, “From Anger to the free

¹⁴ Kimura Taiken, *Theravada Buddhist Thoughts*, Most Ven. Thich Quang Do (2007) (translated), Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, Vietnam, p. 231.

¹⁵ Sangharakshita, *Ibid.*, p. 56

¹⁶ *Samyutta Nikāya*, Thich Minh Chau (1991) (translated), Hanoi Religious Publishing House, Vietnam, p. 291.

¹⁷ K. N. Kadam, *The Meaning of the Ambedkarite Conversion to Buddhism and other Essays*, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, (1997), p. 42.

¹⁸ *Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra*, Thi Vu (1973) (translation and commentary), Paris Publishing House, Vietnam, p. 79.

attachment” and “From Self to Non-Self”. Buddhism believes that a calm mind is very important, “thanks to a calm mind, we can see things as they exist... If the mind is calm, the desires and cravings caused by the objective world will not dominate the mind either.”¹⁹

In the spirit of volunteering to serve sentient beings without limits; practice *kusala* or love-compassionate naturally; constant effort in insight into body and mind; Tam innocuously complete students; full literature-private-tu; understanding jurisprudence and jurisprudence; worldly – worldly harmony; transcendent but still close to the simplicity of entering the world... The Buddha lists the criteria by which any person can decide which teachings to accept as true. Do not blindly believe religious teachings, just because they are claimed to be true, or even through the application of various methods or techniques. Direct knowledge grounded in one’s own experience can be called upon. He advised that the words of the wise should be heeded and taken into account. He proposed not a passive acceptance but, rather, constant questioning and personal testing to identify those truths that verifiably reduce one’s suffering.²⁰ Ottamathara has shown the rare bi-brave of a Buddhist practitioner who has attained the *Dharma* in modern times. Therefore, he was trusted by the Sangha, the Buddhists submitted to him, and the leaders respected him. His teachings and teachings have brought *Vipassanā* Meditation to positive application in life, making practitioners always see the results immediately in the present, helping many people to benefit, inner peace, actively discharge evil and good deeds towards turning mortals into saints in the path of liberation taught by the Buddha.

Buddhism in Myanmar is always respected by leaders, Buddhist monks, and nuns all over the country who wish to join hands for peace and happiness for themselves and others. *Vipassanā* Meditation Master Ottamathara has always fervently called for and advocated for peace. He was not only a *Vipassanā* Meditation Master, a shaman, a psychologist, a sociologist... but also a Buddhist leader who had a great influence on the Sangha, Buddhists, and common people in Myanmar and some parts of the world today.

On May 14, 2023, in Myanmar, *Vipassanā* Meditation Master Ottamathara - the owner of more than 100 meditation centers in Myanmar, 12 centers in Thailand, and some in the world, with the common name *Thabarwa* was recognized by the NGO as The Hope Charity Myanmar Foundation honors the title of “The great and noble person who teaches the *Dharma* clearly - The shaman, the Elder Sayadaw Ottamathara”. On March 9, 2022, this organization also presented him with the noble and honorable title of “The great philanthropist of social charity - Venerable Sayadaw Ottamathara”.

¹⁹ *Digha-Nikāya*, Thich Minh Chau (1972) (translated), Van Hanh University Institute, Saigon, Vietnam, p. 56 - 57.

²⁰ *Anguttara Nikāya* I, Thich Minh Chau (1996) (translated), chapter III, *Keraputta*, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, Vietnam, p. 338.

VII. CONCLUSION

The entire process of *Vipassanā* meditation is indeed a purification of the mind - the evolvement of a skillful mind. While practicing *Vipassanā* meditation, meditators need to sit still with their back straight and completely quiet for a certain period. *Vipassanā* exercise retreats frequently exhort monks, nuns, lay Buddhists, and cultivators should strictly undertake precepts, have a really obvious mind, meditate diligently, and seriously comply with the rules and schedules. During the retreat, practitioners observe the 5 or 8 precepts for a peaceful mind. They can pay attention to one object, observe feelings throughout the body, balance the sensations, and invariably remain mindful, alert, benevolent, and wholesome towards everyone. The teacher's guidance in meditation can profoundly and proficiently assist practitioners in unlocking their minds, thereby creating a premise for self-practice at home later on, with the most crucial state of an open mind without clinging and desire. Diverse positive and negative emotions will arise during meditation, so persevering and diligent practice in life is vital.

Vipassanā is the approach detected by the Buddha, and the practice is not limited to lay Buddhists. The process of self-purification through inner self-observation requires meditators to assiduously sustain, their efforts and the awareness that no one can practice for us. The discipline and rules only support the cultivator during the retreat to tame body and mind. Regulations are formulated to facilitate an environment for intensive meditation and strengthen effective meditation practice. This consent is one of conduct and understanding, not blind coercion. Meditators can practice industriously and intensely only with an attitude of trust. Confidence in yourself, trust in the teacher, and faith in the *Vipassanā* method are the foundation for successful application. Eventually, meditators should note that one's progress depends solely on one's virtuous qualities, personal growth, and five factors: fervent endeavor, confidence, sincerity, health, and wisdom. At *Thabarwa* centers, Ottamathara has been teaching *Vipassanā* Meditation, to promote monks and nuns, and local and foreign yogis cultivate the ability to "do *Dharma* without limit" to solve all problems for themselves and society; embody the spirit of Buddhism and practical application.

Sayadaw U Sayadaw Ottamathara specializes in self-transformation and vows to fully propagate the path with the *attitude of doing all kusala indiscriminately*, calmly, and in harmony with all faculties. The practice of parami (*paramita*) is the merit that any true Buddhist disciples of any tradition have experienced in common with the Buddha's teaching. He is also famous for his great loving-kindness. Master Ottamathara's spirit of meditation practice has the effect of promoting the Buddha's teachings applied in the human world, popularizing *Vipassanā* meditation, joining hands with the community, supporting peace, respecting life, and imbued with humanity and morality. It also comes from purely understanding and perceiving deeply the teachings of the Primordial Buddha preached over 2600 years and the parami (*paramita*) of *Vipassanā* Meditation Master Ottamathara accumulated from lifetimes.

His past as well as his vows in the benefit of forgiveness. As for the issue of international preaching, Master Ottamathara also has plans to establish several new Natural *Thabarwa* Centers in the United States, Europe, Australia, and Asia ... He is willing to make sincere *Dharma* connections without distinction based on the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni Buddha.

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AN INCLUSIVE, COMPASSIONATE, AND NON-VIOLENT BUDDHIST KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM: ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

This research paper explores the amalgamation of Buddhism in the field of education to encourage compassion and wisdom. The first part of the paper examines the history of Buddhism and its fundamental doctrines. Therefore, the Buddhist knowledge system is the learning and preparation of arising to the truth and accepting things as they truly are. Numerous approaches related to education, accessibility, and inclusivity make Buddhism an integrated structure, and that will be the second part of this paper. Buddhism, which started with just five followers, has now spread into numerous regions and is the belief of almost 600 million people in more than fifteen countries. There is a blend of skills, training, resilience, and the development of personality in this educational system. Buddhism is primarily centered around the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Buddhism is an education and practice of non-violence and truth. The purpose of teaching, therefore, is to awaken distinctive potential; the goal of knowledge, to symbolize that intrinsic wisdom - a wisdom categorized by an uncommitted, open, progressive mind - and an empathetic respect for all lives. Gautama Buddha is considered a great guru of all time. His teachings were for the good of humankind in the fourth century BCE and are equally true today for the happiness of the majority of people in the world. In this paper, we adopted analytical studies, descriptive, and methodical approaches, and conclusions of the paper are drawn after the analysis of primary and secondary writings, the great works of Buddhist authors, e-journals, and e-books available.

Keywords: *Integration, compassion, wisdom, resilience, humankind.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi asserts that Buddhism made a lasting influence on Hinduism by his immense sacrifice, his profound renunciation, and the impeccable purity of his life, and that Hinduism will always be indebted to that great master.¹ The principles of peace and nonviolence are the most celebrated concepts of the Indian scriptures and traditions. Represented by thousands of cultural and indigenous groups, hundreds of languages, and numerous religions practiced in harmony, these reveal the tradition of “Live and Let Live.” Buddhism is not just a belief from older times or a simple devotion, as many think, but it is a time-tested scientific religion and philosophy, which, in the context of the present world situation, is more relevant today than ever before for establishing world peace.² India is the land of Buddha, thus the land of peace and non-violence. Buddhist education was the first after Brahmanism and broke many obstacles in society. The most prominent symbol of Indian pride is the Ashoka Chakra, which was inspired by King Ashoka, who relinquished violence and embraced Buddhism after witnessing the destruction of war. Buddhism is one of the oldest religions with a tradition in the world. It is founded on the life and traditions of Gautama Buddha. In this contemporary world, there has been a developing interest among researchers and scholars in exploring alternatives or new methodologies to educate young minds with a holistic approach. Buddhist education established an impeccable society. Religious history in India began around 1500 BCE, and about 600 or 500 BCE was the time of Buddha, marking a timeline of almost 1,000 years - a history of continuing communication between two views on religion, which interacted and also merged.³

II. SIDDHARTHA BECAME BUDDHA

Buddha's life began in 563 or 566 BCE, in a rich family in Lumbini, today situated in Nepal, and he was raised in a small principality named Kapilvastu. At this spot, almost 316 years later, King Ashoka built a pillar made of stone to mark the divine spot. The engraving on pillar is engraved in five lines and almost ninety Asokan characters: “Here was born the Buddha, the sage of the Sakyan.”⁴ His father gave him the name Siddhartha. He belonged to a wealthy royal family in a warrior caste known as the Kshatriya. His father was Shuddhodana, and his mother was Mahamaya. In his younger years, Siddhartha mastered the science and arts of his time, along with other training in warfare. He had a sharp intellect. He married a young princess, but soon after witnessing human suffering, one day he left all the comforts and luxuries and realized the truth of the world. Now, Siddhartha began to teach after attaining nirvana and became the Buddha, meaning “the Enlightened or Awakened.” Four series of events that Prince Siddhartha Gautama experienced led to his

¹ Mahadev Desai (1928): p. 26.

² Morgan, Kenneth W (1956): p.12.

³ Peter D. Santina (1984): p. 17.

⁴ Piyadassi, Thera (1995): p. 7 - 8. “*Hida budhe jate Sakyamuni.*”

curiosity about life, prompting him to leave his lavish and comfortable life to follow the path of asceticism and discover the reality of life. One day, when he was visiting his garden, he saw an old man who was weak due to age. His second sight was of a sick man, hopeless and abandoned. Third, he witnessed a death, and after that, he saw a solitary person walking alone without help. After seeing all this, he learned from his charioteer that all of us would go through these conditions. It was this benevolence that led Siddhartha Gautama to abandon his luxurious life and seek nirvana for the sake of all human beings.⁵ His pursuit of freedom from oppression to nirvana had begun. He also sought guidance from two mentors, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, and practiced meditation. Finally, after a few months, he reached Gaya and found the place suitable for his quest for enlightenment. "Five other ascetics who admired his determination joined him. They were Kondana, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama, and Assaji." He struggled for six years and, at last, abandoned extreme fasting and continued with a more balanced routine. At the age of thirty-five, one day under the Bodhi tree, on the riverside of Naranjara, in Gaya, he realized and attained nirvana on the full moon of Vesakha. He became the Buddha. He shared his understanding of various subjects with the people, and soon they, too, realized the right path and followed him. Earlier, it was just a perspective on different subjects, but with time, it became a religion: Buddhism. Buddha was born as a common man, achieved Nirvana as a common human being, and died as any other man. Despite having attained parinibbana, he did not think of himself as a deity or any special person or as any extraordinary human being.⁶

III. FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The four noble truths are a necessary feature of Buddhist teachings. It is because we fail to comprehend the four noble truths that we get stuck in the cycles of birth and death. From the doctrine itself to the practice, the four noble truths are the summary of the teachings of the Buddha.⁷ In the four noble truths - namely, the truth of suffering (*dukkha*), the truth of the cause of suffering (*samudaya*), the truth of the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*), and the truth of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering (*maggā*) - we have the foundation for understanding and practicing the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha, in a sense, was an unmatched faith healer. His manner of describing the four noble truths is similar to that of a doctor. Firstly, he identified the ailment; next, he revealed the reason behind that illness; after that, he deliberated on its elimination, which is the treatment. The cure for this is the noble eightfold path.⁸ Thus, the teachings of the Buddha are open to all and are not enforced upon anyone.

IV. THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The Tathāgata (Buddha) understood it as the middle path, eluding the

⁵ Peter D. Santina (1984): p. 23.

⁶ Ibid (1995): p. 25.

⁷ Peter D. Santina (1984): p. 28.

⁸ Piyadassi Thera (1995): p. 38 - 39.

extremes, which gives vision and knowledge and leads to calm, realization, enlightenment, and nibbāna. These are eight aspects of life that are to be incorporated into life according to Buddhism. These are: right understanding (*sammā diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā vācā*), right action (*sammā kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*), right effort (*sammā vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā sati*), and right concentration (*sammā samādhi*). These eight constituents of the noble eightfold path are interconnected. The path is noble, and those who follow it are also noble and wise. People can practice this path simultaneously, as each part supports the other. The noble eightfold path is also represented by the Dhamma wheel (*dhammacakka*), consisting of eight spokes. This path is the means to the goal of Buddhism. To understand these eight phases of the path, they have been categorized into three training (*tiśikkhā*): *sīla* (noble behavior or ethics), *samādhi* (mental development or meditation), and *paññā* (intelligence or wisdom).⁹ Good conduct is the foundation of every religion. All living beings are equal, and this should be reciprocated toward all others. We are encouraged by the good words of others and, at the same time, hurt by the uncontrolled speech of others. Therefore, to cultivate a culture in which congruence, contentment, cooperation, and communication are the objectives to be comprehended, one must regulate, promote, and employ one's ability to communicate effectively. The Buddha instructed Rāhula to avoid lying. According to him, someone's good character is reflected in his good behavior alone. Right action develops an admiration for relationships and life.¹⁰ Right action (*sammā kammanta*) involves respect for life and relationships. Such rules and conduct are essential for the betterment of society and are extremely important for individual progress. Right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) is also related to right conduct. Five categories of occupation are explicitly discouraged for the followers of Buddhism. These are: dealing in animals for butchery, trading in slaves, selling armaments, dealing in toxins, and commerce in intoxicants such as drugs and alcoholic beverages. These are prohibited means of livelihood because they bring disrespect and are harmful to society as a whole.¹¹ Mental development is another important aspect of the practice of the noble eightfold path. The Buddha himself said that, for all mental states, the mind plays a crucial role. Today, all scientists recognize the importance of the mind. According to Buddhism, when the mind is free of all evil, such as greed and anger, the whole universe will be purified. So, the last three steps of the noble eightfold path inspire and empower individuals to be more observant, self-reliant, and peaceful. With the right effort (*sammā vāyāma*) and a positive attitude, one can achieve successful results. By making the right efforts in our career, studies, practice, and Dhamma, we can become successful. Right mindfulness (*sammā sati*) is significant in our day-to-day life. It means we must be attentive at all times, even when doing our daily chores. To avoid accidents, we should always

⁹ Peter D. Santina (1984): p. 48.

¹⁰ Ibid: p. 52-53.

¹¹ Ibid: p. 56.

be attentive. There should be no distractions on the way of Dhamma either. We should not become entangled with distractions and must play an active role in our relationships with others. It means we should always be mindful. This is an important characteristic of mental development that we can practice to make ourselves better. According to Buddhism, if we are not able to practice meditation, we can practice the right effort and right mindfulness instead. It is all about focus, concentration, awareness, and attentiveness of the mind. In the Buddhist scriptures, it is written that the practice of mindfulness is the way to achieve the end of suffering. Right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) is the way to focus the mind on an object pointedly. When you concentrate on one point, you are not distracted, and all other thoughts are eliminated. For this type of concentration, we need a specific, specialized teacher. When we achieve the ability to concentrate, it has dual benefits. Firstly, it leads to the happiness of the mind and the body, bringing relief, pleasure, peace, and calmness. Secondly, it becomes instrumental in such a way that it helps us see things as they truly are. It formulates the mind to accomplish wisdom.¹²

V. BUDDHIST SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Saṅgha - In ancient India, caste was highly instrumental in shaping society and determining access to education. The Buddha intensely condemned the prevailing caste system and declared that all castes should unite as rivers merge into the sea.¹³ At this time, the Buddha not only rejected this discriminatory system but also united all monks in the *saṅgha*, where caste, clan, and tribal distinctions ceased to exist, forming one community. To spread the Buddhist teachings the *saṅgha* plays an important role. Along with the Buddha and the dhamma, the third jewel is the *saṅgha*. It refers to the community of bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs who follow the Buddhist path. The Buddha himself acknowledged the profound significance of the *saṅgha* in preserving the purity of his teachings. This is evident in the fact that he incorporated the *saṅgha* as the third constituent of the holy triple gem (*tiratana*). The *saṅgha*'s vital role, both during the Buddha's time and in the present, as the source of the dhamma across space and time, can never be undervalued.¹⁴ By living together in the *saṅgha*, bhikkhus engage with the community and learn together. These Buddhist *saṅghas* function as both religious and educational institutions, and their followers, in turn, develop new ideas and systems. Within these *saṅghas*, disciplinary rules and laws were established for the monastic community. The Buddhist *saṅgha* serves as the carrier of the Dhamma, teaching by example and guiding others on the path to enlightenment. Rājagaha was the first center of Buddhist learning. After his enlightenment, the Buddha visited Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha. The king of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, became a follower of the Buddha. Soon, in Rājagaha, many Buddhist philosophical schools of thought flourished.

¹² Peter D. Santina (1984): p. 67 - 68.

¹³ Piyadassi Thera, (2009): p. 61.

¹⁴ Ven. Dr. K. Shri Dhammananada (2000): p. 16 - 17.

Monastery - During the Buddhist period, the main centers of education were monasteries, vihāras, and maṭhas. To gain admission, a learner had to appear before the board and request permission to study. Monasteries were not only centers for academic learning but also provided instruction in practical and religious knowledge. This system was innovative and unique in many ways compared to other educational systems prevalent in ancient times. The organization and administration of these institutions were the responsibility of the monks living in the monasteries.

Pabbajjā and Upasampadā - Pabbajjā means “going forth,” and upasampadā means “higher ordination” or “nearing full admission.” These are important stages in the Buddhist primary educational journey. Pabbajjā is the ceremony in which, after being admitted, a novice must change both clothing and conduct. The minimum age for this ordination is eight years. The student also formally takes refuge by reciting: (1) I take refuge in the Buddha, (2) I take refuge in the Dhamma. (3) I take refuge in the Saṅgha. One of the most remarkable aspects of this system was that students of any caste could seek admission. Upon ordination, they no longer belonged to any caste. In ancient India, where social identity was deeply tied to caste, this was a revolutionary idea. Buddhist education was open to all classes of society. In Buddhism, upasampadā signifies that a monk has already completed twelve years of education in a monastery. At this stage, the student becomes a fully ordained member of the saṅgha and has the option to become a bhikkhu or bhikkhunī. This step requires severing all ties with the lay world. The duration of this advanced education is ten years, making the total period of monastic education twenty-two years.

Medium of Instruction in Monasteries - The language used by teachers and students during their studies was the common or local language. Primarily, Pāli served as the medium of instruction, though the mother tongues of the students were also widely used.

VI. OBJECTIVES OF LEARNING

The main objective of learning in this age was to spread the Dhamma and, through it, the accomplishment of nibbāna. With the beginning of the Buddhist education system, the institutionalization of learning in ancient India also started. The main aim of Buddhist education is to attain wisdom. According to the Buddha, it is wisdom that unlocks the gates of nibbāna or enlightenment. Wisdom ends ignorance, the fundamental cause of suffering. Buddhism is seen as an ethically principled religion. For common people, the Buddha set some moral standards through the five precepts: (1) Refrain from taking life. (2) Refrain from taking what is not given. (3) Refrain from the misuse of the senses. (4) Refrain from wrong speech. (5) Refrain from intoxicants.¹⁵ Buddhist education is for all and plays an important role in overall personality development. It also teaches all followers to live a disciplined, non-violent life.

¹⁵ Madhusudan Sakya (2011): p. 17 - 25.

VII. DOCTRINES OF EDUCATION

“The process by which freedom (and peace and happiness) is achieved is called development, and in Buddhism, human development is synonymous with education”.¹⁶ The main objective of Buddhist education was the holistic development of students, so the curriculum was also based on the values of the Buddha’s philosophy. Systematic Buddhist literature is available in the three baskets of the *Tiṭṭaka* - *Suttapiṭaka*, *Vinayapiṭaka*, and *Abhidhammapiṭaka*. These are the codified teachings of the Buddha. The *Tiṭṭaka* is studied and admired by bhikkhus, scholars, and students. It serves as a guiding principle for all followers of Buddhism. The *Suttapiṭaka* contains the Buddha’s teachings on morality and nibbāna practices, while the *Vinayapiṭaka* outlines the necessary rules to maintain discipline for monks living in monasteries. The *Abhidhamma* provides philosophical knowledge to monks regarding the mind and the reality of the world. The basic principles of Buddhist education emphasized ethical, intellectual, and physical growth for students in monasteries. It was the duty of everyone to follow the rules and regulations in these Buddhist schools. The curriculum was primarily spiritual in nature. Every student had to study religious books related to the Buddha and his doctrines.

Role of a Teacher - A teacher had to live like a monk for at least ten years and possess purity in character and thoughts. It was also the teacher’s duty to take care of students if they fell ill. There was a unique relationship between the teacher and the student in monasteries. Students usually accompanied their teacher and carried their belongings and essential items, such as water, robes, clothes, chairs, or āsanās, etc. Discipline and simplicity were the guiding principles of that time. Teachers instructed monks in manners, ethical values, self-discipline, as well as religious and skill-based education. While some resident monks lived in the monasteries and taught students, well-known teachers were often invited to give special classes. These classes were mainly based on their expertise in religion, but other subjects such as medicine, skill development, and military training were also covered by these specially invited teachers.

Methods of Teaching - The ultimate aim of every student in Buddhist education was to attain bodhisatta realization. The primary method of teaching during the Buddhist period was oral transmission. Although there is evidence of writing during that time, education in monasteries was predominantly verbal. Teachers taught orally, and students memorized the lessons. If students had doubts, discussions were held to clarify them. Monks and teachers were also engaged in propagating Buddhism, so some monks emphasized travel as a means of education. Ācariya Rāhula and Ācariya Sāriputta regarded travel as a significant educational tool for students. After completing their education in monasteries, students were encouraged to undertake extensive journeys to gain real-world understanding.¹⁷ Talks and discussions also took place in the *saṅgha*

¹⁶ P. A. Payutto (1994): p. 63.

¹⁷ Devasis Chakma (2023).

twice a month - on the first day of the month and the day of *pūṇimā* (full moon). Bhikkhus and bhikkhunis from other monasteries and *saṅghas* would gather in one place, present their doubts, and engage in discussions until solutions were reached. Attendance was compulsory for all monks and students. The teaching approach was interactive in nature.

Skill Education - Buddhist education maintained a balanced relationship with the real world. It was not only aimed at the development of the mind and self-attainment but also focused on personality transformation through skill development. The main aim of education was to emphasize both learning and practical application. A key feature of the *saṅgha* was living and learning together, fostering teamwork. Bhikkhus were trained in handicrafts, and most of them acquired the skills of weaving and stitching their robes during their stay in monasteries. In addition to this, farming, animal rearing, trade, and commerce were also part of their education. Sculpture, painting, and architecture were included in their studies as well. Many monasteries were constructed and decorated by students during this time. Medicine was also part of the curriculum, ensuring that bhikkhus were educated in various practical skills.

VIII. WOMEN MONASTICISM

Most Buddhists accept the biological differences between males and females. The Buddha held a respectful position for women in society, but initially, he was not ready to admit women into the *saṅgha*. It is said that upon the request of his stepbrother Ānanda, he allowed female followers to join the Buddhist *saṅgha*. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the Buddha's maternal aunt and foster mother, became the first female follower. After that, women from all castes and clans joined the *saṅgha*. In his great compassion and generosity, the Buddha always treated women with respect and politeness, teaching them the path to harmony, purity, and spiritual attainment. The Blessed One said: "A mother is the friend at one's home. A wife is the highest friend of the husband."¹⁸ However, for female followers or nuns, the Buddha established eight rules of respect (*garudhamma*), which were as follows: (1) Even if a nun has been ordained for a hundred years, she must pay respect to a monk who has just been ordained. (2) She must not slander a monk. (3) She must not accuse a monk of any misdeed. (4) She must receive the full monastic code for nuns from a monk. (5) She must confess her offenses before the assembly of monks and make amends accordingly. (6) She must seek instruction from a monk every half month. (7) She must not spend the vassa (rains retreat) in a place where there are no monks. (8) After the vassa, she must confess her offenses to a monk and make amends. These restrictions applied only to nuns and were established for the discipline of the *saṅgha*. Women were also not appointed to high administrative positions in their monasteries. However, admission to the *saṅgha* was open to all women, regardless of social status, caste, or creed. Many nuns attained great spiritual progress and established themselves as renowned

¹⁸ Piyadassi Thera (1995): p. 68.

scholars. In many ways, Buddhism was the first religious tradition to recognize and support the education of women.

IX. CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF BUDDHIST TEACHING

Followers of the Buddha - The Buddhist education system is extraordinary in many ways. Buddhism emerged as a response to the limitations of other philosophical concepts prevalent at that time. Gautama Buddha was primarily an ethical and disciplined teacher who focused on questions related to human suffering. His teaching on nibbāna centered around the Four Noble Truths - suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering (*samudaya*), the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*), and the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*magga*). The main aim of Buddhist education was the spread of dhamma and the attainment of nibbāna. Dhamma emphasized humanity and humanitarianism, which attracted a large number of followers to Buddhism. The religion promoted values such as harmony, tolerance, justice, and universal compassion - principles that remain relevant in contemporary society. Buddhist teachings particularly appealed to the downtrodden in society. Buddhism also introduced the idea of conversion in India, and many, including Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar, chose to embrace Buddhism. Beyond its social impact, Buddhism also brought significant changes in the field of education, as Buddhist philosophers advocated for progressive thought. Non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) was a fundamental principle of Buddhist education. The concepts of education for all and inclusive education are deeply embedded in Buddhist teachings and are now central components of contemporary India's educational philosophy. The idea of humanity in Buddhism is based on mutual respect and the belief in the inherent dignity of all living beings. Buddhism strives for a compassionate, peaceful, impartial, and sustainable society through social and political activism, rooted in human rights.¹⁹ As Chandradhar Sharma wrote in his book, "Buddhism was embraced by the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the intellectual and the dull alike. It spread like wildfire far and wide from the lofty Himalayas to Cape Comorin and ranged beyond the frontiers of its homeland to Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Malaya, Java, Sumatra, and then again to Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, China, and Japan."²⁰

Holistic Knowledge System - Buddhist educational institutions, including monasteries, sanghas, and viharas, were democratic in nature, allowing people from any religion or caste to reside and receive education. The Buddha recognized the significance of monasteries and sanghas as the purest means of imparting education. Sanghas were particularly quiet places where residents lived a secluded life, avoiding the distractions of the outer world. The Buddhist education system was universal in nature, free from racial or cultural discrimination. Life in monasteries was simple. The monks, who served as teachers, were well-qualified, secular, and non-violent. They acted as guardians to their students and were responsible for the holistic development

¹⁹ Centro di Atene per i Diritti Umani (2024).

²⁰ Chandradhar Sharma (1976): p. 69.

of their sissas (students). Since all students lived together in monasteries, the relationship between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves, was harmonious. Education in the 21st century also emphasizes the overall development of students and universal access to education. Many countries provide free and compulsory elementary education for young children. The core learning outcomes and objectives of Buddhist teachings - morality and wisdom - were clearly defined and universally accessible. In India, the government is striving to improve the quality of education by recognizing learning outcomes and ensuring their achievement at the end of each course. Today, primary and secondary education are not merely based on rote learning; instead, they emphasize principles of equality, justice, secularism, respect for all living beings, human dignity, well-being, and rational thinking - values described in the *Tipiṭaka*. As Albert Schweitzer noted, "In this sphere, the Buddha gave expression to truths of everlasting value and advanced the ethics not of India alone but of humanity. The Buddha was one of the greatest ethical men of genius ever bestowed upon the world."²¹ During the Buddhist era, the medium of instruction was primarily the language spoken by common people, though some teachers also used Pāli and Sanskrit. According to the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), using a student's local language or mother tongue as the medium of instruction enhances comprehension and strengthens cultural identity. Skill development was a core component of Buddhist curricula - a concept that remains relevant today. Every country should integrate skill-based education to equip youth with employable skills and reduce unemployment. Hands-on training in specialized fields, tailored to individual abilities, should be an essential part of university education, particularly in developing nations. Since monasteries were centers of education, students often studied outdoors in natural settings, allowing them to develop an awareness of medicinal plants and their properties. This deep connection with nature was an integral part of Buddhist learning and remains essential in modern education. Buddhist education and Buddhism as a religion hold immense significance in today's world. The Buddha's message of kindness and generosity toward all beings is universal. In an era marked by conflict and division, his teachings of compassion and wisdom are more relevant than ever in human history.²²

X. BUDDHISM FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SELF AND SOCIETY

The Eightfold Path teaches us right conduct with continuity. This perspective of Buddhism is significant for all of us even today. Compassion and ethical values are crucial for everyone and must be an important part of education. Amidst the various intricacies of contemporary society, there is a growing need to instill moral values among students. There must be a serious concern to preserve the core and spirit of Buddhist knowledge while catering to the growing desires of modern-day humanity. Generally, education in

²¹ O. H. de A. Wijesekera & Jayatileke, E. A. Burtt (2008): p. 52.

²² Dhammananda (1994): p. 27.

every era is for the benefit of both the self and society. The teachings of the Buddha are for the development of both the individual and humanity. They aim for the holistic development of the individual and also for the well-being of all people. The connotation of the Buddhist knowledge system is to design the best way of life for individuals and to nurture their capabilities. This is to enhance the highest quality of an individual's character. The goal is the overall growth of personality. Buddhist knowledge is centered on the teachings of the Buddha; one has to learn them, understand them, and make those teachings beneficial to humanity.²³ Thus, Buddhist education develops individuals who benefit others. The Buddha's way of teaching was also different from that of other teachers. He did not deliver well-prepared lectures or talks. Instead, he observed his surroundings, and spontaneous topics became the themes of his discussions. Even today, this remains one of the best pedagogical tools for teaching. Buddhism emphasizes the interdependence of all things and beings. The Buddha was possibly the foremost teacher to point out that all existing species on earth - whether worms, plants, other creatures, mammals, or birds - comprise multiple sub-species, whereas all human beings belong to a single species. The Buddha's teachings can be regarded as a science of human living and are more relevant today than they were about 2,600 years ago. In Thailand, monks live in a natural environment, practicing Dhamma in harmony with nature. They grow fruit trees and plants, making their surroundings peaceful and healthy places to stay and practice meditation. The education system during the Buddhist period was effective not only in nurturing the spiritual growth of students but also in fostering their personality development. Even today, it is essential that students follow Buddhist education, and countries should take inspiration from it to redefine their education systems for the 21st century.

XI. BUDDHISM FOR PEACE

Today, Buddhist monks are serving society differently. Social coherence and worldwide harmony are the duty of every one of us living on this planet. Buddhist monks can play their part and take responsibility. Not only in India, China, and other countries in Asia, but also in Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Australia, the Buddhist knowledge system is playing a significant role in contributing to widespread harmony and peace. There is tremendous potential in the *saṅgha* and monks to help others in times of distress. Monks can use psychological tools to help ordinary people develop superior qualities. The Buddha himself never criticized non-spiritual wealth. In Buddhist suttas and scriptures, it is written that the Buddha asserted that if wealth is honestly earned, it gives a person confidence, honor, pride, dignity, and the ability to do good. Monks who help others achieve success with the right understanding are following the path of their teacher for the benefit and welfare of humanity. The Buddha and his teachings have transcended all racial as well as natural borders of the modern world. His Eightfold Path is equally important today as it was 2,500 years ago. These are the guiding principles of our daily lives.

²³ Zana, V. T. (2023): p. 39-49.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown all human beings the uncertainties, intricacies, and complications of today's world, so the right effort is necessary. While utilizing resources, people are exploiting and overusing them, forgetting that our actions have consequences - therefore, right understanding is the need of the hour. To overcome negativity, we must follow the path of meditation as prescribed in Buddhist scriptures. With the right intentions, including the right speech, we can live a peaceful life free of war and conflict if we practice right communication. With ethical conduct in the contemporary world, we can work toward a life free from nuclear weapons. We should refrain from using harsh words and instead choose gentle speech, which will build trust and respect for one another while also reducing conflicts. To live peacefully in today's stressful world, it is essential to follow the right intention, purify our minds and thoughts, and act accordingly. We can achieve a harmonious society by engaging in the right actions, such as respecting all forms of life, fostering harmonious relationships, and honoring others' belongings. Ethical means of earning constitute the right livelihood. For the moral development of society, we should earn a livelihood based first on our talents and second without exploiting or harming other living beings. For spiritual growth, right effort and right mindfulness are extremely important. Presence of mind is a top quality that every one of us needs. In today's fast-paced and busy lives, concentration is vital. Only a clear and calm mind can focus effectively and reduce suffering. In the modern world, people are adopting various forms of meditation, and practicing yoga is one of them. Right concentration provides peace, mental stability, and mental clarity. In today's world, no other teaching method is more practical than Buddhist pedagogy. The fundamental goal of Buddhism is peace, and the Eightfold Path contributes to maintaining peace in the world.

XII. BUDDHIST SOLUTIONS FOR TODAY

For common people, the Buddhist knowledge system provided a standard for morality through five principles: (1) Refraining from taking life, which means not killing any living being. (2) Refraining from taking what is not given, which means not stealing from anyone. (3) Refraining from the misuse of the senses, which means not indulging excessively in sensual pleasures. (4) Refraining from wrong speech, which means not lying or gossiping. (5) Refraining from intoxicants that cloud the mind.²⁴ The most important characteristic that differentiates the Buddha from all other teachers is that he was a common man. He was connected neither to any spiritual power nor to any god. He was also neither an incarnation nor a prophet. He was a human being, and all his achievements were the result of his efforts and understanding as a human being. There is a saying of the Buddha: It does not matter if a person possesses an entire mountain of gold - it will never be sufficient to completely satisfy their needs and desires. Moral structures in the contemporary world, such as environmental responsibility, religious tolerance, and human rights,

²⁴ Harvey Peter (2000): p. 67.

are essential elements of cooperation for a sustainable future. They must be maintained through more optimistic, principled values and a novel approach to thinking.²⁵ The Buddha himself was not in favor of blind followers; he wanted people to think with mindfulness and wisdom. Buddhism, both as a teaching and as a way of life, is a principled path where equality, humanism, harmony, and honesty prevail.²⁶ Through his own mental and intellectual resilience, he attained nibbāna. He never claimed to be a protector who could save others. He was a pure soul who learned through his own experiences, and his teachings were conveyed in simple language for common people.²⁷ The world is indebted to the Buddha for the rise of rationalism as a protest against religious superstitions. It was he who emancipated people from the control of priests. It was he who first showed the way to free humanity from the grip of hypocrisy and religious dictatorship.²⁸

There can never be a war in the name of Buddhism. No ravaged country has ever borne witness to the prowess of the followers of the Buddha; no murdered men have poured out their blood on their hearthstones, killed in his name; no ruined women have cursed his name to high heaven. He and his faith are clean of the stain of blood. He was the preacher of the Great Peace, of love, of charity, of compassion, and so clear is his teaching that it can never be misunderstood.²⁹

XIII. CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that an inclusive, compassionate, and non-violent Buddhist knowledge system offers a profound framework for addressing contemporary challenges and building a sustainable future. Integrating Buddhist educational principles with modern pedagogical approaches underscores the transformative power of Buddhist philosophy - not only in guiding individual spiritual development but also in fostering social, environmental, and political harmony. At its core, the Buddhist system emphasizes the cultivation of inner wisdom, mindfulness (*sati*), and compassion (*karuṇā*). These values, rooted in the teachings of the Buddha - most notably through the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path - provide both a means for personal liberation and a blueprint for ethical living. By advocating for self-observation and the disciplined practice of *vipassanā bhāvanā*, Buddhism equips individuals with the tools to discern what is wholesome and to transform suffering into opportunities for growth.

Moreover, the Buddhist approach to education, as evidenced by its historical development in monasteries and sanghas, remains relevant today. It fosters a spirit of inclusivity and equality by transcending traditional barriers of caste and social status. The commitment to nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*) and

²⁵ P. A. Payutto (1994): p. 79.

²⁶ Dhammananda (1994): p. 5.

²⁷ Piyadassi (1995): p. 20 - 22.

²⁸ Dhammananda (1994): p. 5.

²⁹ Fielding, Hall H (1898): p. 88 - 89.

mutual respect, core to Buddhist ethics, creates a nurturing environment where diverse communities can coexist and thrive. Such a model of education not only contributes to individual well-being but also strengthens societal resilience by promoting ethical conduct and collaborative problem-solving. In an era marked by environmental degradation, social inequities, and geopolitical uncertainties, the Buddhist knowledge system offers valuable insights for sustainable development. Its emphasis on interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and holistic growth underscores the idea that true progress arises when personal transformation and collective responsibility are harmoniously integrated. The practices of mindfulness and ethical living, as advocated in Buddhist scriptures, provide a pathway toward reducing conflicts and nurturing a culture of peace and mutual understanding. Ultimately, this study calls for a renewed engagement with Buddhist teachings as a dynamic and relevant paradigm for modern education and social development. By embracing the principles of compassion, wisdom, and mindful awareness, societies can lay the groundwork for a future defined by peace, sustainability, and shared prosperity.

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THE INTERSECTION OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS AND MODERN EDUCATION: A PATH TO COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP

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Abstract:

The need for compassionate and visionary leadership has never been more urgent in a world marked by complex challenges and ethical dilemmas. This article explores the transformative potential of integrating Buddhist teachings into modern education to cultivate empathetic, moral, and effective leaders. Drawing from the core principles of Buddhism - mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom - it examines how these timeless values can address critical gaps in current educational paradigms, which often emphasize competition and material success over emotional intelligence and moral responsibility. The article discusses how Buddhist principles can be applied in educational institutions and how mindfulness, compassion-based curricula, and ethical reasoning can nurture both educators and students. By sharing case studies of successful implementations and insights from neuroscience and psychology, it advocates for their use in emotional regulation, ethical decision-making, and interconnected leadership. It also discusses the accompanying challenges, including potential cultural challenges and the need for inclusivity. Additionally, it offers a roadmap for developing education systems that can inspire compassionate leadership at all levels. By drawing on the hallmarks of Buddhist teachings and their alignment with the needs of contemporary education, this article envisions an era in which leaders possess the clarity, resilience, and ethical foundation needed to navigate complexities with true devotion to the common good.

Keywords: *Buddhist Teachings, Modern Education, Compassionate Leadership, Mindfulness in Education.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is crucial in tackling the intricate difficulties of the 21st century. The swift progression of technology, globalization, and societal turmoil necessitates leaders capable of maneuvering through uncertainty with fortitude and lucidity. Traditional leadership paradigms frequently emphasize profit, authority, or efficiency at the expense of ethical and compassionate decision-making. This has led to considerable problems, including a worldwide confidence deficit in institutions, increasing inequality, and environmental deterioration. Compassionate leadership has become a vital alternative, grounded in emotional intelligence and ethical responsibility. This leadership prioritizes serving others, encouraging collaboration, and advancing sustainable growth. However, realizing this transition necessitates a fundamental change in the education and development of leaders.¹

Education is the forge in which future leaders are created. It provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives necessary to address the concerns of society. Conventional education systems prioritize quantifiable outcomes such as grades, employment rates, or financial success over intangible attributes like empathy, ethical reasoning, and mindfulness. Consequently, numerous leaders possess strong technical skills but lack the readiness to navigate the moral and emotional intricacies of authentic leadership.² Multiple studies highlight the significance of emotional intelligence and ethical thinking in leadership. Goleman's study determined that emotional intelligence is a more dependable predictor of leadership performance than conventional metrics like IQ or technical abilities.³ Moreover, research from the Harvard Graduate School of Education emphasizes the need for curricula incorporating cognitive and ethical development to equip students for leadership in diverse, interconnected contexts.⁴

Buddhism, with its 2,500-year legacy, provides a significant framework for fostering compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom - attributes vital for effective leadership. The Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the *Bodhisattva* ideal offer enduring perspectives on suffering the interdependence of all beings, and the ethical tenets that underpin a purposeful existence. Mindfulness, a fundamental aspect of Buddhist practice, is increasingly adopted in modern

¹ Tan, C.-M., (2012). *Search inside yourself: The unexpected path to achieving success, happiness, and world peace*. New York: HarperOne, p. 44.

² Jon Kabat-Zinn and University of Massachusetts Medical Center/Worcester Stress Reduction Clinic (1990), *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York, N.Y.: Pub. by Dell Pub., a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Pub. Group, p. 34.

³ Goleman, D., (1995). *Emotional Intelligence*, 10th anniversary trade pbk. ed. New York: Bantam Books, p. 25 - 28.

⁴ Howard, G (2012). *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed : Educating for the Virtues in the Age of Truthiness and Twitter*. New York: Basic Books, p. 10, accessed at: http://archive.org/details/truthbeautygoodn0000gard_p2e8.

education and leadership development. Programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindful Leadership Training (MLT) have demonstrated the transformative efficacy of mindfulness in alleviating stress, enhancing concentration, and cultivating compassion in personal and professional settings. Research conducted at Stanford University has shown that mindfulness techniques markedly enhance participants' empathy and emotional regulation, which are crucial attributes of leadership.⁵ Buddhist teachings underscore the significance of servant leadership, exemplified by the *Bodhisattva* ideal. A *Bodhisattva* seeks to mitigate the suffering of others, placing service above self-interest. This ideology aligns with contemporary notions of transformative leadership, which emphasize collective welfare and the advancement of team members.

Thesis Statement

This article argues that integrating Buddhist teachings into modern education can address critical gaps in current leadership paradigms. By cultivating mindfulness, compassion, and ethical reasoning, educators can nurture leaders who are not only skilled and knowledgeable but also deeply empathetic and committed to the greater good. To sum up this exploration, the article addresses several key questions: (1) How can Buddhist principles such as mindfulness and compassion be incorporated into modern educational systems? (2) What evidence supports the effectiveness of Buddhist-inspired practices in fostering leadership qualities? (3) What challenges and criticisms might arise when integrating spiritual teachings into secular education? (4) How can combining Buddhist teachings and modern education create a generation of leaders equipped to address global challenges?

II. FOUNDATIONS OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS

Buddhism, one of the world's oldest spiritual traditions, offers profound insights into human behavior, ethics, and the cultivation of a meaningful life. Rooted in the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, these principles are as relevant today as they were over 2,500 years ago.⁶ This section explores the core teachings of Buddhism and their application to leadership development, focusing on the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the concept of the *Bodhisattva*.

2.1. The Four Noble Truths: A foundation for understanding leadership challenges

The Truth of Suffering (*Dukkha*): Life is inherently unsatisfactory, characterized by pain, change, and impermanence. In *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (SN.56.11, *Saṃyutta Nikāya*) - "Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth

⁵ Margaret E. Kemeny et al. (2012), "Contemplative/Emotion Training Reduces Negative Emotional Behavior and Promotes Prosocial Responses", *Emotion* 12, no. 2: 509–17, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026118>.

⁶ Harvey, P., (2017). *Common Buddhist text: Guidance and insight from the Buddha*. UNESCO, p. 9 – 10.

of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.”⁷ The Truth of the Cause of Suffering (*Samudaya*): Craving (*taṇhā*) and attachment to transient things are the root causes of suffering. In *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (SN.56.11, *Samyutta Nikāya*) - “Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving that leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.”⁸ The Truth of the End of Suffering (*Nirodha*): Liberation from suffering is possible by relinquishing attachment and craving. In *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (SN.56.11, *Samyutta Nikāya*) - “Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonattachment.”⁹ The Truth of the Path to the End of Suffering (*Magga*): The Eightfold Path provides a practical guide for achieving liberation.¹⁰ In *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (SN.56.11, *Samyutta Nikāya*) - “Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.”¹¹ From a leadership perspective, the Four Noble Truths encourage self-awareness and reflection. Leaders can use these truths to recognize and address the sources of dissatisfaction within themselves and their organizations. For instance, a leader facing organizational challenges may reflect on how attachment to outdated practices or unproductive habits contributes to collective inefficiency. By fostering adaptability and encouraging innovation, they can move toward sustainable solutions.¹²

2.2. The Eightfold Path: Ethical and practical guidance for leadership

The Eightfold Path provides actionable steps to cultivate ethical conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom. It comprises three key dimensions: Ethical Conduct (*Sīla*): Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. According to the Buddhist Canon in *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (SN 56.11, *Samyutta Nikāya*) - “And what, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is,

⁷ *The connected discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Samyutta Nikāya*. Bodhi, B. (trans.), (2000). Vol. II. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 1844 – 1845.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Keown, D., (2020). *Buddhist ethics: A very short introduction*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 26.

¹¹ *The connected discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Samyutta Nikāya*. Bodhi, B. (trans.), (2000). Vol. II. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 1844 – 1845.

¹² Robert K. (2002). *Greenleaf, Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. Paulist Press, p. 23 – 24.

right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.”¹³ To more detailed Discussion of Ethical Conduct from *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* (MN.117, *Majjhima Nikāya*) - “And what is right speech? Refraining from lying, refraining from divisive speech, refraining from abusive speech, and refraining from idle chatter: this is called right speech.”¹⁴ Leaders guided by ethical conduct prioritize honesty, inclusivity, and fairness. Right Speech, for example, advocates communication free of deceit or harm a principle highly relevant to conflict resolution and team building. Mental Discipline (*Samādhi*): Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. According to the Buddhist Canon in *Satipatṭhāna Sutta* (MN.10, *Majjhima Nikāya*) - “What is right mindfulness? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings... mind in mind... phenomena in phenomena.”¹⁵ Mental discipline fosters resilience and focus. Mindfulness practices help leaders manage stress, maintain clarity, and respond thoughtfully to challenges. Research by Kabat-Zinn demonstrates how mindfulness improves cognitive performance and emotional regulation, key traits for leadership.¹⁶ Wisdom (*Paññā*): Right View, Right Intention. According to the Buddhist Canon in *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* (MN 117, *Majjhima Nikāya*) - “And what is the right view? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: this is called the right view.”¹⁷ Wisdom enables leaders to adopt a broader perspective, aligning their decisions with long-term goals and ethical considerations. This framework encourages leaders to act with compassion and altruism rather than self-interest. A leader who embodies the Eightfold Path exemplifies integrity, mindfulness, and insight. These qualities enhance personal leadership capacity and inspire trust and loyalty among team members.

2.3. Buddhist psychology and emotional intelligence

Buddhist ideas on the mind provide a great understanding of emotional

¹³ *The connected discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Bodhi, B. (trans.), (2000). Vol. II. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 1844 – 1845.

¹⁴ *The middle-length discourses of the Buddha: A new translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, (trans.) (1995). Teachings of the Buddha. Boston: Wisdom Publications in association with the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, p. 934.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.145.

¹⁶ Kabat-Zinn, J. & University of Massachusetts Medical Center/Worcester Stress Reduction Clinic, (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, N.Y: Dell Publishing, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, p. 35.

¹⁷ *The middle-length discourses of the Buddha: A new translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, (trans.) (1995). Teachings of the Buddha. Boston: Wisdom Publications in association with the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, p. 934.

control a pillar of good leadership. By using mindfulness, leaders develop self-awareness and can thus recognize and control their emotions. Popularized by Goleman, emotional intelligence connects with Buddhist ideas by stressing self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills as essential for good leadership. Programs based on mindfulness like those run by Google's Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (SIYLI) show how these techniques improve team interactions and decision-making. Studies of mindfulness-practicing leaders reveal that they are more suited to control stress, facilitate good company culture, and communicate effectively.¹⁸

2.4. Historical examples of Buddhist leadership

Throughout history, Buddhist leaders have demonstrated the practical application of these teachings. King Ashoka (268–232 BCE): After seeing the destruction that war caused, Ashoka became a Buddhist and transformed his rule into one characterized by compassion and ethical government. He advocated for nonviolence, religious tolerance, and social welfare, establishing a model for ethical leadership throughout his life.¹⁹ His Holiness the Dalai Lama: In addition to campaigning for human rights, environmental sustainability, and peace, the Dalai Lama is a model of compassionate leadership. Because of his emphasis on global ideals and interconnection, he has inspired leaders from a wide variety of cultures and businesses.²⁰

2.5. The relevance of Buddhist teachings in contemporary leadership

In the modern era, the relevance of Buddhist teachings extends beyond spiritual practice to influence leadership development. The increasing adoption of mindfulness practices in corporate, educational, and governmental settings highlights their universal applicability. For instance, programs such as the United Nations "Gross National Happiness" initiative, inspired by Bhutan's Buddhist-informed governance, illustrate how these principles can inform global policy. Similarly, mindfulness-based interventions in schools, like the Mind-Up program, show how Buddhist-inspired practices cultivate emotional intelligence and ethical awareness in students preparing them for future leadership roles.²¹ Buddhist ideas offer timeless wisdom for modern leadership. By practicing mindfulness, ethics, and compassion, leaders can foster trust, collaboration, and sustainable development. These values may alter leadership education to produce leaders with integrity, insight, and a commitment to the common good in the face of unprecedented global problems.

¹⁸ Tan, C., (2012). *Search inside yourself*. HarperOne, p. 15.

¹⁹ Voss, T., n.d. *King Asoka as a role model of Buddhist leadership*. pp. 2 – 10.

²⁰ Dalai Lama, H. H., (1999). *Ethics for the new millennium*. New York: Riverhead Books, p. 10.

²¹ Kabat-Zinn, J. & University of Massachusetts Medical Center/Worcester Stress Reduction Clinic, (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, N.Y: Dell Publishing, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, p. 35.

III. MODERN EDUCATION AND ITS CHALLENGES

Education is a pillar of society. It forms the basis of personal, economic, and leadership development, as well as knowledge. Still, the present educational paradigms, mostly created by industrial and technological revolutions, have numerous important problems. These difficulties limit personal potential and fail to equip students for the complexity of leadership in a globalized society. (1) Current Paradigms of Modern Education: Modern education systems are largely influenced by the industrial-era model, prioritizing efficiency, standardization, and measurable outcomes. While this approach has succeeded in producing skilled workers for the economy, it often falls short in fostering critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making qualities essential for compassionate and effective leadership. (2) Focus on Cognitive and Technical Skills: Most curricula prioritize cognitive skills such as mathematics, science, and language while diminishing the significance of emotional and ethical development. This method frequently leads to students succeeding in technical disciplines while encountering difficulties in interpersonal connections, conflict resolution, and ethical challenges in practical situations. (3) Standardized Testing and Competition: The dependence on standardized testing promotes rote memorization while inhibiting creativity and critical analysis. Competitive settings promote individualism, frequently undermining teamwork and empathy. Kohn's research indicates that competitive academic environments might elevate anxiety and diminish intrinsic motivation in pupils.²² Material Success as the Ultimate Goal: Educational systems often associate success with financial prosperity and career accomplishments. This limited definition of success frequently overlooks the significance of personal fulfillment, ethical behavior, and contributions to social welfare.

3.1. Neglect of emotional and ethical development

One of the most significant shortcomings of modern education is the lack of emphasis on emotional intelligence (EI) and ethical reasoning. Emotional Intelligence: Emotional intelligence, as defined by Goleman, is the capacity to identify, comprehend, and regulate one's own emotions while empathizing with others, and is an essential attribute for effective leadership.²³ Notwithstanding its significance, emotional intelligence is infrequently emphasized in the conventional curriculum. Brackett discovered that children with elevated emotional intelligence had superior academic performance, enhanced social skills, and a reduced likelihood of experiencing anxiety or sadness.²⁴ Ethical Reasoning: Ethical decision-making is a cornerstone of compassionate

²² Kohn, A., (1999). *Punished by rewards*. Houghton Mifflin Co., p. 20. Available at: http://archive.org/details/punishedbyreward00kohn_0.

²³ Goleman, D., (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. Bantam Books, p. 34.

²⁴ Marc A. Brackett, Susan E. Rivers, and Peter Salovey, 'Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Personal, Social, Academic, and Workplace Success', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 5, no. 1 accessed on [January 2011]: 3, accessed at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00334.x>.

leadership, yet it is often absent from educational frameworks. Many institutions fail to provide students with the tools to navigate moral dilemmas, leaving them ill-prepared for leadership roles that require integrity and ethical judgment.

3.2. Challenges in leadership development

Modern education systems struggle to produce leaders equipped for the complexities of the 21st century. Globalization and Cultural Competence: The interconnectedness of the contemporary world necessitates that leaders possess cultural competence, adaptability, and collaboration skills. Nevertheless, educational systems frequently neglect to emphasize the cultivation of global consciousness and cross-cultural comprehension. The OECD report highlighted the necessity for education to foster global citizenship and intercultural discussion; nevertheless, such activities are still restricted in several curricula.²⁵ Shortcomings in Real-World Applications: Traditional education often prioritizes theoretical knowledge over practical applications, leaving students unprepared for real-world challenges. Experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and community projects, are frequently underfunded or inaccessible to many students.

Ethical Failures in Leadership: High-profile cases of corporate scandals and political corruption highlight the failure of current systems to instill ethical leadership values. Without a focus on moral development, there is a risk of perpetuating cycles of unethical behavior in leadership roles.

3.3. The impact of stress and mental health challenges

Modern education systems often place undue stress on students, contributing to widespread mental health issues. Academic Pressure: Intense academic pressure, driven by competition and high expectations, has been linked to rising levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout among students. A study by the American Psychological Association found that nearly 45% of high school students in the U.S. experienced chronic stress related to academic demands.²⁶ Lack of Support Systems: Many schools and universities lack adequate mental health resources to support students. Educators themselves often lack training in recognizing and addressing mental health concerns, exacerbating the problem. Digital Distractions and Overload: The rise of digital technologies has introduced new challenges, including reduced attention spans, increased screen time, and exposure to cyberbullying. While technology offers significant educational benefits, its misuse can undermine focus, emotional well-being, and social interactions.

²⁵ OECD. (2024). *Preparing our youth for an inclusive and sustainable world: The OECD PISA global competence framework, assessments and findings*. p. 10–15. accessed 19 December 2024, ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362558291_Preparing_our_youth_for_an_inclusive_and_sustainable_world_The_OECD_PISA_Global_Competence_framework_assessments_and_findings.

²⁶ UNESCO. (2024). *Education for sustainable development: A roadmap* (p. 33). “Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap - UNESCO Digital Library”, accessed 28 December 2024. UNESCO Digital Library. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>.

3.4. Emerging trends and opportunities

Despite these challenges, there are emerging trends and innovative approaches that seek to address the limitations of traditional education. Holistic Education Models: Holistic education, which emphasizes the development of the whole person's mind, body, and spirit, is gaining traction. Examples include the Waldorf and Montessori education systems, which prioritize creativity, emotional intelligence, and ethical reasoning alongside academic learning.²⁷ Mindfulness in Schools: Initiatives such as Mind-Up and Calm Schools Initiative have incorporated mindfulness practices into educational settings, aiding children in cultivating attention, emotional regulation, and resilience. Research conducted by Schonert-Reichl indicated that mindfulness interventions in educational settings enhanced students' emotional well-being and academic achievement.²⁸

3.5. Global initiatives for education reform

International organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF advocate for education systems that promote equity, inclusivity, and global citizenship. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework integrates Buddhist values into education, emphasizing the well-being of students and their communities.²⁹ Modern education struggles to prepare students for leadership in a complicated and linked society. Cognitive talents and measurable accomplishments typically trump emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and mental wellness. To bridge these gaps and build compassionate and competent leaders, education systems must integrate holistic approaches that promote personal growth, ethical development, and global awareness. Education may develop leaders who are knowledgeable, skilled, empathic, ethical, and dedicated to the greater good by embracing transformative change.

IV. THE INTERSECTION OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS AND MODERN EDUCATION

As education evolves to meet the challenges of a globalized, interconnected world, integrating the wisdom of ancient traditions offers profound opportunities. Buddhist teachings, with their emphasis on mindfulness, ethical conduct, and compassion, provide a rich foundation for transforming modern education. By incorporating these principles, educational systems can cultivate leaders who are not only skilled and knowledgeable but also compassionate, self-aware, and ethically grounded. Mindfulness: Bridging Contemplation and Learning Mindfulness, a fundamental aspect of Buddhist practice, has

²⁷ OECD. (2024). *Preparing our youth for an inclusive and sustainable world: The OECD PISA global competence framework, assessments and findings*. ResearchGate. p. 34.

²⁸ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), 52–66. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454>

²⁹ UNESCO. (2024). *Education for sustainable development: A roadmap*. p. 35.

garnered considerable popularity in contemporary educational environments. Mindfulness is defined as the practice of maintaining present-moment awareness without judgment³⁰, promoting focus, emotional regulation, and overall well-being qualities vital for both students and instructors. Mindfulness in the Classroom: Initiatives such as Mind-Up and Mindful Schools have effectively integrated mindfulness techniques into educational curricula, enhancing emotional resilience and cognitive concentration among students. Research conducted by Schonert-Reichl indicates that students participating in mindfulness activities show greater attention, decreased stress, and heightened prosocial behaviors.³¹ Educators: Educators who engage in mindfulness exhibit reduced burnout and enhanced job satisfaction. Mindful teaching approaches provide a compassionate and inclusive classroom atmosphere, advantageous for both students and educators.³² Mindfulness and Leadership: Applying mindfulness to leadership development programs fosters introspective, compassionate, and adept leaders who make judicious judgments in high-pressure situations. Examples include the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (SIYLI), which combines mindfulness with emotional intelligence training to cultivate effective leaders.

4.1. Ethical education: Building a moral compass

Buddhist teachings on ethics, encapsulated in principles such as the Five Precepts and the Eightfold Path, provide a valuable framework for ethical education. The Five Precepts serve as a foundational ethical code for lay practitioners. They are found in several places in the *Pāli Canon*, including the *Sigalovāda Sutta*. In *Sigalovāda Sutta* (DN.31, *Dīgha Nikāya*), “There are these five gifts, young householder. What five? The gift of abstaining from taking life, the gift of abstaining from taking what is not given, the gift of abstaining from sexual misconduct, the gift of abstaining from false speech, and the gift of abstaining from intoxicating drinks and drugs that lead to carelessness. These are the five gifts, the five great gifts.”³³ These teachings emphasize integrity, non-harm, and accountability, aligning closely with the goals of character education in schools.

Ethics as a Core Curriculum Component: Incorporating ethical reasoning into curricula encourages students to consider the moral implications of their actions. Case studies and role-playing exercises based on Buddhist ethical

³⁰ Kabat-Zinn, J., & University of Massachusetts Medical Center/Worcester Stress Reduction Clinic. (1990). *Full catastrophe living*. p. 54.

³¹ Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children. *Developmental Psychology*, 51 (1), p. 12.

³² Roeser, R. W., Skinner, E., Beers, J., & Jennings, P. A. (2012). Mindfulness training and teachers' professional development: An emerging area of research and practice. *Child Development Perspectives*, 6(2), 167–173. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2012.00238.x>

³³ Walshe, M. O'C. (2012). *The long discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*. p. 461.

principles can help students navigate complex dilemmas, fostering critical thinking and moral sensitivity. Developing Ethical Leadership: Leadership education often neglects the cultivation of ethical values, focusing instead on technical skills and strategic thinking. Integrating Buddhist ethics into leadership training programs prepares students to lead with compassion and a commitment to the greater good. Real-world Applications: Bhutan's Gross National Happiness framework, inspired by Buddhist values, illustrates how ethical principles can guide policymaking and governance. Schools adopting this approach have reported increased student engagement, emotional well-being, and community involvement.

4.2. Emotional intelligence: Enhancing self-awareness and empathy

The Buddhist emphasis on self-awareness and compassion aligns seamlessly with emotional intelligence (EI) principles. Buddhist Psychology and EI: Buddhist teachings on the mind, such as the cultivation of metta (loving-kindness) and karuna (compassion), parallel the key components of EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Mindfulness practices enhance EI by helping individuals recognize and manage their emotions while fostering empathy for others.³⁴ EI in Education: Programs like Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) integrate EI into school curricula, teaching students to build healthy relationships, manage conflicts, and make responsible decisions. Studies have shown that SEL programs reduce bullying, improve academic performance, and enhance overall student well-being.³⁵ Cultivating Compassionate Leaders: Leadership programs inspired by Buddhist practices prioritize empathy and compassion as essential traits for effective leadership. The Dalai Lama's emphasis on "secular ethics" highlights the universal applicability of these principles, transcending cultural and religious boundaries.³⁶

4.3. Holistic leadership development

Buddhism's holistic approach to personal and spiritual growth offers valuable insights for leadership development. (1) The *Bodhisattva* ideal, characterized by selfless service and a commitment to alleviating the suffering of others, resonates with modern theories of servant leadership. Leaders inspired by this ideal prioritize the well-being of their teams and communities, fostering trust and collaboration.³⁷ (2) The Buddhist concept of *pratitya-samutpada* (dependent origination) underscores the interconnected nature

³⁴ Goleman, D., 1995. *Emotional intelligence*. Bantam Books, p. 121.

³⁵ Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>.

³⁶ Dalai Lama, H. H. (1999). *Ethics for the new millennium*. p. 45.

³⁷ Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. p. 67.

of existence,³⁸ encouraging leaders to adopt a systems-thinking approach. This perspective helps leaders understand the broader implications of their decisions, promoting sustainability and social responsibility. (3) Meditation practices, rooted in Buddhist traditions, enhance focus, resilience, and decision-making skills. Corporate programs such as Google's Search Inside Yourself and Aetna's mindfulness initiatives demonstrate the transformative potential of these practices in leadership contexts.

4.4. Case studies and examples

(i) Mindfulness in Higher Education: Institutions like the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Center for Mindfulness have pioneered the integration of mindfulness into medical education, improving students' stress management and patient care skills. The University of Virginia's Contemplative Sciences Center explores the intersection of mindfulness, education, and leadership.

(ii) Ethical Leadership in Practice: Companies like Patagonia and Unilever exemplify ethical leadership inspired by mindfulness and sustainability principles. Their success underscores the value of aligning business practices with ethical and compassionate values.

(iii) Education Systems Inspired by Buddhist Values: Bhutan's education policies, guided by the Gross National Happiness framework, emphasize holistic development, integrating academic, emotional, and ethical learning.

4.5. Challenges and Considerations

While the integration of Buddhist teachings into modern education offers significant benefits, it is not without challenges: (1) Cultural Sensitivity: Implementing Buddhist-inspired practices requires careful consideration of cultural and religious diversity to ensure inclusivity. (2) Resistance to Change: Traditional education systems may resist the incorporation of contemplative practices, viewing them as non-essential or incompatible with existing structures. (3) Scalability and Accessibility: Expanding mindfulness and ethical education programs requires resources and training that may not be readily available in all contexts.

4.6. Future directions

The intersection of Buddhist teachings and modern education holds immense potential for shaping compassionate, ethical leaders. Future efforts should focus on: (1) Research and Evidence-Based Practices: This involves conducting rigorous studies to measure the impact of mindfulness and ethical education on student outcomes and leadership development. (2) Policy Advocacy: Policymakers should be encouraged to prioritize holistic and contemplative education models in national curricula. (3) Collaborative Initiatives: Fostering partnerships between educators, researchers, and Buddhist organizations to develop innovative programs and resources.

³⁸ *The long discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Dīgha Nikāya.* (trans), Walshe, M. O'C. (2012). p. 223.

Integrating Buddhist teachings into modern education offers a transformative path for cultivating leaders equipped to navigate the complexities of the 21st century. By emphasizing mindfulness, ethical reasoning, and emotional intelligence, these principles address critical gaps in traditional education systems, fostering compassionate, self-aware, and ethical individuals. As educational paradigms evolve, drawing inspiration from ancient wisdom can provide a profound foundation for a more inclusive, sustainable, and enlightened future.

V. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

The integration of Buddhist principles into modern educational systems provides a unique opportunity to address pressing challenges in education, such as emotional well-being, ethical reasoning, and leadership development. By combining ancient wisdom with contemporary pedagogical strategies, educators can create a more inclusive, compassionate, and effective learning environment.

5.1. Incorporating mindfulness practices in schools

Mindfulness is one of the most accessible and impactful Buddhist practices, with numerous applications in educational settings. **Mindfulness for Students:** Daily Mindfulness Practices: Incorporating short mindfulness sessions at the beginning or end of the school day helps students center their focus and manage stress. **Mindful Breathing Exercises:** Teaching students to use breathing techniques can enhance their concentration and emotional regulation during challenging tasks. **Mindful Movement:** Activities such as yoga or mindful walking foster a connection between the body and mind, reducing anxiety and improving physical health. **Mindfulness for Educators:** Providing mindfulness training for teachers equips them with tools to manage stress, prevent burnout, and cultivate empathy. Mindful teaching practices, such as active listening and compassionate communication, foster a positive classroom environment. Programs like CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) have shown significant benefits in teacher well-being and student-teacher relationships. **Institutional Support:** Schools can dedicate spaces, such as “mindfulness rooms,” where students and staff can engage in quiet reflection or guided meditation. Integrating mindfulness into extracurricular activities, such as sports and arts, ensures a holistic approach to student development. **Ethics Education Inspired by Buddhist Teachings:** Ethical reasoning is a critical component of leadership and personal growth. Buddhist ethics provide a universal framework that can be adapted to diverse cultural and educational contexts. **Ethics as a Core Curriculum Component:** Developing standalone ethics courses based on principles like the Five Precepts can guide students in navigating moral dilemmas. The Buddha offers practical ethical guidance for laypeople in the *Sigalovāda Sutta*. It emphasizes responsibilities, virtues, and social ethics. According to *Sigalovāda Sutta* (DN.31, *Dīgha Nikāya*), “A noble disciple abstains from killing living beings, abstains from taking what is not given, abstains from misconduct in sensual pleasures, abstains from false speech, and abstains from alcoholic drink that

causes negligence. Such conduct gives rise to goodwill and respect in human society.”³⁹ Integrating ethical reasoning into existing subjects (e.g., using historical events to discuss ethical decision-making) broadens students’ understanding of moral complexities. Case Example: Schools adopting Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness framework teach students to value harmony, responsibility, and sustainability, resulting in higher levels of civic engagement and community well-being. Experiential Learning: Service-learning projects, such as volunteering in local communities, provide practical opportunities to apply ethical principles. Reflection exercises, where students analyze their experiences, and deepen their understanding of ethical behavior and interconnectedness. Ethics in Leadership Training: Leadership programs can incorporate case studies inspired by Buddhist parables, emphasizing selflessness, accountability, and compassion. Encouraging students to explore the impact of their decisions on others fosters a sense of global responsibility.

5.2. Fostering Emotional Intelligence (EI) through Buddhist practices

Buddhist teachings align closely with the components of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness, empathy, and social skills. (1) Developing Self-Awareness: Guided meditation sessions that focus on introspection help students and educators identify their emotions and thought patterns. Journaling exercises, inspired by mindfulness practices, encourage self-reflection and emotional clarity. (2) Enhancing Empathy and Compassion: Practices like *metta* (loving-kindness meditation) cultivate empathy by encouraging individuals to wish happiness and well-being for themselves and others. Role-playing activities in classrooms can help students understand diverse perspectives, promoting inclusivity and reducing conflict. (3) Building Resilience and Stress Management Skills: Introducing Buddhist-inspired stress management techniques, such as mindful breathing and visualization, equips students to handle academic and personal pressures. Workshops on emotional regulation, grounded in Buddhist psychology, provide actionable strategies for managing anger, anxiety, and sadness. Evidence: Research by Brackett highlights the significant role of EI in academic success, mental health, and social relationships.⁴⁰

5.3. Integrating technology and Buddhist practices

Technology offers innovative ways to adapt Buddhist teachings to modern educational systems. (1) Mindfulness Apps: Apps like Headspace and Calm provide accessible resources for students and educators to practice mindfulness. Institutions can customize these platforms to align with their specific goals, such as stress reduction or leadership training. (2) Virtual Reality (VR) and Meditation: VR technology enables immersive meditation experiences, helping

³⁹ *The long discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*. Walshe, M. O’C., (trans) (2012). Wisdom Publications, p. 463.

⁴⁰ Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E. & Salovey, P., (2007). Emotional intelligence. In: J. Cacioppo, L. Tassinary & G. Berntson, eds. *Handbook of psychophysiology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 88 – 103.

students explore mindfulness in engaging ways. Research indicates that VR-based mindfulness programs can enhance focus and emotional well-being.⁴¹ (3) Online Learning and Ethical Education: E-learning platforms can host courses on Buddhist ethics and mindfulness, making these teachings accessible to a global audience. Interactive modules, including videos, quizzes, and discussion forums, facilitate deeper engagement with the material.

5.4. Case studies and real-world applications

(i) Mindfulness in Public Schools: The Mindful Schools program in California integrates mindfulness into K-12 education, with over 750,000 students benefiting from its initiatives.⁴² Evaluations reveal improved academic performance, reduced stress, and enhanced peer relationships.

(ii) Gross National Happiness (GNH) Education in Bhutan: Bhutan's education system incorporates Buddhist values to promote holistic development. Schools emphasize mindfulness, ethical reasoning, and sustainable living, preparing students to contribute meaningfully to society.

(iii) Contemplative Education at Naropa University: Naropa University in Colorado integrates Buddhist principles into its curriculum, offering programs in contemplative education, psychology, and leadership. Students report higher levels of self-awareness, compassion, and community engagement.

(iv) Spiritual Education at the University of the West: Provides a whole-person education, highlighting where the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and creative converge. Delivers a strong liberal arts education that draws from Buddhist wisdom and strives toward a global perspective, to ensure that our graduates can compete and contribute to the modern world.

(v) Vietnam Buddhist University: The Vietnam Buddhist University in Ho Chi Minh City strives to build an advanced Buddhist educational environment and many other fields of study, contributing to the goal of improving people's knowledge, training human resources, linking the application of Buddha's teachings to life, and building leadership.

5.5. Challenges and Limitations

While the application of Buddhist teachings in education offers transformative potential, several challenges must be addressed: (1) Cultural and Religious Sensitivities: Ensuring inclusivity requires presenting Buddhist practices as secular tools rather than religious doctrines. Educators must respect

⁴¹ Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D. & Schellinger, K. B., (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82 (1), pp. 405 – 432. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>.

⁴² Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F. & Diamond, A., (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), pp. 52 – 66. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454>.

diverse beliefs and adapt programs to local cultural contexts. (2) Resource Constraints: Implementing mindfulness and ethics programs requires investment in training, materials, and infrastructure. Funding disparities between schools can limit access to these initiatives. (3) Resistance to Change: Traditional educational systems may resist incorporating contemplative practices, viewing them as supplementary rather than essential. Advocacy and evidence-based research are crucial for overcoming skepticism. The practical application of Buddhist teachings in educational systems offers a transformative path for addressing the emotional, ethical, and leadership challenges of the 21st century. By integrating mindfulness, ethical reasoning, and emotional intelligence into curricula, educators can nurture students who are not only academically competent but also compassionate, self-aware, and ethically grounded. As these practices continue to evolve and expand, they hold the promise of shaping a more inclusive, equitable, and harmonious world.

VI. TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP THROUGH BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES

Leadership in the 21st century requires an adaptive, compassionate, and inclusive approach to address the complexities of globalization, technological advancements, and socio-political challenges. Buddhist principles offer transformative frameworks that redefine leadership, prioritizing self-awareness, ethical decision-making, and a commitment to the collective well-being of all stakeholders.

6.1. The core tenets of Buddhist leadership

Buddhist principles can reshape leadership by integrating selflessness, mindfulness, and ethical conduct. These core tenets are pivotal in fostering a leadership style that values empathy, long-term vision, and collective progress. (1) Selflessness in Leadership: The Buddhist teaching of *anatta* (non-self) challenges the ego-driven leadership paradigm. Leaders inspired by this principle focus on serving the greater good rather than pursuing personal gains. For example, The Servant leadership model, coined by Robert Greenleaf, aligns closely with the Buddhist *Bodhisattva* ideal, where leaders prioritize the needs of others.⁴³ Modern leaders like Satya Nadella (CEO of Microsoft) emphasize empathy and collaboration over hierarchical dominance. (2) Mindfulness as a Leadership Practice: Mindfulness enables leaders to remain present, make deliberate decisions, and manage stress effectively. Regular meditation practices, as promoted in Buddhist teachings, help leaders cultivate clarity and resilience in high-pressure environments. Companies like Google have introduced mindfulness-based leadership programs through initiatives like the Search Inside Yourself Institute, yielding improved decision-making and interpersonal dynamics. (3) Ethical Leadership Guided by the Five Precepts: The Five Precepts serve as ethical guidelines for non-harming, honesty, and responsibility. According to *Dhammika Sutta* (*Snp.2.14*, *Sutta Nipāta*), “Let

⁴³ Greenleaf, R. K., (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Paulist Press, p. 56.

him not destroy life nor cause others to do so. Let him not take what is not given, either in the village or the forest. With faith and restraint, let him avoid sexual misconduct. Let him not speak falsely, either for his own sake or for the sake of others. And let him not drink intoxicating drinks that lead to carelessness.”⁴⁴ Leaders adhering to these precepts prioritize transparency, accountability, and respect for all forms of life.

6.2. Fostering emotional intelligence through Buddhist teachings

Emotional intelligence (EI) is essential for effective leadership, encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills. Buddhist teachings provide actionable practices to enhance these competencies. (1) Self-Awareness: Meditation and reflective journaling, inspired by Buddhist practices, help leaders recognize their emotions and thought patterns. Example: Ray Dalio, founder of Bridgewater Associates, attributes his leadership success to regular meditation, which enhances his self-awareness and decision-making. (2) Empathy and Compassion: Metta (loving-kindness meditation) trains leaders to cultivate unconditional positive regard for others, reducing workplace conflict and fostering collaboration. Research by Boyatzis and McKee highlights that compassionate leaders inspire greater loyalty and productivity among teams.⁴⁵ (3) Resilience and Stress Management: Leaders can use mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) techniques to handle workplace challenges. Studies by Kabat-Zinn demonstrate that MBSR programs improve psychological well-being and resilience, crucial traits for leaders in volatile environments.⁴⁶

6.3. Buddhist-inspired leadership models

(i) The *Bodhisattva* Leadership Paradigm: A *Bodhisattva* is committed to alleviating the suffering of others while striving for personal development. Application in Leadership: Encouraging participatory decision-making processes. Addressing systemic inequalities by prioritizing inclusive policies and practices. For example Jacinda Ardern, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, exemplified compassionate leadership through her response to the Christchurch mosque shootings, focusing on empathy and unity.

(ii) The Four Divine Abodes (*Brahmaviharas*) in Leadership: These principles of lovingkindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*) serve as a framework for holistic leadership. Practical Applications: *Metta*: Building trust and goodwill within teams; *Karuna*: Addressing employee well-being during crises; *Mudita*: Celebrating collective achievements; *Upekkha*: Maintaining balance and

⁴⁴ *The group of discourses (Sutta-Nipāta)*. Norman, K. R., (trans.) (1992). Pali Text Society Translation Series, No. 45. Oxford: Pali Text Society, p. 59.

⁴⁵ Boyatzis, R. E., (2005). *Resonant leadership: Renewing yourself and connecting with others through mindfulness, hope, and compassion*. Harvard Business School Press, pp. 30 – 35. Available at: <http://archive.org/details/resonantleadersh0000boya>.

⁴⁶ Kabat-Zinn, J., (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delacorte Press, p. 66.

impartiality in decision-making.

6.4. Educational pathways for leadership development

Integrating Buddhist principles into leadership training programs ensures a steady pipeline of compassionate and ethical leaders.

6.4.1. University Leadership Programs

Institutions like Harvard and Stanford have introduced mindfulness and ethical reasoning courses in their leadership curricula. Naropa University offers programs explicitly based on contemplative education, blending Buddhist principles with leadership training. The University of the West provides a whole-person education in a context informed by Buddhist wisdom and values and facilitates cultural understanding and appreciation between East and West. More examples are Mahachulalongrajavidyalaya University (MCU), Vietnam Buddhist University, etc. Buddhist principles provide a transformative lens for leadership in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By emphasizing self-awareness, ethical reasoning, and compassion, these teachings offer practical tools for developing leaders who are not only effective but also deeply committed to the well-being of their teams, organizations, and the planet. As these principles continue to be integrated into leadership training and practice, they hold the potential to redefine the very essence of leadership in the 21st century.

6.4.2. Challenges and criticisms

The integration of Buddhist teachings into modern education and leadership has garnered significant interest for its potential to address contemporary challenges. However, like any paradigm shift, it faces a range of challenges and criticisms. These issues arise from cultural, practical, and conceptual dimensions, which need to be acknowledged and addressed to fully harness the benefits of Buddhist principles in these domains.

6.4.3. Cultural and religious sensitivities

One of the primary challenges is navigating the cultural and religious sensitivities associated with introducing Buddhist teachings into secular contexts. While many practices, such as mindfulness, have been secularized, their Buddhist origins can still provoke resistance, particularly in regions where religion in public institutions is contested. Critics argue that integrating such practices risks blurring the lines between secular education and religious indoctrination.⁴⁷ For instance, in multicultural settings, some individuals may perceive these teachings as imposing a specific worldview. This concern highlights the importance of framing Buddhist-inspired practices as universal and secular tools for personal and professional development rather than promoting them as religious doctrines. Careful adaptation and inclusive dialogue are crucial for ensuring acceptance across diverse cultural and religious contexts.

⁴⁷ Purser, R., (2019). *McMindfulness: How mindfulness became the new capitalist spirituality*. Watkins Media Limited, p.77.

6.4.4. Overemphasis on mindfulness

Another critique is the overemphasis on mindfulness at the expense of other Buddhist teachings. Mindfulness has become a popularized concept in education and leadership but is often stripped of its ethical and philosophical foundations. Critics such as Purser have termed this phenomenon “McMindfulness,” where mindfulness is commodified and used as a tool to improve productivity or reduce stress without addressing the deeper systemic issues that cause these problems.⁴⁸ This reductionist approach risks neglecting the transformative potential of Buddhist teachings, which encompass compassion, ethical conduct, and interconnectedness. Addressing this critique requires a more holistic application of Buddhist principles, ensuring that mindfulness practices are contextualized within a broader ethical and philosophical framework.

6.4.5. Resistance to change in traditional systems

Educational and leadership structures are often deeply entrenched in traditional, outcome-driven models. The introduction of Buddhist-inspired practices, which emphasize process over outcomes, compassion over competition, and reflection over action, can be met with skepticism or resistance. For instance, educators and leaders accustomed to measurable goals may view mindfulness or compassion-based practices as abstract or impractical. Moreover, existing curricula and leadership training programs may lack the flexibility to incorporate these practices meaningfully. Overcoming this challenge requires strong evidence of the tangible benefits of Buddhist principles, coupled with strategic advocacy and pilot programs demonstrating their efficacy.

6.4.6. Practical implementation challenges

Implementing Buddhist principles in education and leadership poses practical challenges. For example, mindfulness training requires skilled instructors, time, and resources, which may not be readily available in all institutions. Additionally, cultural differences in how mindfulness and compassion are understood and practiced can complicate standardization across diverse contexts. Furthermore, in leadership, the application of Buddhist principles such as compassion and non-attachment may conflict with the profit-driven goals of many organizations. Leaders may struggle to reconcile ethical decision-making with financial imperatives, highlighting the need for frameworks that balance these priorities effectively. While the integration of Buddhist teachings into education and leadership offers transformative potential, it is not without challenges. Cultural sensitivities, reductionist approaches, resistance to change, and practical barriers all need to be addressed to ensure successful adoption. A more holistic understanding of Buddhist principles, combined with robust empirical research and inclusive implementation strategies, can help overcome these obstacles. By addressing

⁴⁸ Ibid., 78.

these challenges thoughtfully, the transformative power of Buddhist teachings can be harnessed to create more compassionate, ethical, and sustainable systems in education and leadership.

VII. THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP

As the world continues to evolve, the challenges faced by education and leadership systems are becoming increasingly complex. Globalization, rapid technological advancement, environmental crises, and shifting social dynamics demand innovative approaches to both teaching and leading. The future of education and leadership lies in embracing holistic, ethical, and adaptive frameworks that prioritize human well-being, resilience, and sustainability. Buddhist principles offer a profound foundation for these changes, providing tools for navigating uncertainty and fostering compassion, mindfulness, and interdependence.

7.1. Embracing mindfulness and emotional intelligence

The future of education and leadership will likely be shaped by an increasing focus on emotional intelligence (EQ) and mindfulness. Research has shown that EQ is a critical predictor of success in personal and professional life. In education, teaching students to understand and manage their emotions fosters resilience, empathy, and collaborative skills. Similarly, leaders who exhibit high EQ are better equipped to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and make ethical decisions.⁴⁹ Mindfulness practices, grounded in Buddhist teachings, will play a crucial role in this shift. Incorporating mindfulness into educational curricula can help students develop focus, self-awareness, and emotional regulation. For leaders, mindfulness enhances clarity, decision-making, and the ability to manage stress effectively. As these practices become more widespread, they will reshape the goals of education and leadership from achieving external success to cultivating inner growth and well-being.⁵⁰

7.2. Ethical leadership and global sustainability

The future demands leaders who prioritize ethical considerations and sustainability. Buddhist teachings on interconnectedness and compassion provide a roadmap for this transformation. As societies grapple with global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and political polarization, leaders must adopt long-term perspectives that transcend short-term gains. Ethical leadership, inspired by Buddhist principles, emphasizes the importance of serving others, fostering inclusivity, and considering the broader impact of decisions. For instance, companies adopting environmental, social, and governance (ESG) frameworks demonstrate a growing recognition of the need for responsible leadership. Educational systems can support this shift by embedding ethics and sustainability into curricula, preparing students to become conscientious global citizens.

⁴⁹ Goleman, D., (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. Bantam Books, p. 121.

⁵⁰ Boyatzis, R. E., (2005). *Resonant leadership: Renewing yourself and connecting with others through mindfulness, hope, and compassion*. Harvard Business School Press, p. 55.

7.3. Redefining success in education and leadership

Traditional models of education and leadership often focus on quantifiable achievements such as grades, test scores, profits, and growth. However, the future calls for a redefinition of success that includes well-being, community impact, and personal fulfillment. Buddhist teachings, which emphasize the balance between external accomplishments and inner peace, can help guide this redefinition. In education, success might be measured by the ability to cultivate curiosity, empathy, and a sense of purpose in students. Similarly, leadership success could be evaluated by the ability to create environments that prioritize employee satisfaction, social responsibility, and sustainable practices. Adopting these broader measures of success will require a cultural shift, supported by policies and practices that value holistic development.

7.4. Technology and human connection

Technology will continue to play a transformative role in education and leadership. However, as digital tools become more integrated into daily life, there is a risk of losing human connection. Buddhist principles, which emphasize presence and genuine engagement, can help counterbalance the depersonalizing effects of technology. In education, leveraging technology to enhance learning while maintaining personal connections will be crucial. Virtual and hybrid learning environments can incorporate mindfulness practices to ensure that students remain engaged and grounded. In leadership, technology can be used to facilitate communication and collaboration, but it must be coupled with efforts to foster trust and empathy among team members.

7.5. The role of research and collaboration

The future of education and leadership will also depend on ongoing research and collaboration across disciplines. Buddhist-inspired practices such as mindfulness and compassion have already demonstrated significant benefits in various settings. Expanding research to explore the long-term impacts of these practices on organizational culture, student outcomes, and societal well-being will strengthen their credibility and adoption.⁵¹ Collaboration between educators, policymakers, business leaders, and researchers will be essential for integrating Buddhist principles into mainstream systems. Pilot programs, case studies, and international forums can facilitate the sharing of best practices and insights, fostering a global movement toward more compassionate and ethical systems. The future of education and leadership lies in creating systems that nurture the whole individual intellectually, emotionally, and ethically. Buddhist teachings provide a powerful framework for this transformation, by emphasizing mindfulness, compassion, and interdependence. By redefining success, prioritizing sustainability, and embracing human connection alongside technological advancements, education, and leadership can evolve

⁵¹ Zenner, C., Herrnleben-Kurz, S. & Walach, H., (2014). Mindfulness-based interventions in schools—a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, p.603. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603>.

to meet the needs of a changing world. The integration of these principles will not be without challenges, but the growing recognition of their value suggests a promising path forward. As educators and leaders strive to create a more compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable future, the wisdom of Buddhist teachings will continue to inspire and guide these efforts.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND REMARKS

The integration of Buddhist teachings into modern education and leadership holds the potential to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time. From promoting mental well-being in educational environments to cultivating compassionate, ethical, and resilient leaders in the corporate world, Buddhist principles such as mindfulness, compassion, and interdependence offer invaluable insights and tools for transformation. The exploration of these intersections reveals not only the immediate benefits of such practices but also their long-term implications for fostering a more harmonious and sustainable future.

8.1. The transformative power of Buddhist teachings

Buddhist teachings, which emphasize mindfulness, compassion, ethical living, and interdependence, offer a fresh approach to education and leadership in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By focusing on the holistic development of individuals intellectually, emotionally, and ethically Buddhism invites us to rethink the traditional goals of education and leadership. In education, the incorporation of mindfulness practices can enhance emotional well-being, academic performance, and social skills, providing students with the tools they need to navigate the challenges of the modern world. In leadership, Buddhist principles encourage a shift from power-driven models to compassionate, service-oriented leadership, emphasizing the well-being of individuals and communities as the ultimate measure of success.

8.2. The Growing Importance of Ethical and Compassionate Leadership

As the world faces increasing challenges related to inequality, environmental sustainability, and social justice, the need for ethical and compassionate leadership has never been more urgent. The future of leadership lies in the hands of those who are not only skilled in technical aspects but also emotionally intelligent and ethically grounded. Buddhist-inspired leadership principles emphasize the importance of understanding our interdependence, fostering collaboration, and making decisions that prioritize long-term well-being over short-term gain. These principles challenge the current leadership paradigms that often prioritize profits over people and encourage a more holistic, human-centered approach to leadership.

8.3. Overcoming challenges and criticisms

Despite the transformative potential of integrating Buddhist teachings into education and leadership, several challenges must be addressed. These include cultural sensitivities, resistance to change, and the need for empirical evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of these practices. Addressing these challenges requires thoughtful, inclusive approaches that present Buddhist

principles as universal tools for well-being rather than religious doctrines. Moreover, continued research and the sharing of successful case studies will be crucial in dispelling misconceptions and demonstrating the long-term benefits of mindfulness, compassion, and ethical leadership.

8.4. The path forward

Looking ahead, the future of education and leadership will likely be shaped by a greater emphasis on mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making. As educational institutions and organizations continue to adapt to the changing needs of society, there is great potential for Buddhist principles to guide these transformations. However, for these changes to take root, a concerted effort will be needed from educators, leaders, policymakers, and researchers to advocate for and integrate these practices in meaningful ways. The increasing adoption of mindfulness and compassionate leadership across various sectors suggests that we are on the cusp of a paradigm shift. With the continued expansion of research, the development of innovative educational models, and the growing recognition of the importance of ethical leadership, Buddhist teachings have the potential to play a central role in shaping a more compassionate, sustainable, and interconnected world.

8.5. Final remarks

Ultimately, the integration of Buddhist teachings into education and leadership represents not just a philosophical shift, but a practical strategy for addressing the challenges of the 21st century. By fostering mindfulness, compassion, and ethical awareness, we can cultivate leaders and learners who are not only more effective in their respective roles but also more attuned to the needs of the broader world. In doing so, we can create a future in which education and leadership are truly aligned with the values of empathy, interconnectedness, and sustainability, making a positive impact on individuals, communities, and the planet as a whole.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: WITH REFERENCE TO THE MORAL SCHOOL PROJECT IN THAILAND

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Abstract:

When I was young, I didn't know why my mom had to compel me to go to the temple every important day relevant to Buddhism, whether it was Magha Pūjā, Visākha Pūjā, or another important day of religion. Meanwhile, when I was in school, the school organized Buddhist activities for the students to participate in, a practice I found acceptable. On the other hand, when I grew up and was in high school, I usually avoided engaging in Buddhist activities because of boredom. Fortunately, I had an elder brother who was a senior in high school. He served as an idol, inspiring me to participate in Buddhist activities such as volunteering, attending Buddhist camps, and assisting in developing youth in our village. Even though this was in the past which passed many years ago, many of the lessons I learned from Buddhism continue to shape and refine my habits and mindfulness and could be adapted in the present.

In the present day, education in Thailand continues to uphold Buddhist activities, allowing students to engage both inside and outside the school. The majority of these activities take place in provincial or rural areas. For example, in my hometown, all schools, including high schools, continue to implement Buddhist activities aimed at supporting and encouraging the development of mindfulness in students. To give them learning to be empathetic to others, compassionate, forgiving, and know right from wrong, and other skills. Despite the abstract nature of Buddhist activities in schools, we are unable to understand the inner workings of students once they complete these activities or refine their religious beliefs. However, in this article, I aim to illustrate the relevance of Buddhism to education in Thailand, the impact Buddhism has on

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students in the school, how students resist or participate in Buddhist activities, and how students contribute to Buddhist activities in the school. Finally, in this article, I will express the perspective and assumption trend of the sustainability of students who are involved in Buddhist activities through education.

Keywords: *Buddhist education, students, mindfulness, sustainability of Buddhism.*

I. INTRODUCTION

We have cultivated our behavior from childhood through learning from our parents, the environment, school, and other experiences. Therefore, many things we have learned from childhood reflect our current lives. Most parents would like their child to be a good person from childhood. As a result, they typically instill in their children the importance of doing things correctly and avoiding making mistakes. Parental guidance alone is insufficient for children's development. Therefore, parents must rely on the knowledge acquired from school to develop their children's potential and foster quality growth. Similarly, if parents want to develop mindfulness in their children, they have to rely on the doctrine of religion to refine their children's minds as well.

Thailand, predominantly a Buddhist country, typically incorporates doctrine into the standard course syllabus. Generally, in Thailand, common students will study general matters in doctrine not the same as monks and nuns must study doctrine in detail. In the case of monks and nuns, they have a Buddhist school specifically designed for them to deepen their studies of Buddhism, including both its doctrine and practices. Additionally, teachers in common schools frequently instruct students in doctrine. Some schools invite monks to impart doctrine to their students. This case is usually found in education in each province in Thailand. Moreover, schools not only teach doctrine but also engage in activities related to Buddhism. Whether it's praying and meditating before class, participating in religious activities at the monastery, or participating in a Buddhist camp to practice dharma, these activities are all part of the school's educational program. These activities appear to be a process that refines students to develop into mindful individuals. However, this is merely an expectation of adults, even though performance measurement is unclear or abstract.

II. THE CONTEXT OF BUDDHISM IN SCHOOL

According to the Office of Educational Innovation Development of Thailand, King Rama Ten emphasized the importance of "helping to create a good person for our country" and outlined principles for both teachers and students to follow. These principles include: (1) teachers should show love to their students, and students should return the favor; (2) teachers should teach students to be kind to their friends and not compete with each other; and (3) students should help each other, and teachers should teach them harmony.¹

¹ Public Relations. (2022, November 10). *มาตรฐานและตัวชี้วัด โรงเรียนคุณธรรม สพล*

This outcome led to the creation of the “Moral School” project, which has been ongoing since 2012. However, during my time in high school from 2006 to 2011, my school implemented the Home-Temple-School project. This project was inspired by King Rama IX, who aimed for the three communities – the home, the temple, and the school – to work together; to amend, develop, and solve the problems in the community to build the society to be strong.² The goal was to help them learn how to be good members of society and to develop the skills necessary to lead our nation into the future. In my high school, the Home-Temple-School project was initiated by a group of monks who collaborated to establish a morality camp and extend it into the school.

After that, according to my experience from my high school, in a week we had Buddhist activities one time per week, which length of Buddhist activities was half a day such as praying for 20 minutes and meditation for 15 minutes after then listening to a sermon from a monk 30 - 45 minutes. The daily routine for the students involved praying in front of the flagpole and then meditating for 5 minutes before entering the classroom. Moreover, once per academic year, my high school will provide a Buddhist camp for students to participate in, which is mostly held in a monastery. During the Buddhist camp, students engage in activities such as praying, meditation, walking meditation, dharma practice, learning about religious doctrine, and other related activities. The process of the Buddhist camp will be manipulated by monks and laity volunteers, who may be students or people in that community, which in this duty I have been before. In addition to the Buddhist activities at the camp, there were other activities such as decorating with fabric, arranging flowers, setting up the altar, and engaging in various hobbies. Students can use this skill as a part-time job to supplement their studies. However, a Buddhist camp lasts approximately 3 – 5 days.

Today’s Buddhist camp activities are less intense than in the past for a variety of reasons, including a limited budget, a decline in religious faith, and other factors. Today, Thailand faces the problem of faith in religion, specifically Buddhism. Individuals who become monks and then behave inappropriately are causing the decline of Buddhism. For instance, in Thailand, Buddhists believe that when we donate money to the temple as much as we can, then this action will increase merit. As a result, there is a huge circulation of donations in the temple, which the ascetic has to handle.³ This presents a challenge to ascetics, leading the monks to succumb to the temptations of greed. Apart from

[*Moral school standards and indicators*]. Office of Educational Innovation Development. Retrieved from <https://moral.obec.go.th/home/2022111089>.

² Ratchakon Napharaphiphat and team, “มุมมอง “บวร” เพื่อความมั่นคง,” สำนักงานสภาพัฒนาการเศรษฐกิจแห่งชาติ (Office of the National Security Council), accessed on (February 8, 2025), available at: <https://www.nsc.go.th/wp-content/uploads/Journal/article-00403.pdf>.

³ Da, L. Y., & Henry, M. (2023, August 8). In Thailand, misbehaving monks are trashing Buddhism’s reputation. Retrieved from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-08/thailand-misbehaving-monks-foreign-correspondent/104184056>.

the money, there is one more case of making monks behave badly: sexuality.⁴ This case often happens in temples. Due to the discipline of ordination, being a monk is reduced and not very strict. Whenever someone wants to be a monk, they can go to the temple and request to the abbot in the temple that they want to be a monk, and then the abbot lets them be a monk without strict examination of the monastic code, not the same as in the Buddha's era. This enables the temple to welcome individuals seeking monastic ordination without any form of screening. Even though the core of Buddhism is the teachings or doctrine of Buddha, we cannot deny the significant role ascetics play in spreading religion. Moreover, many large monasteries in Thailand have transitioned into Buddhist commerce, rather than solely promoting the doctrine.⁵ In addition, the diversity of beliefs in gods is a trend that is spreading to Thailand, which has made most people turn to beliefs in gods more.⁶ This shift not only reflects a growing interest in spiritual exploration but also indicates a blending of traditional Buddhist practices with new religious movements. As a result, many practitioners find themselves navigating a complex landscape of faith, where the teachings of the Buddha coexist with a variety of deities and spiritual practices.

However, Buddhist activities have continued but have changed into a new responsibility in the school, which will emphasize morals for individuals. The Moral School Project does not aim to prioritize any specific religion but rather encourages everyone, including executives, teachers, and students - those who will shape the future of the country - to become moral individuals. School seems like a place to nurture students who are seedlings - to grow and flourish in the society of the country next. This aligns with some aspects of the Buddha's training, particularly the emphasis on his disciples to be aware and mindful. For instance, according to *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, 5.7⁷ Buddha taught that young monks are not careless of sensual pleasure. The discourse emphasized that all sentient beings are attracted to sensual pleasures. When a young man decides to become a monk, his sensual pleasures are left behind. To become monks, they had to develop consciousness knowingly of sensual pleasure through Buddha's teaching to warn themselves against being careless about them. The Buddha gave a sample of a nanny caring for a child, comparing it to a nanny who strives to save a child's life out of compassion and kindness from

⁴ Da, L. Y., & Henry, M. (2023, August 8). In *Thailand, misbehaving monks are trashing Buddhism's reputation*. Retrieved from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-08/thailand-misbehaving-monks-foreign-correspondent/104184056>.

⁵ Da, L. Y., & Henry, M. (2023, August 8). In *Thailand, misbehaving monks are trashing Buddhism's reputation*. Retrieved from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-08/thailand-misbehaving-monks-foreign-correspondent/104184056>.

⁶ Kyodo News. (2024, July 18). *Thais place faith in lucky charms amid slow economic growth*. Retrieved from <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2024/07/d97c1ea39940-thais-place-faith-in-lucky-charms-amid-slow-economic-growth.html?phrase=gender&words=>.

⁷ *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Āṅguttara Nikāya*, trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi (Massachusetts: Wisdom Publication, 2012), 630.

the case of a child who puts a stone in his mouth. The Buddha concluded that young monks had not yet developed consciousness, faith, energy, prudence, and wisdom related to skillful standards. When these skills are completed, the Buddha will not be concerned about them, meaning the young monks won't be careless about sensuality after being trained by the Buddha.

III. HOW WILL THE STUDENTS BEHAVE WITH MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION?

According to the project I was discussing above, we can see how we will know after the students pass the process of the Moral School project what the result is and what the indicators of the result are. The Moral School project categorizes its indicators into seven points: (1) the development of a moral ideology within the school; (2) the presence of a mechanism and tool for moral ethics practices within the school; (3) an increase in expected behavior in the school, including moral ethics, sufficiency, gratitude, honesty, truthfulness, patience, and selflessness; (4) a reduction in bad behavior; (5) the process of participation and responsibility creation within the school; (6) the innovation and integration of moral ethics in the classroom; (7) the school as a place to learn about moral ethics.⁸ The seven points of the Moral School project aim to mold students into virtuous individuals. Although the project's criteria do not explicitly mention mindfulness for the students, the project's process may help them learn about moral ethics by encouraging them to critically think about what they should and shouldn't do in accordance with the concept of moral ethics. This reflective approach can foster a deeper understanding of their values and the impact of their actions on others. By engaging in discussions and activities centered around moral dilemmas, students might naturally cultivate a sense of mindfulness that aligns with ethical considerations.

On the other hand, if the students lack mindfulness, they will not know what is wrong or right in the realm of moral ethics. Therefore, the foundation of students participating in the Moral School project is to cultivate mindfulness, which will enable them to understand what they should do for good deeds and what they should avoid or not do for bad deeds. For instance, the Moral School project handbook mentions that students should be good role models, prompting them to consider their options. For instance, if a friend fails an exam, what actions should they take to support them? Should they ignore their friends, aggravate them, or provide tutoring to help them pass? In the case of students who lack mindfulness, they may ignore those who fail the exam; on the other hand, some students who care about their friends may possess mindfulness to assist their friends in passing the exam. Therefore, to be a good role model, students must practice mindfulness to be aware of their actions, whether they are doing good or doing bad. As the Buddha has taught his mendicants about the Mindfulness of Death 1st (*Paṭhamamaraṇassati*

⁸ Public Relations, “มาตรฐานและตัวชี้วัด โรงเรียนคุณธรรม สพฐ.,” โรงเรียนคุณธรรม สพฐ. สำนักพัฒนานวัตกรรมการจัดการศึกษา (moral school), page no. 6, last updated November 10, 2022, available at: <https://moral.obec.go.th/home/2022111089>.

Sutta, AN 6.19), he raised a question to his mendicants that were: “Bhikkhus, mindfulness of death, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit, culminating in the deathless, having the deathless as its consummation. But do you, bhikkhus, develop mindfulness of death?”⁹

After that, a mendicant responded to the Buddha’s question by saying that he developed his mindfulness of death. The Buddha then posed another question to the mendicant, asking, “But how, Bhikkhu, do you develop mindfulness of death?”¹⁰ The mendicant then replied, “If I have one day or one night left, I will focus on the Buddha’s teaching, and that means my goal is achieved; that is my way to develop mindfulness of death.”¹¹ Subsequently, five other mendicants joined in answering the Buddha’s question. Following this, the Buddha concluded his teaching on the Mindfulness of Death: “Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will dwell heedfully. We will develop mindfulness of death keenly for the destruction of the taints.’ Thus should you train yourselves.”¹² This is merely one example of how the Buddha taught his disciples to be mindful. Despite not explicitly mentioning mindfulness in education, the Moral School project emphasizes the importance of moral ethics and understanding what actions are appropriate and inappropriate for students to be mindful of. This approach encourages students to reflect on their behavior and its impact on themselves and others. By fostering an environment of ethical awareness, the Moral School project aligns with the principles of mindfulness, promoting a deeper sense of responsibility and compassion in young learners.

IV. A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Students can engage in various activities related to the Moral School project to demonstrate their commitment to moral ethics and align with the project’s objectives. For instance, the Good Deeds Recording Activity requires students to document their good deeds, such as cleaning the classroom, collecting garbage, assisting the teacher with tasks, letting a friend borrow a self-pencil, and so on. This activity is a common and easy way for students to understand the tangible act of good deeds, and it has been widely used in those schools that participate in the Moral School project. In addition, the Moral School project also includes letting students learn to be compassionate to others through teaching students how compassion manifests itself from a moral perspective. Most compassion is usually inserted in the context of activities under the concept of the Moral School project. The principles of organizing

⁹ *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: a Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, trans. from the Pāli by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Massachusetts: Wisdom Publication, 2012, p. 870.

¹⁰ Bodhi, B. (2012). *The numerical discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 870.

¹¹ Bodhi, B. (2012). *The numerical discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 870.

¹² Bodhi, B. (2012). *The numerical discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 870.

activities under the Moral School project can be classified into eight distinct categories: (1) activities that aim to create participation; (2) activities that aim to increase analytical and logical thinking skills; (3) activities that aim to increase life skills; (4) learner-centered activities; (5) activities that respond to students' interests, aptitudes, and needs; (6) activities that reflect the real context of school; (7) authentic assessment; and (8) the activities that have been organized can be applied in the classroom.¹³

According to the principles of organizing activities under the Moral School project above, one has mentioned activities that aim to increase life skills. This section includes illustrations that pertain to teamwork, problem-solving skills, leadership and follower roles, and the development of life skills such as patience, empathy, and volunteerism. For instance, Anuban Phra Samut Chedi School participated in the 2020 Moral School project, which incorporates the principles of organizing activities to foster compassion in students. The designated name of the activity was “มีน้ำใจใคร่รัก” which means being kind is loved by everyone.¹⁴ This activity has the purpose of cultivating moral kindness in students toward others with no expectation of return. Moreover, this activity has taken from Buddha's teachings about sustaining (*Saṅgaha Sutta*, AN 4.32) to be applied specifically in beneficent conduct (*atthacariyā*); there are four of sustaining: giving (*dāna*), kind speech (*peyyavajja*), beneficent conduct (*atthacariyā*), and impartiality (*samānattatā*).¹⁵ When students participated in this activity, they learned how to be kind to others independently, without the need for teacher guidance. The activity's indicators and evaluation employed the observation method to assess and determine if the students' actions aligned with the activity's objectives. Through this process, they developed essential social skills and a greater sense of empathy. As a result, students began to demonstrate thoughtful interactions that fostered a supportive classroom environment.

In terms of sustainability, it can happen in the future. When we examine the project and activity's context, we find coherence. For example, in the case of the activity under the Moral School project I have mentioned above, the context of the activity would help students comprehend what compassion looks like. After that, when students were cultivated with compassion, they would learn how it looks, and then they would learn and memorize it. When students consistently practice compassion, it cultivates long-term memories that are sustainable for their future. Meanwhile, sustainability would emerge when students cultivate moral ethics from childhood, subsequently forming

¹³ Yuwasathirakhun Foundation. (2017). *Handbook of organizing activities to develop moral school* (คู่มือการจัดกิจกรรมพัฒนาโรงเรียนคุณธรรม). Sahamit Printing and Publishing, pp. 28 - 29.

¹⁴ Phrompho, T. (2020). โครงการคุณธรรม เรื่องมีน้ำใจใคร่รัก [Moral project: Being kind is loved by everyone]. Retrieved from <https://fliphtml5.com/bookcase/crgmd>.

¹⁵ Bodhi, B. (2012). *The numerical discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 416.

this behavior into a habit. As they grow older, they may develop the self-esteem necessary to make basic decisions about what is right and wrong. Moreover, those who teach students also play an important role in cultivating the student's mindfulness and leading to sustainability for their future.

On the other side, sustainability may not happen for every student who engages in the Moral School project. If they are not training themselves to be mindful always then they may lack mindfulness to think, analyze, and discern what should be done or should not be done under the frame of moral ethics. Moreover, without consistent practice and reflection, students might struggle to internalize the principles of moral ethics and fail to apply them in real-world situations. This lack of awareness could ultimately hinder their ability to make responsible decisions and contribute positively to their communities. This is a common occurrence when a student's growth is accompanied by mental development and a transformation in various dimensions, influenced by their surrounding environment. For instance, in the story of *Angulimāla*: he used to be a good guy before he became a bandit because he stayed in an environment of people who were jealous of his genius and used artifice to tackle him to become a bad man. No matter how well students are taught certain behaviors, if some absorb bad behavior, they can develop bad habits as well. Therefore, mindfulness plays an important role in being aware of stimuli from outside and inside the mind. By practicing mindfulness, individuals can cultivate greater self-awareness and make conscious choices that align with their values, rather than succumbing to negative influences. This proactive approach can help break the cycle of poor decision-making and promote healthier behaviors, ultimately leading to personal growth and resilience. According to the teachings of the Buddha:

Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu should dwell mindful. This is our instruction to you. And how, bhikkhus, is a bhikkhu mindful? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure regarding the world. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings... mind in mind... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure regarding the world. It is in this way, bhikkhus, that a bhikkhu is mindful.¹⁶

This Buddha's teaching demonstrates to his disciples to be mindful in every moment; mindfulness will lead to success in the elimination of covetousness and displeasure concerning the world. This is a profound Buddha's teaching that seems simple to comprehend but difficult to follow. However, being mindful will bring about a compassionate and sustainable future together. By embracing mindfulness in our daily lives, we not only cultivate inner peace but also foster deeper connections with others. This collective awareness can pave the way for a more harmonious existence, encouraging individuals to act with kindness and understanding in a world often marred by conflict and division.

¹⁶ Bodhi, B. (2000). *The connected discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications, p. 1661.

V. COMPREHENSION

Childhood experiences greatly influence our behavior and development, and parents often instill the importance of correctness and avoiding mistakes in their children. However, parental guidance alone is insufficient for children's growth, and they must rely on the knowledge acquired from school to develop their potential and foster quality growth. Thailand, predominantly a Buddhist country, incorporates doctrine into the standard course syllabus, with common students studying general matters in doctrine, while monks and nuns have a Buddhist school specifically designed for them to deepen their studies of Buddhism. Teachers in common schools frequently instruct students in doctrine, and some schools invite monks to impart doctrine to their students. Schools also engage in activities related to Buddhism, such as praying and meditating before class, participating in religious activities at the monastery, or participating in a Buddhist camp to practice dharma. These activities appear to refine students to develop into mindful individuals, but performance measurement is unclear or abstract.

The Office of Educational Innovation Development of Thailand emphasizes the importance of "helping to create a good person for our country" and outlines principles for both teachers and students to follow. These principles include showing love to their students, teaching kindness to their friends, and teaching harmony. This led to the creation of the "Moral School" project, which has been ongoing since 2012. During my time in high school from 2006 to 2011, my school implemented the Home-Temple-School project, inspired by King Rama IX, which aimed for the three communities - the home, temple, and the school - to work together to amend, develop, and solve problems in the community to build society to be strong. The goal was to help students learn how to be good members of society and develop the skills necessary to lead our nation into the future.

King Rama X and Rama IX of Thailand appear to be prioritizing students, who are the future of our country, by fostering moral ethics from a young age through the creation of projects that align with religious morals. This seems to be laying the foundation of society's strategy by developing human resources, and it is one of the missions that may accomplish the development of a population in the country that is of good quality in the context of the moral dimension. To drive the country without corruption, but this is merely an assumption, in the current day Thailand is still experiencing corruption problems, which are difficult to solve. This ongoing struggle highlights the need for a more robust framework that integrates ethical education and accountability at all levels of governance. Only by fostering a culture of integrity can Thailand hope to break the cycle of corruption and build a more prosperous society for future generations. Additionally, I couldn't deny that Buddha's teachings play an important role in dealing with moral principles to guide each activity for those who engage in the Moral School project. The example I mentioned earlier clearly demonstrates this. Although, currently, Buddhism faces the problem, and adhesion is reduced from the problem of

monks behaving inappropriately and causing the decline of Buddhism. Even though adherence to Buddhism seems to be reducing in the current day for many reasons, such as the individual, corruption in temples, and the advent of belief in God. These things cannot destroy Buddhism in Thailand at all; on the other hand, these crises make some new generations or some organizations step out to show spirit to hold Buddhism in various formats, such as making podcasts to promote Buddhism in a new perspective to open minds for those who are not familiar with Buddhism in different perspectives and unique. These efforts not only aim to preserve traditional teachings but also adapt them to contemporary society, allowing for a more inclusive understanding of Buddhism. By embracing modern technology and innovative communication methods, these initiatives foster a deeper connection between the faith and younger audiences, ensuring that the essence of Buddhism remains vibrant and relevant in today's world. The Moral School Project is a Buddhist initiative that aims to promote moral values in schools, encouraging students to become responsible and mindful individuals. The project aligns with the teachings of Buddha, who emphasizes the importance of being aware and mindful. In addition, the Moral School project plays a crucial role in guiding students toward morality, fostering mindfulness in their education, and cultivating compassion and sustainability for their future, all while upholding moral ethics. Although evaluation simply involves teachers observing students' behavior. It is significant for students to know the results of actions of good deeds and bad deeds in basic. After students do good deeds, what is the effect after that? On the other hand, after students do bad deeds, then what is the effect after that? This is also how they may learn from the process of the Moral School project. By reflecting on the consequences of their actions, students can develop a deeper understanding of right and wrong, fostering a sense of accountability. Ultimately, this reflective process encourages them to make more informed choices in the future, contributing to their growth as ethical individuals.

However, sustainability may not happen for every student who engages in the Moral School project if they are not training themselves to be mindful always. This is a common occurrence when a student's growth is accompanied by mental development and a transformation in various dimensions, influenced by their surrounding environment. No matter how well students are taught certain behaviors, if some absorb bad behavior, they can develop bad habits as well. Therefore, mindfulness plays an important role in being aware of stimuli from outside and inside the mind. By practicing mindfulness, individuals can cultivate greater self-awareness and make conscious choices that align with their values, rather than succumbing to negative influences. This proactive approach can help break the cycle of poor decision-making and promote healthier behaviors, ultimately leading to personal growth and resilience. The teachings of the Buddha emphasize the importance of being mindful in every moment, as it leads to success in eliminating covetousness and displeasure concerning the world. By embracing mindfulness in our daily lives, we not only cultivate inner peace but also foster deeper connections with others. This collective awareness can pave the way for a more harmonious

existence, encouraging individuals to act with kindness and understanding in a world often marred by conflict and division. In adopting this mindset, we open ourselves to opportunities for growth and learning, allowing us to respond to challenges with compassion rather than frustration. Ultimately, such an approach not only transforms our personal experiences but also has the potential to inspire those around us, creating ripples of positive change in our communities.

However, while the Moral School project might not be the best option for every student, by integrating its principles into daily routines, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of their actions and their impact on the world around them. This approach not only fosters personal growth but also encourages collective responsibility toward creating a more compassionate and sustainable society. Ultimately, this shift in mindset can lead to a more empathetic community, where individuals are more inclined to support one another and work together to address societal challenges. By nurturing these values from an early age, we can cultivate a generation that prioritizes kindness and cooperation in all aspects of life.

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BUDDHIST EDUCATION A MINDFULNESS BRIDGE FOR CREATION OF A COMPASSIONATE SOCIETY: A STUDY

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Abstract:

Education is an ignition seeding and nurturing of the thought process to live within a civilized society with creative characteristics interconnected through the roots of human emotions. From the time of civilization until now, humans transformed and adapted the society on earth, there was the spark of education, and many great brains of people contributed their service to the store of knowledge for the development of society. This becomes more interweaved to all humans with every passing day establishing and developing the directions of education towards a more highly and competent Society.

Keywords: *Buddhism, mindfulness, compassion.*

I. EPISTEMOLOGY

To educate means to ‘bring up (a child) to form habits, manners, etc., to train intellectually, ethically and morally.’¹ If education is geared or boosted to develop only the mental powers of a child or entity, this education is not complete. It must develop his character, and behavior which means developing qualities like *Mettā* (loving-kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *muditā* (sympathetic joy), and *upekkhā* (equanimity). He must get rid of entangled defilements such as *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha*, or greed, anger, and pride and develop qualities such as non-greed, friendliness, humility, compassion, etc.

The word mindfulness is an English translation of the word *sati*, which occurs in Buddhist teachings and texts in a range of meanings, such as recollection, recognition, wakefulness, attentiveness, calling to mind, and alertness.² In the context of contemplative practices, it refers to a quality of conscious

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¹ See the Oxford English Dictionary.

² Bodhi, B. (2011), p. 19 – 39.

awareness, and the repeated application of this awareness to each experience of life.³ Furthermore, the term relates to the cultivation of wholesome, skillful, wise attention to four domains of existence: body, feelings, cognition, and mental constituents. According to traditional Buddhist teachings, mindfulness strengthens tranquillity and mental balance and enhances wisdom, insight, lovingkindness, and compassion. Further, meditation practices are assumed to bring about a reduction of greed, aversion, and ignorance, considered by Buddhist psychology to be at the root of human suffering.⁴

II. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this research paper is to examine the essential importance of Compassion as depicted through the Pāli Literature and its role of Mindfulness in Buddhist Education for a Universal Compassionate Society. By exploring relevant Pāli Literature, and Literature Review, this paper aims to shed light on the following aspects: (1) To provide a comprehensive overview of Buddhism, and the relevance of mindfulness and meditation in the context of education; (2) To understand the epistemology of the word Buddhist Education, Mindfulness, and Compassion; (3) To analyze the case studies of Monks, Nuns, and Laypeople to whom Buddha addressed the essential need of Compassion to strengthen the Society; (5) To address the social strata of the uncompassionate ancient society and its potential challenges, seen through the teachings of Buddha; (6) To examine Buddhist Education and its bridge to deliver the teachings to each individual of the society irrespective of class, creed, color, age, and gender; (7) To examine how society is diluted if compassion is not taken into consideration and not given importance as a part of Education with Mindfulness; (8) To integrate the spiritual elements factors that promote a Compassionate society such as joy, harmony, happiness, and peace; (9) To propose application, and the need for the future integration of Buddhist doctrine, mindfulness, and compassion in educational institutions.

III. SOCIAL STRATA OF AN UNCOMPASSIONATE ANCIENT SOCIETY:

There was acute racial discrimination in the society. This discrimination was according to the profession of man and according to birth, class, creed, age, gender, and color. In the society, there were four divisions of men, of whom the Brahmin was superior. Brahmanism dominated the society and established its supremacy in the country. The Brahmins enjoyed rights to religious training and education. However other categories of people were deprived of their religious and educational rights. At that time there were 62 heretical doctrines in existence and the priesthood got the upper hand.

In this social background, a religious revolution started in ancient India in 600 BC., and a new doctrine or system developed which is called 'Buddhist Doctrine' or 'Buddhist Philosophy' for all irrespective of caste, creed, and profession. In the early period, Buddhist Education was limited within the monasteries and was meant only for the inmates of the monastery. But later on,

³ Bodhi, B. (2011), p. 19 – 39.

⁴ Ditrich, T. (2017), p. 3 – 32.

it was made open to all, even lay people got scope to have education in those institutions. Buddhist monks used to lead a life of meditation in solitary places or a life of teaching, preaching, and propagating Dhamma. As a result of the activities of these teaching monks, seats of learning gradually grew and a new chapter in the history of developing a compassionate society was taken place in the land of the Buddha through his universal teachings.

IV. BUDDHIST EDUCATION

The Buddhist Education system truly opens an era of free liberal or rational or logical thinking or reasoning in every field or nature of knowledge. People accustomed to thinking in terms of fixed digits or numerals began to think of the world creation as it is, as a process, a process of coming into existence and passing away. It may be interesting to find out what is passing away and what is coming into existence. Buddha taught Dhamma which was good for many in the beginning in the middle in the end to liberate humanity from suffering; it had a great social significance message for a society. Although, this is a silent message, nevertheless a revolutionary message, spread by Buddhism. It was Buddhist doctrine, which changed the lifestyle of the society with its strong education process in transforming towards a compassionate living society.

The goal of Buddhist education is this lofty one, the alleviation or coming out of all suffering, Buddhist practitioners were immensely diligent in providing a course that provided many penultimate goals en route to this ultimate final goal of liberation. These penultimate goals, as we shall see, ranged from very basic methods of social development to the eradication of doctrines thought to be spiritually dysfunctional to the development of pedagogical skills to the attainment of meditational accomplishment, and so on in developing a civilized compassionate society to live in harmony. While Buddhism is tautological in the sense that all teaching is understood in the context of progress towards nibbāna, it is not monomaniacal. Buddhism appreciates the diversity of human personalities and needs, and in surveying Buddhist educational undertakings, we see a very rich flowering of techniques and even penultimate goals within the peripheral of self-development through mindfulness nature.

V. BRIDGE OF BUDDHIST EDUCATION

The entire system of Buddhist Education was rooted in Saddhā (faith) in the *Ti-Ratanāya* (Triple Gems), and above all in the Buddha as the Fully Enlightened One, the Supreme teacher who guides towards right living and right understanding. Based on this faith, the participant or practitioner must be inspired to become accomplished in *sīla* (virtue) by following the moral or value guidelines. They must come to know the precepts well, understand the reasons for observing them, and know how to apply them in the difficult circumstances of human life today to exist within a compassionate society. Most importantly, they should come to appreciate the positive virtues these precepts represent: kindness, compassion, honesty, purity, truthfulness, and mental sobriety. They must also acquire the spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice (*Cāga*), so essential for overcoming selfishness, greed, and the narrow focus on self-advancement that dominates in present-day civilized society.

The ideal of generosity is to develop compassion and renunciation, qualities which sustained the Buddha throughout his entire career. It is to learn that cooperation is greater than competition, that self-sacrifice is more fulfilling than self-aggrandizement, and that our true welfare is to be achieved through harmony, loving-kindness, tranquillity, peace, and goodwill rather than by exploiting and dominating others in the name of class, creed, age, gender, color.

The flame of compassion must be generated or ignited by methodical mental training in calm and insight, the two wings of Buddhist meditation. But Buddhist Education can go far in laying the foundation for this wisdom by clarifying the principles that are to be penetrated by mindfulness insight. In this task learning and wisdom are closely interwoven, the former providing a basis for the latter. Wisdom arises by systematically working the ideas and principles learned through study into the fabric of the mind's thought process, which requires deep reflection, intelligent discussion, and keen investigation of the essence of Buddhist education through mindfulness.

VI. CORE TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA THROUGH MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

The teachings of the Buddha consist of *sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Pañña* i.e. knowing at the experiential level *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*. Thus, his teachings have nothing sectarian in them. They are based on the universal laws. Craving and aversion will destroy us. If we crave misery they will multiply. But if we see where and how they arise we will be able to uproot them out. If today's society diligently incorporates or accepts and comes forward to adapt to learn the technique of *Mettā* or *Vipassanā* Meditation and the Buddhist Education Universal doctrine inspires them to practice it, it is sure to have a salubrious effect on them. It is a technique of meditation to look within. It is completely free from sectarianism and teaches universal Dhamma.

If our society participants are taught to see at the experiential level through the prism of Mindfulness Meditation the root cause of their mental defilements, they will tend to be wise, they will be non-attached to the things of the world as they will realize their impermanent nature at the experiential level, they will cut out desires from them, and look within and see where desires arise and multiply, they will make efforts not to let them arise in ignorance and overpower them. *Mettā* or *Vipassanā* will go a long way in lightening the darkness of ignorance which is responsible for multiplying our misery. Practise of *Mettā* and *Vipassanā* will make them see at the experiential level because they should observe moral precepts. Such blissful teachings given by Buddha to mankind are Buddhist Education for a larger section towards developing a compassionate society.

VII. BUDDHA THE UNIVERSAL TEACHER OF SOCIETY

The Buddha is known to many generations of Buddhists or Universal Society as a historical one. He was popularly called a teacher of both men and gods since he was endowed with supreme knowledge and because he was a destroyer of doubts. He is a peerless and phenomenal teacher in whom

many sought refuge. Many famous Brahmins reputed to be of great learning, venerated the Buddha unreservedly⁵. To Sabhiya one of the most renowned Brahmins, the Buddha was the greatest teacher in whom he saw hardly any attachment. The Buddha appealed to him as a beautiful lotus flower does not cling to water, so you do not cling to merit and demerit, both. Stretch forth your feet hero. Sabhiya pays homage to the teachers' feet.⁶ It is the personality of the Buddha and the events of his life were so remarkable that they made him the most practical and awakened educationist or teacher. The Buddha, according to Prof. G.C. Pande, has been regarded as the very embodiment of knowledge (Bodhi) and Karuṇā (Compassion). He said, "The greatness of the Buddha personality is manifest from the fact that no other individual has left as strong and impressive on the history of Indian culture as he did."⁷

It is wisdom that the Buddha held up as the direct instrument of final liberation, as the key for opening the doors to the Deathless, and also as the infallible guide to success in meeting life's mundane challenges. Thus, wisdom is the crown and pinnacle of the entire system of Buddhist education, and all the preliminary steps in a Buddhist educational system should be geared towards the flowering of this supreme virtue. It is with this step that education reaches completion, that it becomes illumination in the truest and deepest sense, as exclaimed by the Buddha on the night of his Awakening: "There arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and light."

VIII. DILUTED FACTORS OF A COMPASSIONATE LIVING SOCIETY

The effort made through each moment by all individuals is invariably directed towards successful living. But it just cannot be assumed that the lives of all the people on earth are successful. To decide the success or the failure of a life, we must have a clear notion of the goals, aims, and purposes of life. An individual earning his living by fishing will consider that to make a success of his life, he must catch more and more fish. A person who earns his wealth by selling liquor is likely to believe that his life will become more successful if he sells more liquor. The man who lives by robbing others will think that his life would be successful only in proportion to the thefts and robberies he did, without being caught by law. Those who have gotten into the habit of indulging in sensual pleasures are likely to think that their life will be successful if they get more and more opportunities to indulge in sensual pleasure.

Considered this way, the success or the failure of a life depends on the kind of belief held by each person within the living society. People act according to the views they hold. To lead a successful life, one must possess wise and perfect views.⁸ This wise and perfect view must be wise and perfect in terms of Buddhist Thought. This is described as the 'Sammā ditṭhi' perfect view.⁹ Not

⁵ Henry Weerasinghe (1992), p. 12.

⁶ K. R. Norman (1984), p. 91.

⁷ G. C. Pande (1993), p. 393.

⁸ *Saṃyutta Nikaya*, PTS, p. 420 - 424.

⁹ *Saṃyutta Nikaya*, PTS, p. 420 - 424.

only the perfect view, but the eight-fold factors taught in the Buddhist concept of the middle path too enable a person to lead a successful life.¹⁰ There are several other virtues a person should cultivate before he can adopt a wise view. By acquiring those virtues indicated in Buddhism, an individual leads towards right thought, appropriately.

The behavioral patterns of the members of the human society are not all alike. Those individuals, in whom lust predominates, are attracted to alluring objects and are excessively given to the indulgence of sensual pleasures. They spend a good part of their time dancing, singing, and listening to music, and seek satisfaction through the enjoyment of such activities. They pay more attention to these pleasures than to most otherworldly activities. Others do not try to be critical about the good and the bad that prevail in society. They are perpetually given to finding fault with all the things that happen in society. They keep their mind as a festered wound. Like venomous serpents, they exude anger towards their daily tasks.¹¹ They are not sure about what they should do or not do. They have no awareness of their own lives. They float around aimlessly, like dry leaves in the wind. Such people allow their lives to be darkened by their behavior. These forms of behavior are the outcome of the unrestrained senses of individuals. The restraint of one's senses is described as discipline or Sila or morality this is the path towards a successful life.

From ancient times, heeding the words and advice of elders was upheld as a high virtue. Adults have greater knowledge and experience than the young in social activities. Respecting and honoring elders in a given community has been upheld by Buddhist traditions. Buddhist teachings refer to the act of respecting elders as a good deed that will bring meritorious results. In the Pāli, the virtue of respecting elders is referred to as "Vuddhappacayana Dhamma" the virtue of respecting elders.¹² Everything that the adult society expects cannot be right. But, since a young member of society cannot acquire the experience, the adults have gained about society, the younger members can benefit from some of the experiences gained by the elders and make their life a success.

Human beings tend to think in a variety of ways. Due to the differences in viewpoint, we could barely see two people acting in the same way within the society norms. The value systems and tastes of one person may not be appreciated by another. The political and economic theories adopted by one country may be rejected by another. The value systems and theories of each person may be logical from the point of view of that person. Yet another person might consider it a logical conclusion based upon a truth, a falsehood, or an empty notion. In consequence, one could perceive vast gaps between various countries, various societies, and members of the society. These gaps occur due to differences in viewpoints and beliefs.¹³ The salutary, wise viewpoint an

¹⁰ *Visuddhi Magga*, PTS, p. 101 - 110.

¹¹ *Anguttara Nikaya*, PTS, I, p. 124

¹² *Dhammapada*, PTS, p. 16, Stanza 109.

¹³ *Samyutta Nikaya*, PTS, p. 156 - 167.

individual acquires in the course of individual development will enable a person to narrow the differences that occur due to varying beliefs. To achieve complete development in the context of a society, built on a wholesome viewpoint that can be discerned only through a sharp intellect, the eight-fold path can be utilized. This path is the noble eight-fold path or the Middle described in the teachings of Buddha a key element in developing a compassionate society.

9.1. Happiness

Happiness (*sukha*) is a feeling of ease, well-being, and satisfaction and can range from mild to intense and be either momentary or enduring. The Buddha distinguished between worldly happiness which is dependent on sensory stimulation, and spiritual happiness which is derived from being virtuous and gradually freeing the mind. Some examples of worldly happiness that the Buddha considered legitimate and worthwhile are the happiness of ownership (*atthisukha*), the happiness of wealth (*bhogasukha*), and the happiness of being free from debt (*anaṇasukha*).¹⁴ The sense of achievement, from excelling in one's chosen profession and making a good living out of it can make one very happy.¹⁵ On a higher level, some of the things conducive to spiritual happiness include practicing the Precepts,¹⁶ being just,¹⁷ calming the senses,¹⁸ thinking about and rejoicing in one's good deeds, taming the mind, being able to love despite being surrounded by those who hate and being at peace. The highest and most refined happiness comes from attaining awakening.¹⁹

Concerning the two levels of happiness, the Buddha advised: 'If by giving up worldly happiness one can attain the higher happiness, the wise person should do so, seeing it as a more enriching happiness' (Dhp 290). Happiness has an important role in meditation in that it assists in the development of a stable, effortless concentration. The Buddha said: 'The mind that is happy becomes concentrated' (*sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati*).²⁰

9.2. Harmony

Harmony (*avirodha*, *sahita*, or *samagga*) is the smooth, pleasant, and non-contentious functioning together of two or more things. The Buddha often spoke of the need and also the desirability of harmony within and between groups of people. Some of the things contributing to what he called 'the progress of a society' (*aparihāṇīyā dhamma*) are the ability 'to meet together in harmony, adjourn in harmony and conduct business in harmony'.²¹ The former murderer or bandit Āṅgulimāla was echoing the Buddha's sentiments when he said: 'Let my enemies hear from time to time the Dhamma of those who speak

¹⁴ A. II. 67 – 8

¹⁵ D. I. 51.

¹⁶ D. I. 69 – 70.

¹⁷ A. I. 294.

¹⁸ D. I. 70.

¹⁹ Dhp 16, 35, 197, 202 – 3

²⁰ D. I. 73.

²¹ D.II. 74: "samaggā sannipatanti, samaggā vuṭṭhahanti, samaggā... karaṇīyani."

of patience and in praise of harmony and let them live following it.²²

Humans are notorious for their inability to get along with each other, and in this respect, religious groups, communities, or society are often little better than others. Why is it, someone once asked the Buddha, ‘that wanting to live in peace and without hate, violence, hostility, ill-will, and malignancy, humankind is constantly in conflict and plagued by hate, violence, hostility, ill-will, and malignancy and lacking in love?’²³ The root cause of most disharmony is clinging and craving; clinging to one’s ideas, to one’s belongings, or to one’s position; craving for pleasure, power, or recognition. And at the deepest level, craving is spawned by the notion of self or ego. Complete harmony and lasting peace will only be possible when one has attained awakening. But in the meantime, much can be done by individuals to make their relationships more harmonious in a compassionate society.

The Buddha said: ‘Monks, there are six things that foster love and respect, helpfulness and agreement, harmony and unity.’²⁴ What six? When one acts with love towards one’s companions in the spiritual life, both in public and in private; when one speaks with love towards them, both in public and in private; when one thinks with love towards them, both in public and in private; when one share with them, without reservations, whatever one has acquired justly, even if it be no more than the food from one’s alms bowl; when one possesses together with them virtues that are complete, unbroken and freedom-giving, praised by the wise and conducive to concentration; and when one possesses with one’s companions in the holy life, both in public and in private, the noble understanding, leading to freedom and which conduces to the destruction of suffering; then will there be love and respect, helpfulness and agreement, harmony and unity. These are the foundation pillars of a compassionate society where each human strives to live following society.

The Buddha once asked several of his monk disciples how they were able to live together ‘in harmony, mutual appreciation, and agreeability, like milk and water mixed, regarding each other with the eyes of love.’²⁵

One of them, Anuruddha Thera, replied, ‘I always consider what a blessing it is, what a real blessing, that I am living with such companions in the spiritual life. I think, speak, and act with love towards them, both in public and in private. I always consider that I should put aside my wishes and acquiesce to what they want and then I do that. Thus, we are many in body but one in mind.’²⁶

Several things are mentioned here by the Buddha and Anuruddha – love, generosity, having common values, appreciation of others, being sensitive to

²² M. II. 105.

²³ D. II. 276.

²⁴ M. I. 322.

²⁵ M. III. 156: “*samaggā sammodamānā avivadamānā khīrodakibhutā aññamaññaṃ piyakkhūhi sampassantā vihāramāti.*”

²⁶ M. III. 156.

their needs, and not always demanding to get one's way. Other qualities that nourish harmony are forgiveness, kindness, respect, sympathy, and tolerance.

9.3. Joy

Joy (*pīti*) is a feeling of subtle and refined happiness and is similar to it. In Buddhist psychology, joy is seen as the result of virtuous living, a sign of successful meditation, and an indication of growing spiritual intense maturity. Many different types of joy are identified in Buddhism. Sympathetic joy, for example, is the ability to be able to rejoice in the success and happiness of others. When the sage Bāvari merely heard the word 'Buddha' he experienced exaltation (*udagga*), jubilation (*vedajāta*), and elation (*attamāna*).

Buddhālabana *pīti* is the calm joy one can feel while contemplating an image of the Buddha. In the Visuddhimagga, joy is categorized according to its intensity and the effect it can have on the body. Thus, there is minor joy (*khuddikā pīti*), momentary joy (*khaṇikā pīti*), showering joy (*okkantikā pīti*), uplifting joy (*ubbeḡā pīti*), and pervading joy (*pharaṇā pīti*).²⁷

Some people are cautious of joy, thinking that it might lead to attachment, but Buddhaghosa made an interesting comment on this matter: 'It is called joy because it is to be enjoyed' (Vis.143). Joy is an important part of the jhānas and one of the seven limbs that lead to awakening.²⁸

9.4. Peace

Negatively peace (*samagga*, *santi*, or *upasama*) is the absence of conflict while positively it is the presence of harmony, tranquillity, and ease. The Buddha praised and promoted peace within society, between individuals, and within individuals. The Jātaka has a character say: 'This is my message to you who are assembled here; live in concord, avoid arguments...train yourself in peace, for this is praised by the Buddhas. Delight in peace and justice and thereby freedom from bondage will not be destroyed' (Ja. IV. 211). The Buddha commented that even the gods envy the person who lives in peace (Ud. 30). He described himself as a reconciler of those at variance and an encourager of those already united, rejoicing in peace, loving peace, delighting in peace, speaking in favor of peace.²⁹

But the Buddha was not just at peace himself, nor did he merely speak up for peace, he also actively did what he could to promote it. According to tradition, once the Sakyans and their neighbors the Koliyans, were about to have an armed conflict over the water in the river that divided their countries from each other. It was the height of summer and there was barely enough water to irrigate the Koliyan's let alone the Sakyan's. The Buddha positioned himself between the warriors of both sides and inquired: 'What are you fighting about?' 'Water,' came the reply. 'And what is more precious? Water or the blood of your young men?' he asked. 'Blood is far more precious than water,' they

²⁷ Vism. 143.

²⁸ D. II. 79.

²⁹ D. I. 4.

replied. “Then is it not improper to spill blood for the sake of water?” These reasoned and gentle words of admonishment brought everyone to their senses, a compromise was worked out and peace was restored.³⁰

One of the meditations taught by the Buddha was the Recollection on Peace (*upasamānussati*)³¹ during which one contemplates the beauty of peace within oneself and one’s community. The deepest and most lasting peace, however, is only available to those who have attained Nirvana. As the Buddha said: ‘Peaceful is the mind, speech, and actions of one who is utterly quiescent and freed by knowledge.’³²

It is appropriate that the Dalai Lāma, the first Buddhist monk to be awarded the Nobel Prize, and Aung San Suu Kyi, the first Asian woman to be awarded it, were both given it for their efforts to bring about peaceful political change. The Buddhist scriptures say: ‘Having seen contention as a danger and harmony as peace, abide in unity and kindness; this is the teaching of the Buddhas’ (Cp. 3, 15, 13).

From the above, we can contemplate the pillars of a Compassionate Society through Mindfulness Buddhist Education emphasizing Happiness, Harmony, Joy, and Peace which are the essential ingredients for a civilized compassionate Society.

9.5. Teachings of Buddha creation for a compassionate society

The most noticeable feature of the Buddha’s personality was his compassion, and this compassion was not just something he felt for others or that they felt in his presence, it was also the motive for much of what he said and did. He said: “What should be done out of compassion for his disciples by a teacher who cares about their welfare and out of compassion for them, I have done for you.” He visited and comforted the sick “out of compassion”, and he taught the Dhamma “out of compassion.” Once he went into a lonely forest looking for the serial killer Angulimāla, out of compassion both for him and for his potential victims. The Buddha’s compassion seems to have transcended even the bounds of time. He is described sometimes as doing or refraining from doing certain things “out of compassion for future generations.” On many occasions, he said that his very reason for being was “for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the good and the happiness of gods and humans.”

After the Buddha’s awakening, he saw the need for some kind of community, bound together by shared values and norms, which would provide the optimal environment for awakening and could disseminate the Dhamma as widely as possible. Thus, what came to be known as the four-fold community (*catu parisā*) evolved, its four parts being monks and nuns (*bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī*) and lay men and women (*upāsaka* and *upāsikā*)³³. He envisaged the parts of this

³⁰ Dhp-a.254; Ja. V.412 ff.

³¹ Dhp-a.254; Ja. V.412 ff.

³² Dhp 96.

³³ See Anālayo (2018), p. 9 - 17.

community being mutually dependent (*aññamaññaṃ*) on each other – monastics on the laity for their basic needs and the laity on monastics for knowledge of the Dhamma. Furthermore, because the Buddha considered his Dhamma to be distinct from other teachings, it was only right that he would want his disciples to be distinct too - most importantly in their probity but also their dress. The ascetics of other sects tended to wear whatever clothes they could find or were given and, in any style, they liked, but the Buddha wanted his monastics to all to use the same type of robe dyed a similar color so that they could be immediately distinguished from other ascetics. The color was called *kaśāva*, which probably referred to a tawny-yellowish hue³⁴. Although the Buddha never required it be done, lay disciples dressed in white (*gihī odātavasana*) as an alternative to more ostentatious, brightly colored, and embroidered wear perhaps because it was thought to suggest purity and simplicity.

At the beginning of the Buddha's career, people expressed their intention to become disciples, whether monastic or lay, by taking what was called the Three Refuges (*tisaraṇa*) – a refuge being a place offering security from a threatening or dangerous situation. The Buddha was considered such a refuge because his awakening demonstrated that the continual process of birth, death, and rebirth could be transcended; the Dhamma was a refuge because it provided how this could be achieved; and the Saṅgha was a refuge by offering the guidance and encouragement, example and support needed to transcend conditioned existence. The word *saṅgha* means a group or assembly and is generally used for the monastic orders, i.e. monks and nuns, although in the Three Refuge avowal, it does not usually refer to monks or nuns but to anyone who has realized either a stage at which awakening becomes irreversible and inevitable or awakening itself. To this day, those who decide to become Buddhist recite three times a simple formula – I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Dhamma; I take refuge in the Saṅgha – by which they affirm their confidence in and commitment to Buddhism.

The Buddha's first move in developing a community of disciples was to establish a monastic Saṅgha. An order of monks unencumbered by familial ties and social obligations would provide the best opportunity to develop the spiritual qualities needed to attain awakening. Furthermore, such monks would be in a good position to disseminate the Dhamma. In the beginning, joining the monastic community required approaching the Buddha and requesting to become a monk, but as time went by the Buddha saw the need for a more formal and structured organization, which the monastic Saṅgha eventually became. Some years after the first monks were ordained, a group of women expressed a desire to become nuns, and a nun's Saṅgha was founded.

³⁴ Vin. I. 306 gives a range of colours that monastics' robes should not be, including red, yellow and orange. Buddhist monks today are often said to wear 'saffron' robe, and indeed the colour of their robes sometimes resembles the bright orange of saffron. But the saffron plant was unknown in fifth century BCE India and even later was never used as a dye because of its expense and poor fixing properties..

9.6. Compassionate society seen within the pāli literature through case studies

The ideal loving Buddhist couple would be Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā, who were devoted disciples of the Buddha and who had been happily married for many years. Once Nakulapitā told the Buddha in the presence of his wife: “Lord, ever since my wife was brought to my home when I was a mere boy and she was a mere girl, I have never been unfaithful to her, not even in thought, let alone indeed.”³⁵ On another occasion, Nakulamātā devotedly nursed her husband through a long illness, encouraging and reassuring him all the while. When the Buddha came to know of this, he said to Nakulapitā: “You have benefited, householder, you have greatly benefited, in having your wife Nakulamātā full of compassion for you, full of love for you, as your mentor and teacher.”³⁶ From the Buddhist perspective, these qualities are the recipe for an enduring and enriching relationship – faithfulness, mutual love and compassion, and a willingness to learn from each other (anukampikā or anaticariya, atthakāmā, ovādikā, and anusasikā respectively).

One of the most famous of these is the Nigrodhamiga Jātaka. One day the lot fell to a doe from the Sāka herd who was pregnant. She went to her stag and said: “I am pregnant. Let my turn be postponed until I have given birth and then I will go to the chopping block.” The stag was unsympathetic. “We cannot make an exception. Your turn has come and you must go to the block.” Desperate to save her unborn fawn she went to the Nigrodha stag and begged him to do something to postpone her death. Moved by compassion he said: “Go home and I will see what I can do.” Accepting that he could not demand another deer take the doe’s place he resolved to do it himself. The next day he went to the chopping block, laid his neck on it, and calmly waited for his grim fate. When the cook came and saw the stag he was surprised. “The king has granted immunity to this stage and yet he lays his head on the block. What can this mean?” He ran off to tell the king, who quickly drove his chariot to the block in the forest.

For the Buddha love and compassion were incomplete if they were not extended to all sentient beings. He even suggested that in certain circumstances kindness to animals might take precedence over human laws. Once a certain monk found an animal caught in a trap and, feeling pity for it, released it. Customary law at that time considered a trapped animal to be the property of the hunter who had set the trap, and this monk was criticized by his fellows for theft. However, the Buddha exonerated him, saying that because he had acted out of compassion, he had not committed any offense.³⁷

Commenting on the Buddha’s words, the Saddhammopāyana says: “Nursing the sick was much praised by the Great Compassionate One and is it a wonder that he would do so? For the Sage sees the welfare of others as his

³⁵ A. II. 61.

³⁶ A. III. 295 - 8.

³⁷ Vin. III. 62.

own and thus that he should act as a benefactor to others is no surprise. This is why attending to the sick has been praised by the Buddha. One practicing great virtue should have a love for others.”

X. CONCLUSION

We see how Buddha in each discourse has been a compassionate teacher who delivered his teachings for 45 years and built a new society which was the need of that hour to come out of dogmas and superstition so that every individual or profession is respected in a good manner. Such respect earned is a part of Education where every individual in the community is mindful through his actions, speech, and mind and this transforms a greater compassionate society.

In eulogizing compassion, the *Jātakamāla* says: “Compassion gives birth to all the other virtues just as cooling rain makes the crops grow. When a person is compassionate, he has no desire to harm his neighbor, his body, speech, and mind are purified, concern for his neighbor’s welfare increases, and states like kindness, patience, happiness, and good reputation grow. Being calm, the compassionate person does not arouse fear in the minds of others. He is trusted like a kinsman; he is not agitated by the passions but quenched by the waters of compassion. The fire of hatred does not blaze in his heart... Remembering this, strive to develop compassion towards others; as if they were yourself or your offspring.”

Compassion is the way *mettā* relates to those in distress. Once again, not everyone requires compassion. Sometimes those around us are celebrating or savouring success. Now it is appropriate for *mettā* to manifest itself by celebrating with them, listening as they recount their good fortune, and being happy in their happiness. Sympathetic joy is *mettā*’s response to those who are happy. However, there is another aspect of sympathetic joy that does not always get a mention. When compassion comes, forgiveness and pardon usually follow. Eventually, we may even be able to have a reconciliation with them. However, we must keep in mind that a person might have been so grievously hurt by another that they want no contact with them. It would just be too painful and would reawaken distressing associations. If equanimity and forgiveness have dissipated all the old hate, that is sufficient. The reality is that the deeper the wounds, the more time they take to heal. The road from hatred to freedom from hatred may be long but its mileposts are all marked “Equanimity”.

Seen through the above case studies in the aspects of a deer how the bodhisattva shows compassion towards his or her subordinates, similarly, the Nakkulapita and her wife during their last stage what all good merits they have earned are remembered to have compassion mindfulness so that the birth should be in higher realms, also we can see how monks and nuns also had compassion for humans and animals. The way Buddha had compassion to transform *Āṅgulimāla*. This shows when we inculcate this quality with mindfulness as a core Buddhist education in life our lives and society will change and prosper diligently.

This shows that *Mettā*, *Karuna*, *Muditā*, and *Upekkhā* all go with one another and in this Compassion has a potential role. If an individual gets an understanding of how compassion is essential for humans and animals this world will become a Compassionate Society.

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THE ROLE OF MINDFUL EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING A UNIFIED WORLD: BUDDHIST INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS FROM CHINA TO SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on mindful Buddhist education that integrates compassion, wisdom, and ethical principles to address global challenges. It fosters emotional resilience, critical thinking, and interconnectedness, offering solutions to issues like inequality, mental health, and climate change through mindfulness practices and interdisciplinary applications. Historical Buddhist networks connected South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia, promoting cross-cultural exchanges and the dissemination of mindful Buddhist teachings at centers like Nālandā and Mahāvihāra. On the other hand, Pure Land Buddhism highlights Buddhism's adaptability, blending Indian Mahāyāna ideas with Chinese cultural values. Modern educational collaborations between China, India, and Sri Lanka also build on these Buddhist educational networks. Institutions like Peking University, Nālandā University, and the University of Peradeniya advance Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhist studies through research and scholarships. Pilgrimages to sites like Bodh Gayā and Mount Wutai, foster spiritual and intellectual ties. As this research paper observed, by integrating traditional Buddhist wisdom with modern approaches, mindful Buddhist networks address sustainability, peacebuilding, and interfaith dialogue. These collaborations underscore Buddhism's transformative potential in promoting harmony, equity, and global citizenship, offering enduring insights into present-day challenges and sustainable development.

Keywords: *Mindful education, unified world, Buddhist wisdom, mindfulness.*

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I. INTRODUCTION TO MINDFUL BUDDHIST EDUCATION

The need for education in cultivating compassion and mindfulness is more than ever in a world that is becoming more interconnected but also more fractured. Through the integration of ethical principles, self-awareness, and holistic learning, mindful Buddhist education provides a transformative method that surpasses traditional education. The importance of mindful Buddhist education in undertaking today's issues and its capacity to link international intellectual networks are examined in this research paper. As instructed in the Theravāda *Tripitaka*, core qualities that went beyond cultural and geographic borders, such as compassion (*karuṇā*), wisdom (*prajñā*), and non-harming (*ahiṃsā*), are emphasized in mindful Buddhist education.¹ It nurtures emotional strength, critical thinking, and a profound sense of interconnectivity and has its roots in centuries-old customs. This method prepares people to handle global issues including social inequity, mental health issues, and climate change by promoting an understanding of our common humanity and the interconnectedness of all living things.

The focus on awareness (*sati*) and meditation techniques are the fundamental components of mindful Buddhist education. These exercises aid in the development of children's capacity to concentrate, control their emotions, and make moral decisions. Including mindfulness in curricula can help build more inclusive, productive, and sympathetic learning environments in stressful and competitive school climates.² Furthermore, interdisciplinary research can be stimulated by the incorporation of Buddhist ideas like dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), especially in disciplines like ecology, neurology, and the social sciences where knowledge of interrelated systems is essential.³

The ability of mindful Buddhist education to bridge intellectual networks across various disciplines and geographical areas makes it relevant on a worldwide scale. For example, academic partnerships between Buddhist researchers and readers in Asia, Europe, and America can promote mutual learning and cross-cultural communication. These networks can tackle universal issues related to ethics, sustainable development, and the human condition. Additionally, the digital era presents previously unheard-of chances to distribute Buddhist educational materials, facilitating a wider audience and more in-depth interaction. Buddhist concepts can be incorporated into worldwide discussions through online forums, international conferences, and

¹ William Van Gordon, & Edo Shonin, Nirbhay N. Singh (2015). *Buddhist Foundations of Mindfulness*, Basel: Springer International Publishing, p. 99.

² Padmasiri De Silva (2001). *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, p. 44 - 57.

³ Seonaigh MacPherson & Patricia Rockman (2023). *Mindfulness-Based Teaching and Learning Preparing Mindfulness Specialists in Education and Clinical Care*, London: Taylor & Francis, p. 15 - 22.

cooperative research initiatives.⁴

Additionally, mindful Buddhist education supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, especially those related to justice, peace, and high-quality education. It can act as a basis for developing global citizenship by fostering principles of inclusivity and togetherness. According to the United Nations, education is crucial to achieving several other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Individuals can break the cycle of poverty by obtaining a quality education. Education helps to reduce inequities and achieve gender equality. It also enables people worldwide to live healthier and more sustainable lives. Education is also important for building tolerance among people and contributing to a more harmonious society. The UN believes, that to achieve goal 4, education finance must become a national investment priority. Furthermore, policies such as making education free and obligatory, expanding the number of instructors, strengthening fundamental school facilities, and embracing digital change are critical.⁵

On the other hand, programs that include mindful Buddhist teachings in peacebuilding initiatives, for instance, have demonstrated potential in resolving conflicts and foster reconciliation in areas impacted by historical and sociopolitical tensions.⁶ Thus, mindful Buddhist education provides a strong framework for developing moral leadership, improving emotional intelligence, and bridging cultural and intellectual gaps. Its significance in the twenty-first century is highlighted by its capacity to develop international intellectual networks and solve current issues. Adopting the timeless wisdom of mindful Buddhist education will help us navigate an era of rapid change and uncertainty. It will create a way for a more sustainable, inclusive, and compassionate world.

From ancient times to the present, this study examines the development and effects of Buddhist educational networks that link China, India, South East Asia, and Sri Lanka. This study illustrates how these networks support sustainable development, especially in social harmony and community-based ventures, by analyzing historical documents, current institutional relationships, and educational practices. The study emphasizes how the ancient Buddhist values of interaction mindfulness, and moral behavior can provide useful answers for promoting social justice, peace, and harmony in contemporary Asian societies.

II. THE GAUTAM BUDDHA'S APPROACHES TO MINDFUL EDUCATION AND ITS NETWORKING

The concepts of awareness, interconnectedness, and compassion are at the

⁴ Morten Schlütter (2014) "Buddhism in the Digital World", in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism*, (ed.) Mario Poceski, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 12.

⁵ UN Sustainable Development Goals- Quality Education (2024), <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

⁶ Pascal Frank et.al (2019). "Mindfulness, Education, and the Sustainable Development Goals", in *Quality Education: Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*, New York: Springer, p. 8 - 10.

heart of the Buddha's method of mindful education and networking. In terms of individual growth and community involvement, it places a strong emphasis on cultivating wisdom (*paññā*), moral behavior (*sīla*), and mental discipline (*samādhi*). In the Buddhist tradition, increasing inner awareness, moral principles, and practical wisdom are the main goals of mindful education. In particular, the components of right view, right thought, and right mindfulness are in line with the noble eightfold path and the four noble truths. "And what is the noble eightfold path? It is the right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion."⁷

It is obvious that the noble eightfold path is closely connected with mindful practices. The Buddha's teachings on mindful life led to fulfilling the noble eightfold path and obtaining Nirvāṇa. There are a few essential features we can highlight in mindful education. The first one is self-awareness. Through mindfulness exercises like meditation, education starts with an understanding of oneself, including one's thoughts, feelings, and ambitions. The second one is following some essential Buddhist ethics and values. It is important to stress the importance of ethical principles as the cornerstone of education, such as truthfulness (*sacca*) and non-harm (*ahiṃsā*). It is important to use realistic and flexible teaching strategies to meet each student's requirements and abilities known as "skillful means" (*Upaya*). As demonstrated by the Buddha's teachings to the Kalamas (*Kalama Sutta*), which promote autonomous thought and conclusions based on evidence, critical inquiry is the encouragement of inquiries and research.

Of course, you are uncertain, Kalamas. Of course, you are in doubt. When there are reasons for doubt, uncertainty is born. So in this case, Kalamas, don't go by reports, legends, traditions, scripture, logical conjecture, inference, analogies, agreement through pondering views, probability, or by the thought, "This contemplative is our teacher". When you know for yourselves that, "These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & suffering" - then you should abandon them.⁸

The Buddha also appreciated the integrating knowledge with life skills to live harmoniously and contribute to societal well-being. Incorporating mindfulness activities into the teaching space to improve focus, empathy, and emotional control is one way that mindful education encourages approaches like contemplative pedagogy. An essential component of mindful education is networking. The Buddha acknowledged that true devotees or monks could not learn Buddhism without professional teachers. Thus, in *Dhamma* communities, networking is always emphasized. The Buddha stresses establishing connections based on respect, understanding, and shared values in a Buddhist setting. It is consistent with the development of *kalyāṇa mittatā*

⁷ *Vibhaṅga sutta*, SN 48. 38.

⁸ *Kalama Sutta*, AN 3. 65.

(spiritual friendships) and the idea of interdependence (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Buddhist intellectual networking has certain fundamental elements.

Interdependence is the first aspect. It teaches us to acknowledge the interdependence of all living beings and encourage teamwork and cooperation for the benefit of everyone. Proper speech and communication are the other essential components. In this element avoiding harsh language, divisive discourse, and gossip in favor of sincere, compassionate, and goal-oriented communication are imperative. Mutual support is the most crucial component of mindful education in Buddhism. It entailed nurturing networks of spiritual companions (*kalyāṇa mittas*) who assist one another in their spiritual and personal development. Compassionate leadership is an additional vital component. It will be a wise and compassionate leader who prioritizes the needs of the community over personal gain. Among these, inclusion is the most sympathetic. The Buddha's welcoming of individuals from various castes, genders, and origins into the *Sangha* is an example of the Buddhist network's embrace of diversity and inclusivity.

In *Kalyāṇamitta sutta* in *Saṃyutta Nikaya*, the Buddha appreciated reliable spiritual friends as the most important element in developing a mindful Dhamma life.

Ānanda! Good friends, companions, and associates are the whole of the spiritual life. A mendicant with good friends, companions, and associates can expect to develop and cultivate the noble eightfold path.

And how does a mendicant with good friends develop and cultivate the noble eightfold path? It's when a mendicant develops the right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion, which rely on seclusion, fading away, cessation, and ripen as letting go. That's how a mendicant with good friends develops and cultivates the noble eightfold path. And here's another way to understand how good friends are the whole of the spiritual life: "For, by relying on me as a good friend, sentient beings who are liable to rebirth, old age, and death, to sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress are freed from all these things. This is another way to understand how good friends are the whole of the spiritual life."⁹

The Buddha informs Venerable Ānanda in the *Upaddha Sutta* (SN 45.2): "Admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life."¹⁰ This lesson emphasizes how crucial it is to surround oneself with morally upright and encouraging people. Mutual development and a common dedication to moral and spiritual objectives are fostered by such interactions.

A thorough foundation for establishing and preserving cordial relationships in a variety of social roles, such as those with family, friends,

⁹ *Kalyāṇamitta sutta*, SN 3.18.

¹⁰ *Upaddha Sutta*, SN 45.2.

teachers, and colleagues, is provided by the *Sigālovāda Sutta* (DN 31).¹¹ The Buddha emphasizes values like appreciation, generosity, and respect in his six directions of duty and reciprocity. For instance, teachers should convey knowledge and encourage moral behavior, and students should respect and encourage their teachers. The *Cakkavatti Sutta* (DN 26) serves as another illustration of the function of moral leadership in networking. In order to ensure the welfare of their communities, the Buddha leaders governed with fairness and compassion. This advice is especially pertinent to contemporary leaders who are working to build networks that are sustainable and inclusive.¹²

The Buddha's teachings provide practical advice for modern networking and education. To improve focus, emotional control, and ethical awareness, educational institutions and corporations should incorporate mindfulness exercises from the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The *Sigālovāda Sutta*'s ethical reciprocity and the *Upaddha Sutta*'s spiritual friendship principles offer a framework for creating networks that are compassionate and cooperative. Through the alignment of individual growth with the welfare of the group, the teachings of the Buddha encourage people to cooperate in the pursuit of a peaceful and enlightened society.

In both social and professional contexts, mindful networking can be used to build compassionate, cooperative, and inclusive communities that respect moral leadership and a common goal. The spiritual Buddhist network connects spiritual friends and communities through shared experiences, teachings, practices, and philosophy. The world has witnessed many Buddhist traditions and movements that allowed the Buddhist philosophy to spread through Asian regions. From China to India Buddhism was an iconic move in the ancient world. South Asian, South East Asian, and East Asian traditions, cultures, and civilizations sprouted through these Buddhist networks. This research is going to further examine how the ancient Buddhist educational networks through monasteries spread Buddhism and its spiritual texts.

III. ANCIENT BUDDHIST EDUCATION NETWORKS FROM CHINA TO SRI LANKA

In addition to facilitating trade, the old Silk Road created long-lasting educational corridors connecting China, India, and Sri Lanka through Buddhist networks. The foundation for current educational collaborations that tackle today's social sustainability issues was established by these historical ties. In this section, the research examines the ways in which 21st-century societal sustainability is facilitated by Buddhist educational practices and ideas that are disseminated through these networks. The main areas of emphasis include how Buddhist education has changed throughout time, how it has changed in contemporary settings, and how it has been incorporated into social development programs.

¹¹ *Sigalovada Sutta*, DN 31.

¹² *Cakkavatti Sutta*, DN 26.

Buddhist educational networks between China and South Asia are primarily developed through ancient trade and pilgrimage routes. Several significant historical developments can be linked to the formation of Buddhist educational networks. One of the first moves of establishing a Buddhist network between China and South Asia was initiated by early Chinese pilgrims. Early pilgrim monks were essential to the gathering, preservation, and dissemination of Buddhist literature, particularly the teachings of the Buddha. They were expanded geographically and changed to fit different linguistic and cultural contexts. These monks were inspired by the *Dhamma*, or teachings of the Buddha, and their desire to preserve its validity for the next generations. The rich textual traditions of Buddhism that are still in existence today were made possible by their efforts.¹³

Following the Buddha's *Parinibbāna* (passing away), his teachings were passed on and recited orally. To make sure the teachings were correctly retained and passed down, the monastic community (*Sangha*) established councils, such as the first Buddhist council at Rajgir (Rājagaha). However, monks started making pilgrimages as Buddhism spread geographically, from India to Sri Lanka, Central Asia, and finally East Asia. They attempted to gather and preserve sacred texts in addition to engaging in spiritual and mindful practices. The primary goal of Chinese monks seeking classic Buddhist teaching from South Asia was to collect texts from various regions. In order to preserve the teachings and prevent them from being lost or fragmented, some Chinese monks traveled great distances through deserts and mountains to collect Buddhist texts written in many languages and scripts. They found great spiritual teachers in this mindful education journey.¹⁴

The efforts of early Chinese pilgrim monks ensured that Buddhist teachings survived and spread around the world. Their pilgrimages made it easier for Buddhism to be incorporated into various cultural contexts and preserved the authenticity of the texts. As evidence of their solid commitment, the texts they gathered are still essential to studying and practicing Buddhism today. Their journeys and efforts were motivated by the common moral rather than individual benefit. Their work also serves as an excellent example of the Buddhist values of determination, selflessness, and the interconnectedness of all beings.¹⁵

For instance, a famous Chinese monk, Fa-Xian (4th – 5th century CE) traveled to India to gather Buddhist writings, such as the *Vinaya* (monastic precepts). He visited Pāṭaliputra (present-day Patna) in India and Sri Lanka, recording his travels in *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*. As Fa-Xian observed, the Nālandā University and other monastic education establishments in India were very professional in Buddhist mindful teachings. As Nālandā University is one of the most renowned

¹³ Prabodh Chandra Bagchi (2011). *India and China: Interactions Through Buddhism and Diplomacy: a Collection of Essays by Professor Prabodh Chandra Bagchi*, London: Anthem Press, p. 11 - 21.

¹⁴ Mishri Saran (2012). *Chasing the Monk's Shadow*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, p. 112 - 132.

¹⁵ Bagchi, Op.cit., p. 110 - 114.

institutions of Buddhist education, Fa-Xian accounts provide insight into India's flourishing monastic education system. Even though Faxian lived before Nālandā's heyday, which spanned the fifth through the twelfth century, his observations highlight fundamental elements of its curriculum and teaching methods. Nālandā's curriculum placed a strong emphasis on studying Buddhist texts in depth, especially the *Tripitaka* and related commentaries. Buddhist theory was discussed, memorized, and thoroughly examined by monks.¹⁶ Oral transmission as a teaching method was crucial, and it was strengthened by methodical discussion and meditation. Individualized instruction from teachers (*Acharyas*) promoted both academic and spiritual development. Faxian noted that monasteries in India, including Nālandā, maintained high standards of discipline and learning, attracting students and scholars from distant lands.¹⁷

Faxian traveled to Anuradhapura, a well-known Theravāda Buddhist center in Sri Lanka, to visit the Mahāvihāra Monastery. In East and South East Asia, Sri Lanka is renowned for its ability to preserve its scriptures. Faxian noted that the teachings of the Buddha were protected by the careful recording and preservation of the Pali Canon by Sri Lankan monks. With its vast library and knowledgeable monks devoted to studying the scriptures, the Mahāvihāra functioned as a storehouse of Buddhist knowledge. Faxian's voyage demonstrated how India and Sri Lanka share information. He mentioned how a thriving intellectual and spiritual network was established when monks from Sri Lanka traveled to India to gather writings and relics, and vice versa. Sri Lanka, under the influence of Reverend Mahinda, who established Buddhism in the country, became a hub of Buddhist education. Anuradhapura emerged as a prominent educational center, fostering deep exchanges of teachers, texts, and cultural knowledge with India and China. Sri Lanka also played a significant role in preserving Theravāda Buddhist texts, which continue to inform modern Buddhist scholarship.¹⁸

The guru-disciple approach, which combined academic study with practical application, was the foundation of Buddhist education in ancient Asia. Monks frequently served as teachers and spiritual advisors, and education placed a strong emphasis on moral development, character formation, and personal growth. Buddhist teachings placed a strong emphasis on text analysis, memorization strategies, discussion, and critical thinking. Other important elements included mindfulness, meditation, and traditional healing techniques. The growth of social harmony and peace in societies was largely dependent on the incorporation of moral behavior into daily life.¹⁹

¹⁶ 王邦维 (2020) 交流与互鉴 (佛教与中印文化关系论集), 复旦大学出版社, 22.

¹⁷ Sriharsha Indrasena (2021). *Fa-Hien's Records of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, New Delhi: Devapura Publications, p. 24 - 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 273 - 301.

¹⁹ Pintu Kumar (2018). *Buddhist Learning in South Asia: Education, Religion, and Culture at the Ancient Sri Nālandā Mahāvihāra*, Maryland: Lexington Books, p. 140 - 141.

When Faxian returned to China, he was helpful in the translation efforts of these spiritual texts. The development of a formal monastic order in China depended heavily on the writings he gathered while traveling. He laid the groundwork for later translators like Kumārajīva and Xuanzang, who built on his work. Chinese monks and local academics worked together to ensure accuracy and cultural relevance during the translation process. The procedure made the teachings understandable to a new audience while maintaining their doctrinal purity. By adding passages that stressed moral behavior, self-control, and meditation, Faxian's translations enhanced the Chinese Buddhist canon. East Asian educational traditions and monastic reforms were impacted by these works.²⁰

Faxian's observations give a comprehensive picture of the interwoven Buddhist society, where pilgrimage and education were closely related. The sophisticated level of Buddhist research and its influence on regional and international networks are demonstrated by his documentation of institutions like as Nālandā and Mahāvihāra. Buddhism flourished throughout East Asia as a result of the translation initiatives he started and the libraries he documented, which guaranteed the preservation and dissemination of Buddhist teachings. In addition to preserving the historical heritage of Buddhist education, his work encouraged monks and academics of later generations to follow in his footsteps. The attitude of mindful pilgrimage is best exemplified by Faxian's voyage, where a dedication to knowledge and devotion to the *Dhamma* forged enduring intellectual and cultural ties throughout Asia.²¹

A significant milestone in strengthening South Asian and Chinese educational links, Xuanzang's seventeen-year journey (629 – 645 CE) promoted previously unheard-of cross-cultural collaborations in Buddhist study.²² Motivated by a desire to acquire genuine Buddhist texts, Xuanzang traveled across the Silk Road to India, the Buddhist homeland, where he visited important monastic establishments and meticulously recorded their teaching methods. His work promoted a better understanding of Indian philosophy and culture in addition to enhancing Buddhist knowledge in China. Xuanzang visited well-known Buddhist educational institutions on his journey, such as Nālandā University, which he characterized as a flourishing intellectual center with more than 10,000 resident monks involved in scholarly research and discussion. He claimed that intellectuals "came as streams and returned as oceans" to Nālandā. He described the methodical teaching strategies employed at Nālandā, stressing the value of reasoned discussion, in-depth research into the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna doctrines, and real-world applications of Buddhist philosophy. The prosperity of the university, according to Xuanzang, is largely due to academic exchanges

²⁰ Antonino Forte (1988). *Tang China and Beyond: Studies on East Asia from the Seventh to the Tenth Century*, Kyoto: Istituto italiano di cultura, p. 7 - 9.

²¹ Tansen Sen (2015). *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade : The Realignment of India–China Relations, 600 – 1400*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, p. 34.

²² 季羨林 (1990) 佛教与中印文化交流, 江西人民出版社, 45.

and libraries.²³

More than 700 Buddhist books, including sutras, commentaries, and philosophical treatises, which were previously unavailable in China, were brought back by Xuanzang when he returned to China. He personally oversaw groups of academics that translated these books into Chinese, guaranteeing their doctrinal correctness and accessibility, and he founded translation schools in Chang'an (present-day Xi'an). His translations of the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* and books on Yogacara philosophy, which had a significant impact on East Asian Buddhism, are among his most renowned achievements. The voyage of Xuanzang is a prime example of the effectiveness of cross-cultural and educational cooperation. He established long-lasting connections and advanced Buddhist studies throughout Asia by recording India's monastic customs and passing along its spiritual legacy to China. Scholars and practitioners around the world are still motivated by his legacy.²⁴ Pilgrim monks built connections between remote Buddhist communities in China and South Asia. These networks promoted solidarity among world Buddhists and their mindful education by facilitating the sharing of texts, concepts, and practices.

IV. THE ORIGIN AND TRANSFORMATION OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM IN CHINA

The development of the Pure Land tradition is one of the most important and extensively practiced traditions in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It was founded on the intellectual and spiritual determinations of early Indian Buddhism and strengthened by its dynamic evolution in Chinese culture.²⁵ This is just another example of how Buddhism interconnected and expanded throughout East and South Asia. This tradition became a cornerstone of East Asian Buddhist thinking and practice.²⁶

The Chinese phrase *ching-t'u* can imply both "pure land" and "to purify the land." The term "purifying the Buddha-land," also known as "*ching fo-kuo-t'u*" in Chinese, comes from the early Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist concept of a realized world. The term "to purify the Buddha-land" alludes to the notion that the bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism will purify all areas where they would appear as Buddhas in the future. Purification refers to guiding all sentient beings in these areas towards *Nirvāṇa* and achieving Buddhahood. The Mahāyāna bodhisattvas practiced "self-benefit and benefiting others," which involves achieving enlightenment while also assisting others to do the

²³ Benjamin Brose (2021). *Xuanzang: China's Legendary Pilgrim and Translator*, Boulder: Shambhala, p. 43 - 53.

²⁴ Dorothy C. Wong (2018). *Buddhist Pilgrim-monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission: The International Buddhist Art Style in East Asia, Ca. 645-770*, Singapore: NUS Press, p. 43 - 45.

²⁵ Paul Williams (2008). *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London: Routledge, p. 21 - 22.

²⁶ Charles B. Jones (2019). *Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, Understanding a Tradition of Practice*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, p. 33.

same. It refers to achieving the ideal of the bodhisattva path.²⁷

The intellectual origins of the Pure Land tradition can be traced back to the *early Mahāyāna sutras* written between 100 BCE and 500 CE. The books, such as the *Sukhāvati Sūtras* (particularly the Smaller *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra* and the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*), introduced Amitabha Buddha and his Pure Land, Sukhāvati, as places of ultimate *Nirvāṇa*. Amitabha Buddha, portrayed as embodying limitless compassion and wisdom, became important to the Mahāyāna view of Buddhahood. Notably, Pure Land ideals served the spiritual needs of both monastic and lay communities in ancient India. It can contextualize these teachings within the socio-cultural setting of early Indian Buddhism.²⁸

Indian Buddhist philosophical monks such as Nagarjuna (approximately 150 - 250 CE) and Vasubandhu (fourth-fifth century CE) structured these teachings further and connected Pure Land practices to basic Mahāyāna ideas like emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and dependent origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*).²⁹ Nagarjuna's treatise on the ten stages (*Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣa*) and Vasubandhu's treatise on the Pure Land (*Sukhāvati-vyūha Upadeśa*) provided interpretive frameworks that emphasized the Pure Land path's accessibility to all beings, regardless of spiritual progress.³⁰

In the Indian context, the Pure Land teachings were emphasized as universal and inclusive, meeting the spiritual needs of both monastic and lay practitioners alike. Ritual practices, such as visualizing Sukhāvati and reciting Amitabha Buddha's name, were established to help cultivate faith and achieve rebirth in the Pure Land.³¹ The conceptual foundations of these activities created the way for their cross-cultural transmission and adaptation.

The transmission of Buddhism to China along the Silk Road introduced Indian Mahāyāna teachings, especially the *Pure Land sutras*, to a new cultural and intellectual context. The *Mahāyāna sutras* were transported from the Gandhāra region to China as early as 147 CE when the Indo-Kushan monk Lokakṣema began translating the earliest Buddhist texts into Chinese. Reverend Lokakṣema (147 CE) was keen on translating many Mahāyāna scriptures into Chinese, including the *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*. This work emphasized visualization practices for encountering Amitabha Buddha struck

²⁷ Fujita Kōtatsu & Rebecca Otowa (1996). "The Origin of the Pure Land" in *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, Vol. 29, No. 1, Spring, p. 33 - 34.

²⁸ Richard K. Payne (2003). "Seeing Sukhāvati: Yogacara and the Origins of Pure Land Visualization", in *The Pure Land*, Journal of Pure Land Buddhism, New Series, No. 20, Dec, p. 265 - 266.

²⁹ Shin'ya Moriyama (2005). "The Gate of Praise in Vasubandhu's Sukhāvativyūhopadeśa"; *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, Vol. XXXVII, Nos. 1 - 2, p. 236 - 37.

³⁰ H Inagaki (1998). "Nagarjuna's Discourse on the Ten Stages: *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣa* - translation and study of Verses and Chapter 9", in *Ryukoku Literature Series V*, Ryukoku University, p. 135 - 36.

³¹ Kōtatsu, Op.cit., p. 33.

a deep chord with Chinese intellectuals and inspired the early development of Pure Land practice in China.³²

Huiyuan (334 - 416 CE), the founder of the White Lotus Society and the first patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism in China, is an example of how Pure Land teachings were integrated into Chinese Buddhism. Huiyuan emphasized the visualization of Amitabha and the desire for rebirth in Sukhāvati as important practices, linking them to Daoist and Confucian intellectual principles. His efforts contributed to creating Pure Land Buddhism as a community and approachable practice for both monastics and lay people.³³

Chinese intellectuals such as Zhiyi (538 - 597 CE) of the *Tiantai* school and Shandao (613 - 681 CE), a well-known Pure Land teacher, enhanced the tradition. Zhiyi's synthesis of Mahāyāna philosophy and meditation established a foundation for comprehending Pure Land activities within the larger Mahāyāna paradigm. Shandao transformed Pure Land philosophy by emphasizing the chanting of Amitabha's name (*nembutsu*) as the most efficient technique for achieving rebirth in the Pure Land, even for ordinary beings. These achievements established Pure Land Buddhism as an intrinsic aspect of Chinese Buddhism, influencing both monastic and laity activities.³⁴

The Pure Land tradition's success in China can be traced to its adaptation and integration with indigenous Chinese philosophical systems. The emphasis on Amitabha's compassion, as well as the Pure Land path's accessibility, resonated with Chinese values such as community, filial piety, and ethical living. Pure Land practices were gradually merged with *Chan* (Zen) meditation and esoteric rites, resulting in a distinctly Chinese approach to Mahāyāna Buddhism. *Nembutsu* became a widely accepted practice of reciting Amitabha Buddha's name, which is often written as *Namu Amida Butsu* (Homage to Amitabha Buddha). This practice has become one of the most distinguishing features of Pure Land Buddhism.³⁵ This cross-cultural adaptation enabled Pure Land Buddhism to thrive as both a standalone practice and an essential component of Chinese Buddhist schools like *Tiantai* and *Chan*. The tradition's emphasis on faith, recitation, and group worship democratized Buddhist practice, making it more accessible to lay practitioners and cementing its status as a significant spiritual path in East Asia.

The Pure Land tradition is a dynamic fusion of Indian philosophical and literary creativity with Chinese cultural and religious sensibilities. This philosophical tradition is another historical landmark of how China and

³² Kenneth K. Tanaka (2005). "The 'Latter Days of the Law' Ideology among Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Proponents: The Case of Tao-ch'ō and Ching-ying Hui-yüan"; in *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, Vol. XXXVII, Nos. 1 - 2, p. 195 - 204.

³³ Mark L. Blum (2002). *The Origins and Development of Pure Land Buddhism: A Study and Translation of Gyōnen's Jōdo Hōmon Genrushō*, Oxford: Oxford University Press Inc.

³⁴ Williams, Op.cit. p. 216.

³⁵ Gelong Gyalten Lekden (2021). *The Array of Sukhāvati Pure Land: A Concise Mahayana Sutra* eBook, Austin: FPMT Education Service, p. 20 - 22.

South Asia connected through spiritual training and mindful educational networks. In India, it arose as an important illustration of Mahāyāna ideas, emphasizing global salvation through Amitabha's compassion. In China, it has grown into a vibrant and diversified tradition, inspired by Chinese Buddhist scholars' creative engagement with indigenous philosophical frameworks. This paper examines the Indian and Chinese contributions to the Pure Land tradition, highlighting how Buddhism has traditionally changed to fulfill the spiritual requirements of many populations. Understanding these origins and developments provides crucial insights into Pure Land Buddhism's enduring relevance as a global religious tradition and its networking.

V. MODERN BUDDHIST EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING BETWEEN CHINA AND SOUTH ASIA

Based on their common Buddhist ancestry, China, India, and Sri Lanka have a contemporary Buddhist educational relationship that is promoted by research projects, cultural exchanges, and scholarly partnerships. Their historical ties and current initiatives to advance Buddhist studies and education are reflected in this relationship. Today, collaborative research and academic exchange are prominent in China, Sri Lanka, and India relationship. Buddhist philosophy, textual analyses, and the historical dissemination of Buddhism throughout Asia are the main areas of collaborative research. In order to showcase the variety of schools of thought within Buddhism, scholars from Sri Lanka and India regularly work with Chinese institutions on subjects like Mahāyāna Buddhism, Theravāda practices, and the Pure Land Tradition. The United Nations Day of Vesak celebrations and other collaborative academic events encourage discussion on Buddhist teachings and how they relate to contemporary issues like sustainable development and peacebuilding.

China plays a crucial role in study programs and scholarships. Students from India and Sri Lanka can study Buddhism and related subjects at China's esteemed Peking University and Shandong University with scholarships. Chinese Buddhist scriptures and Mahāyāna Buddhism are frequently highlighted in programs. For advanced study in Buddhism and its Chinese interpretations, monks and academics from Sri Lanka regularly travel to Chinese universities.³⁶ Because of its historical significance as the birthplace of Buddhism, India also attracts Buddhist scholars from China and Sri Lanka to establishments like Nālandā University and universities in Bihar. Monks and students can study Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions and discover India's historic Buddhist legacy through scholarships and training programs. Modern Nālandā University is one of the examples.³⁷

Long regarded as a major global hub for Theravāda Buddhist education, Sri Lanka attracts professors and students from nations including China,

³⁶ Thomas Borchert (2020). "A preliminary survey of Buddhist higher education in Asia: developing typologies and comparing secularities", in *Studies in Chinese Religions Volume 6*, Issue 4, p. 327 - 330.

³⁷ Kumar, Op.cit. p. 289.

Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand. To complete, the post-graduate level, Chinese, South East Asian, and Indian students travel to Sri Lankan universities since they offer many Theravāda Buddhist degrees. These universities have well-trained Buddhist monks and lay professors with mindful Buddhist teachings and they work in centers of Theravāda Buddhist study with a modern classroom atmosphere. Theravāda Buddhism is offered and promoted to overseas students by its universities, including the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, the University of Peradeniya, and the University of Colombo. With its Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, the University of Peradeniya is well known for its rigorous academic standards and Theravāda Buddhist studies. The Pali language, Buddhist philosophy, and the evolution of Theravāda Buddhism are only a few of the many topics covered in the curriculum. In their research endeavors, faculty members frequently work with scholars from around the world and concentrate on Buddhist texts and practices. There are many venerable Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka who built a mindful education network throughout Asia. Many young monks from all over the world come to study *Dhamma* and meditation in these monasteries. In universities, numerous highly educated and skilled Buddhist monks actively teach and engage with the international community. Proficient in both Pali and English, they bridge traditional Buddhist teachings with modern scholarship. Renowned venerable monks such as Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Thero, Nauyane Ariyadhamma Mahathera,³⁸ and Rerukane Chandawimala Thero have made remarkable contributions to advancing Theravāda Buddhism and promoting Buddhist scholarship globally. Some venerable Buddhist monks are exceptional teachers of the Forest monastic tradition and Vipassana meditation.

Many lay scholars also play a crucial role in building the educational network between Sri Lanka and the globe. At the University of Peradeniya, one of Sri Lanka's top universities for Buddhist education, Prof. P. D. Premasiri can be introduced as a senior faculty member in the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies. His work makes Theravāda teachings understandable to a wide range of audiences, including overseas students, by bridging the gap between traditional Buddhist scholarship and contemporary academic investigation.³⁹

As comprehensive programs in Buddhist Studies are available at the University of Colombo, the department focuses on applying Buddhist teachings to contemporary issues including ethics and peacebuilding. Both domestic and foreign students are served by the classes, which give them a thorough understanding of Theravāda traditions. As another prominent professor at the University of Peradeniya and thereafter the University of

³⁸ Nauyane Ariyadhamma Thero (2019). *Footprints on the wonderful paths to Buddhahood*, Melsiripura: Nauyana Forest monastery.

³⁹ G. A. Somaratne et.al. (ed.) (2021). *Buddhist thought and application: Essays in Honour of Professor P. D. Premasiri*, Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong, p. 21 - 28.

Colombo, Prof. Asanga Thilakaratne was influential in creating the Buddhist studies curriculum. His reputation as a trailblazer in fusing ancient Buddhist teachings with contemporary philosophical research was further solidified by his leadership at the University of Colombo's Department of Buddhist Studies. In order to strengthen ties between these countries, Sri Lanka frequently hosts worldwide Buddhist forums and seminars.⁴⁰

Students from Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Japan, and China who want to learn more about Theravāda Buddhism increasingly frequently travel to Sri Lanka. Because of their historical ties to Sri Lanka, Vietnamese and Burmese monasteries frequently send their pupils to study Theravāda scripture studies. Because of their common Theravāda traditions, Thai students often seek advanced degrees to improve their doctrinal knowledge and teaching skills. Theravāda Buddhism is studied by Chinese and Japanese students, many of whom come from Mahāyāna backgrounds, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Buddhist philosophy and practice. These students are drawn to Sri Lanka because of its rich monastic culture and the chance to interact with living Buddhist traditions in addition to its academic offers.

Chinese, Indian, and Sri Lankan universities and Buddhist institutions continue to collaborate on research projects, faculty exchanges, and curriculum development. Workshops and conferences, like those hosted by the World Buddhist Forum, offer forums for scholarly discussion and the advancement of Buddhist principles in the classroom. Current projects investigate how Buddhist teachings might be applied to modern problems like environmental sustainability, interfaith understanding, and peacebuilding. Scholars from China, India, and Sri Lanka regularly participate in events like the United Nations Day of Vesak, which highlights common Buddhist teachings for world peace.

A crucial component of the Buddhist educational partnership is cultural exchange via study tours and pilgrimages. In India Bodhi Gaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagar are important pilgrimage sites for Chinese, South East Asian, and Sri Lankan Buddhists, providing chances for historical research and spiritual education.⁴¹ In Sri Lanka, scholars and devotees from China, South East Asia, and India visit the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy as well as other Theravāda locations. In China, South East Asian, Indian, and Sri Lankan monks visit holy places like the Shaolin Temple and Mount Wutai, which deepen their knowledge of Chinese Buddhism.

These networking and educational cultural efforts are very important for developing modern-day Buddhist collaborations in Asia. These Buddhist communities train their students with mindful education and teach both Theravāda and Mahāyāna doctrines. As the Buddha expected from his monks and other devotees, Buddhism can remain alive and enriched only through

⁴⁰ Asanga Thilakaratne (2012). *Theravada Buddhism: The View of the Elders (Dimensions of Asian Spirituality)*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 190.

⁴¹ Shashank Shekhar Sinha (2024). *Casting the Buddha a Monumental History of Buddhism*, London: Pan Macmillan, p. 7 - 9.

mindful educational networks and their collaborations. Therefore, even today, the remarkable Buddhist practice of interconnectedness can be observed in every Buddhist country from India to China.

VI. CONCLUSION

Over centuries, the Buddhist educational networks that interconnect China, India, and Sri Lanka have shown incredible adaptability and resilience. They provide insightful information for promoting social justice, peace, and harmony by combining traditional wisdom with contemporary societal issues. These networks are still developing, embracing novel methods and instruments while upholding the fundamental Buddhist ideas of interconnectedness, mindfulness, and compassion. They have enormous potential to help create a world that is socially sustainable and serve as a model for upcoming international educational programs based on moral and considerate behavior.

The ongoing legacy of Buddhism as a unifying factor in Asia is demonstrated by the contemporary Buddhist educational partnership between China, India, and Sri Lanka. These countries have established strong networks of academic and cultural exchanges that promote understanding and intellectual development because of their common ancestry. Institutions like Peking University, Nālandā University, and the University of Peradeniya remain pillars of Buddhist education through faculty exchanges, research initiatives, and scholarships. These collaborations give scholars and students a comprehensive grasp of Buddhist philosophy and practice by bridging the Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions. Pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya, the Temple of the Tooth Relic, and Mount Wutai are examples of cultural exchanges that strengthen the historical and spiritual linkages between Buddhist communities.

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THE ROLE OF BUDDHIST EDUCATION IN ESTABLISHING GLOBAL HARMONY

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Abstract:

The study focuses on Buddhist education, particularly its role in establishing global peace and promoting compassion. It explores the historical development of Buddhist teaching, from ancient monasteries such as Nālandā to its influence on different cultures, including the translation of *Buddha Vacana* into Tibetan and Chinese. The findings highlight the core ethical values of Buddhism, such as the five precepts and the noble eightfold path, and their importance for social harmony and spiritual development. It also discusses the difficulties in translating *Pāli* terms accurately and provides an overview of *Pāli* translations into various Indian languages, as well as English and other languages. In short, the paper provides a comprehensive overview of Buddhist education, its history, values, and global influence.

Keywords: Buddhism, Buddhist education, global harmony.

I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, the term Buddhist education is widely recognized. Many scholars have examined this topic based on their insights and beliefs. However, we must grasp the realistic meaning and purpose of this term. Many individuals know very little about the contributions of *Buddha-Dhamma* to education. Even in Buddhist countries like India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Cambodia, where an unbroken tradition of Buddhist education has endured for many centuries, the current educational systems do not directly evolve from this tradition, nor are they related to it. The Buddhist educational tradition has been largely supplanted in these nations. Fortunately, a few remnants have been preserved within monastic organizational systems for training novices and monks exclusively. Buddhist literature was very rich in ancient India. Many foreigners have embraced this vast Buddhist literature in India. This extensive body of literature was produced due to the flourishing Buddhist education in

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ancient India. Buddhism was transmitted into Tibet, and as a consequence, many Sanskrit texts were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan and Chinese. Epistemological literature composed by Indian Buddhist scholars, focusing on cognition and other philosophical concepts such as mind, logic, and language, was translated into Tibetan and Chinese. These works had a profound impact on Tibetan intellectual history. These translations began in the 7th century, continued into the 8th century, and intensified later. Tibetan scholars also consulted the Sanskrit versions of oral traditions. Tibetans divided Buddhist texts into two broad categories: *Kangyur* and *Tengyur*. *Kangyur* means “translated words.” It consists of works believed to have been spoken by the Buddha himself. This is, in fact, the Mahāyāna Buddhist *sūtra* literature. All texts have Sanskrit originals and were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Some texts were also translated into Tibetan from Chinese, which themselves were translations from Sanskrit. These works were rendered into Chinese when some Chinese masters traveled to India. *Tengyur* means “translated treatises.” This category consists of commentary texts, including *śāstra* works and *Abhidhamma* treatises, both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna. The *Tengyur* contains 3,626 texts in 224 volumes. Among these, essential texts translated by Kumārajīva include the *Diamond sūtra*, *Amitābha sūtra*, *Lotus sūtra*, and *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa sūtra*. His translation style was distinctive, possessing a flowing smoothness that reflected his prioritization of conveying meaning rather than adhering to a strictly literal rendering. Because of this, his versions of Mahāyāna texts often remained more popular.

II. BACKGROUND

In ancient Indian society, individual teachers imparted education on their own responsibility for a long time. In India, even today, we find many temple colleges that owe their inspiration to the monastic colleges of Buddhism and the *Vedic gurukula* system. Some monastic colleges, such as Nālandā, Valabhi, and Vikramaśīla, became international learning centers and spread the fame of Indian education in Central and East Asia. Nālandā was a renowned university. The tradition of translating early Sanskrit texts is ancient. Some Sanskrit scholars have translated texts such as the *Veda* and post-*Vedic* literature into English and other foreign languages. *rāmāyaṇa* translations are very popular in contemporary society, and people have become interested in listening to the story of Rāma in their local languages. The *purāṇa* have been translated into many languages. The *Matsya purāṇa* was translated into Persian by Goswami Anand Daga in 1792 at Varanasi. A manuscript of this translation is available at the Italian Institute of Rome. A copy of the Persian translation of the *bhāgavata purāṇa* is reported to be available at Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh. Not only in India, but the *purāṇa* have also travelled beyond Indian territories. They reached Tibet, China, Japan, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia. The *brahmāṇḍa purāṇa* travelled to Bali, an island in Indonesia. Many ancient Javanese adaptations of original Sanskrit works indicate the popularity of Sanskrit and Indian culture in the Indonesian archipelago. Dr. H. N. Vander Tank collected many Sanskrit manuscripts of the *purāṇa*, which are now kept in the Netherlands, after his death. Many translatable works of the *rāmāyaṇa*

into Japanese have also been reported from Java. The *purāṇa* have also reached European countries, especially Germany. Indian ideas have greatly influenced German literature and philosophy since the 9th century. German scholars once observed that Indian philosophical systems could serve as a model for Western thought. The influence of Indian literature on European thought can even be traced to the Middle Ages. Some ancient Indian works passed to Europe through Arabic and Persian translations. For example, the *pañcatantra* was first translated into Pahlavi in the early 6th century and later into Arabic in 750 CE. Various versions derived from the Arabic translation eventually became known in Europe. Thus, the Buddhist education system has left a significant impact on global culture. It could even receive endowments from a king of distant Java. Kings and merchants living in India vied with one another to provide generous endowments to these renowned centers of education, which not only offered free tuition but also provided free food and clothing to lay students and monks. In ancient India, the ordination ceremony for Buddhist monks was called *pabbajjā* in *Pāli* and *pravrajyā* in Sanskrit. Every monk had to be adequately trained in the discipline and doctrine of Buddhism. It was the primary responsibility of a monk to develop the educational activities of Buddhist monasteries. The *pabbajjā* marked the beginning of the novitiate period, which could be undertaken when a person reached the age of eight. It can be compared to the *upanayana* of the *Vedic* tradition. However, parental or guardian permission was necessary for *pabbajjā*. *upasampadā* was conferred at the end of the novitiate period, and the recipient had to be at least twenty years old.

Some scholars state: “Though Buddhism encouraged a life of separation from the world and the suppression of desires, it did not, like *Brahmanism*, advocate extreme asceticism and bodily mortification. Instead, the care of physical health was considered important for spiritual development. We find that exercise was encouraged in Buddhist monasteries. However, we have several pieces of evidence that even in the *Vedic gurukula* system, physical exercise was given importance.”

In a Buddhist monastery, the novice and teacher were united by mutual reverence, confidence, and affection. Similar to Hindu *gurukula*, in Buddhist monasteries, the novice assisted his teacher through service, as it is said: “The student’s education will be enhanced by the service to their teacher.”¹ He had to carry his seat and rugs, supply water and toothpicks, bring his begging bowl and utensils, and accompany the teacher as an attendant when the latter proceeded to the town or village for begging or preaching. The teacher monk taught his students the rules of *Vinaya*, or discipline. He emphasized the vow of chastity and abstinence from the pleasures of daily life, which aided in the intellectual and spiritual progress of his students through appropriate discourses. Famous teachers at Nālandā Vishwaavidyalaya (ancient Nalanda University) received

¹ Kashinath Sharma’s “Subhashita Pustakabhandagara”, specifically in the Samanya Neeti section on p.159. “*Guruśūśrūṣayā vidyā puṣkalena dhanena vā | Vidyayā labhyate vidyā caturthī nopalabhyate ||*.”

an allowance merely three times larger than that given to an ordinary student. This illustrates how a Buddhist teacher led a simple life during that era. However, the lack of proper documentation on Buddhist education has hindered access to valuable information. This situation was noted in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.² It is impossible to present a history of education. In the absence of historical records, one can examine the indexes of a hundred standard works on Buddhism, Buddhist culture, civilisation, or history, with hardly any reference to education. Where references to education do exist, the information is most likely limited to Indian education in renowned centres of intellectual activity such as Takshashila and Nālandā, as described in the Buddhist Jatakas or the accounts of Buddhist centres of learning in India and Sri Lanka visited and reported by Chinese travellers Fa-Hien, Hiuen-Tsang, and I-Tsing. If we could obtain this information, we could find references to the Buddhist monastic system of education and the temple schools, which were systematically kept aside. Yet, a few attempts have been made to unravel a Buddhist philosophy of education, with limited results. Famous teachers at Nālandā Vishwavidyālaya (ancient Nālandā University) received an allowance merely three times larger than that given to an ordinary student. This illustrates how a Buddhist teacher led a simple life during that era. However, the lack of proper documentation on Buddhist education has hindered access to valuable information. This situation was noted in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*:

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III. FOUNDATIONS OF BUDDHIST EDUCATION

The foundation of Buddhist education, as we all know, is Buddhist ethics. In one of the verses of the *Pāli* text *Suttanipāṭa*, the Buddha appears advising: “Like a lion not frightened by sounds, like the wind not caught in a net, like a lotus not touched by water, an ascetic wanderer should roam all alone like a rhinoceros.”³ We often find similarities between *Pāli* and *Sanskrit* literature. Some of the lotus similes occur in *Jarāsutta* of *Suttanipāṭa*, in which the momentariness of life is depicted in a lucid poetic style: “In the same way that

² *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. vol. V. p. 177, 1911.

³ Sn 3.37.

a water drop cannot stick to lotus petals, so too the sage remains unattached to false views, false wisdom, and false theories of the world.”⁴ Here, we can find a similarity between *Pāli* and *Sanskrit* literature. Sage Vyāsa says in the *Bhagavadgītā*: “He who acts by offering all actions to *Brahma*, abandoning attachment, remains untouched by sin, like a lotus petal by water.”⁵

Let me conclude this discussion on *Pāli* translation by noting that an exact translation is possible only within the field of mathematics. Two and two make four - this is an exact translation. But in language, even the simplest translation is only an approximation. Therefore, we must use the nearest equivalent word to convey the real meaning of Sanskrit, Tibetan, or *Pāli*. However, the best way to understand Buddhism is to learn the source languages: Sanskrit, *Pāli*, and Tibetan. *Vajirasāra* is a comprehensive *Pāli* work in which the technique of *camatkāra* was developed by providing a scholarly background to the living tradition of Buddhism. The text became engaging due to its literary talent. The fourth stanza presents the material of the *Tipiṭaka* in the following manner: “The one who learned by heart the ten syllables ‘*a saṃ vi su lo a pu sa bu bha*,’ with the mind, obtained happiness.” The letters mentioned here refer to the formula for the recollection of the nine virtues of the Buddha, as described in *Pāli* literature, such as the *Visuddhimagga*. They are as follows: “*iti pi so bhagavā araham sammā-sambuddho vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisa-damma-sārathi satthā deva-manussānaṃ buddho bhagavā ti*.” The abbreviation sequence can be shown as follows: “*a* = *araham*; *saṃ* = *sammā-sambuddho*; *vi* = *vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*; *su* = *Sugato*; *lo* = *lokavidū*; *a* = *anuttaro*; *pu* = *purisa-damma-sārathi*, *sa* = *satthā deva-manussānaṃ*, *bu* = *buddho*, *bha* = *bhagavā*.” The admiration of this formula was praised by Theravādins, as well as followers of other traditions.

IV. VALUES AND ETHICS IN BUDDHIST EDUCATION

Values and ethics are essential to every society. Values are principles that help individuals determine what is right and wrong and guide their actions in various situations. On the other hand, ethics are beliefs that inform us about what is morally right and wrong. These values and ethics are crucial for all human beings to lead meaningful and harmonious lives. Other beings also follow universal values and ethics, but unlike humans, all other beings naturally adhere to the roles and behaviors assigned to them by nature. Therefore, these values and ethics are more essential to human beings than to any other creatures, as humans in contemporary society often fail to recognize their importance. During the time of the Buddha, these values and ethics were upheld in society. However, in later periods, people began to neglect them. Due to this negligence, peace within human society gradually began to diminish. First, let us discuss who the Buddha was and how he came to be known as “Buddha.” To understand this, we must first explore the meaning of the word Buddha.

⁴ *Sn* verse 9.

⁵ *ŚrīmadBhagavadGītā*, v.10.

4.1. The name of *Bhagavān Buddha*

The name of Bhagavān Buddha was derived from the Sanskrit root *budh*. The *Sāṃkhya* system made *buddhi* (intellect) its great principle (*mahat*). *Mahat* is the first element to evolve out of *prakṛti*. It is made of matter, but it has a psychological, intellectual aspect, known as *buddhi* or intellect. This *mahat* or *buddhi* is a unique faculty of human beings. It helps men in judgment and discrimination. *Mahat* helps to distinguish between the subject and the object. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* calls a man who has attained perfect knowledge of the self a *pratibuddha*. With this background of understanding, it is not difficult to see that what Bhagavān Buddha preached was undoubtedly unique. The doctrines that emerged from the knowledge of the Buddha were called *dhamma* (Sanskrit: *dharma*), using the very same term employed by Vedic and *Upaniṣadic* literature. Hence, what the Buddha preached was similar to *Upaniṣadic* wisdom. This form of *dhamma* expresses how it is most comprehensive in *Buddha-dhamma* as well. It includes the physical laws of the universe as well as moral and social duties. However, one great distinction between the Vedic tradition and *Buddha-dhamma* is that the latter does not contain *rahasyavāda* (esoterism) and metaphysical doctrines concerning matter and spirit. Nevertheless, some of its root ideas were just modifications of *Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, and *Vedānta* systems of Vedic philosophy. There was no distinction in knowledge systems in ancient times as we have today. Whether it was *Upaniṣadic-dharma*, *Buddha-dhamma*, or any other system, they always sought to find truthful solutions to philosophical problems. The Buddha's path leads us toward the knowledge of the truth: that all life is a link in a series of successive existences and inseparably bound up with misery. There are two causes of misery: lust and ignorance. Accordingly, there are also two cures. The first cure is the suppression of lust and desire, especially of all kinds of desires for the continuity of existence. The second cure is the removal of ignorance. Indeed, according to Gautama, ignorance is the first factor in the misery of life. It stands first in the chain of causation. However, the ignorance expounded by the Buddha is different from *Vedāntic* ignorance. In *Vedānta*, *ajñāna* is the cause of all illusions, and it is defined as beginningless, yet positive and removable by knowledge. Though it manifests itself in all ordinary things, which have a beginning in time, it has no beginning, for it is associated with pure consciousness. But in *Buddha-dhamma*, this is not ignorance of the fact that man and the universe are identical with God, but ignorance of the Four Noble Truths – the ignorance that life is misery and that the misery of life is caused by indulging in lusts, and that misery will cease by suppressing them. The Buddha's teachings have influenced many nations in both Europe and Asia. It was a favored idea among the Stoics and found acceptance with Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and other modern philosophers. Buddhism offers a vast field of knowledge that has not only spread to but also influenced a large part of the world, including India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and other countries in Southeast Asia, as well as Tibet, Central Asia, China, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan. Today, it continues to influence all of Europe. The humanistic values embedded in the teachings

of Bhagavān Buddha have shaped the history and culture of these countries. They have given rise to numerous literary, philosophical, and artistic works. The Buddha's forty-five-year mission as a wandering teacher was to show the path of Dhamma. He was a teacher of men and gods (*satthā devamanussānaṃ*) and a guide who steers the chariot of self-control (*purisa-damma-sārathi*). These are two of the nine epithets used today in a formula of homage to the Buddha. Moral discipline (*sīla*), the concentration of mind (*samādhi*), and the wisdom gained through the realization of the true nature of life (*paññā*) constituted the essential steps of the path he taught. He enjoyed a life of study and meditation aimed at training and taming the mind. It is but logical that a religious system like Buddhism, which regards ignorance as the root cause of all misery and considers an undeveloped mind to be the fundamental obstacle to emancipation, would place the highest emphasis on mental development and the educational processes most suited for this purpose. Thus, a distinctive system of education began to evolve during Buddha's lifetime. Four factors relating to his educational effort constituted its foundations: the Buddha as the model teacher, the *saṅgha* as a learning society, the monastic establishments as the institutional base for Buddhist education, and the intellectual liberalism of Buddhism as an incentive to educational development.

4.2. *Bhagavān Buddha as a Teacher*

The Buddha was a great *samaṇa*, yet he was a skillful teacher and believed strongly in the power of the spoken word to convince people to change their way of life, adopt new values, and seek new goals.⁶ At a time when other religious teachers resorted to magical and miraculous deeds to win disciples for themselves, the Buddha upheld only one type of miracle: "the miracle of instruction" (*anusāsani-pāṭihāriya*). His discourses were organized with meticulous care. Clarity and logical presentation marked his longer sermons, which he delivered on his own accord. In these, he addressed small or large groups and sought to guide them step by step to a point of view he sought to establish. The Buddha was the most outstanding teacher in ancient India.⁷ Clear examples of this are the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* and *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. A few characteristics stand out in these discourses. He began with an attention-catching statement, e.g., "There are two extremes which truth-seekers ought not to follow; the one sure and straight path is the middle path." He analyzed a concept by breaking it down into its constituent elements and presenting them with numerical enumeration, serving as a framework for the orderly presentation of ideas and an aid to memory. The Buddha frequently used similes and analogies. An interesting passage in the *Sigālovāda Sutta* enumerates the duties of teachers and pupils.⁸ Teachers should show affection to their pupils, train them in virtue and good manners, carefully instruct them, impart knowledge of the sciences and wisdom of the ancients, speak well of

⁶ Nurullah, S., & Naik, J. P. (1951): p. 96.

⁷ Prof. C. Upendra Rao. (2014): verses 56 - 75.

⁸ D. I. 189.

them to friends and relatives, and guard them from danger. The student, in turn, should serve his teacher, rise in his presence and wait upon him, listen to all he says with respectful attention, perform duties necessary for his comfort, and carefully attend to his instructions. These principles apply to secular education, as the same *sutta* lays down a similar set of duties between religious teachers and their lay disciples. Here, the ethical content of what is taught is emphasized, and interestingly, an obligation is placed upon lay disciples to make themselves accessible to their teachers. In both secular and religious education, the obligations of the disciple regarding learning are significant. The pupil is expected to listen respectfully to everything the teacher says. Similarly, the lay disciple is expected to minister to their teacher with respectful attention in words, deeds, and thoughts. However, the Buddha did not advocate unquestioned acceptance of anything based on the teacher's authority alone. Such an assertion would have contradicted one of his fundamental principles: guaranteeing each person the full and undisputed right to think for themselves. The Buddha's approach to learning is a free and unfettered exercise of one's intellectual capacity to think.

4.3. Buddhist education and its gradual progress

Initially, Buddhist education was purely monastic and intended only for those who entered the order for salvation. However, with time, it was realized that gaining public sympathy and support was necessary for the spread of Buddhism. It was also understood that the best way to propagate the religion was by undertaking the education of the rising generation. Therefore, Buddhism advocated for the general education of the whole community from the beginning of the Christian era. In Buddhist monasteries, education was not confined only to theology, philosophy, and logic; Sanskrit literature, astronomy, medicine, law, polity, and administration were also taught for the benefit of students. This enabled them to obtain government service or pursue valuable and learned professions in society. Mere rote learning of texts was not encouraged; reasoning and analysis played an important role in the method of teaching. Foreign travelers like Xuanzang and Yijing informed us that Indian teachers possessed a keen memory, capable of storing countless texts. Individual attention was paid to students at Nālandā, as each teacher had no more than ten students under his charge. The method that the Buddha proposed for the self-examination of all knowledge was observation and analysis. His philosophy or religion was described as *ehi-passika* ("come and observe" or "come and examine") and *paccattam veditabbo* ("to be realized by each one independently"). Buddhism was given, very early in its history, the epithet *vibhajjavāda*, meaning "the doctrine of analysis." The Buddha's position was also stated as that of a guide pointing the way, while each individual had to realize the truth for himself. Xuanzang's account of Nālandā, where he was a student for over five years, shows that it was a full-fledged university with distinct schools of study, admission and examination procedures, a complex academic administration system, and requisite facilities such as libraries and lecture halls. One thousand five hundred teachers catered to 10,000 students -

both religious and lay, Indian and foreign - who studied 100 different subjects, including philosophy, grammar, astronomy, and medicine. "Learning and discussing, they find the day too short" was Xuanzang's observation. While the educational efficacy of Nālandā is evidenced by the quality of its teachers and students, who left a lasting imprint on Buddhist history through their writings and missionary activities, the vast campus, which has been excavated and conserved, testifies to its grandeur. The information about Valabhī is obtained from Yijing, who states that its status was equal to that of Nālandā. Courses of study lasted for two to three years, and the names of exceptional graduates were inscribed on the gates. The university imparted education in secular subjects as well. The government of Valabhī sought graduates from this university to fill essential positions. Tibetan records testify to the prestige and fame of two more Buddhist universities, namely Vikramaśīla and Odantapurī - both associated with *Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna*, better known as Atīśa (q.v.), who was invited in the eleventh century to revamp Buddhism in Tibet. He was an alumnus of Odantapurī and the head of Vikramaśīla, both of which had functioned for several centuries and, in his time, were receiving the patronage of the Pāla kings of Bengal. At Vikramaśīla, admission had to be gained by displaying proficiency in logical argumentation in a debate with one of its six *dvāra-paṇḍitas* (literally "gate scholars"). Upon the successful completion of one's studies, one was awarded the degree of *paṇḍita*. Odantapurī is said to have been the model for Tibet's earliest monastic educational establishments. Jagaddala, founded by the Pāla king Rāmapāla in the first quarter of the twelfth century, had a short existence of one and a half centuries but significantly contributed to Buddhist learning. The Buddha did not invent these methods; there was a common source from which all sects arose. Buddhist monasteries had opened their doors to all, irrespective of caste or country. In particular, Buddhist monasteries admitted people of all castes. The Buddhist educational system paved the way for the growth of a broad democratic system of education, which provided equal opportunities to all, including Indians and foreigners, regardless of their caste and creed. These institutions attracted students from distant countries such as Korea, China, Tibet, and Jāvā. Now, some of the essential and lost texts of our ancient literature can be recovered from Tibet or China, and credit must be given to the Buddhist institutions of our country, which enabled Chinese and Tibetan students to obtain their copies free of cost from Indian university libraries. Buddhist education also contributed to the development of traditional logic and philosophy by initiating and encouraging comparative study. In the early period, it was imparted through the mother tongue. However, in the later period, it was taught in Sanskrit, and many books were written in Sanskrit.

4.4. Spiritual power of Buddhist education

The values of *Buddha-dhamma* are not only humanistic but also spiritual. After the Buddha's *Mahāparinibbāna*, when his path developed into a religion named Buddhism, it continued to spread spiritual values. Buddhism became a powerful spiritual force in the world, reflecting the positive nature of human

beings - not only in humans but in animals as well. Pāli literature contains incidents and episodes that illustrate this point. One such incident is the story of Nālāgiri, a royal elephant in Rājagaha. When Nālāgiri was set free and sent to attack the Buddha while he was walking on the streets of Rājagaha with his disciples, it initially charged toward him in anger but soon became calm and composed upon approaching the Buddha. Nālāgiri belonged to King Suppabuddha, who was the father of Devadatta. Devadatta, out of jealousy toward the Buddha, plotted to kill him while he was in Rājagaha (present-day Rājgir in India). To execute his plan, they intoxicated this massive elephant with alcohol, wounded it with spears, and provoked it until it became uncontrollably enraged. Then, they released it through a special gate into the narrow streets, precisely where the Buddha was walking on his alms round. The intoxicated elephant charged furiously down the street, destroying everything in its path. People fled in all directions in terror. However, the Buddha and his faithful attendant, Venerable Ānanda, remained without running away. Ānanda stepped in front of the Buddha, determined to shield him from the elephant's attack. But the Buddha gently moved forward and, with his immense *mettā*, alleviated the elephant's suffering. Nālāgiri immediately calmed down, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and stood with tears streaming down its face. "In Rājagaha, there was a fierce elephant named Nālāgiri, a killer of men. Then, Devadatta, having entered Rājagaha..."⁹ The Buddha did not concern himself with his safety; he only felt the urgency of ending the suffering of the great animal, and that is exactly what he did. With his immense *mettā*, he alleviated the elephant's pain. The poor creature felt his loving-kindness throughout its entire gigantic body, thus being cured of both its pain and intoxication. Nālāgiri then bowed down at the Blessed One's feet, weeping in gratitude. That was the spiritual power of the Buddha. Several approaches developed through Buddhist ethics are undoubtedly beneficial. One of them is *adhimutti* (open-mindedness), a particularly intriguing value. The mind remains open to new messages, allowing one to grasp and comprehend them. Tolerance is another positive attitude, enabling the acceptance of differing perspectives and acknowledging that one's views may not always be the best or the only truth. Intolerance, on the other hand, restricts one's freedom and is often accompanied by an aggressive nature. Today, religious hatred spreads primarily due to intolerance, which also fuels religious wars, forced conversions, and ideological persecution. India has lost countless lives due to deceptive and coercive religious conversions, which rely on deceitful allurements rather than the true gifts of wisdom. The five fundamental rules of moral conduct in *Buddha-dhamma*, often called *sīla*, were taught by the Buddha. They are as follows: kill not any living beings; steal not others' belongings; commit not adultery; lie not; drink no intoxicants. These five Precepts (*pañca sikkhāpadāni*) are as follows: I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures; I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given; I undertake the precept to refrain from

⁹ Vin. III. 171ff: "Rājagahe nālāgiri nāmahatthīcaṇḍohoti, manussaghātako. Athakhodeva-dattorājagahaṃpavisitvā"

sexual misconduct; I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech; I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness (*pamāda*). This is a fivefold law for all people, including laymen. However, five more precepts were laid down by the Buddha for monks, in addition to the previous five. They are as follows: eat no food except at stated times; use no ornaments or perfumes; use no high or broad beds for sleeping; abstain from dancing, singing, music, and worldly entertainment; own no gold, silver, or any valuable metal, and do not accept gifts of such. All these ten precepts were prescribed for monks, while only the first five were meant for laypeople. However, at times, the first eight were also considered binding on lay followers. In a later period, another precept was added: "Never think that your religion is the best one, and never denounce another's religion." These precepts are similar to *yama*, as taught by the sage *Patañjali* in *Yoga-darśana*. We can see that the *Tevijja-sutta* prohibits all forms of gambling and games, a stance also echoed by *Manusmṛti*.¹⁰ The caste system was later misinterpreted in *Hindu-dhamma*. In the Vedic period, the rigid caste system as seen in later times did not exist. The Buddha emphasized conduct over caste. He declared: "Do not ask about one's birth; instead, ask about their conduct./ Even one from a low family, if he is wise and steadfast, can be noble./ A person disciplined by truth, possessing self-control, and having mastered knowledge (*Vedas*), having lived the holy life (*Brahmacharya*).../ One should invite such a wise person to perform sacred rituals, as he will perform them properly./ Surely, my offering has been well-given, as I have met such a wise person!"¹¹

To establish harmony in society, it is essential to understand and practice these words of the Buddha. A person should be valued based on their deeds and merits, rather than being discriminated against based on accidental birth. The Buddha also spoke of the importance of the purity of the mind. The mind is the forerunner of all mental phenomena and actions. Therefore, the Buddha placed greater emphasis on mental purity than on physical purity. To attain mental purity, one must remove defilements of the mind. Bathing in different rivers does not purify a person. If one has given up mental defilements, one is considered to have bathed spiritually, even without a physical bath. A wrongly directed mind is most harmful to a person, as it leads them to perform wrongful and unwholesome deeds. The Buddha said: "Whatever an enemy may do to an enemy, or a hater to one he hates, a wrongly directed mind can do even worse to itself."¹² On the contrary, a rightly directed mind brings greater welfare than any person or thing in the world. The Buddha's teaching

¹⁰ *Manusmṛti*, IX. 221 - 228.

¹¹ SN 7.9 & MN 93. "*Mā jātiṃ puccha caraṇaṃ ca puccha, kaṭṭhā have jāyatijātavedo; nīcā kulīnopi muni dhitimā ājāniyo hoti hirī nisedho. Saccena danto damasā upeto vedantaḡ vusita brahmacariyo; yaññopanīto tamupavhayetha, kālena so juhati dakkhiṇeyye'ti. Addhāsuyiṭṭhaṃ suhutaṃ mama yidaṃ yaṃ tādisaṃ vedagumaddasāmi; tumhādisānañhi adassanena aññojanobhuñjati habhyasesanti*"

¹² .. *Dhp* 42: "*Diso disaṃ yaṃ taṃ kayirā, verī vā pana verinaṃ Micchāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ, pāpiyo naṃ tato kare'ti.*"

of the Four *Brahmavihāras* is highly profound and should be followed by all human beings. The Four *Brahmavihāras* are: *Mettā* (Friendliness or Loving-kindness), *Karuṇā* (Compassion), *Muditā* (Sympathetic Joy), and *Upekkhā* (Equanimity).¹³ The term *Brahmavihāra* has been translated in various ways by scholars, such as: Sublime or Divine State of Mind; Pious Conduct; Perfect State; Good Moods; Sublime Occupation; Excellent States; Divine States; The Highest Condition.” These four represent the highest states of consciousness. The word *Brahma* means “supreme” or “great,” and the outcome of cultivating these qualities is to be reborn in the *Brahmaloka* (the celestial realm) and experience divine happiness. Therefore, they are called *Brahmavihāras*, as they are the supreme means of purifying the mind. A person who earnestly practices the Four Divine States of Mind genuinely desires the welfare of all beings. Through these *Brahmavihāras*, an ascetic eliminates mental impurities such as lust, hatred, jealousy, and envy. While Yoga is a means of self-purification, the *Brahmavihāras* extend beyond the self and benefit others as well. Enmity arises due to conflicts of interest, feelings of superiority, and rivalry. A person who has been defeated seeks revenge when the opportunity arises, thus perpetuating hostility. The Buddha said: “Victory breeds hatred. The defeated live in suffering. But the peaceful one, having abandoned both victory and defeat, lives happily.”¹⁴ To get rid of the feeling of enmity, one should not have the feeling of victory and defeat. To establish pleasure and peace in life one should keep in mind the following Buddha Vacana: “He abused me, he struck me, he defeated me, he robbed me/ Those who hold on to such thoughts, their hatred never ceases// He abused me, he struck me, he defeated me, he robbed me/ Those who do not hold on to such thoughts, their hatred ceases.// Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world/ It is appeased by non-hatred - this is an eternal law.”¹⁵

Some people keep on thinking, “He abused me, he ill-treated me, he got the better of me, and he stole my belongings.” But the enmity of those harboring such thoughts can never cease. On the contrary, the feeling of enmity in those who never harbor such thoughts can cease over time. Enmity causes anger, and the anger of a person slowly destroys peace. One of the Telugu poets says: “The anger of a person is his enemy, his peace protects him, compassion is his relative, his happiness is his heaven, and his sorrow is his hell.”¹⁶ The Buddha said: Hatred is, indeed, never appeased by hatred in this world. It is appeased only by loving-kindness. This is an ancient law. The feeling of friendliness or

¹³ “Abyāpādenamettāpi abyāpādenamettāgahitā, upekkhātītatramajjhāttatāyacagahitā yasmā kāraṇā, tasmāubhōpetābhagavatānagahitā.”

¹⁴ Dhp 201: “Jayaṃ veraṃ pasavati, dukkhaṃ seti parājito, Upasanto sukhaṃ seti, hitvā jaya-parājayaṃ.”

¹⁵ Dhp 3 – 5.

¹⁶ Sumati Śatakamu, “Printer-friendly pages from Telugu Bhakti Pages,” Telugu Bhakti, <http://www.telugubhakti.com>. “Tana kopame tana śatruvu tana śāntame tanaku rakṣa daya cuṭṭambou, tana santoṣame svargamu tana duhkhamē narakamandru tathyamu sumati”

mettā spreads affection and friendship. Friendship brings pleasure and welfare to society. In practical life, we see that friendliness is often caused by affection (*rāga*), which is not the feeling of pure friendliness. It is to be remembered that true friendliness must be unmotivated, without craving (*taṇhā*). *N'atthi rāgasamaṃ dukkhaṃ* - which means affection (*rāga*) is caused by greed and ignorance, and that brings only suffering, whereas true friendliness (*mettā*) is associated with knowledge. The nature of friendliness is to remove malice, and it is associated with the absence of greed. After seeing the grief of others, the trembling that arises in the hearts of gentle persons is called *karuṇā* (compassion). Compassion removes the grief of others. A compassionate person neither kills beings nor tolerates the suffering of others. The feeling of violence disappears with the presence of compassion. Being subdued by compassion, a true follower of the Buddha thinks in this way: "If I and others find fear and grief equally unpleasant, then what is so special about me that I should save myself and not others?"¹⁷ The sign of kindness (*muditā*) is delight. A person who practices kindness becomes happy when he sees others prosper. He has no feelings of hatred or jealousy toward anybody. Seeing the wealth and merits of others, he neither feels enmity nor jealousy. Kindness removes discontent. There is a lack of true kindness in the joy of unenlightened persons because their joy arises from attachment.

The realization of the Four Noble Truths is essential for humanism as well as for the emancipation of mankind. The Four Noble Truths are: suffering (*dukkha*); cause of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*); cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), and the way leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodhagāminī paṭipadā*). To get rid of suffering, it is essential to follow the fourth Noble Truth - *dukkha-nirodhagāminī paṭipadā*. The fourth Noble Truth is *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* (the Noble Eightfold Path), which consists of: right understanding (*sammā-ditṭhi*): understanding that the four noble truths are noble and true; right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*): determining and resolving to practice the buddha's teaching; right speech (*sammā-vācā*): avoiding slander, gossip, lying, and all forms of untrue and abusive speech; right action (*sammā-kammanta*): adhering to the principle of nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), as well as refraining from stealing or sexual misconduct; right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*): not slaughtering animals or engaging in work that harms others; right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*): avoiding negative thoughts and emotions, such as anger and jealousy; right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*): maintaining awareness of one's mental state, bodily health, and feelings; and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*): using meditation to reach the highest level of enlightenment. "Thus, this teaching is analyzed according to the two approaches (*nayānaṃ*) in the *Suttanta* method. It has been spoken about in both the worldly (*lokiya*) and transcendental (*lokuttara*) sense, albeit briefly."¹⁸ The Noble Eightfold Path is

¹⁷ *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (The Way of the Bodhisattva) 8.96.

¹⁸ Buddhaghosa, *Sammoha-Vinodanī* (Commentary on the *Vibhaṅga*), in *Aṭṭhakathā Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. "Evam idaṃ dvinnampi nayānaṃ vasena suttantabhājanīyaṃ lokiya lo-

the source of Buddhist moral conduct. If anybody follows it rightly, he will destroy suffering and contribute to the welfare of mankind. Out of the eight factors, three - (1) Right Speech, (2) Right Action, and (3) Right Livelihood - are essential for a layperson. In the absence of these, social harmony cannot be established. A follower of the Buddha will refrain from falsehood, hateful speech, harsh speech, and frivolous speech. One must desist from harsh speech for the establishment of peace around him. By performing the Right Action, one contributes to the welfare of society. Abstaining from taking life, taking what is not given, and engaging in sexual misconduct are included in Right Action. The concept of the Right Livelihood has become especially relevant in today's society. Financial corruption has spread all over the world. Now, the world has become a place of dishonesty. We must follow the Buddha's teaching of *sammā-ājīvo*. One should give up false or dishonest ways of earning one's livelihood or any means that cause injury or harm to others. All professions that do not meet this standard should be abandoned, such as killing animals and selling meat, fish, and eggs. The spirit of honesty and service to mankind should be the prevailing motive. These three aspects of the path are directly related to laypersons and society. If the Noble Eightfold Path is practiced rightly, it enables a person to get rid of suffering as well as attain liberation. This is considered the best among all paths. The Buddha says: "The Noble Eightfold Path is the best among paths, the Four Noble Truths are the best among truths; dispassion is the best among mental states, and the Buddha is the best among bipeds."¹⁹ The Buddha regards this *Dhamma* as the most dependable for the purification of knowledge, which also destroys defilements: "This is the only path; there is no other for the purification of insight. You should follow this path, for it confounds Māra."²⁰

The elaboration of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* is the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Noble Eightfold Path: (1) *Sammā-vācā*, *sammā-kammanta*, and *sammā-ājīvo* are included in *sīla* (morality). (2) *Sammā-vāyāma*, *sammā-sati*, and *sammā-samādhi* are included in *samādhi* (concentration). (3) *Sammā-ditṭhi* and *sammā-saṅkappa* are included in *paññā* (wisdom). The Buddha, perhaps for the first time in the history of Indian culture, laid great stress on moral life in two aspects: self-restraint (*saṃvara*) and compassion for all living beings (*karuṇā*). The cultivation of moral values was regarded by the Buddha as an essential part of spiritual perfection. Moral life thus becomes, in Buddhism, a fundamental aspect of religious life. If the Noble Eightfold Path is practiced well, it means *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* are cultivated, and consequently, the kingdom of peace and happiness will be established in the world. Only through the practice of *aṭṭhaṅgika magga* can one attain the cessation of suffering. The

kuttaram issakam eva kathitaṃ."

¹⁹ Dhṛp 273: "Maggānaṭṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho, saccānaṃ caturo padā; virāgo seṭṭho dhammānaṃ, dvipadānaṃ cakkhumā."

²⁰ Ibid 274: "Esova maggo natthañño, dassanassa visuddhiyā; etaṇhi tumhe paṭipajjatha, mārassetam pamohanam."

Tathāgata only shows the path; we must follow it to be free from worldly suffering: “Be an island unto yourself.”²¹

4.5. The evolution of Buddhist texts through translation

If someone is interested in understanding the issues surrounding *Pāli* text translations into English and other foreign languages, they must first grasp the profundity of the *Pāli* language and its grammatical structure. However, this is only achievable through studying *Pāli*. Unfortunately, many Indians have forgotten *Pāli*, which is an ancient Indian language. Among the oldest languages of *Āryāvarta*, *Pāli* stands out. Additionally, *Pāli* is one of the most beautiful languages of ancient India. It encompasses numerous sermons and sacred texts, along with fascinating non-canonical literature. Regrettably, Indians have ceased learning and even reflecting on this language. Nevertheless, this language is vital for comprehending Buddhist culture and Indian history. Studying it will facilitate an understanding of ancient India’s religious and philosophical issues and events. What exactly do we need for accurate translations? First, we should know the language into which we are translating. We need to possess a good vocabulary and use precise words, which requires thorough readings of the literature from which we are translating. In the case of *Pāli*, we need to engage with this literature, understand grammar, be aware of *prakṛti-pratyaya*, and grasp the structure of the language. Sometimes, the same word may have different meanings depending on various contexts. The word *saindhava* means both salt and horse. If someone asks you to bring the *saindhava*, we need to understand the context. I wonder if we can translate the *Pāli* words and convey their original meaning into foreign languages. Various words in *Pāli* often get translated into English but seem not to be very helpful. Translations of terms from this ancient language, *Pāli*, must aid us in understanding the true sense used by the Buddha. Typically, we translate *dukkha* as suffering, stress, or unsatisfactoriness. However, *dukkha* is best left untranslated, as we cannot find an equivalent in English. It means both “suffering” and “stress,” but it also signifies “unsatisfactoriness,” essentially “getting what one does not want” and “not getting what one does want.”²² It encompasses all those nagging feelings through which one perceives that life is not perfect. Survey of *Pāli* translations in Indian languages: The governments of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have given grants for the translation of *Pāli* texts into Telugu and Kannada. The *Pāli-Telugu Tipiṭaka* project is entrusted to the Mahābodhi Society, Bangalore, founded by the late Ācārya Buddhārakkhita in 1956. As part of this project, the following *Pāli* texts are translated, with the *Pāli* text in Telugu script on the left page and the Telugu translation on the right. Completed Translations: *Dhammapada*, *Visuddhimagga* (*Pāli* text not given), *Sutta Nipāta* (*Pāli* and Telugu), *Vinaya Piṭaka* - Part 1 - *Bhikkhu Vibhaṅga*, *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, and a few other books. Translations Underway: *Milindapañha*, *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, *Udāna* and

²¹ DN 16: “Attā dīpo bhava.”

²² *Abhidhammapiṭaka*. “Yaṃ pi icchaṃ na labhati, taṃ pi dukkhaṃ.”

Itivuttaka, *Nidānakathā*, *Jātakakathā* - Vol. 1 with 100 stories (*Pāli* text not given), *Theragāthā* List of Completed Texts in Kannada *Tipiṭaka* Project: *Dīgha Nikāya* - 3 Vol. (*Pāli* and Kannada), *Majjhima Nikāya* - 6 Vol. (*Pāli* and Kannada), *Jātaka* - 5 Vol. (*Pāli* and Kannada) *Khuddakapāṭha* (*Pāli*) - 1 Vol. (*Pāli* and Kannada), *Sutta Nipāta* - 1 Vol. (*Pāli* and Kannada), *Milindapañha* - 1 Vol. (*Pāli* and Kannada). There are some Marāṭhī translations too: *Siddhārtha Jātaka* (सद्धिचर्य जातक) (Vol. 1 to 7) translated into Marāṭhī. *Udāna* (उदान), *Visuddhimagga Sāra* (वसुधधम्मगग सार), *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, *Jātakakathāsaṅgraha* (भाग 1 to 3). *Rāṣṭriya Saṁskṛta Saṁsthāna*, the Deemed University at Delhi (*Samsthāna* has been upgraded to Central Sanskrit University recently), has translated *Pāli* texts into English, Hindi, and Sanskrit. They also run a bi-annual journal in the field of *Pāli* and *Prākṛit* named “*Pāli Prākṛit Anusīlanam*” (A bi-annual journal of *Pāli* and *Prākṛit* language and literature from *Rāṣṭriya Saṁskṛta Saṁsthāna*). The following *Pāli* texts were translated into English, Hindi, and Sanskrit: *Khuddakapāṭhapāli*, *Udānapāli*, and *Itivuttakapāli* – Translated into Sanskrit, Hindi, and English, *Suttanipāṭapāli* - Translated into Sanskrit, Hindi, and English, *Vimānavatthupāli* and *Petavatthupāli* - Translated into Sanskrit and Hindi, *Theragāthāpāli* and *Therīgāthāpāli* - Translated into Sanskrit and Hindi, *Saṁyuttanikāyapāli* - Translated into Sanskrit and Hindi. These are only a few translations done long ago. However, this situation has improved, and many other texts have now been translated. Buddhism was transmitted into Tibet, and as a consequence, many Sanskrit texts were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan and Chinese. Epistemological literature composed by Indian Buddhist scholars, focusing on cognition and other philosophical concepts such as mind, logic, and language, was translated into Tibetan and Chinese. These translations had a profound impact on Tibetan intellectual history. They began during the 7th century, continued in the 8th century, and intensified later. Tibetan scholars also consulted the Sanskrit versions of oral traditions. Tibetans divided Buddhist texts into two broad categories: *Kangyur* and *Tengyur*. *Kangyur* means “Translated Words.” It consists of the works supposed to have been spoken by the Buddha himself. This is, in fact, the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist *sūtra* literature. All these texts had Sanskrit originals and were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Some texts were also translated into Tibetan from Chinese, which were themselves Sanskrit translations. These works were translated from Sanskrit into Chinese when certain Chinese masters traveled to India. *Tengyur* means “Translated Treatises.” This category contains commentary texts, including one hundred treatises and *Abhidharma* works (both *Mahāyāna* and non-*Mahāyāna*). The *Tengyur* contains 3,626 texts in 224 volumes. Among these, the essential texts translated by Kumārajīva include the *Diamond Sūtra*, *Amitābha Sūtra*, *Lotus Sūtra*, and *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*. His translation style was distinctive, possessing a flowing smoothness that reflects his prioritization of conveying meaning rather than strict literal rendering. Because of this, his translations of *Mahāyāna* texts often remained more popular. The tradition of translating early Sanskrit texts is ancient. Some early Sanskrit scholars translated texts such as the *Vedas* and post-*Vedic* literature into English

and other foreign languages. *Rāmāyaṇa* translations are very popular in contemporary society, and people have become interested in listening to the story of *Rāma* in their local languages. The *Purāṇas* have been translated into many languages. The *Matsya Purāṇa* was translated into Persian by Goswami Anand Daga in 1792 in Varanasi, a manuscript of which is available at the Italian Institute of Rome. A copy of the Persian translation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is reported to be available at Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh. Not only in India, but the *Purāṇas* have also traveled beyond Indian territories. They spread to Tibet, China, Japan, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia. The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* reached Bali, an island of Indonesia. Many ancient Javanese adaptations of original Sanskrit works indicate the popularity of Sanskrit and Indian culture in the Indonesian archipelago. Dr. H. N. Vander Tank collected many Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Purāṇas*, which are now preserved in the Netherlands, after his passing. Many translative works of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Japanese have also been reported from Java. The *Purāṇas* have also traveled to European countries, particularly Germany. Indian ideas have greatly influenced German literature and philosophy since the 19th century. German scholars once observed that Indian philosophical systems could serve as a model for Western thinking. The influence of Indian literature on European thought can be traced back even to the Middle Ages. Some ancient Indian works reached Europe through Arabic and Persian translations. For example, the *Pañcatantra* was first translated into Pahlavi in the early 6th century, then into Arabic in 750 CE. Various versions derived from the Arabic translation later became known in Europe.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Buddhist education is not merely a relic of ancient tradition but a dynamic, multifaceted system that continues to shape global harmony. From its origins in monastic institutions such as Nālandā and Valabhi to its pervasive influence on contemporary educational practices, Buddhist education has consistently promoted an integrated model of ethical, intellectual, and physical development. At its core, the Buddhist educational system is built upon the cultivation of moral virtues - *mettā* (loving-kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (sympathetic joy), and *upekkhā* (equanimity) - which serve as the foundation for both personal transformation and social progress.

By fostering critical inquiry and encouraging self-reflection, Buddhist education enables individuals to transcend narrow self-interests and embrace a broader, more inclusive vision of human well-being. The emphasis on the Noble Eightfold Path and the practice of mindfulness (*sati*) not only cultivate inner wisdom but also nurture the qualities essential for peaceful coexistence. This holistic approach underscores the interdependence of body and mind, reinforcing the idea that true peace in society emerges from the well-being of its individuals.

Moreover, Buddhist education has historically transcended rigid social hierarchies, offering a democratic model that welcomes all, regardless of caste,

gender, or social status. The open and inclusive nature of the Buddhist saṅgha, where education was imparted through both oral transmission and rigorous debate, set the stage for a unique intellectual tradition that promoted dialogue and mutual understanding. Such principles remain profoundly relevant today, particularly in a globalized world where cultural exchange and intellectual diversity are paramount.

The legacy of Buddhist education is further evidenced by its enduring contributions to the translation and dissemination of Buddhist texts across Asia and beyond. As scholars and practitioners continue to revisit ancient manuscripts and reinterpret classical teachings, the timeless values of compassion, nonviolence, and wisdom are reasserted as guiding principles for modern society. In this respect, Buddhist education not only informs individual spiritual growth but also offers practical solutions for addressing contemporary challenges, ranging from ethical governance and social justice to environmental sustainability.

Ultimately, the integration of Buddhist educational principles into modern pedagogical frameworks has the potential to foster a more harmonious and sustainable global society. By prioritizing the cultivation of inner peace and ethical conduct, Buddhist education paves the way for a future where personal transformation and collective well-being are mutually reinforcing, creating the foundations for enduring global harmony.

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UNITY AND INCLUSION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY: BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES ON WORLD PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Cynthia Chantal Infante Medina

Abstract:

In an era of escalating social inequalities, environmental degradation, and emotional disconnection, the need for holistic educational approaches has become more pressing than ever. This paper explores the integration of Buddhist teachings, particularly mindfulness (*sati*), into educational systems as a means to cultivate compassion, resilience, and ethical consciousness. By incorporating the ethical principles of Buddhism, such as the Five Precepts and the Noble Eightfold Path, education can become a transformative tool that fosters a more compassionate and sustainable society. The paper emphasizes the potential of mindfulness not only in reducing stress but also in enhancing students' socio-emotional skills and ethical decision-making. It argues that education, when aligned with Buddhist values, can bridge the gap between technical knowledge and holistic well-being, preparing individuals to address contemporary global challenges with wisdom and compassion. The paper concludes that incorporating Buddhist principles into education offers a profound opportunity to reshape learning paradigms, fostering unity, inclusion, and dignity for all.

Keywords: *Buddhism, sustainable development, world peace.*

I. JUSTIFICATION

In today's world, societies and the natural environment face an array of challenges, including social inequalities, armed conflicts, environmental degradation, and an increasing emotional disconnection among individuals. Addressing these pressing issues necessitates the exploration of innovative ways of thinking and acting to build a more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable future. In this context, Buddhist teachings - particularly mindfulness, or

“sati” in Pāli - and the ethical principles they embody provide a profound and transformative framework. This essay aims to justify the relevance of integrating these teachings into educational systems, not only as a tool for individual well-being but also as a means to cultivate more compassionate and ethical societies. As seen in verses 129 and 130 of the Dhammapada, in Buddhism, the principle of equality is rooted in the understanding that all beings fear suffering: “All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill”¹ “All tremble at violence; life is dear to all. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill”². The rapid pace of globalization and technological advancement has brought numerous benefits but has also exacerbated significant imbalances. Emotional disconnection, rising rates of anxiety and depression, and social fragmentation are indicative of a system that prioritizes productivity and consumption over holistic well-being. Additionally, environmental crises such as climate change and biodiversity loss highlight humanity’s estrangement from nature, pushing it towards an irreversible tipping point. These interconnected challenges necessitate holistic solutions that address both the internal and external dimensions of human experience.

Education, as the cornerstone of society, holds immense potential to serve as a catalyst for structural change. However, conventional educational models predominantly emphasize the accumulation of technical knowledge and competition, often overlooking the development of emotional, ethical, and social competencies. This approach has resulted in a gap in preparing individuals to navigate the complexities of the 21st century with resilience, compassion, and creativity. Incorporating mindfulness and Buddhist ethical principles into educational frameworks presents an opportunity to bridge this gap and promote holistic learning.

Mindfulness, understood as the ability to be fully present in the moment, has gained significant recognition in recent years due to its effectiveness in reducing stress and enhancing well-being. However, its potential extends far beyond these individual benefits.

Within the educational context, mindfulness can play a pivotal role in fostering socio-emotional skills such as emotional regulation, empathy, and ethical decision-making.

From a Buddhist perspective, mindfulness is not merely a tool for calming the mind but rather a pathway to the complete eradication of suffering for all beings. The ethical principles of Buddhism offer a robust foundation for fostering more just and sustainable societies. Integrating these principles into educational curricula does not imply the imposition of a religious belief system; rather, it promotes universal values that transcend cultural and religious boundaries.

¹ Dhp 129.

² Dhp 130.

Buddhist ethics emphasize the significance of intentionality behind actions, a principle particularly pertinent in educational contexts where students must learn not only how to solve problems but also how to reflect on the ethical ramifications of their decisions. Encouraging such reflective practices can empower students to make responsible and compassionate choices in their personal and professional lives. As the *Khaggavisāṇa-Sutta* reminds us: “Renouncing violence for all living beings, harming not even one³.”

Sustainability - defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own - is one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Buddhist teachings provide a unique perspective on sustainability by advocating for simplicity, moderation, and respect for nature. An educational system that incorporates these values could inspire students to engage in sustainable practices, such as reducing waste in their communities, adopting responsible consumption habits, and actively participating in environmental justice initiatives.

In an increasingly interconnected and complex world, rethinking educational approaches to align with the needs of the current era is crucial. This essay argues that Buddhist teachings, particularly mindfulness and ethical principles, offer a powerful framework for addressing contemporary challenges and fostering a more compassionate, ethical, and sustainable future. By integrating these teachings into educational systems, individuals can be nurtured not only to achieve professional success but also to become agents of positive change within their communities and the world at large.

This holistic approach represents an opportunity to transform education into a driving force for structural change that benefits humanity and the planet. It calls for the adoption of an inclusive vision of learning that acknowledges the interdependence of all beings and promotes values that transcend cultural, religious, and economic divisions. In doing so, we can aspire to build a society that does not merely survive but thrives in harmony with the world around it.

II. INTRODUCTION

The benefits of meditation have been widely disseminated globally, with mindfulness being recognized for its potential to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. However, from a Buddhist perspective, this practice transcends these immediate benefits and aims at the complete eradication of suffering. In the *Mahā-Satipatthāna-Sutta* discourse, the Buddha addresses the monks with the following words: “This is the only path, bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for attaining the Noble Path, for the realization of Nibbāna, that is, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.”⁴

While mindfulness can be practiced independently, in the modern world, it is often approached from a purely technical perspective, neglecting its deeper

³ Sn. 284 – 290

⁴ D. II. 231.

integration within Buddhist teachings. This fragmented approach omits essential elements necessary for achieving true inner peace, namely virtue (*sīla*) and right understanding (*sammā-ditthi*). Ethics serve as the foundation for mindfulness practice, allowing for a remorse-free mind that facilitates a more profound and transformative experience.

Ethical conduct plays a crucial role in Buddhist practice, providing a moral framework that fosters both personal and collective well-being. Without anchoring mindfulness within ethical principles, it becomes challenging to achieve long-term personal transformation and meaningful societal change. Virtue and right understanding must therefore precede mindfulness practice, forming a solid foundation for the attainment of *Nibbāna*. From the *Dhammapada*: “To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to purify one’s mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas.”⁵

In today’s globalized world, marked by increasing technological, economic, and social interconnectedness, persistent inequalities and conflicts continue to hinder the pursuit of world peace and sustainable development. Human dignity, a fundamental principle that should guide collective actions, is constantly threatened by social exclusion, armed conflicts, environmental degradation, and disparities in access to education. Addressing these crises requires not only corrective measures but also ethical and transformative approaches that tackle the root causes of suffering.

This essay explores how Buddhist teachings offer valuable perspectives for addressing these global challenges, emphasizing the fundamental role of ethics as a tool for fostering a more compassionate and sustainable future. In Buddhist thought, ethics are not merely a set of external norms but rather an internal discipline aimed at aligning human actions with the principles of compassion, responsibility, and mutual respect. This ethical orientation not only prevents individual and collective suffering but also promotes harmonious and sustainable relationships between individuals and their environment.

Within this framework, mindfulness emerges as a central practice that strengthens the capacity to act ethically in every aspect of life. Beyond its widely recognized personal benefits, such as stress reduction and emotional resilience, mindfulness serves as a bridge to a life governed by ethical principles. In the educational sphere, it has the potential to transform not only students and educators but also entire communities by fostering values such as empathy, compassion, and respect for the interdependence of all beings.

Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (United Nations, 2015). This essay argues that the integration of Buddhist ethics into pedagogical strategies can position education as a catalyst for structural change. By complementing mindfulness practice with ethical principles, global citizenship can be nurtured, prioritizing collective well-being, environmental

⁵ Dhp 183.

sustainability, and peace.

The Buddhist perspective, which emphasizes interdependence and shared responsibility, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the root causes of global suffering and offers practical tools to address them. Ethics, conceptualized as an act of generosity toward the world, serve to prevent suffering by fostering an awareness of the broader impact of individual and collective actions. Therefore, this essay seeks to highlight the relevance of Buddhist teachings in contemporary education and to advocate for ethics as an essential pillar in the pursuit of a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

III. DEVELOPMENT (PROPOSALS)

The current global situation is marked by a series of interconnected challenges affecting both people and the natural environment. These challenges include mental health crises, social inequalities, armed conflicts, and environmental problems that worsen over time. Among the most alarming issues is the global rise in anxiety and depression, reflecting a widespread emotional disconnection that affects individuals of all ages and contexts.

Mental health, a fundamental pillar of human well-being, is being eroded by factors such as work-related stress, academic demands, the impact of social media, and socio-economic uncertainties. Recent studies, such as those conducted by Xiang, Martinez, Chow, Carter, Negri, Velasquez, Spitzer, Zuberbuhler, Zucker, and Kumar (2024), highlight the growing need for mental health services targeted at young people. This phenomenon reveals a crisis of emotional neglect, hindering the building of healthy relationships and the development of solid self-esteem.

Simultaneously, social inequalities persist as insurmountable barriers for millions of people. Poverty, social exclusion, and lack of access to basic services, such as education and healthcare, perpetuate cycles of injustice that affect present and future generations. These inequalities not only generate conflicts and tensions within communities but also limit opportunities for sustainable global development. For instance, gaps in access to quality education restrict the potential of millions of young people, condemning them to precarious living conditions and limiting their ability to contribute to the progress of their communities. The Metta-Sutta emphasizes the importance of cultivating loving-kindness: "May all beings, whether weak or strong, long or short, large, medium, or small, subtle or gross, visible or invisible, near or far, born or yet to be born, without exception, experience joy and happiness"⁶

On the other hand, the environment faces an unprecedented crisis. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution affect all living beings, underscoring the urgent need for action. These issues cannot be separated from social and economic inequalities, as vulnerable communities are often the most affected by natural disasters and environmental degradation. The disconnection between humans and nature is also a reflection of a lack of awareness of the interdependence that defines our lives. In this context,

⁶ Sn. 1 - 2.

education plays a crucial role as a transformative tool. However, traditional educational models are often designed to prioritize the accumulation of technical and academic knowledge, neglecting the holistic development of emotional, ethical, and social skills. This limited approach has created a gap in the formation of individuals capable of facing the complex challenges of the contemporary world with resilience, compassion, and creativity. The impact of this disconnection is evident on multiple levels. On a personal level, the lack of socio-emotional skills hinders self-regulation, empathy, and peaceful conflict resolution. On a social level, the absence of robust ethical principles fosters corruption, violence, and exploitation, perpetuating systems that prioritize individual interests over collective well-being. On an environmental level, emotional and ethical disconnection leads to irresponsible exploitation of natural resources, ignoring the long-term consequences for the planet and future generations. The Buddhist precepts emphasize the importance of ethical conduct by stating: I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct. I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.”⁷

Faced with these challenges, the opportunity arises to reimagine education as a powerful tool for transforming society. Instead of focusing exclusively on technical knowledge, the educational system can become a space where ethical values, emotional skills, and a deep connection with others and nature are cultivated. This would not only benefit individuals but also strengthen social cohesion and promote a more harmonious relationship with the environment. Programs that incorporate mindfulness have been shown to have a positive and significant impact on students’ self-regulation skills in preschool and primary education (Roeser, Galla & Baelen, 2022).

Transformative education is based on a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of life. By incorporating universal ethical principles, such as compassion, respect, and responsibility, educational systems can shape global citizens capable of effectively addressing current challenges. Moreover, by integrating practices like mindfulness, students can develop greater self-awareness and awareness of their surroundings, enabling them to make more informed and ethical decisions.

An example of this transformative approach is the growing adoption of educational programs that combine academic teaching with the development of socio-emotional skills. These initiatives have proven effective in improving academic performance, reducing stress levels, and fostering a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment. Instead of perpetuating individual competition, these programs promote cooperation and mutual understanding,

⁷ “Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi. Adinnādānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi. kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi. Musāvādā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi. Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

laying the foundation for a more equitable and supportive society. However, for this vision to materialize, several obstacles must be overcome. First, a paradigm shift in how education is conceived is required. This involves recognizing that success is not measured solely by academic achievements but also by individuals' ability to contribute positively to their communities and the world at large. Second, it is essential to have the support of public policies prioritizing inclusive and quality education aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The world faces complex challenges requiring innovative and holistic solutions. The mental health crisis, social inequalities, and environmental issues cannot be addressed in isolation; they are deeply interconnected and demand an approach that considers both the internal and external dimensions of human experience. Education, as the foundation of any society, has the potential to be a catalyst for this structural change. By envisioning education as a tool for cultivating emotional skills, ethical values, and a deep connection with nature, we can lay the groundwork for a more compassionate, equitable, and sustainable future.

Meeting the needs of people suffering from depression is a public health priority (World Health Organization, 2020).

In Buddhism, ethical principles, known as *sīla*, form the foundation of a virtuous and meaningful life. These principles focus on cultivating essential qualities such as compassion, nonviolence, honesty, and respect for the interconnectedness of all beings. Unlike a rigid moral code, *sīla* is not confined to external rules; it is an internal discipline that guides our intentions and actions toward collective well-being. Buddhist teachings emphasize that mindfulness is essential for practicing ethics, enabling us to observe our bodily, verbal, and mental actions correctly at any given moment and to avoid transgressions when the opportunity arises.

The foundation of Buddhist ethics lies in the understanding that our actions have consequences not only for ourselves but also for others and the world around us. Interconnection, a central principle of Buddhism, teaches us that every thought, word, and action impacts the fabric of existence. Therefore, acting with compassion and respect toward all beings is not merely an ethical ideal but a practical necessity for living in harmony.

One of the most notable aspects of *sīla* is its focus on the intention behind actions.

Buddhism teaches that actions motivated by compassion and right understanding not only prevent suffering but also promote harmonious relationships and strengthen collective well-being. For example, the first Buddhist precept, "to abstain from killing living beings," goes beyond avoiding physical violence; it also encompasses preventing emotional suffering and respecting life in all its forms. This principle reflects a deep commitment to nonviolence and empathy.

Likewise, honesty and integrity are fundamental values in Buddhist ethics. These qualities not only strengthen interpersonal relationships but

also foster an environment of trust and mutual respect. In a world marked by misinformation and self-serving agendas, practicing honesty is a revolutionary act that can transform social and political dynamics.

Another key principle is respect for interconnectedness. Rather than seeing ourselves as separate entities, Buddhism invites us to recognize our profound interdependence with all beings and the environment. This understanding fosters a sense of responsibility for collective well-being and motivates us to act in ways that benefit everyone, not just ourselves.

Buddhist ethics also play a crucial role in the practice of mindfulness. According to Buddhism, meditation and other contemplative practices cannot be separated from a solid ethical framework. Virtue and ethics are essential for creating a calm and remorse-free mind, which in turn facilitates a deeper and more effective mindfulness practice. In this sense, *silā* not only precedes but also guides mindfulness, forming an integrated system aimed at eradicating suffering in all its forms.

This ethical approach has profound implications for education and human development. By integrating the principles of *silā* into educational curricula, students can be trained not only as competent professionals but also as ethical and compassionate citizens. For example, teaching young people the importance of nonviolence and empathy can help them develop healthier relationships and contribute positively to their communities.

Furthermore, the ethical principles of Buddhism offer a solid foundation for addressing global challenges such as social inequalities and environmental issues. By promoting values like moderation and respect for nature, *silā* invites us to reconsider our priorities and adopt a more mindful and balanced lifestyle. In a world where excessive consumption and resource exploitation are the norm, these ethical principles offer a transformative alternative that promotes harmony and balance. This approach is not only relevant on a personal level but also in collective and global contexts, where individual actions, when combined, have a significant impact on social and environmental dynamics.

For instance, the Buddhist teaching on contentment challenges us to reflect on our consumption patterns and their impact on the planet's resources. This reflection extends to food, as illustrated by this contemplation: "Reflecting properly, I use food not for amusement, intoxication, fattening, or beautification, but solely for the continuation and sustenance of this body, to end the discomfort of hunger and to practice the holy life, considering: 'Thus I shall eliminate old sensations of hunger and not create new sensations of hunger, and I shall be healthy, blameless, and live comfortably.'"⁸

This correct consideration toward food does not advocate deprivation but rather balance, enabling us to meet our needs without compromising the well-being of other beings and future generations. Adopting an ethical approach based on moderation can be an effective response to

⁸M. I. 12 – 3,

overconsumption and the environmental crises we face today, such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

In the social sphere, applying the ethical principles of Buddhism can play an essential role in reducing inequalities and building more inclusive communities. Compassion understood not only as a feeling but as a committed action, urges us to work for social justice, equality, and respect for human dignity. Buddhist ethics challenge us to transcend personal and selfish interests, inviting us to adopt a global perspective that values collective well-being over individual benefit.

A distinctive feature of *sila* is its universal applicability. Although rooted in Buddhist teachings, its principles are relevant to people of any religious or philosophical tradition, as they are based on fundamental human values. This makes it a valuable tool for fostering mutual understanding and cooperation in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

From an educational perspective, incorporating the ethical foundations of Buddhism into learning can prepare students to face the challenges of modern times with greater compassion, responsibility, and creativity. For example, an educational program that integrates the teaching of *sila* could include activities such as discussions on ethical dilemmas, community service projects, and workshops on conflict resolution. These activities not only reinforce an understanding of ethical principles but also allow students to apply them in practical and real-world contexts.

Additionally, Buddhist values such as compassion and empathy can be powerful tools for addressing the growing mental health crisis in educational communities. By teaching students to recognize and manage their emotions from an ethical perspective, a healthier and more supportive environment can be promoted in both classrooms and society at large.

Mindfulness practice, guided by an ethical framework like *sila*, can be an effective intervention to reduce stress, anxiety, and emotional disconnection that affect many young people today.

Finally, the transformative impact of Buddhism's ethical foundations extends beyond individuals. On a broader level, they can guide public policies and organizational decisions toward a more equitable and environmentally responsible model. For example, organizations that adopt ethical practices based on principles such as transparency, integrity, and respect for all forms of life not only contribute to a more positive work environment but also generate tangible benefits in terms of social and environmental impact.

The ethical foundations of Buddhism, represented by *sila*, offer a comprehensive framework for addressing the challenges of our time. By prioritizing compassion, nonviolence, and interconnectedness, these principles invite us to reflect on how our actions affect the world and provide tools for living more harmoniously and meaningfully. Incorporating these values into education and daily life can transform individuals, communities, and the world as a whole.

Towards an Education Based on Ethical Values

Buddhism, with its emphasis on compassion and ethics, offers a valuable framework for redesigning educational curricula. Instead of focusing exclusively on the transmission of technical knowledge, ethical education inspired by Buddhist principles seeks to foster essential human qualities such as empathy, responsibility, and critical reflection.

Compassion, understood as the genuine desire to alleviate the suffering of others, can be integrated into educational activities through community service projects, discussions about social issues, and exercises that develop empathy for different perspectives.

In a multicultural and interconnected world, the ability to recognize and value cultural, religious, and intellectual diversity is essential. Incorporating these principles into education fosters mutual understanding and prevents prejudice and discrimination. Education can teach students that their actions have an impact beyond their individual lives, contributing to the well-being of their community and the planet. Practical activities, such as environmental sustainability projects, can help cultivate this understanding.

Ethical Curricula and Sustainability: The design of curricula reflecting ethical principles and sustainable practices is a critical step toward transformative education. Specific proposals include:

(1) **Ethics-Based Subjects:** Integrate topics such as compassion, social justice, and environmental sustainability into existing subjects like social sciences, ethics, or environmental education. For instance, a geography course could analyze the interdependence between human communities and ecosystems, highlighting collective responsibility for environmental preservation.

(2) **Interdisciplinary Projects:** Design activities that bring together different areas of knowledge to address global problems from an ethical and sustainable perspective. A project on climate change, for example, could involve subjects like science, economics, and ethics, promoting comprehensive and responsible solutions.

(3) **Historical Narratives and Examples:** Incorporating stories of figures who embodied universal ethical values, such as Gandhi or Wangari Maathai, inspires students and shows how principles of compassion and sustainability can be applied in real life.

Mindfulness Applied to Ethical Understanding: Beyond its role in emotional regulation, mindfulness can be a powerful tool to foster ethical understanding among students. From a Buddhist perspective, mindfulness is not separate from an ethical framework; instead, it is enriched and guided by values such as compassion and responsibility.

(1) **Meditation Exercises:** Incorporate mindfulness practices that invite students to reflect on ethical issues, such as the nature of their actions and their impact on others and the environment.

(2) **Group Dynamics:** Design activities that promote conscious dialogue

and mutual understanding, such as listening circles where students share experiences and perspectives, cultivating empathy and connection.

(3) **Programs Linking Mindfulness to Social Commitment:** Adapt mindfulness programs to include activities that connect awareness with social engagement, such as workshops on responsible consumption, conflict resolution, and ethical leadership.

Challenges and Opportunities: Despite the evident benefits, implementing ethical and sustainable education faces significant challenges, such as institutional resistance, inadequate teacher training, and the need for financial resources. However, these challenges also present opportunities to innovate and build more inclusive and relevant educational systems.

Strategies to overcome these challenges include:

(1) **Teacher Training:** Provide educators with practical tools to incorporate ethical values and mindfulness into their teaching methods.

(2) **Community Collaboration:** Involve families and communities in the educational process, ensuring that ethical values are reinforced both inside and outside the classroom.

(3) **Progressive Educational Policies:** Promote educational reforms prioritizing the integral development of students by combining academic competencies with ethical and socio-emotional skills.

A Path to the Future: A study on the importance of “informal mindfulness,” understood as the practice of mindfulness during everyday activities like washing dishes or walking, highlights that this practice gradually increases through repetition and accumulated experience. This increase may drive the benefits associated with mindfulness practice (Mettler, Zito, Bastien, Bloom, & Heath, 2024).

Integrating Buddhist principles into education does not mean imposing religion or ideology but rather adopting universal values that transcend cultural and spiritual barriers. By designing curricula that combine mindfulness with ethical principles like compassion and respect for diversity, education can be transformed into a powerful tool for addressing global challenges.

Ultimately, ethical and sustainable education benefits not only students individually but also contributes to collective well-being, promoting more just, peaceful, and resilient societies. This approach is not just an option but an urgent necessity in a world demanding innovative and compassionate solutions to the problems.

Innovative Proposals: Transforming education into a more compassionate, ethical, and environmentally respectful approach requires initiatives that combine theory with practice. Below are concrete proposals designed to bring mindfulness and ethical principles into reality, fostering significant change in students, teachers, and communities.

Ethical Mindfulness Workshops: Ethical mindfulness workshops focus on combining mindfulness practice with reflections on ethical values such as

compassion, respect for diversity, and interdependence. These sessions can include:

(1) **Meditation Practices:** Simple exercises that teach students to be present and develop greater awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and actions.

(2) **Group Reflections:** Dialogue spaces where participants analyze how to apply ethical values in their daily lives and interactions with others.

(3) **Practical Activities:** Dynamics demonstrating the importance of cooperation, mutual respect, and empathy, such as collaborative games or simulations on conflict resolution.

These workshops would not only improve students' emotional well-being but also equip them with practical tools to address contemporary ethical and social challenges.

Teacher Training: Teachers play a fundamental role in the success of any educational initiative. Therefore, programs are proposed to train educators to incorporate compassionate and mindful practices into their teaching methods. Key areas of this training would include:

(1) **Stress Management:** Mindfulness-based techniques to help teachers manage stress, improve their well-being, and model positive behaviors for students.

(2) **Inclusive Practices:** Strategies for creating classroom environments where all students feel valued and respected, regardless of their cultural, social, or academic backgrounds.

(3) **Ethical Integration:** Methods to connect academic curricula with universal ethical principles, helping students develop a deeper understanding of the topics they study.

Additionally, these training programs could include specific modules on teaching students to apply socio-emotional skills and ethical reflections in their daily lives.

Innovative Educational Materials: To complement the previous initiatives, it is essential to develop educational resources that present ethical values and mindfulness creatively and engagingly. Examples of these materials include:

(1) **Interactive Guides:** Books and digital platforms explaining concepts like interdependence and sustainability through illustrations, games, and practical activities.

(2) **Educational Videos:** Short films depicting inspiring stories of individuals and communities that have implemented compassionate practices.

(3) **Collaborative Projects:** Activities where students work together to solve ethical or environmental problems, such as designing solutions to reduce waste at school or promoting respect for diversity in their community.

These resources can be adapted to different ages and cultural contexts, ensuring they are accessible and relevant to a wide range of students.

Community Partnerships: Ethical and sustainable education should not

be confined to classrooms; its impact is amplified when it involves local and global communities. Strategies to foster these partnerships include:

(1) **Collaboration with Local Organizations:** Work with community groups, NGOs, and local leaders to design and implement projects promoting social and environmental justice.

(2) **Community Service Projects:** Initiatives where students apply ethical principles in practical activities, such as reforestation, supporting vulnerable populations, or organizing awareness campaigns.

(3) **Global Exchange Networks:** Create opportunities for students and teachers to collaborate with schools worldwide, sharing ideas and experiences on education, ethics, and sustainability.

These partnerships not only enrich the educational experience but also strengthen participants' sense of global responsibility.

Evaluation and Feedback: To ensure the success of these proposals, it is essential to establish evaluation systems that measure their impact and allow for continuous adjustments. Evaluation tools could include:

(1) **Well-Being Surveys:** Periodic questionnaires to assess the stress levels, satisfaction, and socio-emotional skills of students and teachers.

(2) **Community Change Indicators:** Measures to evaluate the impact of educational projects on the community, such as reduced conflicts or increased civic participation.

(3) **Individual and Group Reflections:** Spaces where participants can share their experiences and suggestions for improving initiatives.

A More Compassionate and Sustainable Future: These innovative proposals aim to transform education into a powerful tool for social change. By integrating mindfulness with ethical principles at all educational levels, individuals can be cultivated who are not only prepared to face the challenges of this century but also deeply committed to the well-being of others and the planet.

Implementing these initiatives has the potential to create a lasting impact not only in schools but also in communities and the broader world. This approach represents a crucial step toward a more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable society, where compassion and respect are the values that guide our actions and decisions.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In a world characterized by multidimensional crises such as climate change, growing social inequalities, and a global mental health crisis, education emerges as a key space for social transformation. In this essay, we have explored how integrating Buddhist principles such as mindfulness and ethics into education can contribute to building a more compassionate, equitable, and viable future in harmony with the environment. This holistic perspective not only addresses the emotional and ethical shortcomings of the current educational system but also proposes concrete solutions to tackle global challenges at their roots.

Education is much more than the mere transmission of technical or academic knowledge; it is an integral process that must shape individuals as ethical, conscious citizens committed to collective well-being. In this sense, mindfulness, understood from Buddhism as a practice that cultivates full and compassionate awareness, offers a powerful tool to transform both the educational experience and the daily lives of students, teachers, and communities.

Currently, education faces challenges such as the rise of anxiety, depression, and stress among students and teachers. These difficulties not only affect academic performance but also individuals' ability to interact positively with their environment. By incorporating mindfulness into the educational curriculum, space is created for people to recognize their emotions, develop self-regulation, and strengthen essential socio-emotional skills such as empathy and critical thinking.

However, mindfulness should not be seen as an isolated practice but as part of an integral ethical framework. This is where the Buddhist principles of compassion, nonviolence, and respect for interconnectedness become the heart of transformative education. These values not only guide individual actions but also generate a culture of collaboration, inclusion, and shared responsibility.

The incorporation of ethical principles and mindfulness practices in education not only benefits individuals but also directly contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Designing curricula that combine ethical values with academic content is a key proposal for shaping global citizens capable of addressing the present age challenges. For instance, teaching students about the interdependence of living beings not only fosters respect for diversity but also promotes a caring attitude toward the environment. By connecting these teachings with mindfulness practices, a profound sense of responsibility for collective well-being can be cultivated.

Throughout this essay, we have outlined innovative proposals aimed at integrating mindfulness and ethical principles into education in practical and responsible ways. Ethical mindfulness workshops, teacher training programs, innovative educational materials, and community partnerships are just some of the concrete steps to transform the educational system from its foundations.

These initiatives not only respond to the immediate needs of students and teachers but also have the potential to generate lasting impacts on communities. For example, ethical mindfulness workshops not only help participants manage stress but also invite them to reflect on their values and their role in building a more just and compassionate world.

Similarly, partnerships with local and global communities strengthen the connection between education and real-world challenges, enabling students to apply their learning in meaningful contexts. In this way, education is fostered not only to prepare for the labor market but also to form conscious citizens committed to social change.

The implementation of these proposals has the potential to radically change how we conceive of education and its role in society. By prioritizing mindfulness and ethics, a generation of individuals is cultivated who can face the modern era challenges with resilience, empathy, and a long-term vision.

Moreover, this educational approach benefits not only students and teachers but also contributes to the creation of more equitable and sustainable societies. In a world where social, economic, and cultural divides are increasingly deep, education based on Buddhist principles offers a path toward unity and inclusion. Mindfulness in education, guided by the ethical principles of Buddhism, represents a transformative solution to contemporary global challenges. By combining full awareness with values such as compassion and respect for interconnectedness, an educational system can be built that not only forms competent individuals but also ethical and conscious citizens. Ultimately, this educational vision has the potential to transcend classrooms and transform society as a whole. By cultivating a generation of leaders and citizens committed to peace, justice, and sustainability, the foundations are laid for a future where human dignity, unity, and inclusion are the pillars of our collective development. This approach is not only a response to the challenges of the present but also a beacon of hope for generations to come.

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MINDFULNESS IN THE ANCESTRAL WORSHIP RITUAL OF VIETNAMESE

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the role of mindfulness in the ritual of worshipping Vietnamese ancestors. Mindfulness, understood as mindfulness and focus on the present, is deeply integrated in worship rituals, expressed through reverence and spiritual connection with ancestors. The study uses document analysis and actual observation to clarify the connection between mindfulness and ancestor worship practices. The results show that mindfulness helps maintain cultural traditions and strengthens family and community relationships. However, in the context of modernization, mindfulness in worship faces many challenges, requiring appropriate adaptation and conservation.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, ritual, Vietnamese.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Ancestor worship is an essential belief in Vietnamese culture, reflecting the filial piety of descendants and showing a strong connection between generations. However, modernization and globalization have led to changes in perceptions and lifestyles, making it more challenging to maintain mindfulness when practicing worship rituals. Many young people today do not deeply understand the meaning and value of mindfulness and ancestor worship, leading to rituals being practiced through loudspeakers or metamorphosing. Therefore, this study was conducted to clarify the concept of mindfulness in the ancestor worship ritual of the Vietnamese people, thereby proposing solutions to preserve and promote core values in contemporary society. In terms of methods, the topic combines document analysis and observation to collect multi-dimensional and reliable data. While the previous works have often approached primarily ethnographic or religious rituals, a standard limitation is the lack of connection with the field of Buddhist psychology and philosophy of the concept of mindfulness. By overcoming this limitation,

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the study identified key factors that help maintain mindfulness in ancestor worship, such as the family educational environment, ritual forms suitable for modern lifestyles, and active support from the community. The results show that worship rituals preserve cultural identity and build a rich spiritual life and community cohesion when mindfulness is aroused and instilled.

1.1. Methods

The study uses a literature analysis methodology, including previous studies on mindfulness and ancestor worship and observations of worship rituals in some Vietnamese families and communities. These resources include monographs, scientific articles, research reports, and historical texts related to the topic. The literature analysis aims to provide a theoretical and scientific basis for explaining the relationship between mindfulness and ancestor worship and to place the study in Vietnam's cultural and social context. In addition, relevant cultural and religious documents are referred to to provide context and theoretical foundation for research.

1.2. Results

Mindfulness, or “mindfulness,” in the Buddhist spirit, is often understood as a deep and complete awareness of all behaviors, thoughts, and interactions between people and the world around them.¹ Mindfulness, as understood in Buddhist philosophy, represents a state of profound tranquility that permeates every thought and experience, irrespective of the individual's current state of being, including attaining *nibbāna*.² Scientifically, mindfulness involves the deliberate and non-judgmental awareness of present-moment experiences, encompassing cognitive and emotional processes. This continuous state of awareness fosters mental stability and emotional regulation, creating an inner environment of calmness and clarity. In the context of *nibbāna* - a state of ultimate liberation and cessation of suffering - mindfulness maintains its role by sustaining a serene and focused mind free from attachment and aversion. Integrating mindfulness across various states ensures that tranquility is not transient but a consistent feature of one's mental landscape. Neuroscientific studies support this by demonstrating that regular mindfulness enhances brain regions associated with emotional regulation and executive control, promoting enduring mental tranquility. Consequently, mindfulness is a foundational practice that underlies attaining and maintaining *nibbāna*, ensuring tranquility is deeply embedded in every thought and state of consciousness. This harmonious blend of mindfulness and *nibbāna* illustrates a comprehensive approach to achieving sustained inner peace and cognitive equilibrium.

In the context of Vietnamese culture and beliefs, mindfulness is not only limited to the religious aspect of Buddhism but also deeply intertwined with the

¹ Gethin, R. (2015). Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness. *Handbook of mindfulness: Theory, research, and practice*, p. 9 - 41.

² Sharf, R. H. (2015). Is mindfulness Buddhist? (and why it matters). *Transcultural psychiatry*, 52 (4), p. 484.

spiritual life of Vietnamese people, especially in the ritual of ancestor worship. Ancestor worship is one of the Vietnamese's oldest and most important spiritual practices. It reflects the sacred connection between descendants and deceased generations. Clearly, it shows the spirit of "drinking water and remembering the source," upholding filial piety towards the roots of the family and the nation.³ In these remembrance rituals, mindfulness is expressed naturally and sustainably, becoming the glue that binds family members and contributing to maintaining and preserving the core values of the national culture. However, in order to better understand the manifestation, role, and meaning of mindfulness in ancestor worship in Vietnam, it is necessary to have a scientific, logical, and comprehensive approach, thereby helping us see the humanistic meaning and importance of educating the younger generation, as well as the limitations that need to be overcome to maintain this tradition in the context of modern society.

First, it is necessary to systematically understand the manifestations of mindfulness in ancestor worship rituals, including specific actions, psychological states, and the connection between mindfulness and other cultural and religious factors. According to Murray, G. (2016)⁴, ancestor worship rituals often involve offering incense, joining hands, bowing, offering offerings, or reading vows, which require high concentration and meticulous attention⁵. As in the incense offering ceremony, the participant must carefully hold the incense stick, turn his mind to his ancestors, close his eyes, or turn his gaze towards the altar with reverence. This "high concentration" is not only a temporary state but also a process of self-observation, not allowing miscellaneous thoughts or worries of everyday life to invade.⁶ At that moment, mindfulness exists, helping the practitioner to identify every movement and breath and, more importantly, to be aware of the noble purpose of the action: to express respect, gratitude, and the desire to "connect" with one's roots. At the same time, to show dignity, ritual participants often need to "keep their minds pure," that is, eliminate negative thoughts, greed, or pressure of work and study so that they can offer incense with a pure heart.⁷ Meanwhile, many people invite a priest or the master of ceremonies who knows the etiquette. Mindfulness is a pivotal mechanism for fostering empathy between humans and the natural world, mainly through ritual worship. Scientifically, mindfulness involves maintaining a heightened awareness of the present moment with non-judgmental attention, which has been shown to enhance

³ *Anguttara Nikāya*, translated by Thich Minh Chau, Thich Minh Thanh & Thich Nhat Tu (eds.). Hong Duc Publishing House, Hanoi, 2021. p. 89.

⁴ Murray, G. (2016). *Vietnam-Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide to Customs and Culture*. Bravo Limited. p. 86.

⁵ *Majjhima Nikāya*, Ed.V. Trenkner and R. Chalmers, 3 vols., PTS. London, 1948 - 1951. p. 92.

⁶ *Majjhima Nikāya* (2020): 905 – 10 (M. III. 71, or MN 116).

⁷ Kang, C., & Whittingham, K. (2010). Mindfulness: A dialogue between Buddhism and clinical psychology. *Mindfulness*, 1, p. 161 - 173.

emotional regulation and increase empathetic responses. When integrated into ritual worship, mindfulness practices enable individuals to engage deeply with their surroundings, cultivating a profound connection and reverence for nature. Rituals often incorporate meditation, chanting, and symbolic gestures, facilitating a mindful state that heightens sensory perception and emotional attunement to the environment. This intentional focus strengthens personal well-being and promotes a collective environmental consciousness, encouraging sustainable behaviors and stewardship of natural resources. Furthermore, anthropological studies indicate ritualistic mindfulness practices across various cultures have historically reinforced harmonious relationships with nature, embedding ecological values within community norms. By bridging individual mindfulness with communal worship, these practices create a synergistic effect that enhances personal empathy and collective environmental responsibility. Consequently, mindfulness through ritual worship emerges as a scientifically supported pathway to deepen human-nature relationships, fostering a more empathetic and sustainable interaction with the ecosystem. However, the fundamental factors remain the sincerity and concentration demonstrated by both individuals and their families during the ceremony. Research in psychology indicates that genuine emotional engagement enhances the effectiveness of ritualistic practices in strengthening social bonds and promoting individual well-being. Additionally, sustained focus and mindfulness during ceremonies contribute to more profound psychological benefits, such as reduced stress levels and improved emotional regulation. Therefore, the authenticity and attentiveness of participants are crucial for maximizing the positive outcomes and overall success of ceremonial activities.

On the one hand, high concentration represents an extraordinary level of awareness, and on the other hand, “keeping the mind pure”⁸ is the expression of the aspect of “dwelling in the present”, which is emphasized in Buddhist thought and developed by Mai, C. T. (1997) into the “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction” (MBSR) method.⁹ In the worship space, that quiet state helps the owner, children, grandchildren, or anyone who participates in the ritual have the opportunity to stop the flow of thoughts and no longer be attracted by social fluctuations. Many studies by Jamieson, N. L. (2023) have shown that, in the moment of incense smoke, the sound of bells, or deep chanting, people easily dismiss worldly worries and, at the same time, turn their minds to gratitude and remembrance for the deceased.¹⁰ Thus, in the spiritual aspect, mindfulness is not only a state of concentration or purity but also includes “a clear awareness of the meaning of ritual”. Each action, such as lighting incense, pouring wine, or arranging offerings on the altar, has a symbolic meaning of sincerity, filial

⁸ *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, translated by Thich Minh Chau, Thich Minh Thanh & Thich Nhat Tu (eds.). Hong Duc Publishing House, Hanoi, 2021, p. 470.

⁹ Mai, C. T. (1997). *Rituals of Salvation: The Vietnamese Cult of the Dead and Its Zen Buddhist Rites*. University of Hawai'i at Manoa, p. 58.

¹⁰ Jamieson, N. L. (2023). *Understanding Vietnam*. Univ of California Press, p. 32.

piety, or wishing for the blessings of ancestors. Therefore, if you only follow habits or forms, rituals can quickly become clichés, losing human depth¹¹. On the contrary, when the practitioner understands the hidden meaning behind each gesture, mindfulness is strengthened, helping the ritual become more sacred and potent. This explains why, in some traditional families, adults often explain to their children and grandchildren how to light incense, make vows, and address ancestors to transfer moral lessons, gratitude, and humanity from one generation to another.¹²

Mindfulness is not only manifested at the individual level but also plays a vital role in creating, maintaining, and strengthening close relationships between family members, between families and communities, and further between people and national culture. In terms of the role of strengthening family connections, ancestor worship is an opportunity for everyone in the house to gather. However, many members are often busy with work and study in modern life. The occasions of death, Tet holidays, or the first day and full moon day are rare opportunities for relatives to gather together, share about life, exchange customs, and family traditions, and especially do incense offerings to remember ancestors together. According to Lischer (2021), through the moments of “ritual in silence together, people have time to settle down, put themselves in the flow of family history, and remember their father, evoking memories and bonding with family members.”¹³ Participating in worship ceremonies early on helps young children become aware of their responsibilities and roles in the family and understand their origins and traditions, forming filial piety, gratitude, and respect for superiors. These moral and spiritual values are naturally maintained and strengthened over generations, becoming an “underground circuit” of culture, connecting the past, present, and future.

In addition to strengthening family cohesion, mindfulness in ancestor worship also contributes significantly to maintaining traditional culture. The ancestral worship culture of the Vietnamese people has deep roots, combining indigenous beliefs, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. For thousands of years, worship rituals have been widely preserved and practiced, from rural to urban, from downstream to upstream. This shows the strong vitality of tradition and, at the same time, the trend of “longevity” in the spiritual life of Vietnamese people. One of the core factors that help ancestor worship rituals survive sustainably is “mindfulness” because it creates a sacred and quiet space where people can vent all worries and “return to the roots” sincerely.

¹¹ Barclay, K., McMahon, D., & Stearns, P. N. (Eds.). (2024). *The Routledge History of Happiness*. Taylor & Francis, p. 26.

¹² Le, D. D., & Giang, L. T. (2024). The Effects of Caring for Grandchildren on Health and Well-Being of Grandparents: Evidence From Vietnam. *Asian Social Work and Policy Review*, 18 (3), e12328, p. 54.

¹³ Lischer, R. (2021). *Just Tell the Truth: A Call to Faith, Hope, and Courage*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, p. 34.

Whenever they hold a bowl of incense and fold their hands to make a vow, people feel like they are “bathing” in traditional culture, clearly feeling the humanity, filial piety, and responsibility to preserve this precious intangible heritage. Emphasize the importance of worship rituals in educating gratitude for parents, rivers, and countries and fostering the will to rise, do good, and maintain order. Thanks to mindfulness, ancestor worship does not become an ostentatious or superstitious activity but is maintained as a sacred bridge. This “solemn” act contains moral, social, cultural, and historical values.

However, when considering mindfulness in ancestor worship from a scientific and social perspective, we also need to evaluate the advantages and limitations of this practice. In terms of advantages, as mentioned, mindfulness contributes to strengthening concentration and inner tranquility, helping practitioners have the opportunity to escape from stress and anxiety in modern life. This concentration creates conditions for people to “self-reflect” in their minds and better understand their hearts about what they aim for, thereby cultivating the qualities of honesty, sharing, and empathy¹⁴. In addition, mindfulness in ancestor worship also plays an educational role in gratitude, directing people to gratitude and respect for root values. Regularly commemorating and offering incense to ancestors will make each person imbued with the concept of “there is a new powder to clean the lake,” aware that today’s success has the great merits of the previous generation. In addition, through community rituals (death ceremonies, Tet holidays, etc.), mindfulness helps arouse solidarity and attachment. Everyone contributes to the ceremony, cleans, decorates the altar, offers incense, and shares spiritual values, forming a “sense of community” embedding national identity. At the macro level, mindfulness becomes the “glue” to maintain the national cultural identity because when people understand and appreciate the roots, they will be motivated to preserve and spread good traditions to the next generation, helping Vietnamese culture to survive sustainably against the intrusion of foreign cultures.¹⁵

On the other hand, the limitations in maintaining mindfulness when worshipping ancestors in Vietnam today are also undeniable. First, it is a problem of “distraction when practicing”, especially in the context of industrialized society, modernization, work pressure, education, digital entertainment, and social networks... making many people no longer have enough concentration and patience to perform the ceremony seriously. In many cases, the ritual becomes profitable for “buying and selling expensively,” or people light incense in a hurry, whisper a double or three-sentence vow without any

¹⁴ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), p. 144 – 156. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy/bpg016>

¹⁵ Dao Duy Anh (2002). Outline of Vietnamese cultural history, Cultural Information Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 283.

deposition, and calm down.¹⁶ Besides, the “limited understanding” of the true meaning of rituals is also a significant challenge. For example, many people only know how to light incense to “invite grandparents to eat Tet” but do not understand why they have to join hands, why they have to offer rice trays, why they have to make vows or dresses, or the origin and meaning of offerings such as votive gold, fruits, betel nuts, wine, etc. This ignorance makes rituals easily fall into formality, even taken advantage of by some people who “sell services” to worship. In the long run, if mindfulness is eroded, ancestor worship risks becoming one-sided, far from fundamental human and moral values.¹⁷

On the other hand, we must also recognize that the introduction and interference of international cultures in the period of globalization has created pressure to transform many traditional cultural features, including ancestor worship. Due to frequent exposure to Western lifestyles, a segment of young people may view ancestor worship as backward, superstitious, or no longer feel that it is a sacred activity that requires mindfulness. For those who migrate abroad (study abroad, work, settle), maintaining the ancestral altar also faces many difficulties regarding living conditions, space, time, etc. Since then, mindfulness has gradually declined, worship rituals have been shortened, and only superficial rituals have occurred. However, many young people still strive to “preserve” and maintain this ritual, seeing this as a way to connect with their homeland, helping them have a spiritual fulcrum in an unfamiliar environment. Some also create worship methods on digital platforms, such as creating online incense offering applications, online worship ceremonies, sharing knowledge about worship rituals on social networks, etc. Although this form is controversial for its “sacredness,” it also shows the adaptive trend of traditional culture in the modern world.¹⁸

Thus, for mindfulness in ancestor worship to be maintained and developed sustainably, it is necessary to have many synchronous solutions from the individual, family, community, and national levels. First, at the individual and family level, each member must know the deep meaning of worship activities, actively study, learn, and pass on what he knows to the next generation. Setting aside a certain amount of time during the day or on the occasion of death to offer incense, recite prayers, or retreat in front of the altar can become a positive educational “mindfulness habit.” Children and grandchildren also need access to documents and books or listen to folk tales and legends to realize that behind each incense stick are many historical stories, hardships, and ancestors’ courage. At the community level, local governments and cultural associations can organize talks, seminars, or exhibitions introducing the ritual of worship,

¹⁶ Dang Nghiem Van (1996). On current religious beliefs, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 315.

¹⁷ Van, V. H. (2020). The Buddhist cultural heritage is part of the cultural life of Vietnamese people. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 8 (3), p. 811 – 823.

¹⁸ Tran Dang Sinh (2002). *Philosophical aspects of ancestor worship of Vietnamese people in the Northern Delta today*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, pp. 32 – 33.

inviting researchers, monks, or folk artisans to give a deeper explanation of the philosophical meaning. Beliefs. This will arouse the interest of young people and, at the same time, limit misunderstandings or false worship practices. At the national level, mindfulness in ancestor worship should be recognized as an important part of intangible cultural heritage, thereby having policies to preserve and encourage research and teaching in an educational environment. Some schools can integrate the content of mindfulness and moral values in civics, history, or literature lessons, helping students form an appreciation and understanding of etiquette. Besides, modern technology and communication can also become an effective channel for disseminating knowledge. Ritual instructional videos, short lectures on the value of mindfulness posted on social media, and academic analysis articles on university websites can all contribute to spreading and strengthening mindfulness in the community.¹⁹

It is also impossible to ignore the psychological and health aspects when practicing mindfulness in ancestor worship. Many studies in psychology and neuroscience show that when people are in a state of concentration and calm, the brain secretes beneficial neurotransmitters, which help reduce stress and increase the ability to self-regulate emotions. This stable and positive mentality can contribute to building a more harmonious relationship in the family, limiting conflict.²⁰ Therefore, if you skillfully combine Buddhist mindfulness with ancestor worship, each family member will have more “spiritual medicine,” relieving stress and improving psychological health. Moreover, when witnessing the reverence and solemnity of grandparents and parents during worship, children also learn to control behavior, train calmness, and cultivate personality. For adults, on every occasion of death, Tet comes, gathering around the altar, smelling incense, sipping tea and bowls of wine, and listening to stories about grandparents, parents, or clans; it is also an opportunity to contemplate, self-reflect, and reorient the road ahead. Thus, mindfulness brings profound human value and, at the same time, nurtures a “healthy spirituality,” directing people toward truthfulness – goodness – and beauty.

Of course, any cultural practice needs to face the risk of being “commercialized” or “exploited” for other purposes. Ancestor worship is no exception. Due to not correctly understanding the nature of mindfulness and the meaning of worship, some places focus on full trays, burning votive gold, building monumental tombs, and praising wealth instead of concentrating on sincere filial piety and deep gratitude. This leads to the abuse of smoky incense, environmental impact, waste of wealth, or the creation of competition: “One house offers more than the other.” In addition, there is also the phenomenon

¹⁹ Le, D. D., & Giang, L. T. (2024). The Effects of Caring for Grandchildren on Health and Well-Being of Grandparents: Evidence From Vietnam. *Asian Social Work and Policy Review*, 18 (3), e12328, p. 57.

²⁰ Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), p. 822 – 848. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822>

of shamans “roaming,” turning rituals into buying and selling services, making many people mistakenly believe that as long as they offer a lot and burn much votive gold, they will be “blessed.” This is the phenomenon of “superstition,” which can overshadow the reasonable value of ancestor worship. Instead of letting mindfulness shine through, some families are “led” by vague and financially costly vows. Therefore, to limit this situation, communicating and educating about the true meaning of rituals, encouraging simple and appropriate practices, and upholding the spirit of “more courtesy than offerings.” Cultural management agencies, Buddhist associations, or Confucian associations need to make detailed recommendations and guidelines to help people identify and avoid falling into the “quagmire” of superstition. In this context, mindfulness is seen as a “torch” that illuminates the way, reminding each individual of the core purpose of ancestor worship: to be grateful, to remember, and to remind oneself to behave by moral morality.

Taken together, it can be seen that mindfulness is the soul of the ancestor worship ritual, helping this action to become solemn, profound, and full of meaning. Thanks to the state of concentration and calmness, Vietnamese people maintain a connection between the past – present – and future; an invisible but sustainable link is encapsulated within the family and spread to the community and the nation. Mindfulness in ancestor worship not only helps each individual have the opportunity to purify the soul and find a quiet and peaceful corner but also contributes to nurturing morality, educating gratitude, and enriching cultural identity. At the same time, it also arouses a sense of maintaining a long-standing spiritual heritage, which is the foundation for shaping personality, strengthening family affection, and building a good society. However, mindfulness only shines when each individual, family, and community knows its value, not allowing hustles, rivalries, or ignorance to distort the worship practice. We need to recognize that, in modern life, mindfulness is not “outdated” or “marginalized”; on the contrary, it is a spiritual “remedy” to help people face stress. Through the worship ritual, we are reminded of the origin and the finitude of human life, thereby cherishing the present and thinking about the future. These values are fully compatible with the sustainable development trend of the contemporary world: respecting the past, preserving heritage, and moving towards living in harmony and being responsible for the natural environment and society. In addition to family bonding, we need to have stronger and broader educational and communication activities. Mass media, social networks, and cultural NGOs can cooperate in organizing seminars, creating art publications and documentaries, or building online information channels, spreading the message of “mindfulness in ancestor worship” to all levels of people. Once the essence, value, and meaning are understood, each individual will actively practice the ritual voluntarily, sincerely, and more deeply.

In addition, improving the quality of academic research on mindfulness in the context of ancestor worship is necessary. This would provide a solid scientific basis for solutions to preserve and promote traditions. Much research focuses on

mindfulness in Buddhism or psychotherapy²¹, but less on “mindfulness in folk beliefs”²². Deepening this topic can open new perspectives on the intersection of the Vietnamese people’s Buddhism, Confucianism, and ancestral worship beliefs and how spiritual, moral, and cultural values are intertwined. Through the results of interdisciplinary research (sociology, anthropology, religious studies, psychology), we will have a more “comprehensive” and “multi-dimensional” view, avoiding simplifying or radicalizing the problem. From there, universities and research institutes can make policy recommendations, such as developing a set of teaching materials on mindfulness in belief, guiding rituals by modern life, and organizing training courses for religious workers or community leaders so that they can spread this positive message.²³

Finally, for mindfulness in ancestor worship to take root in contemporary society, it is important that each person needs to “live mindfully” even when leaving the altar, that is, maintain a spirit of gratitude, mutual respect, observance of piety to parents, etc. behave in a meaningful way. Ritual worship is only a means, a door to the spiritual world, and mindfulness is the quality that helps people maintain awareness and live by their conscience.²⁴ If applied correctly, mindfulness will improve the quality of ritual practice and contribute positively to building a compassionate, orderly, and loving society. It also has the “deep meaning” of offering incense sticks to the altar, reminding us to treat each other with sincerity so that every day that passes, we live and act worthy of the noble traditions left by our ancestors.²⁵ Thus, looking at a comprehensive direction, mindfulness in ancestor worship has been and will continue to be a core factor in helping maintain Vietnam’s cultural identity, strengthen spiritual ties between generations, and promote educational and humanistic values in the community.²⁶ In the flow of modernization, if we know how to preserve and adapt intelligently, we can completely transfer this quintessence to future generations, helping them understand that “lighting incense is not only an action, but a way of life,” thereby continuing to maintain the spirit of national filial piety. Once “imbued” with the meaning of mindfulness, people will see that the ancestor worship ritual is not a mandatory procedure but a natural expression of the heart, a “spiritual ritual” that supports the soul and directs

²¹ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), p. 144 – 156

²² Pereira, M. C., Simões, P., Cruz, L., Barata, E., & Coelho, F. (2022). Mind (for) the water: An indirect relationship between mindfulness and water conservation behavior. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 21(4), p. 673 - 684.

²³ Crossan, M. M., & Apaydin, M. (2010). A multi-dimensional framework of organizational innovation: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of management studies*, 47 (6), p. 1154 - 1191.

²⁴ Van Vu, H. (2023). Vietnamese People’s Customs of Worshipping the Soul: Concept, Content and Current Changes. *The Russian Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 7 (3-2), p. 67 – 77.

²⁵ Nussbaum, M. C. (2019). The cosmopolitan tradition: A noble but flawed ideal. Belknap Press. p. 56.

²⁶ Hanh, T. N. (2007). *Living Buddha*. Penguin, p. 78.

people to better values.²⁷ Moreover, even though time has passed and society has changed, the beauty of “drinking water and remembering the source” is still enduring and endures, contributing to shaping its own identity and affirming the value of Vietnamese culture in the international arena, as affirmed in many research works that mindfulness, with roots from Buddhist philosophy and handed down through the practice of ancestor worship, it is the red thread that connects the spirituality, personality, and culture of an entire nation.

II. DISCUSSION

Mindfulness in Vietnamese worship rituals reaches its peak when it harmoniously combines tranquility, a sense of roots, and filial piety.²⁸ Regarding cognition, mindfulness helps people deeply understand impermanence, arouse gratitude for ancestors, and appreciate traditional values. In terms of psychology, performing the ceremony with a calm mind reduces stress, nourishes the soul, and connects generations of families. Regarding culture, mindfulness in worship is an invisible link that preserves national identity and maintains historical sources. Morality is also nurtured when people know their role and responsibility to their ancestors and the community. This has existed for a long time in Vietnam because it is suitable for national sentiments and simultaneously inherits the spirit of “drink water and remember the source.”²⁹ The unique feature of Vietnamese Buddhism is reflected in the concept of “dependent,” helping mindfulness to permeate the culture of worship, creating harmonious and sustainable nuances.

Mindfulness in worship rituals is a core element that helps people connect with their roots while maintaining cultural and moral values passed down from generation to generation. Mindfulness helps individuals focus on the present moment and preserves national identity through the ritual of ancestor worship. Therefore, mindfulness practice has both spiritual significance and a far-reaching impact on social cohesion and human moral education.

However, the modern context, with the hustle and bustle of life and the intrusion of many foreign factors, poses many challenges to maintaining mindfulness in worship. Many young people underestimate or do not understand the meaning of rituals, leading to superficial and formal practices.³⁰ Faced with this situation, many researchers need synchronous and creative solutions to inherit the traditional quintessence and adapt to the needs and

²⁷ Dhammananda, K. S. (2024). *What did Buddhists believe?* Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, p. 80.

²⁸ Dhammananda, K. S. (2024). *What did Buddhists believe?* Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, p. 56.

²⁹ Long, N. T., & Van, V. H. (2022). The Policy of Preserving and Developing Traditional Cultural Values of Vietnam: A Case Study of Some Vietnamese Folk Beliefs. *Synesis (ISSN 1984-6754)*, 14 (2), p. 311 - 329.

³⁰ Worwood, V. A. (2012). *The fragrant mind: aromatherapy for personality, mind, mood, and emotion*. New World Library, p. 43.

lifestyles of today's generation.³¹

To overcome this, solutions include strengthening education and communication about the value of mindfulness, diversifying and improving forms of worship, organizing practice spaces to connect families and communities, developing interdisciplinary research and supporting policies, and upholding the role of families and spiritual leaders.³² These measures maintain and promote ancestor worship beliefs in modern Vietnamese society and contribute to building a sustainable moral and cultural foundation, connecting generations and towards a harmonious community.

III. CONCLUSION

Mindfulness is a core element in the Vietnamese ancestor worship ritual, contributing to maintaining and promoting the nation's cultural, moral, and spiritual values. However, mindfulness faces many challenges in the modern context, requiring attention and efforts from families, communities, and society to preserve and promote this value. Education about the meaning and importance of mindfulness in ancestor worship and adapting traditional rituals to the modern context are necessary solutions to maintain and transmit the nation's precious cultural values to future generations.

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³¹ Ngo Duc Thinh (2001). Beliefs and religious culture in Vietnam, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 50.

³² Van, V. H. (2020). The Buddhist cultural heritage is part of the cultural life of Vietnamese people. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 8(3), p. 811 – 823.

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INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR DAY OF VESAK AND VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA MINDFULNESS EDUCATION-A SOLUTION TO HELP STUDENTS FACE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CRISES

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Abstract:

Modern education, within the context of globalization and rapid social change, encounters numerous new pressures. Beyond providing students with knowledge and skills to meet labor market demands, education must also foster humanistic values to shape a future generation that is conscious, responsible, and compassionate. In response to urgent issues such as environmental crises, social inequality, and moral decline, compassion and a commitment to sustainable development have emerged as core values requiring greater emphasis. This paper examines the role of Buddhist mindfulness in imparting these two values. Mindfulness, by cultivating awareness and deep understanding, enables students to regulate emotions, alleviate stress, and develop compassion for themselves, others, and nature. Engaging in mindfulness practice not only facilitates a deeper connection with oneself but also nurtures empathy and a sense of responsibility in one's actions. While compassion fosters harmonious relationships, the recognition of sustainable development underscores the necessity of preserving the environment and natural resources, ensuring equilibrium between humanity and ecosystems. The study advocates for the integration of mindfulness into modern education through subjects such as ethics, life skills, extracurricular activities, community initiatives, and a supportive learning environment. These efforts aim to nurture a generation of students who are not only intellectually proficient but also empathetic, understanding, and socially and environmentally responsible. This serves as the foundation for cultivating a sustainable and humane future in the new era.

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Keywords: *Modern education, Buddhist mindfulness, compassion, sustainability, development, social responsibility.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education has long been regarded as the most powerful tool for shaping the future of humanity, playing a central role in building a civilized, progressive, and sustainable society. However, in the modern world, which is deeply influenced by rapid technological advancements and the immense pressures of contemporary society, education appears to be drifting away from its core objectives. Instead of fostering holistic human development – both intellectually and morally – the current education system places excessive emphasis on achievements, grades, and competitiveness. As a result, students are subjected to an overwhelming academic workload, leaving them with little time and space to connect with their families, nature, and essential humanistic values. This not only diminishes their quality of life but also erodes the fundamental values necessary for individuals to lead fulfilling lives with awareness, responsibility, and a deep sense of connection to their community and environment.¹

Moreover, the world is currently facing major environmental and social crises. Phenomena such as the rise in school violence, the apathy of a portion of young people toward social issues, and the moral decline within communities clearly highlight the gaps in today's education system. (Phú & Phu, 2024)². Elements such as compassion, sustainability awareness, and a sense of responsibility seem to be insufficiently emphasized in educational programs, leading to a lack of holistic character development among younger generations. In this context, Buddhist mindfulness has been proposed by many researchers as an effective educational approach. With its focus on awareness, deep understanding, and empathy, mindfulness is not only a philosophy of life but also an essential skill that helps learners develop self-awareness, regulate emotions, reduce stress, and improve mental well-being. Furthermore, mindfulness has the potential to cultivate compassion, foster a sense of responsibility toward society and the environment, and strengthen the connection between humans and nature.³

Numerous studies have shown that practicing mindfulness can help students improve their concentration, reduce academic pressure, and encourage them to be more aware of the connection between individuals and the community. This not only helps them develop essential life skills but also contributes to fostering a generation that is responsible for society and the planet.⁴

¹ Mueller (2009): Volume 18, p. 1031–1056, in 2009. The specific excerpt appears on p. 1032.

² Phú & Phu, *Tạp chí tâm lý – Giáo dục*, vol 30 (2024), p. 19.

³ Frank, Fischer, & Wamsler (2020), p. 547.

⁴ Hải, Đ. H. Quan điểm Phật giáo về phát triển bền vững và các nhân tố ảnh hưởng tới hiệu quả

Compassion and awareness of sustainable development – fundamental values for creating a better world – can be deeply integrated through mindfulness education, shaping generations that are not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually enriched and socially conscious.

This paper focuses on analyzing the role of mindfulness in modern education while proposing specific methods to integrate mindfulness into the curriculum. These solutions aim not only to enhance academic competence but also to emphasize spiritual development, compassion, and social responsibility, preparing younger generations to face global challenges in a sustainable and humane manner.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To research the role of mindfulness education in helping students cope with environmental and social crises, this paper adopts a mixed-methods approach, including the following specific steps:

Document analysis: This study synthesizes theoretical and practical literature related to mindfulness, mindfulness education, and the relationship between mindfulness education and the development of compassion and awareness of sustainability. The materials are collected from: Published scientific studies in international and domestic journals, specialized books, reports, and guidelines on mindfulness education from major educational organizations, and documents related to the impact of environmental and social crises on students.

Synthesized evaluation: Combining quantitative and qualitative data to conclude the impact of mindfulness education on helping students face crises. The effectiveness and scalability of mindfulness education models in school settings. This multidimensional research approach ensures a comprehensive and insightful perspective, evaluating practical outcomes while providing strategic direction for the future application of mindfulness education.

III. RESULTS

3.1. Compassion in modern education

Definition and Importance of Compassion: Compassion, from a Buddhist perspective, is the ability to understand the suffering of others and the desire to alleviate that suffering. In the context of education, compassion is not only an ethical value but also an essential life skill. Studies have shown that students and teachers with high levels of compassion tend to have better relationships, fewer conflicts, and higher satisfaction in their learning and work.⁵

The life of Buddha is the fullest and most profound embodiment of wisdom and compassion, the two core values that make up His transcendent character. From any perspective, we can feel the light of compassion and the vast wisdom

giáo dục, phổ biến quan điểm đó trong xã hội. *Gia đình hòa hợp và xã hội bền vững*, p. 195.

⁵ Hạnh, T. L. Đ. “The role of buddhism in moral education in vietnam. Advice and guidance”, p. 75.

radiating from His life and teachings. Wisdom is the vast sky through which the mind of compassion flows, and although it is difficult to fully grasp the enormity of Buddha's wisdom, His compassion is something that anyone can easily recognize and feel (Davids J & Indrani Kalupahana).⁶ To think of Buddha is to think of the great compassion He manifested throughout His life. Scholar G.C. Pande once remarked that the greatness of Buddha lies not only in His teachings but also in His timeless influence, as no other figure has left as deep an imprint in the history of Indian culture as He has. According to him, wisdom (Bodhi) and compassion (*karunā*) are the perfect embodiment of Buddha's character – a great and transcendent personality. In agreement, philosopher S. Radhakrishnan describes Buddha as a symbol of boundless tolerance. He wrote: "Buddha did not view life solely as a series of sins but also as suffering that must be resolved through understanding and awakening. He faced adversity with a clear mind and strong faith, combining gentleness and love with a firmness that was sometimes tough but always resolute".⁷

Not only in philosophical terms, but historian Will Durant also praised Buddha as a symbol of absolute compassion. He commented: "Buddha is the one who 'repays hatred with virtue.' When misunderstood or insulted, He remains silent. If someone harms Him, He shields them with love. Even when that person continues to do evil, He still uses good deeds to resolve the situation." Buddha's compassion is not just mere affection but also a sacred practice (*ariyacariyā*) – a path of enlightenment, shaped and nurtured through many lifetimes of Bodhisattva practice. This is not temporary or personal compassion but the result of a long process of cultivation, transcending all selfish limits, thinking only of the benefit and happiness of countless beings. The *Saṅgīti Sūtra* records Buddha's confirmation that He cultivated compassion over many lifetimes, and it was this merit that allowed Him to be reborn as a universal monarch before attaining supreme enlightenment and becoming the Fully Enlightened One.⁸

The Buddhist scriptures, such as the *Lakkhaṇasuttanta*, also state that the 32 marks of excellence of the Buddha are the result of practicing compassion and noble virtues toward beings in many past lifetimes. Therefore, when He came into this world, the Buddha not only carried infinite wisdom but also expressed boundless compassion through every action and teaching. Even as a young prince, Siddhattha demonstrated compassion for all suffering in life. Legend tells that during the land-plowing ceremony of the *Sākya* royal family, the young prince was not pleased by the sight of small creatures writhing in pain under the plow's blade. Instead of joining in the festive ceremony, Siddhattha quietly sought refuge under a persimmon tree, sat in deep meditation, and quickly attained the serene state of the first *jhāna* (as recorded in the *Saccaka*

⁶ Davids J & Indrani Kalupahana (1987), *The Way of Siddhartha – A Life of the Buddha*. University Press of America, p. 21.

⁷ S. Radhakrishnan (1950), *The Dhammapada*. Oxford University Press; London, p. 12 - 13.

⁸ *Kinh Capala Sutta*.

Sūtra, Majjhima Nikāya). Furthermore, other texts record that the prince had no interest in the hunting pleasures that were typical of royals at the time. Once, when out walking in the forest with Devadatta and Naradatta, Siddhattha became disappointed and protested when they killed animals. Upon seeing a white crane shot down by Naradatta, the young prince rushed to its aid, removed the arrow, and cared for it with boundless love. These actions clearly revealed the compassion and noble character of the future Buddha.⁹ From childhood to enlightenment, the life of the Buddha is the most compelling proof of the power of compassion, not only as a personal virtue but also as a guiding principle for liberation and enlightenment. His life continues to be an endless source of inspiration for all beings on the path to truth, love, and liberation from suffering.

Current Situation: The modern education system, despite many advancements in technology and teaching methods, often lacks specialized programs to nurture compassion. Instead, the pressure from grades, achievements, and increasing competition has become an inseparable part of the educational environment. The consequences of this include the rise of mental health issues, including stress, anxiety, and even school violence. These pressures not only negatively impact student's personal development but also reduce their ability to collaborate, a crucial skill for sustainable development in the future.¹⁰ The modern education system often lacks programs that nurture compassion. Instead, the pressure from grades and competition often leads to isolation, stress, and even school violence. This not only affects student's mental health but also reduces their ability to collaborate and develop sustainably in the future.

Buddhist mindfulness and compassion: What exactly is mindfulness, and why has it become such a common term nowadays, especially for children? Simply put, mindfulness means focusing entirely on what you are doing right now without getting lost in other thoughts or worries. It's like focusing on one task, such as eating your favorite ice cream, and truly savoring each bite without thinking about the homework you need to submit tomorrow or the new game you want to play. It's all about being present in the moment.

Why is mindfulness important for children, especially in today's fast-paced digital world? Children today are surrounded by screens, notifications, and constant stimuli that make it easy for their minds to wander. From video games to social media, there's always something competing for their attention. This can lead to distractions, difficulty focusing on schoolwork, and even increased stress levels. By practicing mindfulness, children learn to bring their attention back to the present moment, which can help them manage these distractions significantly.

Mindfulness is an effective tool for cultivating compassion. Through practices like loving-kindness meditation (*mettā* meditation), students can

⁹ Davids J & Indrani Kalupahana (1982), *The Way of Siddhartha – A Life of the Buddha*, University Press of America, p. 21.

¹⁰ Phú & Phu (2024), p. 20.

develop empathy while also improving self-awareness and emotional regulation. In the context of modern education, mindfulness is understood as the ability to focus on the present moment without being distracted by unnecessary worries or thoughts. It is not only a philosophy but also an essential life skill, especially for children in today's world, where technology and media continuously compete for their attention. Research shows that practicing mindfulness can help children reduce stress levels, improve focus, and better regulate emotions. By directing attention to the present, children learn to manage distractions, thereby enhancing their ability to learn and develop character. Moreover, mindfulness is a powerful tool for nurturing compassion. Through practices like *mettā* meditation, students not only develop kindness but also enhance self-awareness and emotional regulation. These values play a crucial role in creating a positive and sustainable school environment.¹¹

3.2. Sustainable development in education

The Meaning of Sustainable Development in Education: Sustainable development in education is an important aspect, not only focusing on environmental protection but also encompassing social and economic aspects. The goal of education for sustainable development is to create a balance between these factors, aiming for a comprehensive and sustainable future for the next generations. According to Da Silva (2024), sustainable development in education requires a comprehensive curriculum that helps students gain a deeper understanding of individual and collective responsibility in protecting the planet.

In the context of growing global issues such as climate change, social inequality, and resource depletion, education becomes a vital tool in addressing these challenges.¹² Education is not only a means of conveying knowledge but also a foundation for forming awareness, skills, and responsible behaviors. According to Hyland (2013), education also plays a role in nurturing ethical values and building social capital, contributing to the promotion of sustainable solutions for society. One of the key goals of sustainable development in education is to foster sustainable awareness through practical activities. Small actions such as saving energy, reducing waste, and recycling not only help protect the environment but also contribute to building a sustainable lifestyle. However, as Mueller (2009) emphasized, education for sustainable development needs to go further, encouraging students to engage in solving major issues such as environmental crises, promoting a circular economy, and building a fair society. According to Hài (2024), raising sustainable awareness should start early, as children and adolescents are the most receptive and capable of changing behaviors. When equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills, they can make better decisions, contributing to the sustainable development

¹¹ Hyland, T. (2013). *Moral education, mindfulness, and social engagement: Fostering social capital through therapeutic Buddhist practice*. Sage Open, 3(4), p. 2158244013509253.

¹² Frank, P., Fischer, D., & Wamsler, C. (2020). "Mindfulness, education, and the sustainable development goals". *Quality Education*, p. 545 - 555.

of society. Sims et al. (2020) also affirm that sustainable education not only helps students face environmental crises but also helps them build resilience against issues such as climate anxiety.

Furthermore, sustainable development in education is not only for students but also requires the participation of teachers, parents, and the community. According to Miller-Porter (2024)¹³, educational programs require close coordination between schools and stakeholders to create a comprehensive and cohesive learning environment. This not only helps students learn but also promotes the application of sustainable values in daily life. Thus, sustainable development education also contributes to enhancing critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability. These skills are not only essential for solving current problems but also help prepare the younger generation for future challenges. As Paswan (2024)¹⁴ pointed out, the combination of education and ethical values can promote peace and sustainable development on a global scale. Sustainable development education is not only a tool to raise awareness but also an important foundation for building a future where people, society, and nature can coexist and develop harmoniously.

The Role of Mindfulness in Sustainable Education

Mindfulness plays a particularly important role in sustainable education because it helps students develop the ability to be aware of the impacts their actions can have on the environment and society. In the current context, where issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequality are becoming increasingly serious, educating environmental awareness is more essential than ever. Mindfulness, to nurture awareness, encourages students to pay attention to their every action and recognize the connection between individual actions and their effects on the community and the planet.

Practicing techniques like “environmental mindfulness meditation” not only helps students connect more deeply with nature but also helps them develop a sustainable and respectful relationship with the world around them. When students take the time to observe and feel the environment mindfully, they gradually become more aware of environmental issues more clearly and deeply. Mindfulness helps them notice seemingly small things that have lasting impacts, such as excessive use of natural resources, food waste, or the habit of littering. These actions can be changed through awareness and mindfulness. Research has shown that applying mindfulness in education can help enhance awareness and reduce anxiety, especially for students facing increasing environmental challenges. Mindfulness not only helps students understand environmental issues but also helps them maintain a positive and responsible attitude toward taking action to address those issues. Practicing mindfulness in the context of sustainable education encourages students to act responsibly

¹³ Miller-Porter, A. (2024). *Mindfulness in Sustainability Education*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, p. 11.

¹⁴ Paswan, T. C. Phát triển bền vững và hòa bình thế giới: định hướng Phật giáo. *Lãnh đạo bằng chánh niệm vì hòa bình bền vững*, p. 253.

not only for themselves but also for the community and the planet.¹⁵

(1) Mindfulness, through nurturing awareness and attention, can become a powerful tool in promoting sustainable education. It not only helps students learn about environmental protection but also practice protective actions from a young age. When equipped with knowledge and awareness through mindfulness education, the younger generation will become responsible citizens, capable of proactively and effectively facing future environmental challenges.¹⁶ These skills are not only important in addressing current environmental issues but also serve as the foundation for building a sustainable future for the next generation.

3.3. Integration of Buddhist mindfulness into modern education

In the context of modern education, the application of mindfulness is not only a method for stress reduction but also a strategy to enhance the quality of learning and promote holistic human development. Mindfulness practices should be tailored to specific groups, from preschool children to teachers and lecturers, to achieve optimal results.

Preschool children: Shaping awareness from an early age breathing and body awareness activities: Preschool children need simple and engaging methods to develop mindfulness. Guiding them to practice exercises like “deep breath in, blow the balloon out” not only helps them become aware of their breath but also supports their ability to focus and regulate emotions. **Mindful storytelling:** Short stories about love, gratitude, and patience help children understand emotions while also developing the habit of listening and focusing on the present moment. **Practicing gratitude through play:** Activities like “Gratitude Circle” allow children to share what makes them happy, fostering gratitude and social connection.

Primary School Students: Developing focus and creativity mindful art exercises: Encouraging students to draw or color in a quiet state, focusing on every detail and color, helps develop creativity and concentration. **Mindfulness box:** A box containing objects like sand, seashells, or small balls, when used, encourages children to focus on sensory perception, reduce stress, and improve concentration. **Focus games:** Games such as “Listening to Sounds” teach students how to listen and recognize, enhancing their focus during learning activities.

Secondary and High School students: Writing a diary in mindfulness: Writing a diary in mindfulness is an effective method for students to recognize their emotions and thoughts without judgment, thus developing self-awareness. **Short mindfulness meditation:** Short meditation sessions, 5-10

¹⁵ Sims, L., Rocque, R., & Desmarais, M. É. (2020). Enabling students to face the environmental crisis and climate change with resilience: inclusive environmental and sustainability education approaches and strategies for coping with eco-anxiety. *International Journal of Higher Education and Sustainability*, 3 (2), p. 112 - 131.

¹⁶ Da Silva, L., & Wise, S, (2006), “Parent perspectives on childcare quality among a culturally diverse sample”, *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 31(3), p. 6 - 14.

minutes long, at the beginning or end of class, help students reduce stress, improve concentration, and boost mental health. Compassionate group activities: Group discussions on compassion and empathy help students understand and apply these values in daily life, thus building a positive school community.

University students: Mindful Skills Course: Organizing short courses on meditation, emotion management, and positive thinking helps students balance life and study more effectively. Meditation practice in libraries or quiet spaces: Creating mindfulness spaces on campus for students to practice meditation, recharge, and improve focus. Social projects: Encouraging students to participate in community projects to practice compassion and social responsibility through hands-on activities, fostering sustainable relationships with the community.

Teachers and lecturers: Role Models for the Learning Community Teachers play a central role in integrating mindfulness into the classroom. Training teachers in mindfulness not only helps them manage work-related stress but also enables them to become role models for students to follow. Teachers need to develop mindfulness skills to create a friendly, peaceful learning environment where students can grow intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Furthermore, teachers should focus on building positive relationships with students, helping them feel supported and loved. When teachers practice mindfulness, they can inspire students, helping them develop the necessary skills to face challenges in both their studies and life. Mindfulness will be a powerful tool to help teachers maintain calmness and clarity in any situation, thus creating a healthy and effective learning environment.¹⁷ Through the development and application of these methods, teachers not only enhance the quality of education but also contribute to the creation of a sustainable learning community, where students not only gain knowledge but also learn how to live harmoniously and responsibly towards society and the environment.

(1) Mindfulness training programs: Offer in-depth courses that help teachers develop stress management skills, build positive relationships with students, and maintain emotional balance. (2) Daily meditation practice: Allocate brief moments before or after work hours for teachers to practice meditation, helping them maintain peace of mind and clarity in their teaching. (3) Support for colleagues: Establish mindfulness practice groups within schools, where teachers can share experiences and support each other in maintaining mindfulness practices. The integration of mindfulness into education not only enhances the quality of learning but also contributes to building a humane, harmonious, and sustainable society.

¹⁷ Ritchhart, R., & Perkins, D. N. (2000). "Life in the mindful classroom: Nurturing the disposition of mindfulness". *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(1), p. 27 - 47.

IV. CONCLUSION

Buddhist mindfulness offers a comprehensive and profound method for teaching compassion and sustainable development awareness in modern education. When integrated into the educational system, mindfulness is not just a technique to help students improve concentration and reduce stress, but also an essential tool for developing humanistic values, building character, and nurturing students' spirits. Mindfulness practice helps students learn not only to listen to themselves but also to listen to the world around them with care and understanding.

By promoting awareness and empathy, mindfulness helps students recognize the impact of their actions and decisions on society and the environment. This is a critical step in fostering environmental protection awareness and building a sustainable society. Mindfulness encourages students to view issues from a holistic and deep perspective, enabling them to act responsibly and sustainably, not just for personal gain, but also for the benefit of the community and future generations. The integration of mindfulness into education also contributes to improving student's mental health. Research has shown that mindfulness can help reduce anxiety, stress, and insecurity while enhancing inner peace. This not only helps students overcome academic challenges but also prepares them to face difficulties in life. When students can confront life's issues with a resilient mindset, they become stronger, and more resilient, and develop effective problem-solving skills.

Mindfulness in education is a path towards a humanistic education, where every student learns how to live responsibly and with empathy. When compassion and awareness of sustainable development are nurtured in student's hearts from an early age, we are helping to build a peaceful, harmonious, and compassionate world. A generation of students raised with these values will have the ability to bring about positive changes, not only in their communities but also globally. Therefore, integrating mindfulness into education is not just an option but an essential requirement for building a sustainable and humane future.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: SCHOLARLY PAPERS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK 2025 IN VIETNAM

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Abstract:

Although the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were introduced in 2015, they were preceded by a series of major world conferences since 1972, including the Stockholm Conference, the Rio Conference, and the 1992 Earth Summit. The Earth Summit II, held at the United Nations headquarters in New York in 1997, further paved the way for the establishment of the SDGs. Additionally, UNESCO-led initiatives such as Education for All (1990) and the Millennium Development Goals (2000) played significant roles in integrating global development efforts into the SDG framework. Compassionate sustainable development refers to meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, there was notable progress toward achieving the SDGs. However, the global economic downturn and severe crises in many countries have reversed much of the progress made by 2019. According to UN estimates, by 2024 - just six years before the 2030 deadline—SDG progress is projected to be at only 17% of the expected levels. The success of compassionate sustainable development ultimately depends on human behavior. While social, economic, and institutional factors influence

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sustainability, human behavior remains the key determinant in achieving long-term development goals. Environmental mindfulness is fundamental to advancing the SDGs, making education a crucial tool for fostering transformation across all age groups. Cultivating mindfulness at every level of society is essential to shaping behaviors that support sustainable development. The integration of mindfulness and education is, therefore, a foundational requirement for compassionate development that sustains the planet's resources. Education and mindfulness have a profound, catalytic impact on individual well-being and the future of our planet.

Keywords: *Compassionate sustainable development, mindfulness in education, mindfulness and behavior, role of education, integration of education and mindfulness.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Although high standards in education and human development have been achieved today, particularly since the Education for All (EFA) movement in 1990, which promoted universal primary education in every country, the world now faces unsustainable outcomes starkly reflected in global warming, climate change, natural disasters, and human distress. The formal education received by past and present generations, though highly academic, has proven deficient in critical areas. A lack of emphasis on preserving and protecting the environment is one such oversight that education has never directly addressed. Vast industrial emissions, waste disposal, deforestation, and over-extraction of natural resources since the Industrial Revolution - further intensified by globalization and open economies—pose severe threats to human existence. The global community, particularly United Nations-led development agencies, has now mobilized to find solutions to these challenges. Human-centered development has significantly contributed to the current crisis, affecting future generations. The depletion of resources, intensification of natural disasters, climate change, and global warming—exacerbated by ozone layer damage—have made it impossible to return to environmental normalcy. The only viable solution is to halt further deterioration and adopt sustainable measures that promote compassionate development, ensuring that future generations can meet their survival needs. The mission of sustainable development is to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Education is identified as the most powerful intervention in achieving these goals. However, unless adults and children become acutely aware of the severe threats facing humanity, conventional education alone will not yield the expected outcomes.

II. UNDERSTANDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Although the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established in 2015, they were a result of four major world conferences since 1972¹. The

¹ Environment and sustainable development, Stockholm 1972, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/stockholm1972>

first United Nations (UN) Conference in Stockholm in 1972 was followed by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 - known as the Rio Conference or Earth Summit Environment and Sustainable Development, Rio Earth Summit 1992,² then the UN General Assembly Special Session on Sustainable Development in New York in 1997³ better known as Earth Summit II; and finally, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002⁴ Besides these, the UNESCO-led Education for All initiative in 1990⁵ and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000⁶ also contributed to integrating all development efforts to SDGs. On September 25, 2015, the UN officially declared the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), setting a target for achievement by 2030 for the global community. The 17 SDGs—no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water, and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work, and economic growth—aim to eradicate poverty and protect the planet from climate change, which threatens human existence. The global community adopted these 17 goals, developed country-specific strategic plans, and mobilized resources. Most countries made reasonable progress toward achieving the SDGs until the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global efforts in 2020. According to the SDG Monitoring Report by the UN, the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, escalating conflicts, geopolitical tensions, and worsening climate crises have severely hindered progress. With just six years remaining, current efforts fall far short of what is needed to meet the SDG targets. Only 17% of indicators show progress sufficient for achievement by 2030, and a mere 12% of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are currently on track.⁷

The United Nations and countries worldwide increasingly recognize the importance of education for sustainable development.⁸ Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO (2009 - 2017), stated “A fundamental change is needed in the way we think about education’s role in global development because it has a catalytic impact on the well-being of individuals and the future

² Environment and sustainable development, Rio Earth Summit 1992, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992>

³ 2nd Earth Summit: <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/newyork1997>

⁴ Earth Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/johannesburg2002>

⁵ Education for All - The Jomtien Conference in 1990; <https://world-education-blog.org/2014/08/22/the-jomtien-conference-in-1990-was-a-game-changer-for-education/>

⁶ Millenium Summit 2000: <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/newyork2000#:~:text=The%20Millennium%20Summit%2C%20held%20from,and%20government%20of%20all%20time.>

⁷ UN (2024): *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*, January 31 2025, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/>

⁸ UNESCO (2018) A. Leicht, J. Heiss and W. J. Byun (eds.): *Issues and trends in Education for Sustainable Development*, January 31 2025, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261445>

of our planet. Now, more than ever, education has a responsibility to be in gear with 21st-century challenges and aspirations and foster the right types of values and skills that will lead to sustainable and inclusive growth and peaceful coexistence”.⁹ It is evident that among the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), education serves as a crosscutting intervention essential for transforming human behavior to achieve these goals by 2030. UNESCO has emphasized that education, which is crucial for achieving all SDGs, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The Education 2030 Framework for Action guides the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitment.¹⁰

III. IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SDG

Although governments have developed plans to achieve the SDGs, the progress made until the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, along with multiple other crises, has reversed positive trends toward achieving these goals. COVID-19 has altered the political, environmental, and economic aspects of human existence, affecting psychological well-being and sustainability, which in turn impacts people’s living standards and quality of life. The COVID-19 era led to social problems and international crises in the early 2020s. As of April 13, 2024, 7,010,681 people have died from the coronavirus outbreak. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated in late 2023 that the pandemic caused a loss of US\$28 trillion in economic output from 2020 onward. Fifty-four countries faced a serious debt crisis, with 14 countries at risk of both public and private debt crises, 22 at risk of a private sector debt crisis, and 21 at risk of a public sector debt crisis. Despite global efforts to mitigate poverty through the SDGs, poverty levels have increased significantly. Sri Lanka successfully reduced poverty to just 4% by 2019, but this figure rose to 12% due to the debt crisis in 2024. A decline in income has led to a sharp rise in global poverty. Due to the pandemic, about 97 million more people now live on less than \$1.90 a day, raising the global poverty rate from 7.8% to 9.1%. As of today, 8.5% of the global population – almost 700 million people – live on less than \$2.15 per day, the extreme poverty threshold for low-income countries.¹¹ Moreover, school-based education was severely disrupted, and in several countries, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the Philippines, schools remained closed for well over a year. UNICEF and UNESCO have highlighted this setback as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on schooling and learning (UNICEF, 2022).¹²

⁹ UNESCO (2017): *Education for Sustainable Development Goals Learning Objectives Education*; January 31 2025, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444>

¹⁰ UNESCO CLD 815.18, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114766>

¹¹ World Bank Group: Poverty Overview: October 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

¹² UNICEF 2023: *EDUCATION IN A POST-COVID WORLD: Towards a RAPID Transformation*: <https://www.unicef.org/media/135736/file/EducationinaPost-COVIDWorld.pdf>

IV. HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Human history is full of wars and civil conflicts. Struggles for power stem from human greed and the desire to dominate others. Throughout history, discrimination among humans has been a common phenomenon. Skin color, tribe, race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, caste, culture, and sexual orientation are some of the common criteria used by individuals, communities, and nations to discriminate against one another. Despite significant advancements in human societies, including achievements in education, discrimination against fellow humans persists. In public forums, powerful nations advocate for equity, equality, and fair treatment. This is also reflected in national and international declarations. However, these facades have suppressed direct discrimination, while indirect discrimination and marginalization have become the diplomatic tools of powerful groups, including international agencies at the highest levels of society. These same individuals, leaders, and organizations subtly harm others while favoring certain communities, races, and nations at the expense of others. Such behavior breeds tension and humiliation, leading to unrest, anger, hatred, and resentment among individuals, as well as conflicts, distrust, terrorism, and wars among communities and nations. These are destructive behaviors that hinder the achievement of the SDGs.

The entire globe is increasingly in distress as a result of escalating natural disasters, global warming, and the depletion of resources, which pose alarming threats to human existence. Unless every individual is aware of sustainable development, future generations will not enjoy the quality of life that the present generation does. No nation can achieve the SDGs if its people do not actively support strategic interventions toward these goals. Sustainable development depends on individual behavior, and no government can implement effective programs unless people recognize the gravity of these issues. Every individual must recognize the importance of themselves and their households in actively contributing to sustainable development. No government or international organization can achieve the dream of sustainable development unless people are committed to the SDGs. This is no exaggeration. Individuals and households serve as the foundation for building stronger, more resilient, and sustainable communities. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how individuals and families can be involved and motivated to work toward the SDGs. This calls for shaping individual behavior to be more conscious and mindful of the SDGs.

Disparities widen daily within households, among local communities, at political levels, and in national and international arenas. Equity and equality are enshrined in the constitutions of all governments. Yet poverty, starvation, lack of access to healthcare and education, denial of human rights, and resource deprivation threaten human security and dignity. Such injustices and misfortunes breed anger and create tension, leading to unrest, conflict, violence, crime, and destruction. These factors hinder the achievement of the SDGs.

V. FUTURE GENERATIONS AND COMPASSIONATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Brundtland Report (1987),¹³ published by the World Commission on Environment and Development, stated that “sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This commission was established in response to mounting concerns over ozone depletion, global warming, and other environmental challenges hindering efforts to improve the global standard of living. However, this interpretation primarily focused on environmental issues, as sustainable development was often understood in terms of environmental degradation and resource depletion.

The UNDP (2015) defined sustainable development in terms of economic and social development, as well as environmental protection. All these sectors are interdependent. The 17 SDGs directly relate to these three sectors. Thus, sustainable development is built upon the following dimensions: (1) The Social Dimension, where individuals commit to using available resources responsibly, ensuring that future generations can also benefit. (2) The Economic Dimension, where individuals and societies ensure the continuation of economic welfare for future generations. (3) The Institutional Dimension, where institutions make decisions with a long-term perspective to serve future generations.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) focuses on education, which is a cross-cutting intervention essential for achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Education is a key intervention that enables societies to address various challenges, as none of the SDGs can be achieved without educating people about these issues. In general, sustainable development refers to policies, projects, and investments that generate present benefits without compromising environmental, social, and personal well-being in the future. Such policies are often referred to as “green policies” because they aim to minimize the environmental impact of development and prevent resource depletion. Sustainable development is an approach to growth and human development that aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future. In other words, sustainable development aims to ensure the continuity of both human and animal life by conserving natural resources, preserving environmental gifts, and safeguarding human achievements for future generations.

It is important to understand the value of compassion, which is the ability to feel sympathy for others. In the context of sustainability, compassion means that people today consider future generations with empathy and take action to conserve the planet and its resources to ensure their survival. A mindful person, rather than a mindless one, can effectively address sustainability challenges. A

¹³ Brundtland Gro Harlem (1987), *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, United Nations; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>

mindless person lacks direction in their thoughts, fails to perceive reality, and is often unable to cultivate compassionate behavior.

VI. HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND THE HUMAN MIND

The human mind determines an individual's actions and governs human behavior. In Buddhist theory, this is expressed as “cittena niyati loko–cittena parikkassati, cittassa ekadammassa- sabbeva vasamanvagū” “The world is directed by the mind; by the mind, it is swept away. All follow the authority of one thing: the mind.” (*Samyutta Nikāya, Citta Sutta*)¹⁴ The mind continuously generates feelings (*cetanā*), which lead to moods, ideas, and behaviors – an unstoppable process, even for those in meditation. The Buddhist model of the mind suggests that consciousness is a continuous stream (*bhavaṅga-sota*), with the mind (*manasa*) being central to self-exploration and transformation. A shift in thinking and a strong sense of social values are necessary to cultivate pro-sustainable behavior. When an individual experiences discrimination, marginalization, or denial, antisocial tendencies may naturally emerge, leading to distraction and distress. Under such circumstances, one cannot expect positive thoughts or peaceful behavior. Disruptions to peace hinder sustainable development, as disparities and discrimination create space in the human mind for resentment and retaliation against injustice. Conversely, when individuals or communities are treated fairly and recognized, their behaviors become more positive, contributing to emotional well-being. The Theravāda school introduces the concept of the mind as a fundamental factor of existence, referred to as the “life-stream” (*bhavaṅga-sota and bhavaṅga citta*). This life-stream consists of a sequence of mental moments shaping one's state of being and perception. According to Buddhist theory, consciousness arises through seven basic cognitive functions (*sabba citta sādāraṇa* – Universal Mental Factors): *Phassa* (contact), *Vedanā* (feeling), *Saññā* (perception), *Cetanā* (volition), *Ekaggatā* (one-pointedness or agreement), *Jvitindriya* (life faculty), and *Manasikāra* (attention). There are 52 mental factors¹⁵ in Buddhist psychology, categorized as Universal Mental Factors (7), Particulars (6), Immoral (14), Beautiful (19), Abstinences (3), Illimitable (2), and Wisdom (1).

To achieve sustainable development goals, all individuals within a community or nation must commit to adopting proactive behaviors that ensure sustainability. Sustainable development can only be driven by the ‘righteous’ and ‘proactive’ actions of individuals. No government can achieve SDGs without the commitment of its people to the necessary practices. Therefore, educating both the young and the old for transformation is essential, as education shapes behavior. However, despite the widespread availability of formal education, commitment to SDG goals remains lacking, even among students. The current education system is primarily focused on passing examinations rather than

¹⁴ *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya*. Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.) (2000). Boston: Wisdom Publications. ISBN 0-86171-331-1.

¹⁵ Mental factors (Buddhism); [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_factors_\(Buddhism\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_factors_(Buddhism)), February 4th 2025.

transforming society for sustainable development. As a result, today's formal education falls significantly short of preparing individuals and communities to contribute meaningfully to SDG achievement.

Buddhists understand that healing the self and healing society are interconnected, making both inner and outer work essential and interrelated.¹⁶ Buddhist teachings emphasize the interdependence of all living beings, including humans and the natural world, underscoring that the well-being of the environment is crucial to the well-being of all life forms. Early Buddhist environmental ethics encouraged followers to protect clean water, safeguard sacred trees, and make food choices that minimize harm.¹⁷ Similarly, the *Vanaropa Sutta* (SN. I) praises those who plant groves, stating that their merits grow both day and night. In Buddhism, nature is not seen as an adversary but as a partner in achieving peace. Throughout his life, the Buddha frequently engaged with nature, often teaching in forests and woodland parks, making the natural world an intrinsic part of his teachings (Fronsdal)¹⁸ According to Buddhist philosophy, everything—including work and family relationships—reflects an individual's inner life. Perception is shaped by the self and fluctuates according to one's inner state. Therefore, if individuals change themselves, their circumstances will inevitably change as well (Sokaglobal.org). Nichiren,¹⁹ a Japanese Buddhist monk, reinforced this idea by stating: "If the minds of living beings are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds." This perspective highlights the critical role of mindfulness in achieving a sustainable planet.

VII. MINDFULNESS AND BEHAVIOR

The concept of mindfulness originates from the Pāli term "*sati*", which literally translates to memory, recognition, and consciousness. The path to overcoming suffering is called the Eightfold Path (*ariyaṭṭaṅgikamagga*), and its seventh element is "*sammā sati*" or right mindfulness (Bodhi, 2013). In the last 20 years, mindfulness has received renewed global attention. The importance of emotional intelligence (EQ) for successful living gained prominence in the 1990s with Daniel Goleman's book *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998).²⁰ Traditional philosophy often viewed the mind as a mysterious internal realm that governed outward physical behavior. Some philosophers even considered the mind to be a spiritual entity.

¹⁶ Paula Green (1991): *Buddhist Non-violence, the Mindfulness' Bell*, Vol 4.

¹⁷ Norman, K, R; *Poems of Early Buddhist Nuns: Therīgāthā*. Oxford: Pali Text Soc, 1989.

¹⁸ Gil Fronsdal: *Buddhism in Nature*; Insight Meditation Center; <https://www.insight-meditationcenter.org/books-articles/buddhism-in-nature/#:~:text=In%20Buddhism%20nature%20is%20not,Buddha%20and%20heard%20his%20teachings>.

¹⁹ Nichiren (1222 – 1282), the priest who established the form of Buddhism embraced by members of the Soka Gakkai, is a unique figure in Japanese social and religious history.

²⁰ Daniel Goleman (1999): *Working with Emotional Intelligence*; Bantam Books, New York.

In the Buddhist philosophical vocabulary, there are at least three terms for what is ordinarily designated as “mind”: *manas* (mental power or mental faculty), *viññāna* (discernment or consciousness faculty), and *citta* (mind or thought). Breaking every experience down to its irreducible constituents holds the key to understanding both the dynamics of the mental and the resulting activities associated with the karmic process.²¹ The mind and its ever-flowing thoughts, or *citta*, lead to “behaviors”. Behavior has two forms: covert and overt. What matters most is behavior itself, as it directly interacts with people, society, the environment, and resources.

The mind, or *manas*, has a continuous flow of *citta* (thoughts). These thoughts cannot be stopped by any means, not even through meditation. This is the reality of the mind and its thought process. Mindfulness is a practice that helps individuals understand that the thoughts arising in the mind must be righteously managed by the consciousness faculty or *viññāna*. This requires *sammā sati*, meaning righteous awareness or right mindfulness. Righteousness refers to doing what is right obeying moral principles or ethical laws. *Sammā Sati* is “correct” or “right” mindfulness. In Buddhist theory, “to bear in mind” further implies “bearing in mind the Dhammas.” According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *sati* means maintaining awareness of reality, where sense perceptions are understood as illusions, allowing one to perceive the true nature of phenomena (Wikipedia).²²

In the context of sustainable development, the Buddhist perspective emphasizes understanding the reality of development challenges with a futuristic outlook. A mindful person’s behavior leads to righteous or right actions, known as *sammā kammanta*. In contrast, a mindless person is unlikely to exhibit realistic or righteous behavior. When behavior is righteous, an individual naturally aligns with the right view, speech, conduct, livelihood, and effort—key elements of the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyaṭṭaṅgikamagga*) in Buddhism. The author’s advocacy here is for secular living rather than the attainment of *nibbāna*, the supreme goal in Buddhist ideology. Right mindfulness (*sammā sati*) plays a crucial role in guiding a person toward a right livelihood that fosters positive conduct for sustainable development. Mindfulness inherently cultivates righteous behavior, making individuals less likely to violate the principles of compassionate and sustainable development.

VIII. MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

Education is the gateway to fostering such a behavioral foundation for change. This mission must be embraced by all forms of education—informal, non-formal, and formal—to cultivate mindfulness and compassion among people of all ages, ensuring their commitment to sustainable development goals.

²¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – Indian Buddhism #4, 2009, 2012.

²² The *Abhidhammattha-sangaha*; <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abhidhammattha-sangaha> (cited 4th February 2025).

Repeated meta-analyses of mindfulness and education-related research studies clearly illustrate that mindfulness training can bring positive behavioral outcomes for teachers and students. By adhering to the basic principles of transformative learning in education for sustainable development and socio-emotional competencies, both adults and children can be transformed. Being conscious of one's behavior and committing to environmental preservation, particularly of fast-depleting resources, is one of the most promising efforts toward sustainability. However, fostering these values is challenging unless school communities collaborate with parents. Parenting is a key intervention in shaping a child's behavior, as parents play a crucial role in inculcating values during early childhood. Schools must provide parent education that emphasizes the importance of adopting environmentally friendly and ethically responsible behavior at home. Today, schools are well-integrated with parents and the broader schooling community, making them a vital platform for promoting sustainable behaviors. While mindfulness practices may have a relatively weak direct effect, they can still positively influence key socio-emotional competencies such as emotional regulation, empathy, social connectedness, and resilience, albeit with varying degrees of impact. Guidance is also needed on how to effectively implement mindfulness practices to enhance education for sustainable development (ESD).²³

Beyond all these aspects, education serves as the gateway to the three key components of compassionate development outlined by the UNDP (2015) for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These components include (1) the Social Dimension, (2) the Economic Dimension, and (3) the Institutional Dimension, all of which emphasize the responsible use of available resources without compromising the needs and well-being of future generations. This can only be achieved if individuals and communities remain mindful of their actions, actively working to preserve, conserve, and protect the environment while preventing waste and the overexploitation of natural resources. Mindfulness training, therefore, is a fundamental approach to enhancing human consciousness and mental capacity, ultimately fostering 'righteous behavior' that aligns with the principles of sustainable development.

The current understanding of human behavior and environmental degradation provides a broader and more detailed perspective on how human actions impact the environment and all living beings. Disasters, tragedies, and the exploitation of natural resources have become increasingly evident in society. Humans not only drive environmental changes but are also affected by them and remain the only agents capable of addressing these challenges. Today, societies dominate the Earth's major biophysical cycles and bear responsibility for critical environmental crises, including climate change and biodiversity loss.

²³ Ana M. Gómez-Olmedo, Icon, Carmen Valor, Icon & Isabel Carrero (June 2020): *Mindfulness in Education for Sustainable Development: Nurturing Socioemotional Competencies through a Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13504622.2020.1777264>

Addressing these challenges is impossible without altering human behavior—both individually and collectively. Raising awareness about the root causes of human actions is essential in fostering attitudes that align with sustainable thinking.”²⁴ In education, this perspective supports the use of mindfulness as an intervention to combat environmental ignorance, aggressive tendencies, and maladaptive behaviors that threaten human existence.

Mindfulness and education together help mitigate deviant behaviors in industries, thereby improving institutional systems that prevent harmful emissions, environmental pollution, and the over-utilization of depleting natural resources. The second rationale is that applying mindfulness as both a practice and a resource strengthens factors that contribute to conscious behavior among individuals and communities toward sustainable development goals. Such training not only transforms individuals but also fosters new leadership to address these pressing issues. In education, this is reflected in programs and studies exploring how mindfulness contributes to resilience against stress, benefiting both teachers and students. Mindfulness is argued to help learners and educators cope with the demands and challenges of educational settings (Meiklejohn et al. 2012).²⁵ Furthermore, research on mindfulness-based teacher training initiatives suggests that personal mindfulness training enhances teachers’ well-being, self-efficacy, classroom management skills, and their ability to build supportive relationships with students. Since education systems are closely connected with parents and communities, teachers can be mobilized to address these issues through effective programs with community support (Meiklejohn et al. 2012). Additionally, mindfulness is argued to enhance the quality of educational interventions (Beauchemin et al. 2008).²⁶

More recently, a fourth potential aspect of mindfulness has drawn the attention of educators—its role in cultivating broader ethical virtues, a topic of ongoing debate in mindfulness research.²⁷ Ethical virtues are moral characteristics that individuals develop through learning and practice, aimed at

²⁴ Aiman Siddiqui (2024): *Human Behavior on Environmental Degradation*, Conference Paper, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379906921_Human_Behavior_on_Environmental_Degradation

²⁵ John H Meiklejohn Catherine Phillips M Lee Freedman Show, Amy Saltzman (2013): *Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239938765_Integrating_Mindfulness_Training_into_K-12_Education_Fostering_the_Resilience_of_Teachers_and_Students#fullTextFileContent

²⁶ James D Beauchemin Tiffany L Hutchins Tiffany L Hutchins Fiona Patterson (2008): *Mindfulness Meditation May Lessen Anxiety, Promote Social Skills, and Improve Academic Performance Among Adolescents With Learning Disabilities*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/244918853_Mindfulness_Meditation_May_Lessen_Anxiety_Promote_Social_Skills_and_Improve_Academic_Performance_Among_Adolescents_With_Learning_Disabilities

²⁷ Grossman, 2015; Monteiro et al., 2015.

fostering a meaningful and well-lived life. Rather than simply adhering to rules or guidelines, the cultivation of ethical virtues—such as honesty, courage, and compassion—focuses on developing positive character traits. In this context, the Dhamma and mindfulness training serve as pathways for nurturing virtues in individuals and instilling moral values that contribute to achieving sustainable development goals. In conclusion, I wish to state that:

The Dhamma is not merely an idea but a mode of conduct and a way of life. Education, as a behavioral science, brings lasting behavioral changes, shaping actions and empowering learners to make informed decisions and take responsible actions. True behavior transformation is a lasting change and the pathway to cultivating mindfulness in every action. Mindfulness, or the conscious awareness of behavior, transforms ecological principles into habits of mind, body, and heart –forming the foundation of righteous living that paves the way for compassionate and sustainable development.

IX. CONCLUSION

Sustainable development, at its core, necessitates a delicate equilibrium between social, economic, and environmental imperatives, ensuring that present needs are met without compromising the ability of future generations to fulfill their own. The realization of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) is contingent upon the collective efforts of individuals, communities, and institutions in making informed, ethically responsible choices. Within this framework, education plays an indispensable role - not merely as a means of disseminating knowledge but as a transformative process that nurtures ethical awareness, mindfulness (*sati*), and a deep sense of interconnectedness with all sentient beings. Buddhist teachings provide profound insights into the cultivation of mindfulness and its ethical implications in addressing global sustainability challenges. Mindfulness, as a practice of heightened self-awareness and introspective clarity, serves as a foundation for conscious decision-making and compassionate action. By fostering an acute awareness of the interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*) between human actions and environmental consequences, Buddhist principles encourage a shift from exploitative tendencies toward responsible stewardship of natural and social resources. When integrated into educational paradigms, mindfulness not only enhances cognitive and emotional well-being but also instills a moral compass that aligns personal aspirations with the collective good.

From a Buddhist standpoint, sustainability is not merely a pragmatic goal but an ethical imperative rooted in the principles of non-harming (*ahiṃsā*), generosity (*dāna*), and right livelihood (*samyag-ājīva*). The ethical dimension of sustainability demands a reevaluation of consumerist habits, an acknowledgment of the karmic consequences of human actions, and an intentional movement toward a more harmonious coexistence with the natural world. Education that incorporates these dimensions can empower individuals to recognize their intrinsic responsibility in shaping a more equitable, compassionate, and sustainable society.

Ultimately, the integration of mindfulness into educational systems represents a paradigm shift toward a more conscious, ethically attuned society. By cultivating mindfulness, individuals develop the capacity for discernment, restraint, and altruism—virtues that are indispensable in addressing the pressing ecological and social challenges of the modern era. True sustainability, therefore, is not solely an external pursuit but an inward transformation that arises through self-awareness and ethical responsibility. It is through these mindful and compassionate actions, supported by collective engagement, that humanity can forge a path toward genuine sustainability, ensuring a just and thriving future for all.

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UN VESAK DAY: INTERNATIONAL INTERFAITH MINDFULNESS DAY

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Abstract:

Vesak Day commemorates three pivotal events in the Buddha's life: his birth, enlightenment, and passing into *Maha Parinibbana*. As Buddhism spread across regions, Vesak celebrations also evolved, blending local traditions while maintaining their core significance.

More than a religious observance, Vesak emphasizes ethical living, compassion, and mindfulness meditation as pathways to peace and liberation. Beyond its Buddhist origins, mindfulness meditation has gained global recognition, secular and inter-religious aspects, as a practice that enhances physical and mental well-being across cultures and traditions.

This article proposes recognizing the UN Vesak celebration as "International Interfaith Mindfulness Day". Such a designation would highlight Vesak's universal themes and provide a global platform for fostering mindfulness, interfaith dialogue, and collective reflection. Establishing Vesak Day as International Interfaith Mindfulness Day would inspire a worldwide commitment to peace, happiness, and harmony, exemplifying the Buddha's timeless teachings and their enduring relevance in today's interconnected world.

Keywords: *Vesak, mindfulness, interfaith, meditation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Vesak Day is an annual observance for Buddhists globally and is regarded as one of the most sacred dates. The day is also considered one of the auspicious days in the Buddhist calendar that marks the special day of celebration every year due to its connection with the life of the Buddha. It is to commemorate the three pivotal events in the life of the Buddha: his birth, his enlightenment

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and *Maha Parinibbana*, his passing away.¹ These days, each highlighting the Buddha's profound understanding of suffering and the path to liberation, are central to the spiritual observance of Vesak. As Buddhism spread across the world, particularly during the reign of King Ashoka of India the celebration of Vesak evolved, integrating local traditions while maintaining its core significance.²

The Vesak is a day that reminds people to walk on the path to peace by practicing sharing and caring, living an ethical life, and understanding the natural phenomena of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Furthermore, it serves as a promotion of a life of kindness and compassion, mindful living, and attaining liberation.

The Vesak celebration emphasizes practices beyond mere worship and praise of the Buddha. Primarily, it focuses on participating in religious activities, such as giving offerings, observing moral practices, listening to *dhamma* talks, and engaging in mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness meditation is an essential part of the practice to gain the right understanding and liberation but not exclusive to Buddhism. Accordingly, the Vesak celebration could promote mindfulness not only in a secular context³ but also as a universal platform for interfaith awareness and practice, which has not been identified so far. Mindfulness meditation is one of the effective pathways to peace and liberation for everyone, regardless of their background, religion, ethnicity, or nationality, which is also supported by the UNDV declaration 2013.⁴ Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to recognize "The Vesak Day" as an "International Interfaith Mindfulness Day."

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VESAK

The day of Vesak or *Visakha Puja* (Thai) is the day of worshipping or merit-making event for Buddhists all over the world. The most venerable Phra Brahmagunabhorn explains the term "*Visakha Puja* is an abbreviation derived from the Pali term *Visakhapunnami* Puja. It is sometimes written as Vesak, which is founded on the Sanskrit term *Vaisakhapournami puja*."⁵ On this sacred day, Buddhists believed that coincidentally the birth of the Buddha-to-be (Pali: *Bodhisatta*, skt: *Bodhisatva*), his attaining enlightenment and entering *Mahaparinibbana* or passing away all these three events took place on the full moon day of Vesak Lunar month.

The legends suggest that on the full moon day of Vesak, the sixth lunar

¹ Phra Brahmagunabhorn, (2554 BE), *Important days for Thai Buddhists*, Thailand: Sahadhamma printings, p. 30.

² Vincent Smith (1901), *Rulers of India*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, p. 118.

³ UNDV declaration 2013, item number 8.

⁴ UNDV declaration 2013, item number 5; '...Spreading the Buddha's wisdom on the interconnectedness of all humans'.

⁵ Phramaha Hansa Dhammaso, (2011), *Vesak Day and Global Civilization*, Thailand: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya press, p. 6.

month,⁶ the *Bodhisatta* was born into the royal family of *Kapilavatthu* (Skt. *Kapilavastu*) at the beautiful grove named Lumbini, presently located in modern Nepal. He was named Prince *Siddhartha* (Skt. *Siddhartha*) and lived a princely luxurious life. At the age of 29, he left the palace in search of the truth and became a royal ascetic wandering around practising contemporary austerities in search of freedom. After six years of practice at the age of 35 at dawn on the full moon day of Vesak, 588 BC, 45 years before the Buddhist Era, he finally attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree at *Uruvena* village in the current *Bihar* State of India, known as *Bodhgaya*. Ever since, he has been known as the “Buddha”, the compassionate one, an enlightened one, a fully liberated one. For forty-five years after his enlightenment, the Buddha, out of compassion, tirelessly spread his findings for the good and happiness of all beings. Finally, at the age of eighty on the full moon day of Vesak, the Buddha traveled to the Sala Grove in *Kusinagara* modern India, and passed away.⁷

Therefore, Vesak Day is an auspicious day for Buddhists to celebrate the life of the Buddha out of gratitude and appreciation for his compassion in showing us the path to liberation. It is also known as “*Buddha Purnima*”, “*Buddha Jayanti*”⁸ or “*Swanyapunhi*”⁹ to commemorate the three important events in the life of the Buddha.

III. HISTORY OF VESAK CELEBRATION

It is understood that Vesak was not an organized celebration during the time of the Buddha. Nevertheless, a historian and Buddhist scholar, the late Venerable Sudarshan *Mahasthavira* of Nepal, advocated that the Vesak celebration very likely originated with the birth of Prince *Siddhartha* and his return to *Kapilavatthu*. He argued that the joyful occasion of Queen *Mahamaya*’s return to *Kapilavatthu* after the *Bodhisattva*’s birth in Lumbini Grove was a moment of great happiness for the people of the *Kapilavatthu*. They celebrated by gathering in the streets, singing, dancing, and decorating the city with flowers. This tradition, known as ‘*Swanyapunhi*’ in the Newari language, which means a celebration with flowers, is said to be the origin of the Vesak celebration. On the day of his attainment, he further argues that numerous celestial beings were present and celebrated by sprinkling flowers over the Buddha’s achievement. Similarly, on his passing away day, both celestial beings and humans worshipped him with great honor and respect

⁶ Scholarly The most widely accepted scholarly estimate places the year at 623 BC, which is technically 80 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. The current Buddhist Era is 2568 in Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, while other Buddhist traditions recognize it as 2567 BE.

⁷ Handy Inthisan, (2007), *Walking on the Path of the Buddha*, Thailand: Pimpinit Printing, p. 134.

⁸ IBC, (2009), *Vesak Day: The Buddha’s Birth, Enlightenment and Passing away*, Thailand: IBC, p. 1.

⁹ Sujankirti, (2007), *The Buddha and Baisakha Purnima*, Kathmandu: Nagar Mandapa Shreekirti Vihara, p. 16.

with flowers.¹⁰ This assumption may be plausible; however, one can argue that it is probably based on his faith and confidence in the Buddha. Historically it would be troublesome to accept it as the official Vesak celebration.

The first concrete historical records appeared to be from the time of King Ashoka. As Buddhism spread beyond the Indian continent with the support of King Ashoka, accounts indicate he organized Vesak Celebrations to pay great respect and honor to the Buddha. According to the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian who visited India around the 5th century records further confirm the Vesak celebration of a grand procession of the Buddha at *Pataliputta* that continued from the time of the Ashoka. According to the description, they made a four-wheeled chariot, and on it, they erected a structure of five stories by tying bamboo together... on the four sides are niches with a Buddha seated in each, and a Bodhisattva standing in attendance on him. Such celebrations continued even after the King Ashoka.¹¹ Unfortunately, the tradition was discontinued due to the political and religious landscape changing over time.

Another important piece of evidence appeared to be chronicles from Sri Lanka. *Mahavamsa*, one of the chronicles provides tangible records of the celebration of Vesak. According to these records, it is suggested that in the 5th - 6th century CE, the term Vesak was mentioned where it says that the King *Dutthagamani* (101 - 77 BC) of Sri Lanka organized twenty-four great Vesak Celebrations.¹² The chronicles also further record that the successors of King *Dutthagamani* also continued the tradition. It is also believed that this tradition was introduced to Sri Lanka with the expansion of Buddhism during the time of King Ashoka, where it received state patronage and flourished in Sri Lanka.¹³ Successively, the tradition was believed to be introduced to Thailand during the Sukhothai period. According to the *Nangnopphamat*, a book on the Loi Krathong Festival, a joyful and colour celebration took place in the city of Sukhothai. The Royal Family would observe *sila*, and precepts and perform many meritorious deeds.¹⁴

IV. SYMBOLISM AND SPIRIT OF VESAK

In the modern era, the Vesak celebration serves not only as a commemoration of the Buddha's life but also as a reminder of his teachings on mindfulness, compassion, and enlightenment. It calls individuals to commit to ethical conduct, the path of peace, and understanding, thus aligning their lives with the *Dharma*.

¹⁰ Sujankirti, (2007), *The Buddha and Baisakha Purnima*, Kath: N. M. Shreekirti Vihara, p. 16.

¹¹ Vincent Smith, (1901), *Rulers of India, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press*, p. 118., Sujankirti, (2007), *The Buddha and Baisakha Purnima*, p. 17.

¹² IBC, (2009), *Vesak Day: The Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and Passing away*, Thailand: IBC, p. 1.

¹³ Vincent Smith, (1901), *Rulers of India, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press*, p. 118.

¹⁴ IBC, (2009), *Vesak Day: The Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and Passing away*, p. 5.

Nowadays, Vesak is celebrated across the Buddhist world with rituals such as devotional activities; expression of respect and devotion by organizing processions of the Buddha image, lantern lighting, offering flowers, and decorating monasteries and streets. Lay Buddhists visit monasteries to offer food and other requisites to monastic and observe precepts as well as listen to the sermons to advance understanding as well as perform acts of charity and kindness to embody the Buddha's teachings on compassion and selflessness. Lastly, reflection through sermons and group meditations enhances spiritual growth and mindfulness. Nonetheless, while the core principles of Vesak remain consistent, different cultures bring unique elements to the observance such as:

- In Sri Lanka, lantern lighting, oil lamps, and vibrant decorations adorn homes and monasteries.
- In China, Vietnam, and Korea, the bathing of Buddha statues symbolizes purification.
- In Thailand, state holidays encouraged people to attend merit-making in different forms and participate in candlelit processions known as Wian Tian at temples.
- In Nepal, a procession of a decorated chariot with a Buddha image is taken around the city with traditional music bands and candlelit processions.¹⁵

These diverse customs emphasize Vesak's ability to unite people from various cultures while honoring the Buddha's timeless teachings.

V. RECOGNITION AS A UNIFIED BUDDHIST FESTIVAL

In 1950, during the inaugural World Fellowship of Buddhists conference in Colombo, Sri Lanka Vesak Day was officially acknowledged as a day to commemorate the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and passing.¹⁶ Similarly, almost half a century later, the United Nations resolution to celebrate Vesak marks a historic acknowledgment of the global significance of the Buddha's life and teachings. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1999, recognizing Vesak as an international observance.¹⁷

The United Nations resolution was initiated by predominantly Buddhist countries, particularly led by Sri Lanka, with support from other 33 nations with significant Buddhist populations, such as Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Bhutan. The proposal emphasized the Buddha's universal teachings of peace, compassion, and non-violence, which resonate with the UN's values. Subsequently, the proposal was approved. The resolution received widespread support and was agreed unanimously reflecting the international respect for the Buddha's teachings.

¹⁵ Sujankirti, (2007), *The Buddha and Baisakha Purnima*, p. 19 - 23.

¹⁶ Sujankirti, (2007), p. 6.

¹⁷ MCU (2010), *The Vesak Day, History, Significance and Celebrations*, Thailand: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya press, p. 14.

The UN General Assembly adopted the resolution on December 13, 1999 (A/RES/54/175), with provisions that can be summarised; firstly, the UNGA officially declared Vesak Day as an international observance, acknowledging the day's importance to the global Buddhist community. Secondly, the resolution invited UN member states, UN agencies, and international organizations to acknowledge the contribution of Buddhism and, where appropriate, celebrate Vesak Day. Lastly, the United Nations Headquarters and regional offices were encouraged to mark Vesak Day with commemorative activities.¹⁸

Every year since the resolution was approved Vesak Day, has been internationally celebrated as a global observance. The first-ever Vesak celebration took place in 2000 at the UN Headquarters in New York and other UN offices worldwide. The first Global celebration took place in Sri Lanka with state sponsorship, the second year at the UN headquarters in New York, and the third year with the support from Myanmar government was organized in UN Headquarters. In 2004-7 under the leadership of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) supported by the Thai government the Vesak Celebration was organized on a completely different scale by inviting Buddhist scholars from around the world to participate and so began future productive projects including cultural performances, speeches by Buddhist leaders, Mindfulness Meditation sessions and discussion on peacebuilding. The celebration highlighted the importance of Buddhist study, practice, propagation, and protection. In 2008 for the first time, the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha hosted the United Nations Day of Vesak in Hanoi with 87 countries participating. The main theme of the conference was Buddhist contributions to building a just, democratic, and civilized society.¹⁹ Subsequently, Vietnam sponsored the organisation of the celebration in 2014 in Ninh Binh with 95 Countries, and in 2019 in Ha Nam with 112 countries taking part.²⁰ Once again Vietnam is organising this United Nations Day of Vesak Celebration 2025 at the Vietnam Buddhist University, Ho Chi Minh City.

VI. UNIVERSALIZED MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

At the Bangkok Declaration of the 10th Anniversary celebration of the UN Day of Vesak in 2013, representatives from 34 countries presented nine key points. The second last of these points says: to promote the ethical use of mindfulness in a universally applicable manner, in such fields as healthcare, education, management, and community development.²¹

¹⁸ MCU, *Messages on UN Day of Vesak Celebration 2023*, P. 7., accessed on January 26, 2025, available at, www.undv.org.

¹⁹ ICDV, (2012), *Buddhajayanti: The Celebration of 2600 years of the Buddha's Enlightenment*, Thailand: the 9th IBC on the UNDVC, p. 3., UNDV, (2013), *Buddhajayanti*, <https://www.undv.org/vesak2013/en/index.php>.

²⁰ MCU, *Messages on UN Day of Vesak Celebration 2023*, p. 7; ICDV, *Success Story of the UN Day of Vesak*, accessed on January 26, 2025, available at: www.undv.org.

²¹ UNDV, (2013), *Bangkok Declaration of the 10th anniversary celebration of the UNDV*, accessed December 1, 2024, available at: www.undv.org/vesak2013/en/index.php.

Traditionally, there are two types of meditation practices: *Samatha*, serenity meditation, and *Vipassana*, insight meditation. The practice of serenity meditation aims at the development of calmness and finding inner peace whereas insight meditation is to gain direct knowledge regarding natural phenomena.²² These practices aim to cultivate mindfulness, *sati* to develop discernment, and *panya*.

The *Satipatthana Sutta*,²³ the Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is a foundational text in Buddhism that outlines how to practice mindfulness and describes its profound benefits. This practice is central to the cultivation of serenity, *samatha*, and the development of insight, *vipassana* leading to the realization of liberation (*nibbana*). The *Satipatthana Sutta* identifies four areas of mindfulness practice:²⁴

1. Mindfulness of the Body (*kayanupassana*): Observing breathing, postures, and bodily sensations to understand the impermanence of physical form.
2. Mindfulness of Feelings (*vedananupassana*): Noticing pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings to reduce attachment and aversion.
3. Mindfulness of Mind (*cittanupassana*): Observing the state of the mind (e.g., calm, agitated, joyful) to recognize its transient nature.
4. Mindfulness of Mental Objects (*dhammanupassana*): Contemplating mental phenomena such as thoughts, emotions, and the principles of the Buddha's teachings (e.g., the Four Noble Truths).

Mindfulness meditation is a practice that involves cultivating awareness and presence in the current moment without judgment. Mindfulness is a fundamental element of Buddhist meditation practices. It has various ways of mindfulness in all Buddhist traditions as well as in modern usage.²⁵ Generally, this practice involves focusing attention on the present moment, observing the body, feelings, thoughts, emotions, and external stimuli with clarity and equanimity. Mindfulness meditation typically includes Awareness of the body by paying attention to the rhythm of breathing and further bodily activities including observing physical sensations in the body. It also involves contemplation of different sensations and feelings, watching thoughts and emotional patterns, and understanding conditioned realities without attachment or aversion.

The benefits of mindfulness meditation are both spiritual and practical. In

²² H. Gunaratna, (2013), *The Path of Serenity and Insight*. USA: Bhavana Society, p. 3.

²³ *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.), (2005), USA: Wisdom Publications, pp. 145s.

²⁴ Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005), Ibit. P. 145; Thich Nhat Hanh (2019), *The Miracles of Mindfulness*. London: CPI Mackays, p. 111.

²⁵ Analayo (2017), *Early Buddhist Meditation Studies*, USA: Barre Centre for Buddhist Studies, pp. 19s.

terms of spiritual benefits, the Buddha clearly outlined these in the discourse;²⁶

“Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realization of *Nibbāna*.”

Besides these benefits, modern research studies suggest further benefits can be expected from the mindfulness practice. It helps calm a restless mind and fosters concentration developing mental clarity and focus. The practice of observing thoughts and emotions non-judgementally helps to reduce stress and anxiety. It teaches individuals to be in the present moment and trains them to respond to rather than react to the situation. Regular mindfulness practice increases emotional awareness, allowing practitioners to identify and address emotions effectively, fostering inner peace and stability. The practice also encourages introspection and self-discovery. This heightened awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions aligns with Buddhist teachings on understanding the nature of self.

In the modern context, mindfulness has been universalized and is emphasized as a psychological tool rather than a strictly spiritual or religious practice. This secular approach emphasizes emotional regulation, stress management, and mental well-being, often promoted in contexts such as healthcare, education, and workplaces without any explicit reference to Buddhist philosophy, which is one of the objectives of the 10th UNDV declaration.

Mindfulness is universalized and popularized through programs such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) by Jon Kabat Zinn²⁷ which follows Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), or Mindfulness-Based Intervention (MBIs) programs,²⁸ These programs are backed by scientific research that highlights its benefits in reducing anxiety, improving focus, and fostering emotional well-being. Such practices have gained global accessibility and also adapted to suit diverse audiences, transcending cultural and religious boundaries.

Nowadays, mindfulness practices such as mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful eating, and body scanning are widely taught in non-religious settings. Since the focus lies in practicality, mindfulness meditation prioritizes practical outcomes over philosophical exploration, making it an attractive tool for the challenges of modern life. Nevertheless, some argue that this adaptation risks diluting the depth of traditional mindfulness by divorcing it from its ethical and spiritual roots in Buddhism. Furthermore, it is also criticized as

²⁶ Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.), (2005), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, USA: Wisdom Publications, p. 145; Analayo (2006), *Satipatthana*. USA Windhorse Publication, p. 17.

²⁷ Jon Kabat Zinn (1994), *Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday life*, USA: Hyperion, p. 3.

²⁸ Ruth Baer et al., *Frequency of Self-reported Unpleasant Events and Harm in a Mindfulness-Based Program in Two General population Samples*, *Mindfulness* Vol. 12, p. 763 - 774, March 2021.

over-commercialized and too simplified which may lead to harmful results in the longer term. Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged as having its origin in the Buddhist psychology of meditation practice.

VII. MINDFULNESS MEDITATION AND VESAK DAY

The Vesak Day is a commemoration of mindfulness practice in the Buddha's journey from birth, enlightenment and *Mahaparinibbana*, passing away. Each event highlights mindfulness practice as essential. First, the Buddha's birth symbolizes the beginning of self-awareness and the quest for the truth to be free from all bondage and conflict. Mindfulness meditation was the key practice for that freedom. On his birth, the Bodhisattva proclaimed;

'mindful and fully aware the *Bodhisatta* passed away from the Heaven of the Contented and descended into his mother's womb'... as soon as the *Bodhisatta* was born,... uttered... this is the last birth; now there is no more renewal of being in future lives.'²⁹

The practice of Mindfulness played a fundamental role in the Buddha's journey to enlightenment. It was through mindful observation of his thoughts, feelings, and sensations that he gained insight into the nature of suffering and the path to liberation. His awakening enabled insight into the Four Noble Truths, suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering and the path to end the suffering.³⁰

His passing away exemplifies the profound awareness cultivated through the teachings and liberation. In *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, the Buddha's last days, Venerable Anuruddha uttered on the Buddha's passing:

'The sage who's free from lust has passed away to peace. With mind unshaken he endured all pains: by *Nibbāna* the illumined's mind is freed.'³¹

One of the main principles of the Vesak celebration, therefore, is to reflect and follow the footsteps of the Buddha and his enlightenment. He achieved liberation through mindfulness practice under the Bodhi tree and taught for forty-five years encouraging everyone to work mindfully towards that freedom. His last statement was "Don't be negligent, live mindfully".

Mindfulness meditation, as a result, undoubtedly, is deeply connected to Vesak Day. It offers an opportunity not only limited to Buddhists but for anyone who seeks peace and harmony to renew their commitment to mindfulness practices through various activities.

The Vesak celebration is further marked by acts of kindness and charity, which reflect mindful awareness of the suffering and needs of others. Activities such as feeding the poor, releasing captive animals, or engaging in community service are performed with a spirit of merit-making but are generally carried

²⁹ Bhikkhu Nanamoli (2015), *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pali Canon*, Kandy: BPS, pp. 3/5.

³⁰ Anne Bancroft (2002), *The Dhammapada*, London: Vega, pp. 59 - 60.

³¹ Maurice Walshe (1996), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, USA: Wisdom Publications, p. 271.

out with a spirit of mindfulness and compassion.

VIII. VESAK DAY PROMOTES GLOBAL MINDFULNESS

Nowadays, Vesak Day celebrations have been transferred from the Buddhist background to the global stage and have received UN recognition.³² Similarly, Mindfulness meditation has global recognition, and its landscape has changed from a Buddhist and spiritual base to a secular and scientific environment.³³

As mindfulness promotes physical and mental well-being that has global recognition and as it becomes more universal attracting people from various backgrounds, the Vesak Celebration too brings millions of people together to cultivate mindfulness and conduct mindful actions, fostering a shared experience of presence and unity. Undoubtedly, the Vesak Celebration can inspire not only Buddhists but people of all faith beliefs to reflect on their lives with awareness, kindness, and compassion.³⁴ In addition, it also serves as an annual opportunity to deepen one's mindfulness practice - based on their faith and integrate mindfulness into daily life for the benefit of physical and mental well-being.

The connection between Vesak celebrations and mindfulness meditation extends beyond Buddhist communities, providing a universal framework for fostering mindfulness, compassion, and ethical living. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that mindfulness practice is no longer confined solely to Buddhism; it has become integrated into secular discourse and interfaith contexts, encouraging mindfulness practices across various religions, cultures, and traditions. Buddhism undoubtedly serves as a rich repository for both the theoretical and practical aspects of mindfulness. However, as mindfulness has become more universalized in recent history, diverse faiths, and religious groups have also embraced mindfulness practices rooted in their faiths.³⁵

IX. INTERFAITH PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS

As mindfulness practice becomes more universal, it provides a foundation for inter-religious engagement by offering a neutral, secular approach that can be seamlessly integrated into specific religious contexts. This neutrality enables mindfulness to act as a bridge between faith groups, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding. Over time, mindfulness meditation has evolved into a shared platform that supports physical and mental well-being across diverse backgrounds.

In this context, mindfulness meditation serves as a non-threatening common ground in interfaith settings, promoting respect and the exchange of

³² MCU, *Messages on UN Day of Vesak Celebration 2023*, accessed on January 26, 2025, available at, www.undv.org.

³³ Ruth Baer et al., *Frequency of Self-reported Unpleasant Events and Harm in a Mindfulness-Based Program in Two General population Samples*, *Mindfulness* Vol. 12, p. 763 - 774, March 2021.

³⁴ Patricia Findlay and S. M. Sujano (2023), *Interfaith Stories Celebrating 30th Anniversary of Aberdeen Interfaith Group*. Scotland: Aberdeen Interfaith Group, p. 38.

³⁵ Jim Garrison and Jim Burklo, *A Short Interfaith Guide to Meditation Practices*, accessed on January 25, 2025, available at: www.orsl.usc.edu.

experiences among individuals from various religious traditions. This interfaith approach to mindfulness plays a significant role in building mutual respect and understanding, helping to bridge divides between religions. A notable example is Scotland's annual Interfaith Mindfulness Day, which is organized to celebrate Vesak Day. This is a collaborative initiative event organized by the *Varapunya* Meditation Centre and the Aberdeen Interfaith Group, which exemplifies this spirit of unity and shared practice.³⁶

X. INTERFAITH MINDFULNESS: COLLABORATION AND PRACTICE

Interfaith refers to the interaction, cooperation, and dialogue between individuals or groups from diverse religious traditions and spiritual beliefs.³⁷ Such initiatives foster understanding, respect, and collaboration among communities of differing faiths. One such organization advancing this mission is the Aberdeen Interfaith Group (AIFG), a member of the umbrella organization Interfaith Scotland. The AIFG was established in 1993, coinciding with the centenary celebrations of the World Parliament of Religions, a historic event that marked a significant moment in global interfaith dialogue.³⁸ Since its inception, the AIFG has provided a platform for individuals and groups to engage in meaningful conversations, fostering mutual respect and cooperation. The AIFG celebrated its 30th Anniversary in 2023 in the Aberdeen Town Hall.³⁹

The *Varapunya* Meditation Centre (VMC) in Aberdeen Scotland is a Buddhist monastery which was established in late 2012 under the spiritual guidance of Ajahn Sujana along with pious devotees. The Centre offers Buddhist studies and meditation sessions at the Centre, in various places in the city and online. Since the establishment the VMC has been a member of the AIFG and working in collaboration ever since.⁴⁰

As a member of the AIFG since 2012, Ajahn Sujana, the resident monk at VMC, has the honor of representing the center and contributing to its initiatives. His journey has been profoundly shaped by this work, especially in his role at the meditation center in Aberdeen, Scotland. The support and inclusivity of the AIFG have provided me with an invaluable platform to connect, learn, and collaborate with individuals from various faith traditions. Together, they have worked toward shared objectives such as fostering mutual understanding, combating prejudice, and promoting peace. Through initiatives like interfaith walks and cultural exchange programs, AIFG has created

³⁶ Patricia Findlay, *Interfaith Mindfulness Day*, Interfaith Scotland, Newsletter Autumn 2019: issue 32, p. 17.

³⁷ IFN, 'Inter Faith' - What and Why?, accessed on January 25, 2025, available at: www.interfaith.org.uk.

³⁸ Patricia Findlay and S. M. Sujano (2023), *Interfaith Stories Celebrating 30th Anniversary of Aberdeen Interfaith Group*. Scotland: Aberdeen Interfaith Group, p. 16.

³⁹ News, *30 Years of Aberdeen Interfaith*, Interfaith Scotland magazine Spring 2024: Issue 41, p. 19.

⁴⁰ Ven. S. M. Sujano (2017), *Kalyana Mettacitta: Stories of a Bhikkhu on the Block*, Scotland: *Varapunya* Meditation Centre, p. 4.

meaningful opportunities for dialogue and unity, highlighting the power of collective efforts in bridging cultural and religious divides.

XI. INTERFAITH MINDFULNESS DAY: A MODEL PROJECT

The Vesak Day is traditionally observed with rituals and worship, Ajahn Sujana envisioned celebrating it in a way that would resonate with Scotland's multicultural and interfaith context, an inclusive approach, inviting members of other faiths to participate. Motivated by those intentions, in collaboration with AIFG and VMC the 'Interfaith Mindfulness Day' project was launched in 2018 at the *Varapunya* Meditation Centre in Aberdeen, Scotland.⁴¹ Since then, it has gained special status among Interfaith events in Scotland. The event serves as a platform for people of diverse faiths – including branches of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Brahma Kumaris, Bahai, Sikhism, Quakerism, and Humanists – to explore mindfulness practices in the context of their spiritual traditions. This is a day program featuring activities within the Buddhist environment such as a mindful walk in nature, sharing food in a spirit of community, and reflections tied to themes of mental health, aligning with Scotland's Mental Health Week. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these celebrations successfully transitioned to an online format, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of interfaith initiatives. The event has grown in popularity, highlighting how mindfulness – a universal practice transcending religious boundaries – can bring people together.

The initiative builds on the idea that mindfulness is a bridge connecting various spiritual and cultural practices. For instance, a similar event, *Be Still and Know* is an Interfaith Day of Mindfulness,⁴² (Lance Smith, 2024) was held in rural Massachusetts in 2014. Inspired by traditions ranging from Buddhism to Native American spirituality, it featured sitting and walking meditation, silent contemplation and shared reflections. These practices exemplify the power of mindfulness to create spaces for shared understanding and collective peace.

XII. INTERFAITH MINDFULNESS DAY: MOVING FORWARD

Interfaith mindfulness events offer a unique opportunity to address global challenges such as mental health, social cohesion, and environmental awareness. They create a framework where individuals from different backgrounds can come together, not to debate differences, but to celebrate shared values like mindful living, compassion, presence, and inner peace. The collaboration between Aberdeen Interfaith Group and the *Varapunya* Meditation Centre exemplifies how local initiatives can inspire broader efforts to promote harmony in diversity.⁴³

⁴¹ Patricia Findlay, *Interfaith Mindfulness Day*, Interfaith Scotland, Newsletter Autumn 2019: issue 32, p. 17

⁴² Lance Smith, *Be Still and Know: An Interfaith Day of Mindfulness*, accessed on November 30, 2024, available at: <https://bestillandknowinterfaith.blogspot.com>.

⁴³ Ajahn Sujana, *Aberdeen Interfaith Group*, Interfaith Scotland Newsletter Autumn 2022: Issue 36, pp.16 - 17.

Interfaith mindfulness initiatives foster respect for diversity and promote common goals, encouraging a broader perspective on a more inclusive, peaceful world. These gatherings have successfully demonstrated how mindfulness can unite different faiths and traditions, focusing on shared values such as mindful living, compassion, and an awareness of the natural world. They also have been facilitating interfaith reflections and dialogues, cultivating a sense of community among diverse belief systems.

The Vesak commemorates the Buddha's life and teachings, emphasizing the profound impact of mindfulness meditation in fostering inner peace and transformative growth.⁴⁴ It serves as a reminder for individuals from all backgrounds to integrate mindfulness into their daily lives, uniting diverse communities in honoring the Buddha's legacy through mindfulness, compassion, wisdom, and self-awareness.

By promoting the Vesak celebration on an international and interfaith mindfulness meditation platform, Vesak transcends cultural and religious boundaries, inspiring people to embrace its essence. This celebration strengthens the connection to the Buddha's path, guiding practitioners toward happiness in this life and future lives, and ultimately, toward enlightenment. Therefore, celebrating Vesak Day as "International Interfaith Mindfulness Day" beautifully honors the Buddha's teachings by inspiring global citizens to live with awareness, compassion, and wisdom. This celebration certainly highlights the transformative power of mindfulness on both personal and collective levels.

XIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Vesak Day has evolved from a traditional Buddhist observance into a global celebration recognized by the United Nations, symbolizing the universal significance of mindfulness meditation. Similarly, mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist teachings, has transcended from its origins to become a widely embraced secular and scientific practice, fostering physical and mental well-being across religions, cultures, and traditions. Both Vesak and mindfulness uphold the values of awareness, compassion, and unity, offering a common foundation for diverse communities.

The connection between Vesak and Mindfulness Meditation transcends religious boundaries, creating a framework for ethical living and fostering collective harmony. Vesak offers an annual opportunity for individuals from all backgrounds to deepen their mindfulness practices, reflect with kindness and compassion, and reconnect with the Buddha's transformative teachings. Initiatives such as Interfaith Mindfulness Day in Scotland exemplify how mindfulness can act as a bridge between traditions, creating inclusive spaces for healing, dialogue, and shared understanding.

44 UNDV, UNDV, (2013), *Bangkok Declaration of the tenth anniversary celebrations of the United Nations Day of Vesak*, accessed December 1, 2024, available at: www.undv.org/vesak2013/en/index.php.

To further amplify this vision, the Vesak Day celebration could be formally recognized as International Interfaith Mindfulness Day. This proposal aligns seamlessly with Vesak's universal themes and its potential to unite people of all traditions. By serving as a global platform for interfaith engagement, mindfulness practice, and collective reflection, the Vesak as International Interfaith Mindfulness Day would inspire a worldwide commitment to unity, happiness, and harmony – critical elements for cultivating a compassionate and peaceful world.

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FOSTERING UNITY AND INCLUSIVENESS FOR HUMAN DIGNITY: BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL HARMONY AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS

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Abstract:

This article examines the theme “Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development” in light of the United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV) 2025. We hope to highlight the significance of Buddhist teachings in solving modern world difficulties by analyzing the five sub-themes: “Cultivating inner peace, forgiveness and mindful healing, Buddhist compassion in action, mindfulness in education, and fostering unity”. According to the article, Buddhist teachings provide fundamental insights that can help individuals and societies achieve sustainable growth, social cohesiveness, and long-term peace.

Keywords: *Buddhism, world peace, sustainable development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The globe is currently facing unprecedented difficulties, such as conflicts, inequality, environmental degradation, and a crisis of human dignity. In this setting, Buddhist teachings offer useful insights toward cultivating unity, inclusivity, and compassion. The UNDV 2025 provides an opportunity to investigate these lessons and their implementation in fostering global peace and sustainable development. The purpose of this article is to look at the relationship between Buddhist teachings and contemporary concerns, with a focus on inner peace, forgiveness, compassion, education, and collaboration. The scientific literature frequently defines mindfulness as intentionally and acceptingly focusing on the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). The key

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components of mindfulness are awareness, attention, and a positive attitude toward the experience of the present moment (acceptance). According to theoretical explanations of mindfulness training, repeated practice enhances self-regulatory abilities, including attention and emotion control, which have advantages such as improved mental health and reduced emotional reactivity.¹ Connection practices have been demonstrated to increase kindness and decrease implicit biases. These practices include generating feelings of warmth and goodwill for others (loving-kindness practice), wishing to alleviate others' suffering (compassion practice), and reflecting on the caring motivation behind an action (e.g., the decision to teach).² More importantly, this article will solely discuss "Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future Education" because it has a significant impact on influencing future generations.

II. INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

The term "mindfulness" is an English translation of the word "*sati*," which has several meanings in Buddhist texts and teachings, including "remembering," "recognizing," "waking up," "paying attention," "calling to mind," and "being alert."³ It describes a state of conscious awareness and the repeated application of this awareness to every daily experience in the framework of contemplative activities.⁴ The phrase also refers to the development of a healthy, skillful, and astute understanding of the four facets of life – the body, emotions, intellect, and mental components. The traditional teachings of Buddhism state that mindfulness improves wisdom, insight, loving-kindness, compassion, and mental balance. Additionally, it is believed that the meditation techniques will lessen ignorance, aversion, and greed – three things that Buddhist psychology holds to be the main causes of human suffering.⁵ During the 1960s and 1970s, Westerners traveled to Asia to study Buddhist practices, while Eastern Buddhist leaders traveled to the West to share many of these viewpoints. Buddhist centers that were later established, particularly in the United States and England, incorporated a number of Eastern traditions and provided public training and programs (Young, 2016).⁶

The development of an ideal state of psychological welfare and consciousness, as well as the cultivation of profound insight into mental processes, identity, and reality, were the stated goals of these approaches as they were envisioned at the time (Walsh, 1983).⁷ It was believed that meditation was a family of techniques that improved consciousness, trained attention, and gave people more deliberate control over their mental processes. According to the language

¹ Vago & Silbersweig (2012), p. 153.

² Kang, Gray, & Dovidio (2014), p. 85; Weng et al. (2013), p. 60.

³ Bodhi (2011), p. 51; Ditrich (2017), p. 26.

⁴ Bodhi (2011), p. 19; Ditrich (2017), p. 31.

⁵ Ditrich (2017), p. 7.

⁶ Young (2016), p. 41.

⁷ Walsh (1983), p. 10.

of the time, the techniques could be useful for a range of “intermediate aims,” including psychophysiological and psychotherapy ones (Walsh, 1983).⁸ The groundwork for the original spiritual practices’ secularization was thus laid.

The term “mindfulness” was almost non-existent in the educational sphere fifteen years ago. Only a tiny number of educators and scholars imagined the role mindfulness practice could play in promoting the well-being of teachers and pupils. Fast forward to 2015, and we’ve seen an extraordinary boom in interest in incorporating mindfulness into school, which is being sponsored by a variety of groups. Benefits of Mindfulness in Education - students who engage in mindfulness exercises report increased focus and attention span, which can result in improved academic achievement. Both teachers and students can gain a great deal by incorporating mindfulness into the classroom.

Around the last few decades, a growing interest in the principles and uses of mindfulness in education has led to a wide variety of projects, programs, and methods of delivery all around the world. In kindergartens, schools, teacher in-service training programs, and higher education, mindfulness in education has been extensively explored, applied, and integrated, and the subject of research studies. The goal of introducing mindfulness into education was to improve academic achievement, resilience, social and emotional skills, mental health, well-being, and prosocial behavior. Peer-reviewed research on mindfulness in education is rapidly increasing, and international organizations like the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are discussing the subject.

Since mindfulness was initially used in medicine at the end of the 1970s to help patients with chronic health difficulties manage their pain, stress, and sickness, interest in the practice and its advantages has grown. After being included in Buddhist practices, mindfulness was secularized and presented in groups with the goal of lowering stress and enhancing health (Kabat-Zinn, 2003⁹; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2013¹⁰). Subsequent generations of therapeutic and non-therapeutic models were influenced by the model’s ubiquity, clinical success, and research, which increased interest in mindfulness-based viewpoints.

These days, mindfulness meditation is a hot topic in neuroscience, clinical and health psychology, cognitive therapy, education, business, and leadership. Studies have indicated the efficacy of mindfulness in enhancing clinical symptoms and overall health. Still, there is little research on mindfulness in educational contexts, even if there is evidence that mindfulness meditation can improve cognitive ability. It’s clear that anxiety levels are rising and that pupils at all levels are having more difficulty controlling their attention spans. For example, social anxiety affects over 12% of people in North America, and more

⁸ Walsh, 1983, p. 18.

⁹ Kabat-Zinn (2003), p. 8.

¹⁰ Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, (2013), p. 16.

significantly, 80% of those people experienced social anxiety before turning 18. Without a doubt, deficiencies in educational opportunities and institutions that equip students to handle the growing complexity of the modern world have a role in the rise in anxiety disorders among young adults.

Teachers have a critical role in providing learning experiences that influence and shape the character and well-being of children and youth (NSW Government, 2015). Teachers, who are regarded as the most important component of education, help pupils learn, grow, and thrive (Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, 2005¹¹). However, teaching is a demanding and complex career that typically involves stress, emotional challenges, job dissatisfaction, and burnout. Beltman and Poulton (2019)¹²; Lomas, Medina, Ivtzan, Rupperecht, and Eiroa-Orosa (2017)¹³; Zarate, Maggin, and Passmore (2019). This can result in poor mental health and lower well-being outcomes for teachers. Alongside school-based initiatives around the world and the increasing preference for teacher facilitation over being led by trained mindfulness practitioners, many mindfulness-based programs for teachers have been created and researched (e.g., Beshai, McAlpine, Weare, & Kuyken, 2016; Crain, Schonert-Reichl, & Roeser, 2017; Harris, Jennings, Katz, Abenavoli, & Greenberg, 2016; Jennings et al., 2019; Schussler et al., 2018). Consequently, there has been a notable surge in peer-reviewed papers about mindfulness-based teacher programs (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). Two categories of mindfulness-based programs are generally well-liked by educators. The first consists of programs designed to support educators' emotional regulation, self-compassion, and overall well-being. The second relates to classes designed to instruct teachers in specific mindfulness practices in the classroom. Some programs integrate the two into a single, long-term, gradual learning process, such as Presence, Awareness, and Self-Compassion in Schools (PAS) in Austria¹ or the Purple School Project in Israel. While recognizing teachers' stress, emotional challenges, and burnout, both categories seek to improve their coping strategies, resilience, and overall well-being. Some programs focus on in-service teachers, such as Harris et al. (2016), while others target pre-service teachers, such as Hirshberg, Flook, Enright, & Davidson (2020)¹⁴. Enhancing teachers' mental health and well-being (Harris et al., 2016) and enabling them to use newly learned skills to improve their classroom presence and management (Hirshberg et al., 2020; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) are usually the programs' two main objectives.

According to meta-analytic studies, MBIs are significantly linked to lower levels of stress and other negative emotions in both non-clinical (Galante et al., 2021) and clinical populations (Goldberg et al., 2018; Goldberg et al., 2021; Hedman-Lagerlöf et al., 2018; Wielgosz et al., 2019). This is in line with the theory that mindfulness improves mental health by improving our capacity

¹¹ Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, (2005), p. 2.

¹² Beltman and Poulton (2019), p. 6.

¹³ Lomas, Medina, Ivtzan, Rupperecht, and Eiroa-Orosa (2017), p. 23.

¹⁴ Hirshberg, Flook, Enright, & Davidson (2020), p. 7.

to control our emotions (Alsubaie et al., 2017; Hölzel et al., 2011; Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009; Gratz & Tull, 2010¹⁵; Erisman and Roemer, 2010; Wielgosz et al., 2019) and preventing the amplification of negative affect.

The practice of mindfulness is specifically linked to healthy emotion regulation by modifying the degree of emotional response (intensity or duration), receptiveness, and vulnerability to negative emotions, according to a convergence of correlational, experimental, and treatment studies (Chiesa et al., 2013; Fogarty et al., 2015).

According to prominent theoretical models of mindfulness, the mediators of outcomes (such as the reduction of stress) are associated with improvements in emotion regulation (Lutz et al., 2008; Ostafin et al., 2015) as well as attentional changes (Malinowski, 2013; Bishop et al., 2004; Tang et al., 2015). Empirical research supports this idea by demonstrating that attentional shifts toward emotional stimuli (e.g., Roca & Vázquez, 2020¹⁶) and a greater use of specific ER strategies, such as acceptance or positive reappraisal (Garland et al., 2017; Lindsay et al., 2018¹⁷), are linked to decreases in distress and increases in well-being following MBIs.

III. SPECIFIC BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

3.1. Control of emotions

People feel a range of emotions, both positive and negative, in circumstances pertaining to academic learning and success. Effective management of negative emotions is believed to improve academic learning and success since these emotions are known to have a negative impact on learning and achievement. People can increase their emotional awareness without passing judgment by practicing mindfulness meditation. Instead of reacting rashly, they are able to respond to emotions more skillfully thanks to this knowledge. According to studies, practicing mindfulness might lessen unpleasant emotional reactions and improve emotional stability. Students who practice mindfulness are better able to recognize their feelings and create appropriate coping mechanisms, which lowers the likelihood of disruptive conduct.

3.2. Reduction of stress

A organized program called mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) uses yoga and mindfulness meditation to assist people manage their stress. Mindfulness meditation helps reduce the body's stress reaction and enhance mental and physical health by concentrating on the here and now and accepting thoughts and feelings without passing judgment. Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and deep-breathing exercises, can help students manage their stress levels, leading to a calmer and more focused learning environment. Jon Kabat-Zinn created MBSR at the University of

¹⁵ Gratz & Tull, (2010), p. 10.

¹⁶ Roca & Vázquez, (2020), p. 24.

¹⁷ Garland et al., 2017; Lindsay et al., (2018), p. 4.

Massachusetts Medical Center in the late 1970s. It combines body awareness, yoga, mindfulness meditation, and the study of thought, feeling, behavior, and action patterns. In order to lessen suffering or pain and to promote wellbeing, mindfulness can be defined as the nonjudgmental acceptance and exploration of the present experience, including bodily sensations, internal mental states, thoughts, emotions, impulses, and memories.

3.3. Encouragement of well-being

Numerous advantages have been associated with regular mindfulness meditation practice, such as reduced anxiety, depression and enhanced cognitive performance. By encouraging people to think more healthily and feel happier, it can also raise their general quality of life. Moreover, Regular mindfulness meditation practice has been linked to a variety of benefits, including decreased anxiety and sadness, as well as improved cognitive performance. Encouraging people to think more healthily and be happier can improve their overall quality of life.

3.4. Better social skills

Students who practice mindfulness are better able to relate to their teachers and peers because it fosters empathy and understanding. There are several ways that incorporating mindfulness into the classroom improves social skills.

Self-awareness: Students who practice mindfulness learn to observe their thoughts and emotions objectively. They are better able to comprehend their acts and how they affect other people thanks to their increased self-awareness, which promotes more thoughtful relationships.

Empathy & Compassion: Urging pupils to think about and comprehend the emotions of their peers, regular mindfulness practice cultivates empathy. Conflicts may decrease, and more sympathetic behavior may result from this.

Active Listening: By encouraging present-moment awareness, mindfulness can enhance listening abilities. In conversations, students who engage in mindfulness practices are more likely to listen intently and answer intelligently.

Emotional Control: Students who practice mindfulness are better able to identify and control their emotions. They may react to social events with composure and calmness instead of impulsively thanks to their emotional intelligence.

Resilience and Coping: One of the best ways to develop resilience and deal with difficulties is to practice mindfulness. It keeps you centered, lowers tension, and gives you more clarity while reacting to circumstances. Students who practice mindfulness are better able to manage stress and obstacles. Even during challenging circumstances, they can sustain healthy social connections and relationships by improving their stress management.

Positive Communication: Building relationships, promoting understanding, and establishing a supportive atmosphere are the main

goals of positive communication. Kindness and optimistic thoughts are fostered by mindfulness. This kind of thinking can result in more positive and encouraging peer interactions.

3.5. Improved mental health

By lowering the signs of anxiety and despair, mindfulness can improve mental health in general.

3.6. Methods for including mindfulness in the classroom

3.6.1. Mindful breathing exercises: Mindful breathing exercises are a powerful tool for relaxation and focus. To help students center themselves and get ready for learning, begin the day with a few minutes of mindful breathing. Mindful breathing is focusing on the experience of your breath, both inhale and exhale, to promote present moment awareness and minimize stress.

3.6.2. Encourage pupils to listen to one another with awareness in order to improve comprehension and communication. Establish Clear Expectations: Start by outlining the value of active listening and how it contributes to comprehending and appreciating the opinions of others.

Model Active Listening: Show that you can listen intently by keeping eye contact, nodding, and giving a considered response to what is being said. It is a great way to enhance both their comprehension and communication skills.

3.6.3. Mindful Movement: To assist students in decompressing and refocusing, provide brief mindful movement exercises like yoga or stretching.

3.6.4. Mindful Moments: Throughout the day, provide opportunities for quick mindfulness exercises, such as pausing for a minute before beginning a new task.

3.6.5. Curriculum on Mindfulness: Include courses specifically on mindfulness practices and their advantages to incorporate mindfulness into the curriculum.

3.7. Resources for teachers

3.7.1. Mindful Schools: Provides teachers with materials and training to help them incorporate mindfulness into their lessons.

3.7.2. The Center for Mindfulness in Education supports, trains, and does research on mindfulness initiatives in educational institutions.

3.7.3. A thorough guide to comprehending and applying mindfulness in educational contexts is the Handbook of Mindfulness in Education.

3.8. Relational mindfulness in education

Relational mindfulness can help educators better manage, teach, and deal with the emotional problems of classroom and school contexts. To successfully address the management, teaching, and emotional problems of classroom and school contexts, educators must possess a high level of social and emotional competence (Jennings et al. 2011). According to research (Burrows 2008, 2010, 2011b; Day 2004; Jennings & Greenberg 2009¹⁸), there is a need for

¹⁸ Jennings & Greenberg (2009), p. 8.

interventions that assist educators in responding calmly to disturbing and provocative student conduct without unnecessarily escalating these behaviors. According to Jennings & Greenberg (2009), mindfulness can help teachers become more conscious of the emotional atmosphere in their classrooms. According to Thomas (2010)¹⁹, practicing mindfulness can also assist teachers in being more composed when dealing with the daily stressors of teaching. Since many of the participants in a recent study (Burrows 2011b) focused on a relationship with a colleague that was causing them significant concern and was contributing to feelings of frustration, anger, stress, emotional imbalance, anxiety, and professional ineffectiveness, the study concluded that it is also urgently necessary to address the difficult relationships that can develop between adults in school communities. According to Fulton (2005)²⁰, when mindfulness is implicitly incorporated into one's professional work, it can help professionals develop relational competence manner of being. As Weare (2010, 4) has proposed, mindfulness could be "the missing piece in social and emotional learning." The state of mindfulness, according to Bishop (2002, 92)²¹, is one in which one is acutely aware of and focused on the reality of the present moment, accepting and acknowledging it, without being enmeshed in thoughts about the circumstance or emotional responses to it. Given that connection is regarded as the foundation of psychological well-being and as a necessary component of relationship growth, healing, and development, relational mindfulness can be defined as a growing awareness of the current relational experience with acceptance. (Surrey 2005, 92)

Educators and leaders who want to better handle the emotional, instructional, and management problems of classrooms and school environments can benefit from relational mindfulness. It implies that regular relationally oriented mindfulness practice, led by an experienced mindfulness teacher or counselor, that examines contemporary issues in the presence of colleagues is likely to be beneficial for educators who wish to cultivate the ability to maintain composure in highly charged emotional environments. The literature on relational counseling and psychotherapy places more emphasis on counseling training and experience than it does on mindfulness training and experience. In reality, relational mindfulness is a combination of the two, with a focus on increasing awareness of the current relationship experience (Surrey 2005, 92).

To find out if relational mindfulness can be effective in supporting educators in making long-term changes to their practices, more research is required.

IV. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Incorporating Buddhist teachings on compassion, ethics, and sustainability into mindfulness exercises in the classroom can significantly improve the learning environment for both teachers and students. Here are a few strategies

¹⁹ Thomas (2010), p. 34.

²⁰ Fulton (2005), p. 74.

²¹ Bishop (2002), p. 92.

to highlight these values:

4.1. Compassion

4.1.1. Kindness and loving include loving-kindness (*metta*) meditation exercises in which trainees send well wishes and thoughts to both themselves and other people. This encourages compassion and empathy for other people.

4.1.2. Compassionate activities: Motivate kids to take part in community service projects or other deeds of kindness, like lending a hand to classmates. Talk about the effects of these behaviors and consider their emotional impact.

4.1.3. Emphasize understanding and compassion in your relationships with pupils by teaching them to listen and communicate attentively.

4.2. Sustainability

4.2.1. Teach children about the importance of conscious consumerism and how their decisions affect the environment. Talk about how to make sustainable decisions and cut down on waste.

4.2.2. Nature Connection: Include outdoor mindfulness exercises that promote an awareness of the natural world and a sense of connectedness to it. A sense of obligation to safeguard it may result from this.

4.2.3. Implement and serve as an example of sustainable practices at the school, such as energy conservation, recycling initiatives, and green projects.

4.3. Morals

4.3.1. Incorporate conversations about moral decision-making into the curriculum to promote mindful decision-making. Encourage pupils to stop and consider the effects of their actions by practicing mindfulness.

4.3.2. Role-playing Scenarios: Examine moral conundrums through role-playing and talk about how mindfulness might support morally upright behavior in these circumstances.

4.3.3. Values in Practice: As students consider how mindfulness might support them in living in accordance with their basic values, they should be encouraged to identify these values.

4.4. Conformity to the teachings of Buddhism

4.4.1. The Four Noble Truths: Talk about the Four Noble Truths and how mindfulness and compassion can help us comprehend and lessen suffering.

4.4.2. Presenting the Eightfold Path, which emphasizes elements like Right Action, Right Livelihood, and Right Mindfulness, as a manual for moral and conscientious life.

4.4.3. Interdependence: To emphasize the interdependence of all life and the significance of sustainability and compassion, teach the notion of interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*).

Through the integration of these values, educators can establish a learning environment that cultivates individuals who are compassionate, ethical, and environmentally sensitive in addition to promoting academic success.

V. LONG-TERM IMPACT

The concept, presumptions, and goals of mindfulness and positive psychology are similar in a number of ways, which creates an ideal environment for in-depth discussion and mutual learning. Though mostly focusing on adults, there are emerging conversations on the possible integration of these two fields. There have already been some recent attempts to investigate how mindfulness and positive psychology might be incorporated into education for school-aged children. However, there isn't much evidence-based research looking at how the two work together. Ivtzan and Lomas (2016)²² found that mindfulness improves both hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing in adults. Niemiec (2013) discusses the potential merger of character strength with mindfulness, based on positive psychology. Mindfulness-based programs for adults have been linked to increased self-esteem, life satisfaction, psychological flexibility, happiness, positive affect, and optimism (Shapiro, de Sousa, & Jazaieri, 2016).²³

Mindfulness and positive education suggest that 21st-century education should prioritize social-emotional skills, psychological health, wellbeing, and resilience. The two methods offer different methodologies to accomplish the intended goals. Integrating both perspectives, supported by science and practice, can improve understanding and application of both, perhaps enhancing their effectiveness.

Previous initiatives integrating mindfulness into positive education have various degrees and types of implementation. One initiative in Bhutan included a 1:10 ratio of mindfulness-based sessions to life-skills themes in the curriculum, with each exercise lasting only a few minutes (Adler, 2016²⁴). In a study of the Happy Classroom Program in Spain, Lombas et al. (2019) found a 1:1 ratio of mindfulness-based and character-building elements. During the 18-week trial, mindfulness-based sessions were held twice a week for less than 4 minutes on average. In terms of mindfulness education and the "dose-response" principle, both programs are considered low-dose and low-intensity protocols.

A generation that is fervently dedicated to social responsibility, sustainability, and peace might be raised by incorporating mindfulness into the classroom.

5.1. Empathy and compassion

Empathy and compassion are fostered by mindfulness education and are necessary qualities for cooperative and peaceful societies.

5.2. Ethical decision-making

Reflective thinking is promoted by mindful behaviors, which results in moral judgments that take into account the wider effects on the environment and society.

²² Lomas (2016), p. 44.

²³ Shapiro, de Sousa, & Jazaieri, 2016, p. 39.

²⁴ Adler, (2016), p. 33.

5.3. Reduced stress and anxiety

Students who practice mindfulness to manage stress and anxiety are better able to address issues and confrontations with composure and equilibrium.

5.4. Enhanced Focus and Academic performance

By increasing focus and attention, mindfulness helps students become more attentive and knowledgeable citizens, which can improve their academic performance and overall learning experience.

5.5. Implementation strategies

- **Curriculum Integration:** Include mindfulness practices including breathing techniques, meditation, and mindful movement in everyday routine. Including yoga or stretching exercises in physical education or during break times. These activities can help students stay physically active and mentally centered. Encourage students to practice mindful reading by paying full attention to the text and reflecting on their feelings and thoughts. Similarly, mindful writing activities can help students express themselves more clearly and thoughtfully. Engage in drama, music, and art projects to encourage mindfulness. Students should be encouraged to participate completely in their creative processes. Organize workshops or special sessions focused on teaching mindfulness techniques. These can be led by teachers, school counselors, or guest speakers with expertise in mindfulness. Provide students with access to mindfulness apps, books, or online resources. To promote mindfulness, take part in art, music, and theater activities. Encouraging students to fully engage in their creative processes is important. Plan specific seminars or courses aimed at teaching mindfulness practices. These tools can help them practice mindfulness outside of school as well. Make sure educators are trained in mindfulness techniques so they can mentor students and include mindfulness into their lesson plans. A more encouraging and caring learning environment can be produced by incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum. Additionally, it can assist kids in gaining critical abilities for stress management and emotional intelligence development. By introducing mindfulness into curriculum, users may create a more supportive and nurturing learning environment for both students and instructors.

- **Developing a mindfulness culture**

Mindfulness Corners: Set aside a spot in the classroom for students to practice mindfulness when they need a break or feel overwhelmed.

Mindfulness Announcements: Include a quick mindfulness exercise in your morning announcements or assembly.

Classroom Practices: Encourage instructors to incorporate short mindfulness breaks into lessons and transitions.

- **Teacher training:** To effectively lead mindfulness activities and set an example of mindful behavior, educators should receive training.

- **Whole-school approach:** Integrate mindfulness into the school culture by implementing procedures, policies, and events that support

sustainability and well-being.

- **Community engagement:** Engage the community and families in mindfulness programs to increase the influence outside of the classroom.

Education transformation is neither easy nor simple. We require cooperation, ingenuity, critical thinking, endurance, and patience in order to accomplish significant progress. The change of education is neither straightforward nor easy. To make meaningful change, we need collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, perseverance, and patience. We must encourage comprehensive and long-lasting improvements and support the reforms in curriculum, teacher preparation, instruction, school climate, and culture. We must support the reforms in curriculum, teacher preparation, teaching, school atmosphere and culture, and mobilize comprehensive and long-lasting changes. Now is the moment to build on this momentum, start interdisciplinary discussions, and create a cohesive framework that can influence children's lives and academic performance everywhere.

Mindful education not only improves individual well-being, but it also fosters a generation that values and works for peace, sustainability, and social justice. Also, it allows students to be present and engaged in their studies. They can learn how to control their emotions and relieve tension and anxiety (emotional regulation); Consistent mindfulness practice can benefit both mental and physical health (Improved Well-Being); Fostering a calm and concentrated mindset improves pupils' ability to acquire and remember information (Better Academic Performance). This all-encompassing approach to education can pave the path for a more compassionate and ethical society.

VI. CONCLUSION

The broad idea of mindfulness serves as a framework for psychology and education research. The concept of mindfulness has a wide range of applications, as evidenced by a selective review of research findings on problem-based learning, learning material variability, the effects of making learning materials difficult, and three distinct interventions to increase interest (personalization, example choice, and relevance intervention). The wisdom of Buddhism offers a strong basis for dealing with today's most important issues. A world that respects human dignity and advances sustainable development can be achieved by promoting mindful education, acting with compassion, accepting forgiveness, developing inner peace, and encouraging unity. We have the chance to reaffirm our dedication to these ideals and work together to build a more inclusive and peaceful world at UNDV 2025. Promoting mindful education, acting with compassion, accepting forgiveness, cultivating inner peace, and supporting unity can help to create a world that values human dignity and promotes sustainable development. At UNDV 2025, we will have the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to these objectives and collaborate on creating a more inclusive and peaceful world.

The increasing understanding that we must support the whole learner and make sure kids have the resources they need to develop and flourish excites educators, legislators, instructors, and students around the globe. In this

regard, schools offer the most efficient and successful means of reaching youth and teachers, as well as developing their welfare and life skills. These goals and aims are in line with the distinctive pedagogies, ideas, and practices that mindfulness in education offers. The evolution and spread of mindfulness in educational contexts, the role of mindfulness-based pedagogies in education for wellbeing, global educational model and initiative prototypes, the various results and insights gained from mindfulness-based methods for both students and teachers, and potential points of convergence between mindfulness in education and positive education as a basis for integrative dialogue and collaboration were the main topics of this chapter.

There is a wide range of approaches, forms, and purposes within the topic of mindfulness in education. The amount of empirical research on the efficacy of these programs has grown dramatically, albeit it hasn't always kept pace with the expansion of classrooms and school-based activities. Even if the field needs additional development, the total results – which have been gathered from numerous nations – are noteworthy and encouraging. Given everything that has been done, investigated, and found via empirical and scientific research, mindfulness in the classroom can be a crucial component of a new educational paradigm.

New problems arise when new programs and pedagogies are introduced. Therefore, it would be ideal for future mindfulness deployment in educational settings, including the methodical creation and introduction of new models, to be supported concurrently by an empirical evaluation process.

Education transformation is neither easy nor simple. We require cooperation, ingenuity, critical thinking, endurance, and patience in order to accomplish significant progress. We must support the reforms in curriculum, teacher preparation, teaching, school atmosphere and culture, and mobilize comprehensive and long-lasting changes. Now is the moment to build on this momentum, start interdisciplinary discussions, and create a cohesive framework that can influence children's lives and academic performance everywhere.

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EXISTENTIAL CRISIS, MINDFULNESS AND THE MIDDLE PATH TO SOCIAL ACTION

Dr. Asoka Bandarage*

Abstract:

Materialist development and the adulation of individualism and competition have undermined the inherent values of human evolution, namely altruism and cooperation. They have given rise to political and economic extremism and ecological and social destruction. It is vital that we evolve beyond the resultant isolation, powerlessness and resignation of this destructive worldview. While recognizing the value of mindfulness training, this paper explores how we can move beyond the current individualist and limited focus of mindfulness training. How can we move towards a broader ethical and social framework and a balanced path of environmental sustainability and human well-being? How can the Buddha's teaching of the Middle Path and the Noble Eight-Fold Path guide us in this regard?

Keywords: *Existential crisis, mindfulness, middle path, social action.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Deepening eco-social collapse and political-economic extremism exemplify the existential crisis facing humanity today. An explosion of complex emergencies including climate change, armed conflict, destruction of economic, political and cultural institutions, poverty and displacement have become the reality of our time.¹ Physical and emotional suffering, uncertainty, anxiety, despair and confusion increase across the world.

Widening economic inequality represents maldistribution of resources and opportunities. This is the main social issue of our time. Data from Oxfam for 2023 reveals that the richest 1% of the global population controlled nearly

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¹ Bandarage, Asoka. *The Climate Emergency and Urgency of System Change*. Accessed on [January 20, 2025], available at: <https://countercurrents.org/2023/09/the-climate-emergency-and-urgency-of-system-change/>.

twice as much wealth as the remaining 99% of the world population.² The richest five billionaires in the world more than doubled their wealth since 2020 while five billion people became poorer during the same period.³ A handful of global asset management companies, led by BlackRock (with 11.5 trillion in assets in 2024),⁴ represent financialization, the domination of finance capital in every global economic sector, from agribusiness to pharmaceuticals, media, entertainment and defense.⁵

Global media focus on identity politics, dualistic thinking and othering – ‘us vs them’ – contributes to separatism, ethnoreligious strife and jingoism. As a result, public attention is diverted from the existential threats facing humanity. The intensification of conflicts across national, cultural and even sexual boundaries prevents the development of a shared human and ecological consciousness.⁶ Countries in the Global South, such as China and India are thoroughly embracing the myopic model of the Global North of financial deregulation and technological and market development, putting short-term profits over long-term environmental, cultural and social sustainability.⁷

Generally unacknowledged in the media is that economic growth is closely paired with an increase in militarism, making the arms industry a leading sector of the global economy. The Stockholm Peace Research Institute, for example, has estimated that global military expenditure was \$2.443 trillion in 2023, the largest annual increase since 2009. The largest spenders have all drastically increased their military spending: the United States by 37%, China by 12% and Russia by 4.5%.⁸ At the same time, the number and types of nuclear weapons in development have also increased as rival nation-states deepen their nuclear arsenals.⁹

² Oxfam International. *Richest 1% Bag Nearly Twice as Much Wealth as the Rest of the World Put Together over the Past Two Years*. Accessed on [January 18, 2025], available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/richest-1-bag-nearly-twice-much-wealth-rest-world-put-together-over-past-two-years>.

³ Oxfam International. *Wealth of Five Richest Men Doubles since 2020 as Five Billion People Made Poorer in ‘Decade of Division, Says Oxfam*. Accessed on [March 22, 2024], available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/wealth-five-richest-men-doubles-2020-five-billion-people-made-poorer-decade-division>.

⁴ Brush, Silla. *BlackRock Hits \$11.5 Trillion of Assets with Private-Market Push*. Accessed on [February 22, 2025], available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-10-11/blackrock-hits-11-5-trillion-of-assets-as-private-markets-grow>.

⁵ Bandarage (2023): 7 – 9.

⁶ Herman and Chomsky (1988): 203 – 36.

⁷ Bandarage (2023): 122 – 134.

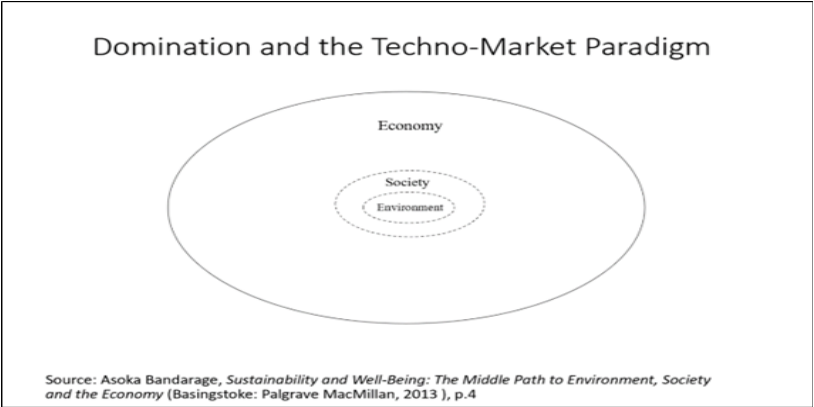
⁸ STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE *Trends in World Military Expenditure*, 2023. April 2024. SIPRI. Available at: <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2024/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2023>.

⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Role of Nuclear Weapons Grows as Geopolitical Relations Deteriorate—New SIPRI Yearbook out Now*. June 17, 2024. Accessed on [November 23, 2024], available at: <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/role->

II. DOMINATION AND THE TECHNO-MARKET PARADIGM

Underlying global crises is a paradigm of domination built on the concept of dualism and attachment to the concept of a separate self and self-advancement and power over others. It approaches life- both human and non-human- as mere resources to be conquered and controlled for purposes of production and consumption. The relentless pursuit of economic growth has led to great material advancement. Yet, it undermines the natural integration of planetary life, which seeks to reintegrate the environment and society through advances in modern science, technology, and the market.¹⁰ Developments in bioscience and technology are replacing natural forms of plant, animal and human life with technologically transformed hybrid or virtual commodities. The folly of pursuing transhumanism is a serious threat to humanity’s identity as a species in nature.¹¹

Figure 1: Domination and the Techno-Market Paradigm

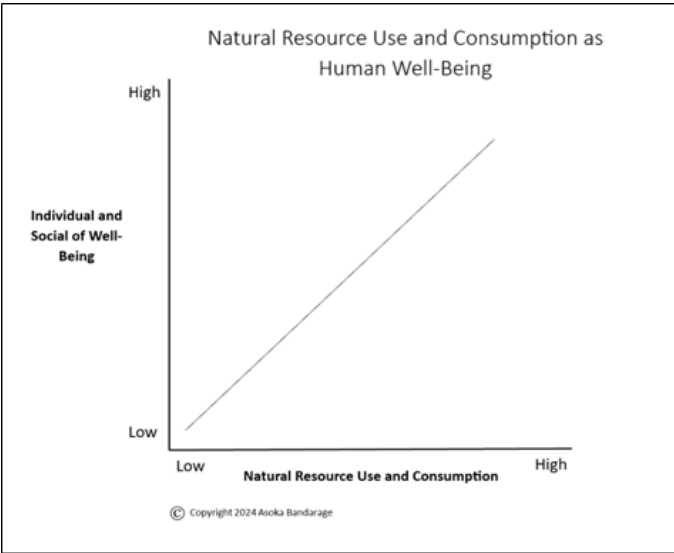


The techno-market imperative is built on developing human craving and ignorance and the notion that individual and social well-being inevitably increases with quantitative growth and increased material consumption. Social, ecological and ethical values are not factored into economic decisions. Instead, it encourages excessive individualism, competition and separation between people intensifying geopolitical rivalries. Modern advertising built on psychological manipulation upholds the assumed insatiability of human wants.¹²

Figure 2: The Trajectory of Insatiable Growth

nuclear-weapons-grows-geopolitical-relations-deteriorate-new-sipri-yearbook-out-now.

¹⁰ Bandarage (2013): 4.
¹¹ Bandarage (2013): 43 – 46.
¹² Bandarage (2013): 41 – 43.



III. MINDFULNESS

Largely in response to the efforts of environmental and social change movements worldwide, the language and concepts of environmental sustainability, basic human needs, human development and so on, have been adopted/ co-opted by dominant world institutions, namely United Nations bodies and transnational corporations. Similarly, the language and techniques of mindfulness drawn from Buddha’s teaching is being incorporated within the techno-market culture as a response to widespread mental disorders and unhappiness, especially in the Western World.

Mindfulness (*sati* in Pali) involves cultivating present-moment awareness and equanimity through attention to breathing and bodily sensations. Mindfulness practice is based on Buddhist principles and is a powerful tool for nurturing the inner peace and guidance much needed in these turbulent times.¹³ The practice of mindfulness fosters sensitivity to the realities of impermanence, suffering and the interconnectedness of life, nurturing compassion towards both the self and others, thereby overcoming dualism. This has immediate relevance to the themes of the 2025 UN Vesak Conference: ‘Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity and Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development’.

In recent decades, many different types of mindfulness meditation have become popular in the West, generally led by influencers from corporate, media and Hollywood elites. Tech giants, such as Google and Apple, and multinational consultancies and banks promote employee meditation to relieve stress and

¹³ *Mahasatipatthana Sutta: The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Awareness.* (S.N. Goenka edition). Vipassana Research Institute, Mumbai, 1996, pp. vii–xiv.

increase competitive advantage and productivity.¹⁴ Indeed, “in Silicon Valley meditation is no fad, it could make your career.”¹⁵ With no shortage of irony, even the US military has embraced mindfulness meditation to boost its soldiers’ performance and grit.¹⁶

These approaches to mindfulness that focus on profit-motive and the quest for power only fuel the dangerous national and international policies that destroy life and undermine the fundamental principles of interconnectedness and compassion. In contrast, mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective intimately parallels an ethical worldview based on morality and non-violent action.¹⁷

Generally, values of moderation and interdependence were acculturated in traditional Asian Buddhist communities.¹⁸ The currently dominant corporate approach to mindfulness is externally driven and materialistic and provides no depth, tools or guidance to understand the socio-economic forces underlying the interrelated global crises. Nor does it help generate real solutions based on ethical criteria and actions needed to develop sustainability and international social justice. In this sense it is not mindfulness at all and is perhaps better referred to as “McMindfulness”;¹⁹ a profoundly limited and individualist mindfulness that dilutes and distracts from activism seeking real social change and liberation from the dominant institutions and culture that threaten all life.

IV. TOWARDS RIGHT MINDFULNESS

The 2025 UN Vesak Conference poses the question: How can Mindfulness in Education become a guide for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future? Indeed, how can we harness the awareness, equanimity, and compassion nurtured by mindfulness meditation to overcome isolation, powerlessness, and apathy, and confront the ongoing political and economic extremism that will inevitably lead to complete ecological and social destruction?

Mindfulness practice focusses on heightened awareness of the present and viewing reality, both internal and external, objectively. Buddhist teaching helps us understand the true roots of suffering – the three poisons of greed (*raga*), hatred (*dvesha*) and ignorance (*moha*) – and their manifestations in

¹⁴ Bandarage, Asoka. *Mindfulness and Social Action in Covid 19 Crisis*. Accessed on [April 30, 2020], available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2020/04/mindfulness-social-action-in-covid-19-crisis/>.

¹⁵ Schatman, Noah. *In Silicon Valley Meditation is No Fad*. Accessed on [December 22, 2024], available at: <https://www.wired.com/2013/06/meditation-mindfulness-silicon-valley/>.

¹⁶ Myers, Melissa. *Improving Military Resilience through Mindfulness Training*. Accessed on [January 10, 2025], available at: https://www.army.mil/article/149615/improving_military_resilience_through_mindfulness_training.

¹⁷ Rahula (1979): 45 – 50.

¹⁸ Norberg-Hodge (1991), pp.9-18; Bandarage, Asoka. “On Location: Organ Dana.” *Tricycle*, Winter 2005, p. 87.

¹⁹ Purser (2019), *passim*.

the contemporary existential crisis. In this regard, it is well to remember the first two verses of the Dhammapada where the Buddha taught the primacy of the mind and Right Mindfulness:

*“Manopubbangama dhamma
manosettha manomaya
manasa ce padutthena²
bhasati va karoti va
tato nam dukkhamanveti
cakkamva vahato padam.²⁰*

All mental phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind, ‘*dukkha*’ follows him just as the wheel follows the hoofprint of the ox that draws the cart.”²¹

*Manopubbangama dhamma
manosettha manomaya
manasa ce pasannena
bhasati va karoti va
tato nam sukha¹ manveti
chayava anapayini.²²*

“All mental phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness (*sukha*) follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.”²³

As Buddhists, we understand the well-being of the self cannot be separated from the wellbeing of the other. It is explicated in the biological and social principle of interdependence – *anatta* – and the illusion of a separate self. It requires transcending a limited and individualist approach to mindfulness to focus on *samma sati*, a comprehensive understanding of mindfulness based on the Buddha’s the Noble Eight-Fold Path.²⁴

We need to explore how *samma sati* (Right Mindfulness) and *samma samadhi* (Right Concentration) are inherently linked with the other factors of the Path, namely ethical conduct (*sila*) and wisdom (*panna*). In other words, Right Mindfulness requires commitment to ethical precepts such as, non-violence, truth and honesty and to the wisdom of virtuous or Right intention

²⁰ *The Dhammapada*. Translated by Tin, Daw Mya, M.A., Edited by Editorial Committee. Burma Tipitaka Association, Rangoon, Burma, 1986, Chapter 1, *Yamakavagga*

²¹ *The Dhammapada*. Translated by Tin, Daw Mya, M. A., Edited by Editorial Committee. Burma Tipitaka Association, Rangoon, Burma, 1986, Chapter 1, *Yamakavagga*

²² *The Dhammapada*. Translated by Tin, Daw Mya, M. A., Edited by Editorial Committee. Burma Tipitaka Association, Rangoon, Burma, 1986, Chapter 1, *Yamakavagga*.

²³ *The Dhammapada*. Translated by Tin, Daw Mya, M. A., Edited by Editorial Committee. Burma Tipitaka Association, Rangoon, Burma, 1986, Chapter 1, *Yamaka-vagga*.

²⁴ Rahula (1979): 45 – 50.

and Right view.²⁵

In the Introduction to the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Awareness, the Buddha stated:

“This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation for the extinguishing of suffering and grief, for walking on the path of truth, for the realization of *nibbana*; that is to say, the fourfold establishing of awareness”²⁶.

The *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, explains that the fourfold establishing of awareness – of the body, bodily sensations, the mind and mental contents – must lead to Right Mindfulness, namely the eradication of craving and aversion and the realization of *nibbana*.

“...Here, monks, a monk dwells ardent with awareness and constant thorough understanding of impermanence, observing body in body, having removed craving and aversion towards the world [of mind and matter]; he dwells ardent with awareness and constant thorough understanding of impermanence, observing sensations in sensations, having removed craving and aversion towards the world [of mind and matter]; he dwells ardent with awareness and constant thorough understanding of impermanence, observing mind in mind, having removed craving and aversion towards the world [of mind and matter]; he dwells ardent with awareness and constant thorough understanding of impermanence, observing mental contents in mental contents, having removed craving and aversion towards the world [of mind and matter].”²⁷

V. THE MIDDLE PATH

The middle way/ path (*Majjhima Patipada*), identified by the Buddha around 5 BC, has profound potential to help us face both individual and social dilemmas. The Buddha developed the concept of the Middle Path based on his own experiences. Initially, as the heir to a royal throne, he indulged in extreme sensual pleasures. Later, in his quest, for spiritual understanding, he practiced self-mortification. Through these experiences and his meditation practice, he discovered that neither overindulgence nor self-denial resulted in true inner harmony. As a result, he promoted the Middle Way as the pathway to human liberation.²⁸

“The applicability of the Middle Way to societal peace and harmony is inherent in the Buddha’s well-known teaching of the Four Noble Truths: reality of suffering, arising of suffering, cessation of suffering and the Path to ending suffering. Buddha pointed out the reality of impermanence, the changing nature of all material and mental phenomena and the suffering that comes from attachment to such changing phenomena.

²⁵ Hart (1987): 57 – 69.

²⁶ From the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, (*Dīgha Nikāya* 22).

²⁷ From the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, (*Dīgha Nikāya* 22).

²⁸ Rahula (1979): 45 – 50.

Identifying greed, hatred and ignorance (including limited vision) as the roots of suffering, he advocated the cultivation of non-attachment or mental equilibrium/ equanimity as the path to freedom.”²⁹

The Law of Dependent Origination (*Paticca Samuppada*) propounded by the Buddha explains the conditioned arising of all phenomena and the law of cause and effect. Liberation is said to come from following the Middle Path and nurturing the set of non-harmful and non-violent actions of the Noble Eight-Fold Path (*Arya Ashtanga Magga*).³⁰ This consists of:

- Right View/ Understanding (*samma ditthi*)
- Right Thought/ Intention (*samma sankappa*)
- Right Speech (*samma vaca*)
- Right Action (*samma kammantha*)
- Right Livelihood (*samma ajiva*)
- Right Effort (*samma vayama*)
- Right Mindfulness (*samma sati*)
- Right Concentration (*samma samadhi*).³¹

Contrary to common belief in the West, the Buddha did not advocate passivity but instead offered clear guidance for living based on mindfulness, wisdom and morality, including Right Action and Right Livelihood.

The middle road is not about passivity, indecisiveness or being ‘wishy washy’. It is a path of balance, openness, patience and perseverance. As scholar-monk Bhikku Bodhi puts it, the Middle Path “is not a compromise between the extremes but a way that rises above them, avoiding the pitfalls into which they lead.”³²

It is a path that avoids all extremes, be they political ideologies like fascism, neoliberal capitalism, and communism; acts of violence such as terrorism; or cultural, religious or ethnoreligious extremism based on ego-centric and materialistic identity.³³

The Middle Path is founded on the human qualities of generosity, compassion, and wisdom, rather than on greed, hatred, and ignorance. It represents a path of peace rather than violence. Although it may not be essential to use sectarian terms like ‘Buddhist,’ the universal significance of the Middle Path for freedom and well-being should not be overlooked. While the Buddha’s teachings of the *Dhamma*, or the Laws of Nature, are typically applied to individual transformation, their relevance to social and global

²⁹ Bandarage, Asoka. “The Buddha’s Middle Path: Lessons for Sustainability and Global Well-Being.” *Development*, vol. 56, no. 2 (2013): 232 – 40.

³⁰ Rahula (1979): 45 – 50.

³¹ Rahula (1979): 45.

³² Bodhi, Bhikku. “Tolerance and Diversity.” *Newsletter of the Buddhist Publication Society*, no. 24 (Summer-Fall 1993): 1 – 3.

³³ Bandarage (2013): 8.

transformation must also be acknowledged.³⁴

VI. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

In order to address the contemporary global crisis, we must fundamentally rethink the global economic system. The current model, based on domination and unchecked growth, needs to be challenged. Economists E. F. Schumacher and Herman E. Daly offer valuable alternatives with their concepts of 'Buddhist Economics' and 'Ecological Economics,' respectively. Additionally, the idea of 'Compassionate Economics' has emerged, highlighting the need for a more humane and sustainable economic approach.³⁵

Schumacher explained, "the Buddhist Middle Way is by no means antagonistic to physical well-being. It is not wealth that stands in the way of liberation but the attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the craving for them."³⁶

The Buddha's teaching on craving (*tanha*) clarifies the distinction between human needs and wants. It emphasizes that the mind is of utmost importance and that we possess the ability to transform both our individual and collective consciousness.³⁷ Similarly, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy from Thailand advocating moderation and wisdom envisions balanced and sustainable development that can protect society from uncertainties associated with globalization and market turbulence.³⁸

This perspective is much needed to consciously transform the global economic system. It advocates for a shift towards the rational distribution of natural resources, the adoption of suitable technologies, mindful consumption habits, purposeful job creation and fairer wealth distribution across society. This can only be achieved by integrating ethical, social, and ecological criteria into economic decision-making from the start, rather than only considering these factors after social and environmental degradation has taken place, typically from an angle of PR and marketing.³⁹

A transition from unchecked growth to sustainable development requires a holistic transformation, including changes in ownership structures, production technologies, distribution methods, and communication systems. The Middle Path advocates for a nuanced perspective, not entirely dismissing quantitative growth but seeking balanced alternatives. These include the adoption of appropriate technologies, with a focus on renewable energy sources, and the creation of meaningful work opportunities. Such a shift aims to ensure both

³⁴ Bandarage (2013): 78.

³⁵ Schumacher (1974): 56.; Daly (2005), *passim*.

³⁶ Schumacher (1974): 60.

³⁷ Schumacher (1974): 60.

³⁸ United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs. *Sufficient Economy Philosophy*. Accessed on [January 20, 2025], available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/sufficient-economy-philosophy>.

³⁹ Bandarage (2013): 78.

economic stability and social well-being for all members of society, finding a harmony between human needs and environmental constraints.

The Middle Path does not advocate a return to the economic stagnation that characterized tribal societies or a complete abandonment of economic and technological innovation and growth. However, there is much to learn from some of our ancestors, such as those from traditional Buddhist societies, on how to balance short-term material gain and the long-term survival and flourishing of both human beings and the ecosystem that created and sustains us.

Community-centered economics is essential for preserving the intricate web of ecological systems, cultural diversity, ethnic identities, and social structures. As futurist Hazel Henderson described the need for bioregionalism and decentralization is incompatible with unchecked economic growth and globalization, monopoly capitalism and runaway technological growth.⁴⁰

Bioregionalism advocates for local control over natural resources and self-sufficiency. As a counter to neoliberal capitalism's destructive path, increasing numbers are eschewing agribusiness and transnational corporate dominance. Instead, they're adopting ecological, community-based practices, fostering direct connections with land and fellow inhabitants. This shift signifies a grassroots movement towards sustainable, locally-rooted socioeconomic systems.⁴¹

Returning to the land may not be an option for most people. However, the unsustainable concentration of wealth among a minority at the expense of societal well-being and environmental integrity necessitates immediate policy interventions. Financial institutions and asset managers must be compelled to redirect their substantial capital towards sustainable development and job creation rather than destructive ventures. The rapacious pursuit of financial gain through speculative practices requires constraint through the cultivation of compassionate and judicious economic paradigms.

Given increasing global economic inequality, the divergence between under-consumption of the poor and over-consumption of the rich population is sharpening. The eradication of hunger and poverty necessitates a recalibration of global consumption patterns: reducing excess among the affluent while elevating standards for the impoverished. The 'Middle Path Equilibrium Curve' (Figure 3) illustrates that optimal material and spiritual well-being lies neither in extreme deprivation nor in excessive wealth, but in a balanced middle ground.

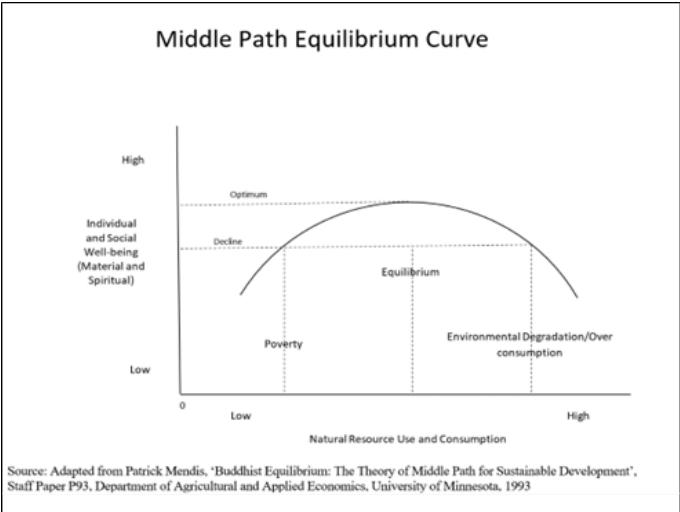
In contrast to the linear consumption and well-being projection of the dominant paradigm (Figure 2), the Middle Path points out that after a certain point, increasing material consumption and resource use decrease happiness

⁴⁰ Henderson (2006): 123.

⁴¹ Quinn, Caroline. *Why Tomorrow Documentary is a Must-Watch for Environmental Advocates*. Accessed on [June 28, 2024], available at: <https://www.tomorrow-documentary.com/why-tomorrow-documentary-is-a-must-watch/>.

and well-being. Rather, optimum individual and social wellbeing results from balanced and shared consumption of resources and goods. In other words, we must prioritize interconnectedness between the self and the other, instead of a paradigm of domination.

Figure 3: Middle Path Equilibrium Curve



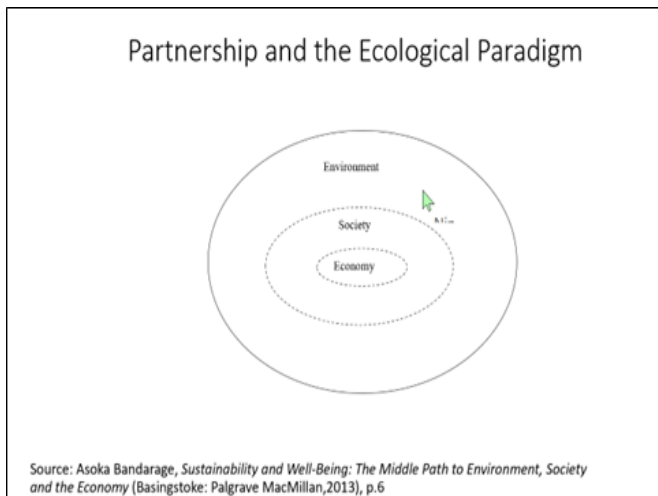
VII. PARTNERSHIP AND THE ECOLOGICAL PARADIGM

Partnership thinking illuminates the organic unity of life and the interconnectedness of all phenomena. This perspective reveals humanity not as an isolated entity, but as an integral component of a nested ecological hierarchy: embedded within animal systems, which are in turn part of broader plant ecosystems, the Earth’s biosphere, and ultimately, the evolving cosmic tapestry of (multiple) universes.⁴² “Interbeing,” a concept introduced by Vietnamese Buddhist scholar-monk Thich Nhat Hanh, transcends hierarchical dualisms. It posits an inherent interconnectedness of all phenomena, asserting that the self’s survival is inextricably linked to the others. This paradigm shift emphasizes mutual dependence over isolated existence.⁴³ The Middle Path and Partnership/ Ecological paradigm are characterized by profound reverence for life’s unity and an acute awareness of the interdependence among diverse elements of the whole. This worldview emphasizes the imperative for cooperation and equilibrium within complex systems.

Figure 4: Partnership and the Ecological Paradigm

⁴² Bandarage (1997): 317.

⁴³ Hanh (2020): 1 - 116.



Partnership consciousness, an inherent aspect of human societies, necessitates evolution into a global paradigm in our interconnected world. This expanded consciousness integrates diverse traditions – Buddhist philosophy, indigenous wisdom – with monistic elements of Western science, including quantum theory and evolutionary biology. Notably, physicists like Bohr, Bohm, and Einstein echo Buddhist thought in identifying consciousness as energy, the fundamental constituent of universal existence.⁴⁴

VIII. MINDFULNESS AND INNER TRANSFORMATION

As the Buddha taught, mind and consciousness preceed all actions. Therefore Right Mindfulness (*samma sati*) is essential to human wellbeing.⁴⁵ The global transformation we require extends beyond intellectual discourse; it necessitates a fundamental shift in human consciousness from ignorance, greed, and hatred to wisdom, generosity, and compassion. Only by embracing these values can we transcend the current system of exploitation and domination and foster sustainable alternatives. This change depends on cultivating wisdom and a strong commitment to compassionate and generous principles among an increasing number of individuals.⁴⁶ It is useful to consider the Buddha's call for the removal of sixteen defilements of the mind as the foundation for mental purification:

“What monks, are the defilements that defile the mind? Covetousness and unrighteous greed is a defilement that defiles the mind. Ill will... anger... hostility... denigration... insolence... envy... miserliness... deceit... fraud... obstinacy... rivalry... conceit... arrogance...

⁴⁴ Cited in Bandarage (2013): 74.

⁴⁵ Pure Dhamma. “*Manōpubbangamā Dhammā, Manōsetthā Manōmayā.*” Accessed on [January 20, 2025], available at: <https://puredhamma.net/dhammapada/manopubbangama-dhamma/>.

⁴⁶ Bandarage, Asoka. “The Buddha's Middle Path: Lessons for Sustainability and Global Well-Being.” *Development*, vol. 56, no. 2 (2013): 232 – 40.

vanity... heedlessness is a defilement that defiles the mind. Knowing that covetousness and unrighteous greed is a defilement that defiles the mind, a monk abandons it. Knowing that ill will... heedlessness is a defilement that defiles the mind, a monk abandons it.”⁴⁷

As discussed earlier, the pursuit of insatiable growth - unbridled materialism, technology and power - at the global societal level is rooted in egoistical craving – *tanha* - and defilements of the human mind. While haste and the pursuit of goals are celebrated virtues in the dominant mechanistic paradigm, the eco-centric paradigm and the Middle Path emphasize the importance of the processes and means employed to achieve those ends. This approach is grounded in morality, wisdom, and right mindfulness, highlighting that how we reach our objectives is as critical as the objectives themselves.⁴⁸ We must cultivate global visions and strategies that resonate with the highest moral and ethical values of humanity, rather than our deepest fears and insecurities. It is essential to establish a political action agenda rooted in universal spiritual teachings that transcend narrow sectarianism and economic competition, guiding us toward a more inclusive and cooperative future.⁴⁹ The Buddha’s teaching of *Maithri* Loving Kindness and *Samma Sati*, Right Mindfulness are most pertinent to developing the partnership ethic that is urgently needed to address the existential crisis facing humanity:

“And how is it monks, that by protecting oneself one protects others? By the pursuit, development, and cultivation [of the four establishments of mindfulness). It is in such a way that by protecting oneself one protects others.”⁵⁰

IX. MINDFULNESS AND SOCIAL ACTION

If an increasing number of educated and relatively privileged mindfulness meditators merely turn inward in response to the existential crises we face, they risk becoming part of the problem rather than part of the solution. By sitting on a cushion and closing their eyes to escape fear and horror, they neglect to expand their awareness to the ethical, social justice, and ecological implications of these challenges. Engaging with the world around us is essential to fostering meaningful change.⁵¹

The silence of meditation and mindfulness practice is not necessarily at odds with the collective action of social movements; rather, they can complement each other in creative and diverse ways. We must explore how the inner transformation of awareness, compassion, and resilience fostered by

⁴⁷ From MN 7, MLDB 118, cited in Bodhi (2016): 34 - 35.

⁴⁸ Bandarage, Asoka. *Women, Population and Global Crisis: A Political-Economic Analysis*. Zed Books, London, 1997, p. 320.

⁴⁹ Bandarage (1997): 320.

⁵⁰ From SN 47:19, CDB 1648-49 cited in Bodhi (2016): 44.

⁵¹ Bandarage, Asoka. “Mindfulness and Social Action in Covid 19 Crisis.” *Asia Times*, April 6, 2020. Accessed on [April 30, 2020], available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2020/04/mindfulness-social-action-in-covid-19-crisis/>.

mindfulness meditation – and other practices such as communion with nature, prayer, and chanting – can be applied to facilitate outer political and economic transitions. This integration is essential for addressing the unprecedented challenges facing humanity.⁵² Ultimately, the change required now is a shift of the human heart from greed, hatred and delusion to generosity, compassion and wisdom. As the Buddha's Loving Kindness Discourse, the *Karaniyametta Sutta* beautifully states:

"May all beings be happy and secure; may their minds be contented... Just as a mother would protect her only child even at the risk of her own life, even so let one cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings... Let one's thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world -above, below and across -without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity..."⁵³

Socially engaged Buddhism is not an entirely a new construct.⁵⁴ The Buddha's teaching imparts instructions for social engagement and mindful living.⁵⁵

"The culturally conditioned, media-driven belief that we cannot do much to change the world is mistaken. The origin and historical evolution of the dominant trajectory of global military and economic expansion is attributable to a small elite. Understandably, most people are currently preoccupied with individual survival, but it is possible for some of us, including mindfulness meditators, to awaken ourselves to the larger social and ecological realities and exercise our agency, rights and responsibilities as parents, teachers, citizens and humans."⁵⁶

To uphold environmental sustainability and human well-being over unrestricted corporate profit signifies Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future upheld by UNDV 2025.

⁵² Bandarage, Asoka. "Mindfulness and Social Action in Covid 19 Crisis." *Asia Times*, April 6, 2020. Accessed on [April 30, 2020], available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2020/04/mindfulness-social-action-in-covid-19-crisis/>.

⁵³ From *Suttanipata*, I.8, cited in Rahula (1979): 97.

⁵⁴ Verhoeven, Martin. "What Is Socially Engaged Buddhism?" *Dharma Realm Buddhist University*, March 19, 2024. Accessed on [March 19, 2024], available at: <https://www.drbu.edu/news/what-is-socially-engaged-buddhism/>.

⁵⁵ Bodhi (2016): 397.

⁵⁶ Bandarage, Asoka. "Mindfulness and Social Action in Covid 19 Crisis." *Asia Times*, April 6, 2020. Accessed on [April 30, 2020], available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2020/04/mindfulness-social-action-in-covid-19-crisis/>; see also, Bandarage, Asoka. "Social and Ecological Ethics." *Arrow Journal*, March 2018. Accessed on [January 20, 2025], available at: <https://arrow-journal.org/social-and-ecological-ethics/>.

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SUBJECTIVITY, PHENOMENOLOGY, AND THE NOTION OF ANATTA

Dr. Jeff Wilson*

Abstract:

This paper explores the issues of unity and inclusivity on a deeper level, examining the meaning of these terms in personal psychology and the subjectivity of the individual. In order to achieve social and international, inclusivity we need to understand the oppositions and fragmentations of the present-day personal psyche. Scholars increasingly use the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl to explain the Buddhist approach to these problems. Rather than attempting a positivistic analysis of the 'external' world like many of his contemporaries, he focused on the cognitive processes that allow us to participate in intersubjective relations with other humans. Like Buddhist epistemology he emphasized consciousness itself rather than a third-person, objective view of the world. The notion of *suññata*, nothingness or voidness, is investigated here from the perspective of the western phenomenologists who disconnect from this third-person approach through 'a certain refraining from judgement' (Husserl). Like the authors of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, they know that wisdom is not found in the intellectual sphere and that sometimes the words get in the way.

Keywords: *Anatta, phenomenology, mindfulness meditation, subjectivity.*

I. INTRODUCTION

From a certain (Western) perspective, the construction, maintenance and tightening of strong ego boundaries is the fundamental concern of present-day educational theories and practices. Such theories appear to be based on a belief that autonomy, rationality and individuality are facilitated in children through the disciplined construction and policing of the parameters that surround and define subjectivity. Perspectives that question this attitude to acculturating and training the next generation of citizens can be found in the writings of French writers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva

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whose cultural theories present an opposing methodology that *loosens* the parameters around subjectivity and that can be developed to coexist with this dominant third-person analytic style in order to simultaneously release the faculties of imagination, creativity and insight. Educational methodologies which embrace such alternative or complementary approaches prepare young people for the art of living, not just for working.

II. CONTRASTING CONCEPTIONS OF THE SELF: EAST AND WEST

When the focus is shifted to a non-Western tradition such as Buddhism, certain resonances begin to appear between these complementary methodologies and the philosophy of Buddhism. It becomes possible to construct a suitable discourse/ terminology in which to discuss subjectivity from both the internal and external viewpoints. Buddhist philosophy centres around the notion of *anatta* (no-self) while occidental epistemology is centred around the self, the ego, and around the rights and responsibilities of the autonomous individual. In the West, a child's development is carefully monitored, its actions and responses accurately tuned to produce a functional ego.

What then, is the Western mind to do with the notion of *anatta* ('no-self'), the negation of a seemingly universal conviction that a continuous and substantial self, or 'own-being' (Skt. *svabhava*) exists. The Freudian ego is still very much the Cartesian ego of '*cogito ergo sum*' ('I think therefore I am'); the 'I' defined as the rationally thinking being. In the Western approach to selfhood, the thinking self stands apart from nature, observing an outside world while the Eastern approach is to see ourselves as part of nature and nature as existing within us. This latter approach views subjectivity from a very different perspective, where an over-emphasis on autonomy does not lead to a separation from a more holistic identification, a sense of belonging to, of being a part of nature. An ability to see from both the objective and subjective perspectives would lead to the logic of the Mahayānists in which a self both exists and does not exist.¹

Therefore, although it is a not altogether trouble-free analysis, it would be possible to say that the Buddhist concept of no-self questions the substantiality of a sense of self that is the product of over-intellectualised self-views. If there is an authentic self then it resides in experience - in the momentary awareness that we have of the flowing existential stream of phenomenal interactivity. The objective of meditation practice, then, is a lowering of parameters in regard to the autonomy of selfhood, and in the transcendence of a mental gateway separating self from other, self from the world. The sense of self that undergoes this transition from self-oriented consciousness to liberated consciousness is still a self but it is not a self that is bound by habitual attachments and is thus experienced in meditation practice as a relatively insubstantial part of the greater psyche. To understand the more esoteric texts of Buddhism requires a use of language that is disentangled from the Cartesian ego.

¹ See, for example T. E. Wood, 1994, *Nagarjunian Dispensations: A Philosophic Journey Through an Indian Looking Glass*. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, p. 15.

III. MEDITATION, COGNITION, AND TRANSFORMATIVE AWARENESS

The problem requires the introduction of relatively non-differentiating perspectives to balance the analytic tendencies of disciplinary approaches.² It is a matter of reinstating the value of semiotic flow, the kind of linguistic flow found in poetic and colloquial language, against the hegemony of symbolic stasis, the language contained within the boundaries of prescriptive grammars and institutional rationalities. Science cannot shield us from our own subjectivity; the methodologies that go into the 'construction' of the subject need to be thoroughly understood in order to conceive of better, less interventionist methodologies in the future. They would be educational methodologies designed to provide a balanced approach to living by developing a synthesis of the analytic, 'task-positive' or task oriented, style and the intuitive (default mode) style of learning and cognition. This re-definition of cognitive styles into the 'task-oriented' and 'default mode' styles has become prominent since the turn of the new millennium through fMRI studies in secular meditation techniques which recognise two independent neural networks in the brain. One follows the cortical regions (the task-oriented mode) while the other lies beneath it (the default mode) and includes the *insular* region which is identified with self-referencing cognitive processes.³ Meditation is now believed to work particularly well with this default mode in promoting cognitive change by bringing about 'sustained attention to interoceptive sensations of respiration or bodily sensation.'⁴ This internalised attention interrupts the habitual self-referencing patterns that create egocentric perceptual behaviours. The effect of interoceptive attention in other words is to free the subject, emotionally and perceptually, from over-attachment to external events and preoccupations. Instead of the automatic conceptual patterns that sometimes impose on behaviour, a more flexible and adaptive mode of cognitive organisation emerges, one that can be characterised as a semiotic flow, as the neuroplasticity of human creativity and which can complement the dominant mode of task oriented thinking and behaviour.

The problem of the boundaries drawn around subjectivity first presents itself then as a contradiction between rational thought and holistic or poetical cognition. But bridges can be built between the disciplined thought of logico-empirical investigation and the internal quest for 'psychic' meaning and value, even if only in the Jungian sense. It may be remembered that C. G. Jung saw the profound, underlying form of consciousness, the *alaya vijñana*, as a collective unconscious containing archetypal figures resembling spirits and *devas*. His work demonstrated that psychology sometimes needs to use the language of

² Edward Crangle, 1997, 'Hermeneutics and the Ontological Categorisation of Religious Experience' in *Australian Religious Studies Review*. Vol 9, No 2, pp. 22 - 31, p. 22.

³ A. S. Farb et al, 2012, *Mindfulness Meditation Training Alters Cortical Representations of Interoceptive Attention*, Downloaded from <https://academic.oup.com/scan/article-abstract/8/1/15/16060> on 27/02/2020

⁴ Ibid.

religion and mysticism to properly describe the workings of the human Psyche. The *external* view produced by logico-empirical approaches to knowledge seems to radically exclude the *internal* experience of hermeneutic subjectivity and to see it as ‘mere’ subjectivity as opposed to the detached and impartial perspective of the empirical gaze. But the task oriented and default-mode areas of the mental sphere can work together as we learn to both think and to not think; to objectively analyse our immediate environment or to simply be aware of the ebbs and flows of the present moment.

The term ‘cognition’ has been employed here in preference to alternatives such as ‘consciousness’, which seems dependent on an opposition to ‘unconsciousness’; or to ‘mind’ which similarly depends on an opposition to ‘body’. However, cognition should not be confused with the notion of ‘cognitivism’ which tends to be used as a signifier for the type of mentation that operates through a process of symbolic manipulation, deduction and inference. These latter aspects of cognition are related here to the ‘analytic’ modality and always contrasted with the equally valuable cognitive modality of the ‘global’, the intuitive, pre-symbolic and undifferentiated modes of knowing and understanding.

‘Cognition’ then refers to the whole spectrum of consciousness, including the subliminal and hardly-noticed sensorimotor interactions that are regarded here as forming the fundamental cognitive basis for the so-called higher cognitive functions. Cognition, then, basically means ‘knowing’, as the Greek root of the word demands: it means ‘knowing’ in both the sense of knowledge acquired through logico-empirical investigation and in the sense of knowledge acquired through direct experience, through intimate acquaintance with the content of our environment.

The terms ‘global’ (or non-analytic) and ‘analytic’ refer here to cognitive states or cognitive styles characterised respectively by low differentiation and high differentiation. A non-analytic style, by this definition, will describe the person’s preferred mode of perceptually-guided activity as a means of dealing with the world in a holistic or ‘whole-istic’ manner, as a continuum of contextually-related (but not highly articulated) phenomena. The analytic style, meanwhile, is characterised by a tendency to articulate the world into a highly complex multiplicity. As most people utilize a mixture of the two main styles, even though one style may predominate over the other, it can be hypothesized that everyone is capable of operating within one or both styles. In the field of Buddhist contemplative practices, the global style has been correlated with certain *Mahayāna* practices - tranquility meditation and emptiness - while the analytic has been compared with the mindfulness techniques characteristic of the Theravada schools.

The two basic forms of meditation style are sometimes found working together; they are never contradictory opposites but rather the characteristics of two different cognitive states: a) the ‘global’ state: characterised by emptiness, the world experienced as an undifferentiated continuum; and (b) the ‘analytic state’: characterised by the tendency to differentiate and

categorise phenomena. The analytic cognitive style can be seen to operate in Buddhist practice in its deconstruction of *samsaric* habits of thought, that is, in its tradition of 'mindfulness' (*sati*), where practitioners adopt an objective and detached approach to their own thoughts and actions. Since the mid-nineteenth century modernisation of the Buddhist Sangha in south-east Asia, this analytic, 'open-monitoring' meditation method has become dominant. Its modern theme of moment-by-moment self-analysis attracted the attention of western psychologists, and successful secular versions have been developed and used by psychologists in areas such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

IV. PHENOMENOLOGY, DECONSTRUCTION, AND THE VOID

The texts produced by the 'global' and non-analytic cognitive state are not organised according to a strictly sequential schema. They are rather, to use a Deleuzian term, 'rhizomatic', that is, they do not grow upwards from a central root system as trees do, but by spreading out laterally as rhizomes do and by obeying a law of circular causality:

any point on a rhizome can be connected to any other point... semiotic chains of all sorts are connected to quite diverse modes of encoding, chains of biological, political, economic and other kinds...

A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating quite different kinds of acts - linguistic, but also perceptual, mimetic, gestural, cognitive ones: there is no language in itself, nor any universality of language, but a concourse of dialects, patois, slangs, special languages ... It develops by stems and underground flows, advances along river valleys or railway lines ...⁵

The wide distribution of the Perfection-of-Wisdom texts, around the beginning of the common era (CE) marked the beginning of the Mahayana tradition. A semiotic chain was developed in these texts between the notions of wisdom, the great mother and emptiness. The fundamental theme of empathy is explored through the semiotic connection between wisdom and the mother; one cares for the mother as the mother cared for one. She is the mother of *even* the Buddhas, so she is the source of wisdom. Her world is empty of substantial 'things'; it is pure experience. There is no universal language:

where there is emptiness there is neither form nor feeling, nor perception, nor impulse ... nor object of mind ...⁶

But then the text reminds us that there are two cognitive styles that are complementary rather than oppositional:

form is emptiness, and the very emptiness is form, emptiness does not

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, Paul Foss and Paul Patton, in *Ideology and Consciousness*, No 8, Spring, pp. 49 - 71, pp. 52 - 53.

⁶ Edward Conze, 2002, 'The Heart of Perfect Wisdom, Short Form' in Perfect Wisdom, Buddhist Publishing Group, Totnes, UK, p.171.

differ from form, nor does form differ from emptiness...⁷

Each issue or theme is treated as an object of meditation that draws to it a centrifugal force of inspiration and insight and which acts as a temporary centre that relates back, like the tributaries of a river rather than through the roots of a Chomskian 'linguistic tree',⁸ to the central question.

These present-day cultural theorists – Deleuze, Foucault and Kristeva – find their phenomenological foundations, not just in Nietzsche, but even more profoundly in the writings of Edmund Husserl. The theoretical similarities found between their 'continental' semiotic philosophy and that found in the Buddhist texts become clear when seen from Husserl's perspective. Like that of the Buddhists, his system focuses on the cognitive processes that allow us to participate in the intersubjective relations of our world rather than on a positivistic analysis of that world. For Husserl, this analysis of the world, this 'natural standpoint', must be disconnected in order to 'go to the things themselves', to turn away from the outside world and concentrate on consciousness itself.

This notion of a cognitive disconnection is found throughout the Buddhist doctrines in the notion of *suññata* (voidness, emptiness or nothingness). The ultimate aim, in the mental practices formed around this doctrine, is the 'sign-less concentration of mind' (*animitta cetosamādhī*). In the *Cūḷasuvāṇṇasutta*, this state is arrived at through a series of such mental disconnections. One disconnects from perception of the 'assembly of men and women', from perception of earth, through to the 'base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception' and nothingness as sign-less concentration. Therefore, the notion of voidness is seen, in the Pāli canon, as an absence of signs, symbols and signifiers, a state of bare awareness (*sati*).

Husserl's idea that we all carry a 'natural thesis', a thesis about the natural world that is 'present to hand', is related to the Lacanian view of a 'symbolic order'; a linguistic ordering of our perceptions of the world. The goal of both phenomenologists and Buddhists is a reduction in the influence of this cognitive nucleus of pre-conditioned relations and ideological conventions. The real theme here is the reception of Buddhist philosophy in the West. To talk about Buddhist philosophy is not to suggest that Buddhism is a philosophy rather than a religion; that's an old debate. It is often now recognised that Buddhism is *more* than a religion, that it is a religion but also a philosophy, a system of psychology and a system of phenomenology as in Edmund Husserl's search for a form of pure, unadulterated consciousness.

Meditation would be a helpful tool for western phenomenologists because their aim is to disconnect the image we all carry of the 'way the world is'. The way to be aware of things in a direct, unconditioned act of perception is to put this rationalistic thesis about the world "in brackets". To put such a

⁷ Edward Conze, 2002, 'The Heart of Perfect Wisdom, Short Form' op cit.

⁸ Ibid, p. 53.

thesis or ideological standpoint into brackets is to separate it from immediate consciousness, not to suppress it, but to hold it in a disconnected state so that it can be clearly seen as a particular perspective, thus leaving the process of *sati* or bare attention in its unconditioned state. Husserl calls this act of perception an *epoché*, “a certain refraining from judgment” (Husserl, 2012: 58). What is disconnected is a ‘Natural Thesis’ about a ‘fact world’ that is always already ‘out there’. His method for attempting to attain pure consciousness is to subject this thesis, this internal commentary on the world, to a ‘certain suspension’ (2012: 57).

This method bears a certain resemblance to the practices revolving around the notion of *suññatā*, the concept of nothingness or emptiness. Most Buddhist disciplines and schools employ the practice of *ānāpānasati*, a certain method of focusing on the respiratory system and centering awareness in the internal (*ajjhata*) sphere of cognition rather than in the external (*bahiddhā*) sphere of the objectively perceived outside world. The aim is to arrive at a state or perceptual mode in which the conceptual and symbolic representations of the world are minimized or suspended. When experience is transposed into the symbolic sphere, when it is put into order and categorised by the constraints of language, it is transformed and consequently has its existence in a separate dimension where the world is interpreted as if one were reading it as a text. It is as if an inner voice, a voice of conditioned thoughts, is constantly explaining and describing the world of experience.

Suññatā is translated as voidness, emptiness or nothingness. The techniques associated with the notion are designed to instil silence in the consciousness of the practitioner, to ‘still the mind’. In the *Culasuññatāsutta*, monks are advised to disconnect from perception of the elephants, horses, men and women of the village and focus on the Sangha. The focus then shifts from the Sangha to the forest, the earth, the base of infinite space and so on until reaching a state of “the sign-less concentration of mind” (*animitta cetosamādhi*). Thus the Voidist method, coming directly from the notion of *Suññatā*, involves a series of disconnections from the symbolic order, the propositional ‘linguaging’ of the world. It is a disconnection of the inner voice of conditioned thoughts and responses that is constantly explaining, describing and ordering the world of experience.

The ‘symbolic order’ is a term constructed by Jacques Lacan, a theorist who mixed together a new reading of psychoanalysis with the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the phenomenology of Husserl. It is a way of grouping together Husserl’s ‘Natural Thesis’ with all of the different perspectives that might be targeted by his method of suspension. As the language acquisition of a child progresses, it learns the social rules and how to play the social game with all its deeply embedded conventions of speech and action. An adult gradually emerges, equipped with the necessary knowledge skills and armed with the prescribed grammatical tools with which to interact with other subjects. An ‘order of things’ has been established and the person is oriented within a social, psychological and ideological environment. In

Buddhist philosophy this order of things can be expressed as *sutamayā paññā*, the form of knowledge based on language and learning. A higher form of knowledge, or wisdom, is expressed by the term *bhāvanāmayā paññā*, wisdom based on mental development and meditation and which produces insight rather than propositional representation.

There are many intersections between the two methods, especially in regard to the notion of *anatta*, or non-self. The notion of a substantial 'self' has been radically questioned by those who have followed Husserl, those so-called postmodernist theorists like Lacan, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva, who are thoroughly rooted in Husserlian thought and who see the ego or self as a 'subject in process', a subjectivity that is constantly changing and that has no true substantiality or permanence. This subject in process exists in a constant interactive relationship with its significant objects: its foundations lie in Desire, and if the desire is too great for a particular object, that object has an exorbitant effect on the subject (Kristeva, 1982). In the same way, the five aggregates are the five aggregates of clinging (*panchupādanakhandā*). We become attached to forms, feelings, sensations, and so on while the attachments, the objects, and the subjective experiences, together, create consciousness. The idea of a substantial self is implicit in this consciousness. There is, therefore an acknowledgement of desire, attachment, and clinging as the major driving forces behind subjectivity, in both systems. Both phenomenology and Buddhism see this thirsting as fundamental in the construction of the individual.

So far, Husserl's interest in Buddhism has hardly been mentioned. He had already formed his theories and methodologies before coming into contact with the Buddha's teachings. A colleague of his had produced a German translation of a substantial part of the Pali canon. When he read it, it had quite a dramatic effect on him. He realized that what he was reading was not just an academic philosophy or a set of religious prescriptions but a methodology for living, an art of living; a *lebenswelt*. He must have seen the significance of the term *bhāvana*, which is often used simply as a word for meditation but that, on a deeper level, refers to 'mental development'. This is not just a development that leads to greater mental abilities in the areas of logic, conceptualisation and propositional grammar but a development leading to intuition, insight, and the eventual transcendence of propositional thinking, to 'cessation' (the cessation of volitional formations). He would have seen that the Buddhist idea of wisdom was similar to his own, signifying a higher degree of knowledge than that produced by the objectifying conceptualisations of logico-empirical language.

Such wisdom is attained through contemplative practices and all the methodologies that must be learned in order to appreciate the calmness of mind that produces insight and a purified intuition. The practices of mindfulness, for example, are methodologies involving the focusing of attention on the experience of the present moment in order to free consciousness from its customary objects and complex thoughts. In a similar way, Husserl's method involves a 'bracketing' of the conceptual systems that are hindrances to the

phenomenological ability to see existence in its pristine state, as emerging out of itself rather than in a formulaic manner, in a formulated mapping of the world. His method of 'transcendental reduction', the bracketing out of our received perceptions/explanations of the natural world, is a pathway to transcendental pure consciousness just as the Buddhist path leads, by way of the cessation of conditioned thought patterns, to the cognitive freedom of enlightenment and the vibrant emptiness of *suññatā*.

Although the poststructuralist notion of 'deconstruction' refers to a critical methodology associated with Jacques Derrida, its epistemological foundations lie in the philosophy of Nietzsche, and deconstruction resonates in certain ways with the Buddhist practice of mindfulness meditation or 'bare attention' (*sati*). Nietzsche views the construction of meaning and value as taking place within a highly symbolic system preconfigured by the operation of certain foundational value oppositions. Such oppositions are always already in play when culture and science come to define tradition and reason and when a logic of contradictions informs the epistemology of both. Foucault acknowledged the fundamental influence that Nietzsche had on his philosophical development in his essay, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*.⁹ In this work, it is clear that Foucault based his post-structuralist epistemology on Nietzsche's attempt to dislodge the privileged 'origin'; the extrapolation of present needs and desires onto an imagined and sacrilegious past. It is this 'sacred' origin that anchors the values and meanings of the present to a distant 'essential' truth. This essential meaning is traced back to its 'roots' in classical Greek and Latin texts and and the pious myths of Judeo/ Christian lore, forming a 'white mythology', Derrida's expression for the notion that a profound mythology underlies and informs Western rationality, the Nietzschean *Grundglaube* (fundamental belief), the belief in a primordial differentiation between good and evil, a misplaced faith in the synthetic terms or things which emerge from such radical opposition.

The primitive meaning, the original, and always sensory and material, figure... is not exactly a metaphor... It is a kind of transparent figure, equivalent to a literal meaning (*sens propre*)... It becomes a metaphor when philosophical discourse puts it into circulation.¹⁰

The original figure soon becomes a mere token because when it is taken up in discourse, it enters into a symbolic domain that is governed and informed by the principle of the opposition: it becomes the subject of desire or aversion according to the cultural context and period within which it emerges or re-emerges.

Deconstruction is an analysis of the 'minute particulars' of any worldview that has become 'accepted as the correct one', an analysis out of which emerges a

⁹ Michel Foucault, 1971, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in (ed) Paul Rabinow (1986), *The Foucault Reader*, Penguin, London, pp. 76 - 100.

¹⁰ Derrida, Jacques. 1982, 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy' in *Margins of Philosophy*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, pp. 207 - 271, p. 211.

‘rather different picture’ than the one previously held.¹¹ The splitting of the sign into signifier and signified, into ‘phonic’ and ‘graphic’, and into utterance and concept reveals the whole of a signifying process to be a ‘structure of difference.’¹² The quest for the ‘ideal’ brings forth a symbolic domain where attention is taken up entirely by a fascination for value-carrying signs: everyday attention to the interactions and experiences of the present moment is dominated by a habitual bestowing of meaning and value onto every event and percept.

To measure reality is to place too much faith in the power of the analytic modality, to privilege structure over play; and in terms of the human sciences, to privilege psychometric evaluations over personal interactivity. This leads to a fundamental belief in the *opposition of values*¹³ and in the existence of a Platonic world beyond the senses, a logical, absolute and ideal reality beyond the imperfection of interpretive human cognition. The third-person stance that anchors the empirical viewpoint becomes part of a process that obscures the sensory image that inspired the original naming. This is why the practice of bare attention follows a middle path (*madhyamika*), an approach that unselfconsciously ‘deconstructs’ the metaphysical oppositions which arise in the mind in the process of observing the object.

Any text can be ‘deconstructed’ if its structure can be revealed, if the network of oppositional values which set the parameters for discourse within the particular field can be demonstrated. Like Wittgenstein’s language games, the targets of deconstruction are often shown to be shallow referential systems whose meanings and values emerge from cultural structures rather than from a super-sensible truth attached to archaic origins. Beneath the apparently rational knowledge of a society lie the silent, socially constructed cognitive processes that inform that rationality. Truth is always compromised by the fact that a value system is already in place (in any culture), that it dictates the parameters within which the search for truth can operate, and that value systems can discontinuously change within cultures.

Within cognitive experience, despite philosophical logic, theology and careful scientific experimentation, transactions take place between the emotions and profound cultural identifications and dependencies;

Metaphysics - the white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own logos, that is, the mythos of his idiom, for the universalised form of that he must still wish to call Reason.¹⁴

¹¹ G. C. Spivak, 1976, “Translator’s Preface” to Jacques Derrida (1976) *On Grammatology*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, p. xiii.

¹² Ibid, p. xvii.

¹³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1998, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, [trans] Marion Faber, p.7. ‘Der Grundglaube der Metaphysiker ist der Glaube an die Gegensätze der Werthe’.

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, 1982, ‘White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy’, op cit, p. 213.

Derrida describes the dominant third-person, task-oriented mode of cognition as a mythology that has gained supremacy to such an extent that it is now known as 'Reason'. He sees clearly that western science, although it has produced so much, has no right to set itself up as scientific philosophy. By denying the subjective it cannot successfully describe reality or satisfy its quest for certainty. There is often a mistaken sense of certainty at the centre, and the semiotic traditions holding it in place change frequently as a result of tension generated by changing social demands and by a general sense of personal discontent (*dukkha*). It is a falsely-reassuring certitude made necessary by the anxiety resulting from an experience of being 'caught by' the game, of being somehow 'at stake' in the game.¹⁵

This is the same anxiety caused by what Buddhists call '*tanha*' (thirst, craving, attachment), a vague awareness that there is some deeply desired specific outcome at stake. In the twelve 'links' (*Nidāna*) of the Buddhist chain of circular causality, *tanha* precedes *upadana*; that is, thirst leads to attachment. A 'certain mode of being implicated in the game',¹⁶ together with an investment of self, desire, and the need to belong, conspire in bringing about the circumstances for a deep attachment to particular outcomes, to a fear of losing the game. Such an urgent need to win and such a profound anxiety at the thought of losing - or of 'being lost' - create the conditions for the emergence of an epistemology of certainty, an absolute and formal knowledge able to answer all questions and resolve all disputes. A vocabulary worthy of representing such a truth requires formal definitions created from semantic histories leading back to distant origins, to an archaic palimpsest, a parchment that has been erased and then reinscribed.

This mythology, which clings to 'bare' experience and which deludes us into believing that our objective gaze produces empirical truths, is a kind of conceptual screen that creates a distance between understanding, desire, and the world. The early Buddhists realised through their mindfulness practices that it was possible to differentiate between the object itself (in its 'suchness') and the value-laden perspectives that habitually emerge in recursive situations. They found that by suspending, as it were, these culturally created perspectives, they could gain a less distorted view of the world. Their practices were designed to deconstruct all habitual attachments to objects thus liberating the attention from unconscious desire. But desire itself was not an object of judgement or suppression; it was noted and recognised by a detached mindful attention which chose 'immediate coping' as the foundation of its ethical practices instead of a codified and prefigured morality.

The patriarchs of this Enlightenment - Descartes, Locke, Kant and others - treated reason as if it were a panacea for all social ills. Rational beings would be cogs in an infinitely rational machine, the 'social body'; and a correspondingly rational mental hygiene would be established that would protect this perfectly

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 252.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 213.

ordered and reasonable utopia from any corruption by irrational thought and behaviour. The dream has been repeatedly criticised and deconstructed, but is still embedded in the disciplinary orientation of Western institutions; and in the get-tough-on-crime speeches of ambitious politicians. The rational society requires rationalised behaviour from its citizens (the elements of its totality) and it demands disciplined, highly differentiated acts of perception. This involves the establishment of a habitual, third-person, objective viewpoint on the world. It is not that the third person view, the objective gaze, is purely the creation of science, but that science has given it enormous precedence over other perceptual attitudes.

V. CONCLUSION

In Foucault's philosophy and in the fusion of psychoanalytic theory and semiotics of Julia Kristeva, the positing of a 'semiotic' domain of pre-symbolic cognition that prefigures and anticipates the forming of the symbolic realm of formal language seems to suggest a foundation for the establishment of a language in which to discuss Asian epistemologies. Edward Crangle's idea that certain meditation techniques favour a non-analytic, undifferentiated cognitive style while others favour a more analytic, more differentiated style resonate strongly with the Kristevan notion that a pre-symbolic cognitive flow precedes the establishment of symbolic, conceptualised understanding. Her pre-cognitive flow, where awareness is more visual than verbal, resonates with the non-analytic cognitive style, while her 'conceptualised understanding' represents the analytic style. Nagarjuna would be happy with this configuration as an example of the workings of the 'middle path' in which no absolute opposition between objective and subjective can exist. Patterns emerge around the construction of subjectivity along the lines of two distinct, contrasting, and non-interventionist cognitive methodologies or modalities. The opposition between the third-person, objective gaze of the scientist and the immediate and intuitive perspective of the meditator is dissolved in the realisation that ultimate truth is ineffable.

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THE NEED FOR BUDDHIST VALUES IN WESTERN SOCIETY WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON CENTRAL EUROPE AND EDUCATION

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Abstract:

The paper is introduced by a brief overview of the origins and development of knowledge on Buddhism and its practice in Central Europe and especially in Czechia and including the values dominating Central European and Czech society nowadays. Then, the paper concentrates on its key focus, which is education and the young generation in general from the perspective of today's crisis, uncertainty about how to solve it, and the apparent and alarming inability to solve the current situation. The conclusion of the paper suggests that it would be necessary to draw much more systematically from Buddhism because Buddhism contains values and shows a path that is missing in today's Western/ Central European society and which is the only path leading out of the dead end in which apparently Western/ Central European society find itself today.

Keywords: *Buddhism; Education; Four Noble Truths; Noble Eightfold Path; Central Europe; Czechia; Poland; Hungary; Communism; Lotus Center in Prague; Dharma Gate Buddhist College; End of Western civilization; Venerable Dhammadipa.*

I. BEGINNINGS OF BUDDHISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE

The first encounters of Central Europeans with Buddhism date back to the Middle Ages.¹ The frequency of contacts increased in the 17th century and the Enlightenment period. However, it was knowledge mediated through travelers, priests, and other Europeans who visited Asia and had been exposed

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¹ Prvním Středoevropanem, který uváděl, že je Čech, byl Odorik z Pordenone, který navštívil který navštívil Tibet a Čínu v letech 1325 - 1330. Liščák (2019).

to the Buddhist environment, or it was knowledge and experience acquired from colonial powers in Western Europe, France, and Great Britain.²

Knowledge and practice of Buddhism began to open its way to Central Europe in the 1920s. In the academic sphere, Departments of Indology or Oriental Studies were inaugurated at Central European universities, where outstanding scholars taught and who were not only academics but also important disseminators of Buddhist knowledge in academia and among a wider public. It was for example Vincenc Lesný in Prague,³ and Otakar Pertold, the first professor of religious studies in Prague, who, according to the testimony of many of his contemporaries, was a Buddhist and managed to survive the domination of the totalitarian regimes of Nazism and Communism.⁴

In the 1920s and 1930s, Buddhism spread in Czechia more than this brief insight can offer. Personal trips to South and Southeast Asia for spiritual purposes increased, and a pleiade of European spiritual thinkers came to Prague, although not exclusively Buddhists, but often esotericists or mystics, yet significantly influenced by Buddhism, such as Paul Brunton or the theosofist Rudolf Steiner. A significant figure in Czech mysticism who cannot be left out of the list was Karel Weinfurter, from whom many Czech practitioners of Eastern philosophy and yoga drew their inspiration.⁵ František Drtíkol, who is today known mainly as an art deco photographer, is considered the founder of Czech Buddhism. He translated a number of Buddhist texts into Czech.⁶ We could mention many more names in this context.

II. TOTALITARIAN REGIMES AND SPIRITUALITY

The development of Buddhism and spiritual movements in general in Central Europe was tragically interrupted for decades by the Nazi occupation of some countries and satellitization of others from 1939 to 1945, and soon after the end of the Second World War by a series of communist coups triggered and supported from Moscow. The incorporation of the Central European states into the Soviet sphere of influence lasted from 1948 to 1989. This had a disastrous effect on the development of spiritual life, including Buddhism, in this region.

Religious education in schools was banned, families who openly professed faith were persecuted and their children were used as a tool to force their parents to abandon their faith, priests were persecuted as enemies of the new

² Lípa (2019): 31 - 67.

³ Vincenc Lesný (1882-1953), from 1924 Professor of Indology at Charles University in Prague, 1937-1939 Dean of Philosophical Faculty (in 1939 the Czech universities were closed by the Nazi occupational regime). From 1945 Lesný was Director of Oriental Institute in Prague. He established Indické sdružení [Indian Association], was co-founder of the journal *New Orient* and in 1952 became one of first members of Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

⁴ Polišenská (1989): 79 - 99.

⁵ Sanitrák (2006): continuously throughout the entire volume up to page 325.

⁶ Lípa, Jan. *Fráňa Drtíkol. Životopis*, accessed on [February 20, 2025], available at: https://arahat.unas.cz/cs/fd_cv_cs.php

socialist society, monastic orders were dissolved and banned, and churches were pushed to the very margins of society. However, the situation was not the same in all Central European countries. The worst was in today's Czech Republic, then Czechoslovakia. In Poland ⁷ and in Hungary, ⁸ the approach of communist authorities towards the church was at some periods slightly milder. I would very much like to explain the reasons for this development in more detail, but that would take us too far from our topic, which focuses on Buddhism.

III. PRACTICING BUDDHISM UNDER COMMUNIST REGIME IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Even under communism, there were small groups in Czechia that were dedicated to Buddhist meditation. Without institutional affiliation, no groups were allowed to exist, as they would be labeled as unauthorized organizations conspiring against the regime. Therefore, the Buddhist meditation groups were usually connected with the practice of yoga, but yoga did not have an easy situation either. The communist security knew well, or assumed, that the yoga environment was spiritually oriented, and therefore the few yoga groups that existed were hiding under the guise of physiotherapy and rehabilitation in hospitals and medical centers.⁹ The surveillance by the communist secret police, sanctions at work and pressure on the family, for example, by a threat of not allowing children to continue their studies at the high school or university, etc.- the regime had many methods, and a strong determination of Buddhists was necessary to resist them. However, these more than modest conditions and many hardships gave rise to a number of exceptionally experienced, profound and wise personalities. The Buddhist foundation developed exceptionally among them and bore its fruits, from which the rest of us eagerly drew in the 1990s and early 21st century.¹⁰

Anyone who remembers these yogic-Buddhist, or rather Buddhist with a small portion of yoga activities, cannot forget them. The meetings took place in remote places and in rather primitive conditions of abandoned or unmaintained rural cottages, with only a small groups of people in attendance. Maintaining a vegetarian diet required considerable ingenuity due to the lack of vegetarian ingredients and even the limited supply of vegetables and fruits. Buddhist texts were smuggled across the border and secretly translated and distributed, and there were only a few people who made it to Indian ashrams during a brief liberal period of the so-called Prague Spring of 1968.¹¹ But many

⁷ Snyder (2003): p. 275p.

⁸ After the suppression of the Hungarian uprising against the communist dictatorship by the Soviet army in 1956, a somewhat milder communist regime was established, which was nicknamed Goulash Communism.

⁹ Foreword by Stanislav Čelikovský to Lysebeth (1978).

¹⁰ I would name for example Milada Bartoňová, Karel Nešpor.

¹¹ Again, Milada Bartoňová has to be named, and also Jiří Čumpelík and Mírko Frýba, who later became a Buddhist monk.

eyewitnesses say that it was these conditions of modesty and renunciation that opened to the practitioners a Buddhist path.

A special case is Poland, which is a country with a very strong Catholic tradition. A position of Catholic church increased especially after the Pole Karol Wojtyła became the Pope John Paul II. The Catholic faith helped Poland to face difficult historical periods in the 20th century, Nazism and communism,¹² and its dominant position made the space for Buddhism relatively smaller. Despite its prevailingly Catholic orientation, also Eastern spirituality, particularly Buddhism, developed in Poland benefiting from relatively more favorable conditions in the country, at least at some periods of 20th Century. In the 1970s, the development in Poland undoubtedly meant a strong flow of spiritual development, both Christian and Buddhist. For example, the travels behind the Iron Curtain were in many cases easier for Poles than for Czechs. In the 1970s, Polish university students were able to go on trips to India, Sri Lanka, and the Far East, as the author can testify based on own observations, and these experiences certainly impacted young people significantly. However, in the 1980s, the tightening of communist restrictions in Poland due to the development of the powerful opposition movement Solidarity put an end to this relative freedom.

IV. BUDDHISM AFTER COMMUNISM – 1990S AND BEGINNING OF 21ST C. IN CZECHIA

After the fall of communism and the restoration of democracy in Central Europe in late 1989, conditions changed quickly in this field as well. Catholic priests had to come from Poland to Czechoslovakia,¹³ which was a real desert in terms of spirituality and had a reputation as the most atheistic European country, which also had its deeper historical roots,¹⁴ to fill the vacancies in the church administration, in parishes, etc. Also teachers of Eastern religions – Buddhists – came from Poland. The similarity of Czech and Polish languages made the communication easier.

Buddhist monks and teachers from abroad, prevailingly from Asia, began to come to Czechia, for instance Bhante Wimala and Lama Ole Nydahl, and gave public lectures where the attendance was very high. Buddhist literature was published by domestic authors and in translations. A number of centers were established, such as the Lotus Center in Prague,¹⁵ which provides even today a home for Buddhists of several schools. Czechs began to travel abroad,

¹² Snyder, op. cit.

¹³ In Czechia, approx. one tenth of Catholic priests are Polish. Mészáros, Pavel. *Rodinný život mi chybí. Ale žádná žena by se mnou nevydržela, říká kněz Czendlik* [I miss the family life. But no women could stand me], accessed on [February 16, 2025], available at: <https://www.denik.cz/spolecnost/byt-vsichni-farari-jako-zibi-zacal-bych-chodit-do-kostela-20191019.html>

¹⁴ This is caused by the interpretation of medieval Hussite movement, and by identification of Habsburg monarchy with catholicism, or rather by identification of anti-Habsburg position with Czech protestant religion and tradition.

¹⁵ <https://www.centrumlotus.cz/en/>

mainly to India, Thailand, Sri Lanka and other Buddhist countries, in search for a deeper exposure to Buddhism. Buddhism as part of religious studies returned again to Czech universities and the Academy of Sciences.

I don't want to idealize too much this period of hectic developments, when, in addition to what has been said, a wave of New Age movement appeared and a search for a spiritual path mixed from time to time with superficiality and amateurism. Nevertheless, this period of flowering lasted throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century; it was a remarkable time of connection of the old generation of practitioners with the new enthusiasts.

V. CHANGES AS THE 21ST CENTURY PROGRESSES

It seems that the Buddhist scene in the Czech Republic today has changed compared to the first decade of the 21st century, and I am afraid that not for better. Buddhist teachers no longer come here, and if they do, they do not give lectures to a wider public as before, and usually only resort to their narrowest circle. At least the author of this article, who has been closely and actively following these events, has not noticed any substantial activity. Those spiritual teachers who were previously active in Czechia have mostly transferred their activities to other countries, as far as can be ascertained from the Internet.¹⁶

In respect of other Central European countries, in Hungary, another Central European country, the situation is different and seems to be more favorable to Buddhist values. Although from the political view, Hungarian President Viktor Orbán, who has been the leading figure in Hungarian politics for many years, is being criticized for his departure from the European political mainstream of liberal democracy and for some his accommodating steps towards Vladimir Putin, *Dharma Gate Buddhist College*¹⁷ has been operating in Budapest, the Hungarian capital, for many years, providing Buddhist education and a variety of spiritual activities and meetings. A *Buddhist stupa* has also been built in Hungary, one of the biggest or the very biggest stupa in Europe.¹⁸

Other Central European country that we are examining in this brief survey is Slovakia, formerly part of Czechoslovakia, where the spiritual life is clearly at a much weaker level.

Buddhism in a Time of Material Abundance and Prosperity

So far, I have briefly described and positively characterized the 1990s and the first decade - the decade and a half - of the 21st century as a time of promising development of spiritual life in Czechia, and of a society open to seek and positively accept Buddhist teaching and Buddhist teachers who often came to this country.

¹⁶ For example, Venerable Bhante Y. Wimala.

¹⁷ *Dharma Gate Buddhist College Budapest*, last accessed on [February 12, 2025], available at: <https://dghbc.hu>

¹⁸ Molnar, Jozsef. *Zalaszentőr Stupa: One of the Biggest Stupas in Europe*, accessed on [February 12, 2025], available at: <https://themindcircle.com/zalaszentor-stupa/>

Of the domestic figures, few local Buddhists who went through a challenging path in search for knowledge during the communist era, without having a chance of contact with the Buddhist environment in South and Southeast Asia and the Far East, with minimal or no contact with Buddhist teachers, had later a significant influence and now enjoyed a highest respect. Very influential were Eduard Tomáš and his wife Míla, valued for their high spirituality, and also Milada Bartoňová. A different path, probably thanks to the fortunate circumstances of the Prague Spring, was chosen by Thomas Peter Guttman, who, after graduating from Charles University in Prague went abroad, continued his studies and became a Buddhist monk and teacher under the name Dhammadipa. He is now back in Czechia serving to the great benefit of the local Buddhist community.¹⁹ Yet, contrary to expectations and assumptions, in the environment of abundance and prosperity that now prevails in my homeland,²⁰ both spirituality and physical moderation have sharply decreased, even though nothing prevents their development. The extraordinary generation of spiritual teachers has already reached an advanced age - they are mostly in their seventies, often in their eighties and older, and today we meet them exceptionally because human age takes its toll.

What was already evident around the mid-2010s has deepened and surfaced even more after the COVID-19 pandemic. In Prague and throughout the country, there are beautifully furnished yoga studios where beautiful and excellently trained instructors teach yoga. Many of them have also completed trainings in famous, often very expensive centers abroad, sometimes they also visited India, but everything is oriented primarily to a practice of various types of yoga - Ashtanga, Iyengar, Power Yoga, Gravid Yoga, Senior Yoga, Facial Yoga and other. However, there are just a few Buddhist centers²¹ in the country, all of them founded during the flourishing period described above. They continue to run their programs, and their management is a wonderful example of devotion, perseverance, and a true Buddhist approach. But they are less visible than they used to be and new ones do not open, or very exceptionally.

Not enough that we have in Prague several Buddha bars where people go to have alcoholic drinks, smoke not just cigarettes but also, something else, etc., and big golden Buddha statues are used to decorate these places. The same is the case of most of massage salons. Recently, it has even happened that Buddhist symbols and quasi-Buddhist behavior have been demonstrated in a very caricatured manner. The most bizarre situation occurred last year when one of the richest Czechs, tried for a very large-scale financial fraud amounting to billions Czech Crowns in value during the privatization²² of one of the largest

¹⁹ <https://www.dhammadipa.cz/cs/biography/>

²⁰ Although Czechs mostly complain, the truth is that the standard of living is high and the country belongs to the safest. The surveys and statistics confirm that.

²¹ A new center worth mentioning is the Shanta Vana Foundation and Meditation Center, founded in Bohemia by the venerable Dhammadipa. <https://www.dhammadipa.cz/cs/>

²² Privatization was the process of returning property nationalized by the communist

coal mining areas in the country, declared himself a Buddhist, wore a white silk top head and orange jeans and T-shirt and constantly disturbed the legal procedure by requesting time for Buddhist meditation and exercise, used quasi Buddhist gestures, ridiculed the lawyers and made the audience laughing.²³

It would certainly not be right to claim that a regime of oppression and lack of basic needs is needed for the development of authentic spirituality. However, the Middle Way (*Majjhimāpaṭipadā*) is very important, and Buddhism shows the true direction that we are currently missing.

There's a bad mood throughout the land

Now, I would like to address the topic from another perspective. In the period of enthusiasm and naive feeling that all problems are gone with the Iron Curtain being gone, the vocabulary used in official documents, in press, and also in diplomacy, in TV and media, correspondingly reflected expectations of positive developments.²⁴ Of course, there were many problems and I do not want to go deeper into this issue, and not everything was so nice – let's mention at least the 9/11. However, the prevailing narrative was positive, including narrative of European Union: common and shared European values, tolerance, cooperation, understanding, mutual support, non-aggression and such. If we say, common European values, it looks as very far from Buddhism, as the basis of European civilization is Christianity. But many of postulates – compassion, mindfulness, non-aggressivity, peace of mind, understanding, support, and other fundamental qualities, are common for both, Buddhism and Christianity.²⁵ It was very promising time.

Unfortunately, today, the situation is very different. At first, the early bird of the coming changes was rather humorous, when the Czech President Václav Havel, who had a subtle sense of the state of society and the atmosphere of the time, uttered a memorable sentence that was later widely quoted and went down in history: "There's a bad mood throughout the land."²⁶ I hope that the subtle and sad humor of this statement was not lost in translation. However, that was the very beginning, at least in Czechia.

Nowadays, no one mentions common European values, either in European Union, neither in Czechia. The main topic that has dominated the professional and public space for several years is catastrophic visions, going as far as

regime to its original owners. Despite the intention of correcting wrongs, the process was also affected by financial and property fraud, often on a large scale.

²³ <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/krimi-jak-rikame-my-buddhisti-kolacek-ve-smokin-gu-s-motylkem-presvedcoval-soud-o-sve-nevine-40425995>

²⁴ The 1990s are today associated with the atmosphere of enthusiasm, relief, good expectations and trust in the future.

²⁵ In Czechia, for example, the following literature is available on this issue, primarily from domestic authors, with several titles in translation. Thích, Nhất Hạnh (1996), Scheufler (1992), Wolf (2014).

²⁶ For the first time Václav Havel used this phrase in his speech in Prague Rudolfinum Hall in 1997. Kaiser (2014): 222 – 228.

apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic ideas. This is something that did not exist at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. Centers and institutes for apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic studies are being established at universities, one of the most important of which is at the leading German university in Heidelberg.²⁷ European centers are specialized almost exclusively on Christian eschatology only, despite the fact that cosmologies and cosmographies of all world religions deal with the theme of end of the world, to put it short. However, all world religions, eschatologies and cosmologies deal with the end of the world, the Day of Judgment, as well as considerations of what happens to the human body after death - Christianity, Hinduism and others. Islam and Christianity are relatively close in this. According to Hinduism, very briefly, the world does not last forever, but is periodically destroyed and re-created and the time is cyclical in Hinduism. It gradually passes through four yugas (ages). Between every two ages there are 400 years of twilight of the previous one and then 400 years of dawn of the following age. Lord Shiva destroys the present world but next world is emerging on its place.²⁸

In respect of Buddhism, there are different Buddhist cosmologies. Certain traditional Buddhist ideas about the world are incompatible with modern science, and have been abandoned by number of modern Buddhists. The 14th Dalai Lama says that “my own view is that Buddhism must abandon many aspects of the Abhidharma cosmology.” He sees the mistakes of this traditional cosmology as not affecting the core of Buddhism (the teaching of the *Four Noble Truths* and liberation) since it is “secondary to the account of the nature and origins of sentient beings.”²⁹

The topic of the end of the world is not just a Central European topic, as shown for example by international Symposium “Precarious Water Futures and the End(s) of World(s) – an Integrative Dialogue Across Disciplines and Societies,” organized by India-German Centre of Advanced Studies in New Delhi.³⁰

If we dwell more on the topic of the end of Western civilization, on the one hand, this is not an easy theme, and it could at least strengthen an interest in this particular civilization and civilizations in general, which is generally quite low today for a number of reasons. However, I would like to point out that in the Western European civilization sphere, from the collapse of the Roman Empire to the present day, preachers and leaders have appeared always from time to time and continue to appear, predicting the approaching end of the world, Judgement Day, end of the civilization and other related fatalities.³¹

²⁷ Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies. University Heidelberg, Germany.

²⁸ Miltner (2001).

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ ICASMP – M. S. Merian-R.Tagore International Center of Advanced Studies/ Metamorphoses of the Political. <https://micasmp.hypotheses.org>

³¹ These were chiliastic movements that appeared particularly in critical and turning

These preachers, of course, depending on the communication technology at the time, through sermons in medieval times, or via social networks today, had sometimes a large response, sometimes even hysterical, of large audiences, and some were able to trigger broad movements that sought to build a new society. I do not want to go into the teachings of Christian chiliastic sects and other movements here, but it should be emphasized that today's journalism about the end of civilization is nothing unusual in history, it has happened many times before, whatever the main reason was. It must also be acknowledged that today's wave of apocalyptic topics is not just a journalistic pursuit of attractivity, but has a real basis. It reflects deep-rooted existential anxiety, fear of the future, of the unknown, of the end, and of death.³²

In Czechia, there are at this time rather frequent public lectures on the end of European civilization and/ or end of Western civilization. These lectures are given by serious scientists, such as the leading world class Czech Egyptologist Miroslav Bárta,³³ whose specialization leads to understanding and knowledge of the development and end of the civilization of ancient Egypt, and other scholars. Their academic expertise and also responsibility allows them to speak on this topic in a qualified manner and then that is fine.

VI. EDUCATION

Approaching the conclusion of my paper, I would like to focus on education. Traditionally, in all or most publications about Czech education, we encounter a proud presentation of excellent education, which goes back to the 18th century, to the reign of Empress Maria Theresa, who implemented a very progressive educational reform for her time.³⁴ It suddenly catapulted Czechia to the position of the most educated or one of the most educated countries in Europe with almost zero illiteracy.

But where are we today? I will now skip education during the Cold War and the dominance of communist ideology in Czechoslovakia, when the structure, system and content of education completely corresponded to the Soviet model

points, especially in connection with the emergence and development of reformist Christian movements.

³² Recent pandemic of Covid-19 was without any doubt one of the sources of these feelings and there are many evidences that people still feel the time of Covid as an interruption or break of their life. The current war in Ukraine even increased the anxiety and stress. Hays, Hayden, Polišenská (2023).

³³ Miroslav Bárta (born 1969) is a Czech professor of Egyptology, an archeologist and politician. From 2011 he has been a leader of research in the archeological site of Abusir in Egypt and 2013 - 2019 a Director of Czech Institute of Egyptology. In 2024 he was elected a Senator. In addition to Egyptology, he has also been studying collapses, rises and falls of civilizations in an interdisciplinary research perspective and authored several books on this topic.

³⁴ Empress Maria Theresa in 1774 introduced an universal education for both boys and girls, consisting of compulsory six-year school attendance and a system of schools with teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic, religion, agriculture and, for girls, housework. A system of higher education was build on this foundation.

and marxist-leninist ideology. Let's look at the main features of educational reform after the fall of communism. Curricula have been revised at all levels of the education system, in many cases accompanied by a deep discourse on the objective interpretation of a number of issues. Borders have been opened for pedagogical and student mobility at both secondary and university levels. A new accreditation system was established and private schools of all levels, including universities, began to emerge.³⁵

A very painful issue that has been on the table for more than 30 years is the financial undervaluation of teachers. Under the communist regime, the teaching profession was very poorly paid, because the communist ideology³⁶ considered the intelligentsia to be a segment of the population that always tends to lean towards the bourgeoisie and therefore to treason. This was also related to the fact that the teaching profession was very feminized.

Although there were in the last decades repeated promises of correction and indeed, salaries were repeatedly increased, especially for primary school teachers, the teaching profession in the Czech Republic still remains financially undervalued. This is also associated with a number of other negative phenomena, especially in primary and secondary schools, including little respect for this profession, a tendency towards formalism, reluctance to engage more deeply and sincerely, and above all, a lack of those who would like to devote themselves to the teaching profession.³⁷

The situation of university teachers, particularly post-docs, assistant professors and lecturers in their 30s and 40s in general, is no less difficult. Low salaries lead to the fact that most of them, especially young ones, teach courses at several universities, which makes it impossible for them to devote themselves to scientific work, research and publishing activities. The struggle for the accumulation of „points“ prevails, blind reviews of articles or projects are extremely rarely written with an effort to honestly evaluate and recommend improvement, but are mostly a malicious effort to harm and prevent the proposed work from being published. This unfortunate state of affairs is widely criticized, but it looks as it is not in the power of our current academia to change it.³⁸ The main mission of a teacher or scholar is disappearing.

³⁵ Just to mention few aspects: the academic mobility financially supported by the European Union called Erasmus provided a great source of knowledge and experience, the system of grants allowed for ambitious international research cooperation, many post doctoral students earned experience in post doct academic stays at universities and research institutions abroad. The access to foreign literature which previously was very difficult or non-existent was also a great source of knowledge and today, the university graduates easily communicate in English.

³⁶ The economy of the communist states was primarily heavy industry oriented and was regulated by COMECON, Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The economies were regulated by central planning and gradually were not able to satisfy the need of domestic market and stayed behind the developed Western economies.

³⁷ Based on personal experience of the author and her family.

³⁸ Based on personal experience of the author and conversation with the peers.

Alarming articles by experts appear daily on the psychological state of young people, especially primary school pupils and secondary school students.³⁹ The psychologists openly admit that do not know how to cope with this situation. Among these children, suicide attempts and completed suicides, depression, self-harm, on the other hand, aggression, bullying, etc. are increasing.

The high school admissions system⁴⁰ is currently heavily criticized for causing significant stress for children and high financial costs for their parents.⁴¹ It would certainly not be good if young people were not prepared to set their goals and strive for them. However, I feel very clearly that this system is not entirely healthy, that the amount of information that surrounds us is so immense that it cannot be processed without a solid foundation, and that the values of Buddhism, at least the basic ones, are what is very much needed to give our world and life in it direction and guidance.

VII. THE BUDDHIST PATH FROM THE DEAD END

In Czech history, there are periods of great spiritual growth and development, and they are truly admirable. However, it is a great mistake for those who experienced or experience them to believe that such events are the beginning of a permanent state, that the new, changed situation will stay with us forever.⁴² And it is here that we find a great Buddhist lesson, which most Czechs lack. It is the awareness that everything is constantly changing and evolving. From this ignorance, a number of negative feelings, frustrations and erroneous assessments of reality stem.

After the fall of communism and the famous Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, the impression arose – and it was spread and shared by the media, academics and experts alike – that the division of the world was over forever, that from now on everything would develop only peacefully, that all evil had been eliminated and so on. Although the author of this article admits that she herself, as many other people, remembers with nostalgia the enthusiasm and positive atmosphere of those times, she is well aware of the transient and changing nature of the essence and external appearance of everything.

Today, even the vocabulary of that time, in which words such as love, cooperation, common values, trust, truth and others were often repeated,

³⁹ Just few titles of recent articles to illustrate the situation: We missed the train in child mental health care; The surge in aggression among young people is mainly the impact of the pandemic, which hit the teenage generation hardest; Police in Prague arrested another student due to a threat of shooting at school, and more. The articles are from <https://www.novinky.cz/> of February 2025.

⁴⁰ There is a unified test administered and evaluated by Cermat (Center for determining educational outcomes).

⁴¹ Children can attend preparatory courses for entrance exams and also take mock exams in advance. These options come with quite high fees, which many families cannot afford.

⁴² This state of mind was, despite many difficulties, very typical for the period after the collapse of Iron Curtain and end of the Cold war. It is a source of nostalgia of many who remember those times.

is sarcastically mocked as naive, detached from reality, etc. The main representatives of the opposition to communism, who were literally loved by the entire nation and abroad, are now mockingly called Truth-Lovers⁴³ (but in Czech it sounds much more mocking), based on Václav Havel's famous slogan "Truth and love must prevail over lies and hatred." Only a few of them have remained as public figures - however, their political views have also changed, significantly towards the politics of realism.

I stated at the beginning of this paper that I am not a scholar researching Buddhism, but a lifelong enthusiastic follower, admirer, and student of Buddhism, trying to find and work on Buddhist theory of social sciences, in contrast to current main stream of theories of social sciences prevailing and dominating in the West. It is precisely in these days that I am increasingly aware of the importance and universality of Buddhist teachings.

The *Four Noble Truths* (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*) teach the basic foundation of Buddhism on *dukkha* (suffering caused by the awareness of transient existence of everything); *samudaya* closely related *dukkha* which means attachment to the transient, unstable world origin and existence. *Nirodha* teaches that the attachment to this transient substance of everything can be ended by letting go of this attachment. *Marga* is a path toward the liberation from *dukkha*.⁴⁴

Closely connected and of a profound importance evidenced in the past and highly needed at present is the *Noble Eightfold Path* (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*).⁴⁵ All its components are nowadays not observed, they are ignored or even violated. But Buddhism offers here a fundamental and universally valid, positive instructions or principles and the compliance with them is lacking in Czechia.

If we start from the second point, then Right Resolve (*samyaka-saṃkalpa/ sammā-saṅkappa*) is clearly not applied in today's society, just like Right Speech (*samyag-vāc/ sammā-vācā*) – let's mention at least a few phenomena here: many-hour speeches in parliament, fake news and disinformation campaigns, constant chatter on mobile phones, I would also include the tabloid press and other. Right Conduct or Action (*samyak-karmānta/ sammā-kammanta*) is not among the respected values today, wars and violence surround us and I would include here also the highly unsatisfactory situation of family and partnership life, changing of partners, which is „thanks“ to tabloid press and social magazines presented as something fashionable and attractive. Right Livelihood (*samyag-ājīva/ sammā-ājīva*: no trading in weapons, living beings, meat, liquor, or poisons – this does not need any additional comments. Right Effort (*samyag-vyāyāma/ sammā-vāyāma*) and Right Mindfulness (*sati/ Satipatthana; Sampajañña*) are related to the state of mind, the strength of its focus and to its

⁴³ One of the most popular mottos of Václav Havel was that „Truth and Love Must Prevail Over Lies and Hatred.“ The „True-Lovers“ is derived from this motto.

⁴⁴ The author of this paper used Miltner (2001). However, the literature to the foundations of Buddhism is enormously rich.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

awareness. And lastly, the eight quality, Right Meditation (*samyak-samādhi/sammā-samādhi*, teaches particularly on *dhyana* meditation. It is related to the state of mind and the strength of its focus and to its awareness. And going back to the first quality - Right View introduces to understanding of Karma and Four Noble Truths, in essence, that our actions have consequences, death is not the end, and our actions and beliefs have consequences after death, which is very basic understanding.

After discussing briefly the *Four Noble Truths* and *Noble Eightfold Path*, I would like to add two fundamental and critical comments that I would like to make here. I am returning again to the end of the civilization topic.

The first point is the so called popularization of the topic and increase of public awareness. The articles, various reflections, documentaries on Youtube and presentations on social networks are often written and/ or created by journalists, publicists, youtubers and influencers with more or less superficial or minimal knowledge of the matter, often with the goal just to increase the number of the readers or viewers. The topic of the end of civilization is being appropriated by journalists, popularizers, etc., as an attractive commodity that sells well. And they ruthlessly flood the market with cheap, supposedly expert descriptions of the ruin and destruction into which our comfortable consumer society is rushing.⁴⁶ A society that is not spiritually grounded is unable to resist these irresponsible pressures. Let's add to this a fully justified environmental stress, hesitations of politicians how to proceed and what decision to take, topics of violence, both real and fictional, which are pouring on us from all sides. The media, TV, press, and the Internet is full of murders, fires and traffic accidents and crimes of all sorts. Another topic is cancer, which also dominates the media. Information on who got sick, who died, details, etc. The documentary value of such information is low and it has a very negative impact on young adults, also on old generations and basically on everyone.⁴⁷

The other point that I would like to emphasize is the impact of this situation on the younger generation - it is no coincidence that bullying is spreading in schools, self-harm is increasing, children's suicide attempts and completed

⁴⁶ There are countless short videos on this topic on YouTube alone. Some of them are talks and readings of Aldous Huxley's books *The End of Civilization* and *Brave New World*, which is OK, but also, for example, such videos as "The Northern Lights over the Czechia-the End of Civilization," there is a "Civilization Hyde Park" channel with various speakers, there are recordings of the music group *The End of Civilization* produced by a person named The Hell with topics such as children addicted to heroin and the like are presented, also topics such as the end of civilization and survival in the wilderness, and many others appear on youtube.

⁴⁷ For example, in February 2024 alone, the main Czech daily *Mladá fronta Dnes* published articles about cancer every day or at most every other day, either interviews with leading oncologists or well-known public figures – politicians, actors or singers. Stories of ordinary families affected by this disease were also reported, and in the fall of 2024, the main TV channel aired a film series about a young, nice and talented medical student who falls ill with a brain tumor, „Sense of Tumor.“

suicides are increasing, and recently there have been threats, often serious, of murder in schools, even at lower school levels, not to speak of mass shooting at the University in Prague.⁴⁸ Very often the children who take such violent steps come from broken families and often witness domestic violence.

Journalists and publicists claim that people require such information and that they try to respect the wishes of readers, and readers claim that they cannot even look at this type of news. The result however is that the picture of our society and environment the media offer is very stressful.

We could go on and on, but I have to at least mention the cinema that is coming to Central Europe. Movies are mostly Hollywood productions of horror, violence and war themes, and the same appears on television being full of crime films every day.⁴⁹ Social networks that create a de facto alternative reality for many young people are full of violence as well.

There is a lack of restraint in our society. The number of extremely obese people is increasing, at the same time eating disorders, especially among young girls is alarming. The number of young people who doubt their sexual orientation and are often traumatized is increasing. With all the respect and understanding to this topic it could be said, however, that there are also not really medically substantiated cases, but rather a manifestation of lack of anchoring in today's world.⁵⁰

To sum up this dismal list, let's say that, unlike the relatively recent times of a few decades ago, there is a toxic, disturbing atmosphere around us, which brings widespread and multi-layered social and individual stress, uncertainty and anxiety.

I am deeply convinced that this is the universality of Buddhist values that is missing and that could open a healthy way out of this toxic dead end.

⁴⁸ On 21 December 2023, a student of history opened a fire in the building of Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague, killed 14 of students and injured 25 students. After this, he committed a suicide. Before doing this, he killed his father and shot in a park a man with a small baby.

⁴⁹ Just as a random example of a common situation: On one of this year's March Saturdays, all channels of TV in Czechia broadcast a total of 29 films with catastrophic, highly violent and evil topic, one of them was even called *End of the World* and several had such words as *Evil*, *Murder* in the title.

⁵⁰ The Czech Republic is a liberal country in the area of LGBT rights, with the introduction of a partnership in 2024 replacing the registered partnership from 2006. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is prohibited. Czechia supports the right of homosexuals to marry by approximately 65% and is generally somewhat more tolerant than other Central European countries. Report of the Center for Research of Public Opinion, Sociological Institute of Academy of Sciences, April/May 2024, <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/images/articles/files/5833/ov2407092.pdf>

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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MINDFULNESS IN ACADEMIC CURRICULA: A STUDY ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' WELL-BEING AND PERFORMANCE

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Abstract:

Mindfulness has gained significant attention as a tool for enhancing mental well-being, emotional resilience, and cognitive performance. This study examines the effectiveness of integrating *sati* into university curricula through a structured *sati* training program. A survey was conducted among 200 undergraduate students from diverse academic disciplines, assessing key behavioral changes such as stress reduction, focus, emotional regulation, and communication skills. The study utilized a Likert-scale-based questionnaire to measure students' perceptions before and after participation in *sati* sessions spanning one academic year. Findings indicate a substantial positive impact, with over 90% of participants reporting improved focus, reduced stress, and enhanced emotional stability. The results suggest that while curriculum-mandated *sati* courses are more effective in fostering engagement, voluntary participation also yields significant benefits. Moreover, students who practiced *sati* more frequently exhibited stronger improvements in cognitive and emotional well-being. The study underscores the necessity of embedding *sati* in higher education to promote holistic student development. Future research should explore personalized *sati* interventions to maximize inclusivity and effectiveness.

Keywords: *Buddhism, effectiveness of sati, academic curricula.*

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I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness, with its roots in ancient meditation practices, has emerged as a powerful tool for improving mental and physical health. The scientific community continues to explore its many applications, ranging from stress reduction to cognitive enhancement, and its potential to improve the quality of life for individuals across various domains. As research continues to unfold, *sati* may become an increasingly integral part of modern health and wellness practices. *Sati* is a mental practice rooted in ancient meditation traditions, particularly in Buddhism, though it has gained widespread popularity in the West as a secular practice. It refers to the ability to be fully present in the moment, with awareness and without judgment. This involves paying attention to one's thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment in a focused and non-reactive way.¹

II. HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The term “mindfulness” translates from the *Pāli* word *sati*, which is a central concept in Buddhist teachings. *sati* is traditionally a part of the Buddhist eightfold path, which is a guide to ethical conduct and mental training. It emphasizes developing awareness in all aspects of life, promoting self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassion. In contemporary times, *sati* has been adapted into various therapeutic and personal development practices. One of the most influential figures in bringing *sati* to the Western world is Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program in the 1970s. This program was designed to help individuals manage chronic pain, stress, and various health conditions through *Sati* meditation.² *Sati* is often practiced through structured meditation, but it can also be cultivated in everyday activities. It generally includes the following key elements: (1) Awareness: Being conscious of the present moment, observing experiences as they unfold. (2) Acceptance: Approaching thoughts, emotions, and sensations without judgment, allowing them to come and go. (3) Non-reactivity: Responding to experiences in a calm and balanced way rather than reacting impulsively.³ The practice of *sati* promotes mental clarity, emotional balance, and physical relaxation, making it a tool for improving overall well-being. While at its core, all *sati* practices aim to cultivate present-moment awareness, there are different styles and applications. Although the list of such practices could be extensive, to put the current scope in context, some examples are compiled in Table 1.⁴

¹ Hanh, Thich Nhat. *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*. First ed., Beacon Press, 1999. ISBN-978-0807012390. [https://tereless.hu/zen/mesterek/Thich Nhat Hanh - The Miracle of Mindfulness.pdf](https://tereless.hu/zen/mesterek/Thich%20Nhat%20Hanh%20-%20The%20Miracle%20of%20Mindfulness.pdf).

² Kabat-Zinn, Jon. “Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future.” *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2003, p. 144 - 156.

³ Kabat-Zinn, J. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. Delta, 1990,

⁴ Zeidan, Fadel, et al. “Mindfulness Meditation Improves Cognition: Evidence of Brief

Table 1 - Non-exhaustive list of mindfulness practices

Techniques	Short description
Breathing-Based Practices	<i>Mindful Breathing</i> – Focusing on the inhale and exhale, noticing sensations of the breath <i>Box Breathing</i> – Inhaling, holding, exhaling, and pausing for equal counts (e.g., 4-4-4-4) <i>Counting Breaths</i> – Counting each breath cycle (e.g., up to 10, then starting over).
Body Awareness Practices	<i>Body Scan Meditation</i> – Slowly scanning the body for sensations, tension, or relaxation. <i>Progressive Muscle Relaxation</i> – Tensing and releasing muscle groups to reduce stress. <i>Mindful Walking</i> – Paying attention to each step, movement, and contact with the ground.
Mindful Observation	<i>Five Senses Exercise</i> – Observing things you can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. <i>Nature Observation</i> – Paying attention to sounds, sights, and feelings in nature. <i>Trataka (Gazing Meditation)</i> – Focusing on an object (like a candle flame) to develop awareness.
Thought and Emotion Practices	<i>Labeling Thoughts</i> – Recognizing and naming thoughts (e.g., “worry,” “planning,” “judging”). <i>RAIN Method</i> – Recognizing, Allowing, Investigating, and Nurturing emotions with compassion. <i>Loving-Kindness Meditation (Metta)</i> – Sending positive wishes to yourself and others.
Mindful Eating & Everyday Activities	<i>Mindful Eating</i> – Eating slowly, savoring each bite, and noticing textures, flavors, and smells. <i>Mindful Listening</i> – Fully engaging in conversations without judgment or distraction. <i>Mindful Cleaning</i> – Washing dishes, sweeping, or organizing with full attention.

Techniques	Short description
Mindful Journaling & Reflection	<i>Gratitude Journaling</i> – Writing down things you’re grateful for daily. <i>Mindful Reflection</i> – Contemplating experiences or feelings without judgment. <i>Morning or Evening Check-In</i> – Noting how you feel mentally, emotionally, and physically.
Movement-Based Mindfulness	<i>Yoga</i> – Combining breath with movement to stay present. <i>Tai Chi & Qigong</i> – Slow, mindful movements that synchronize breath and body. <i>Stretching with Awareness</i> – Noticing sensations during gentle stretching exercises.

Existing research on mindfulness: Mindfulness has been the subject of an increasing number of research studies in psychology, neuroscience, medicine, and education. Its benefits, as explored in research, span a variety of domains, including mental health, cognitive function, physical well-being, and emotional resilience.⁵ (1) Mental Health: Research has shown that mindfulness can reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. Programs like Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) combine mindfulness practices with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to prevent relapse in people with depression. Studies have demonstrated that mindfulness training can help reduce rumination (overthinking), improve mood, and promote emotional regulation.⁶ (2) Neuroscience: Brain imaging studies have identified structural and functional changes in the brain associated with mindfulness practice. Regular mindfulness meditation has been linked to increased grey matter in brain regions involved in memory, learning, emotional regulation, and self-awareness, such as the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex.⁷ Research also suggests mindfulness may help decrease activity in the default mode network (DMN), a brain network associated with mind-wandering and self-referential thinking, which is often linked to stress and anxiety.⁸ (3) Education: Mindfulness programs in schools have shown promise in improving students’ attention, emotional regulation, and academic performance. Educators have

⁵ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. Delta.

⁶ Zeidan, Fadel, et al. “Mindfulness Meditation Improves Cognition: Evidence of Brief Mental Training.” *Consciousness and Cognition*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2010, 597 - 605.

⁷ Davidson, Richard J., and Jon Kabat-Zinn. “Contemplative Practices and the Neuroscience of Meditation.” *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2004, 195 - 207.

⁸ Creswell, J. David. “Mindfulness Interventions.” *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 68, 2017, 491 - 516.

reported that mindfulness helps students reduce stress, improve focus, and develop better coping strategies for dealing with challenges.⁹ (4) Physical Health: There is growing evidence that mindfulness practice can have positive effects on physical health. Studies have shown it can reduce blood pressure, lower cortisol levels (the stress hormone), improve immune function, and even reduce chronic pain. Mindfulness is often incorporated into treatment plans for individuals dealing with chronic pain, cardiovascular conditions, and other physical health issues.¹⁰ (5) Workplace: Mindfulness has been increasingly applied in the workplace to enhance productivity, reduce burnout, and improve overall employee well-being. Studies suggest that mindfulness programs in corporate settings can foster improved focus, creativity, and resilience to stress. Future research is also exploring how mindfulness can be integrated with other psychological and therapeutic techniques, as well as its application in specific populations (e.g., children, older adults, and individuals with severe mental health conditions). There is a growing interest in studying the effects of mindfulness on neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to reorganize itself), emotion regulation, and resilience. In India, mindfulness is increasingly being adopted in both academic institutions and corporate industries due to its recognized benefits in enhancing focus, reducing stress, and improving overall well-being. The integration of mindfulness practices in these sectors reflects a growing recognition of the importance of mental health, emotional resilience, and productivity in both educational and professional settings. The application of mindfulness in both Indian academic institutions and corporate industries is still evolving but has already shown significant potential in addressing the challenges posed by academic pressure, workplace stress, and mental health concerns. In educational institutions, mindfulness helps students and teachers develop emotional resilience, reduce anxiety, and improve focus. In the corporate sector, mindfulness contributes to employee well-being, enhances productivity, and fosters mindful leadership. As awareness of its benefits continues to grow, mindfulness practices are likely to become more deeply integrated into India's academic and professional landscapes, promoting a culture of mental health and emotional well-being (More details can be found in Appendix A & B).

III. NEED FOR MINDFULNESS TEACHING IN THE UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM

Mindfulness teaching in the university curriculum addresses the growing need for emotional well-being, mental health support, and academic success. It helps students build important life skills, fosters a supportive campus culture, and prepares them to thrive in both their personal and professional

⁹ Roeser, Robert W., and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. "Mindfulness and the Development of Emotion Regulation and Academic Success in Middle School Children." *Contemporary School Psychology*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2015, 152 - 165.

¹⁰ Goleman, Daniel, and Richard J. Davidson. *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body*. Avery, 2017, p. 38.

lives. Universities that embrace mindfulness are contributing to the overall development of their students, helping them manage the challenges of university life while also preparing them for the future. Integrating mindfulness teaching into university curricula has gained traction in recent years due to its numerous benefits for both students and the academic environment as a whole. Here are the key objectives and needs for mindfulness teaching in the university curriculum:

- (1) **Enhancing Mental Health and Well-being** - University students often face high levels of stress due to academic pressure, social adjustments, and personal challenges. Mindfulness practices help students develop resilience, emotional regulation, and a greater sense of well-being. Students should be provided with tools to manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges that are common in the university setting.
- (2) **Improving Focus and Concentration** - With the rise of technology, social media, and multitasking, students often struggle with staying focused on academic work. Mindfulness encourages present-moment awareness, which can improve concentration and academic performance. Improving students' ability to focus on tasks, improving their attention span, and reducing distractions thus becomes a challenge.
- (3) **Enhancing Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills** - Emotional intelligence is critical for navigating relationships, both personal and professional. Mindfulness helps students better understand their emotions and the emotions of others, fostering improved communication and conflict resolution. Cultivating greater empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills should thus be the goal.
- (4) **Supporting Academic Performance** - Mindfulness practices have been shown to support cognitive functions that are essential for academic success, such as critical thinking and creative problem-solving, by fostering a calm and clear mind.
- (5) **Promoting Inclusivity and Diversity** - Mindfulness can encourage open-mindedness, reduce bias, and help students approach differences with curiosity rather than judgment, contributing to a more inclusive campus environment.
- (6) **Enhancing Resilience and Coping Skills** - University life is filled with ups and downs. Mindfulness encourages students to acknowledge and accept difficult emotions without being overwhelmed by them, improving their ability to cope with stressors and setbacks.
- (7) **Developing Personal Growth and Self-Reflection** - University is a time of self-discovery and growth. Mindfulness provides students with the space to reflect on their experiences, values, and goals, encouraging greater self-understanding and personal development.
- (8) **Creating a Positive Campus Culture** - Integrating mindfulness into university life can contribute to a more positive and compassionate campus culture, where students, faculty, and staff are more mindful of their interactions and create a supportive environment for everyone.
- (9) **Enhancing Well-rounded Education** - Universities are not only places for academic learning but also personal development. By integrating mindfulness into the curriculum, institutions can help students develop life skills that extend beyond textbooks and exams, preparing them for the demands of modern life.



Mindfulness Class 2023-2024, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, India (Photo Copyright: Author, 2025)

IV. SCOPE OF CURRENT RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF MINDFULNESS

4.1. Courses floated for registered students

The Centre for Happiness and Holistic Well-being has launched a survey to assess the effectiveness of mindfulness among university students, aiming to cultivate a thriving community empowered by mental clarity, emotional well-being, and holistic happiness. The Centre's mission is to provide University students with the tools, wisdom, and practices rooted in ancient Indian traditions, focusing on mental health, self-awareness, and overall well-being. By nurturing the mind, body, and soul, the Centre aims to cultivate resilience, inner peace, and joy, equipping students to navigate academic pressures. This is achieved through integrating ancient Indian practices, fostering a balanced and purposeful life journey. The survey's design is based on key objectives and factors that contribute to the student's overall well-being. The goals of this study, target population, practice session details, and survey methodology are provided in this chapter. Actual questions, together with a statistical summary of the outcome are provided in Appendix A.

4.2. Study objectives

The survey measures key behavioral changes, such as stress reduction, focus, emotional regulation, and other factors that reflect mindfulness's impact on students. Communication Skills: This involves the ability to express thoughts clearly and establish effective communication with others. It encompasses listening, understanding, and responding thoughtfully. Problem Solving: This skill helps students find solutions, evaluate alternatives, and make informed decisions when faced with challenges. Time Management: The ability to manage time effectively and prioritize tasks is essential for maintaining an organized and balanced life. Emotional Intelligence: Understanding and

managing one's own emotions and healthily responding to others' emotions contributes to stronger, more fulfilling relationships. Positive Thinking: Cultivating a positive outlook, even in difficult situations, can help make life more manageable and fulfilling.

4.3. Timeframe

The timeframe for the assessment is one year, constrained by the size of the population surveyed. The survey relies on self-reported outcomes to assess behavioral changes, as mindfulness effectiveness is evaluated through personal reflections and experiences. This approach aims to gauge the influence of mindfulness on students' mental and emotional growth, contributing to their overall well-being and life satisfaction.

4.4. Target population

The survey includes students from the same academic year, consisting of 200 undergraduate students studying different streams of subject; Life Science, Environmental Science major, Mathematics major, Physics Major, Chemistry major, Hindi Major, Foreign Languages (Korean & Chinese) major, English major, Economics major, Political Science major, Anthropology major, Mass communication major, ensuring a balanced representation from different departments of the University.

4.5. Mindfulness practice session details

Practice sessions started in December 2023 to November 2024. Sessions were conducted 3 hours per week. The following 5 methods were used during practice sessions. Focus on the Breath. Purpose: One of the core practices of mindfulness involves focusing on your breath. This is because breathing is something that's always happening in the present moment and can anchor you in the "here and now." Practice: Sit comfortably in a quiet space and close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths to relax. Then, breathe normally and focus on the sensation of the air entering and exiting your nostrils, chest, or belly. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring it back to the breath. Effectiveness: This helps to train the mind to stay present, and over time, it can improve concentration and reduce stress. Body Scan. Purpose: A body scan helps you become aware of physical sensations and areas of tension in your body. Practice: While lying down or sitting, focus your attention on each part of your body starting from your toes and moving up toward your head. Simply notice any sensations in each area without judgment. If you feel tension, just acknowledge it, but try not to change it. Effectiveness: This practice enhances body awareness and helps you notice physical stressors that may go unnoticed in daily life. Mindful Observation. Purpose: This practice involves paying attention to things in your environment, and fully engaging your senses without distraction or interpretation. Practice: Pick an object in your environment (a flower, a cup, etc.) and observe it closely for a few minutes. Notice every detail: its color, shape, texture, smell, and even sound if relevant. Try to avoid labeling it or thinking about its purpose. Effectiveness: This practice encourages being present and reduces automatic thinking, leading to greater mental clarity and calmness. Mindful Listening. Purpose: This practice involves focusing

on sounds without letting your mind wander into judgment or distractions. Practice: Close your eyes and pay attention to all the sounds around you. Do not try to label them or judge them. Simply notice them as they come and go. You can also practice this when listening to someone speak - fully attend to what they're saying without thinking of your response while they're talking. Effectiveness: Helps improve focus and listening skills while promoting emotional presence in interactions. Thought Awareness and Control: Purpose: Mindfulness is not about controlling thoughts, but about being aware of them and letting them pass without getting caught up in them. Practice: Sit quietly and observe your thoughts. Do not try to push them away or forcefully control them, just notice them as they arise. Label them if you like (e.g., "thinking," "judging," "remembering") but do not engage with them. When you catch your mind drifting, gently return your focus to your breath. Effectiveness: Over time, this can help you become less reactive to your thoughts and reduce their control over your emotions.

(6) Survey Methodology: For this study, it is assumed that all students have a similar level of mindfulness practice. All the students have taken Basics of Mindfulness: Buddhist Art of Living as their Skill Enhancement paper in their undergraduate 2nd & 3rd Semester. Any prior exposure to mindfulness or biases influenced by peers or faculty members are considered negligible and are not expected to impact the survey results. To minimize noise from the understanding of terms used in questions, only Closed-ended questions are used to measure changes in stress, focus, and well-being. Answers from practitioners are requested on a simple Likert scale (1-3 & 1-5). To distinguish between expectations and actual impact, the survey is split into 2 corresponding parts. To avoid any biases, fear of likely poor academic grades, or any other potential influence on answers, the survey has been kept anonymous and confidential. To keep it simple, only statistical results have been populated using Google Forms. Results presented here are based on the dominant trends seen in overall statistics, without gender, age or demographic distinction.

V. KEY FINDINGS

From the survey results, it is evident that mindfulness training has had a meaningful impact on students. The primary areas of improvement - stress reduction, increased focus, and better emotional regulation - suggest that mindfulness is a valuable tool for student well-being. A strong trend observed in survey results is - a large difference between expectations and realizations. A good number of students were influenced by the curriculum to register for mindfulness courses. At the end of the course, an overwhelming number of students viewed the introduction of mindfulness in the academic curriculum positively. (See Table 2). A significantly large number of respondents show high expectations from effectiveness and potential benefits of mindfulness sessions. Interest in registration for mindfulness course is partly influenced by convenience, although 70% students do not consider the convenience to be main driver for registration. 66% of students are influenced by curriculum mandates to register for mindfulness or similar courses. This shows that a fully

voluntary introduction of mindfulness courses may not be as effective. In the general population, it is also reasonable to assume some skepticism towards novel techniques. Several respondents who were positively surprised by benefits, and who believed in positive benefits by the end of the course, are overwhelming, hovering north of 90% in most parameters. In general, coping with academic and social stress rates slightly higher than understanding the personal mind and emotions. Although, the significance of the difference may be debatable. 100% of respondents have a positive view of the benefits of mindfulness courses in improving mental health, focus, and social skills. In the same vein, 98% of respondents think that curriculum in universities is an effective tool for realizing these benefits.

Table 2 - Expectations at the start of the mindfulness course and realizations at the end

	Questions	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Do not know (%)
1	I decided to take this course because it is required for my program or degree.	65.5	29.4	5.0
2	I am not particularly interested in mindfulness, but the course seemed convenient.	22.7	69.7	7.6
3	I am taking this course to improve my mental peace and emotional balance.	97.5	0.8	1.7
4	I believe that learning mindfulness will help improve my relationships with others.	89.1	3.4	7.6
5	I am taking this course to help me cope with personal challenges or difficulties in my life.	90.8	5.9	3.4
6	I feel that mindfulness will help me improve my overall emotional resilience.	90.8	3.4	5.9
7	I believe the skills I gain in this course will help me in my future career or professional life.	82.4	3.4	14.3
8	I think that mindfulness will improve my ability to focus, which will help with my studies or work.	95.8	0.8	3.4

9	Mindfulness practice can improve emotional regulation and mental well-being.	99.2	0.0	0.8
10	Mindfulness practice can help reduce rumination (repetitive negative thinking).	91.6	3.4	5.0
11	Mindfulness can improve the quality of relationships by increasing empathy and listening skills.	88.2	2.5	9.2
12	The course has deepened my understanding of how the mind works and how thoughts influence emotions.	89.9	3.4	6.7
13	Mindfulness has the potential to enhance overall quality of life by promoting well-being and balance.	91.6	4.2	4.2
14	Mindfulness plays an important role in promoting inner peace, which is essential for creating peace in society.	94.1	1.7	4.2
15	Mindfulness programs can be an effective way to address the root causes of violence, such as stress, trauma, and misunderstanding.	90.8	2.5	6.7
16	Mindfulness courses are essential for helping students manage academic stress and maintain well-being.	96.6	1.7	1.7
17	Mindfulness courses in University would promote greater empathy and understanding among students, fostering a more inclusive campus environment.	91.6	3.4	5.0
18	Mindfulness courses can help students develop a stronger sense of social justice by encouraging them to listen deeply and understand others' perspectives.	87.4	1.7	10.9
19	Mindfulness courses are practical and beneficial for university students, as they can improve mental health, focus, and social capabilities of students.	100.0	0.0	0.0

20	Universities should provide mindfulness training as part of student orientation programs to help students adjust to academic and social challenges.	98.3	1.7	0.0
21	Mindfulness courses are a valuable tool for students to develop a well-rounded, thoughtful approach to life, improving their ability to engage meaningfully with society.	93.3	1.7	5.0

Furthermore, detailed responses are collected on individual behavior changes (See Table 3). Here, a good correlation is found between the effectiveness of mindfulness and the extent of its benefits. Students who practiced mindfulness daily or multiple times a week reported the highest benefits in stress reduction, focus, and emotional well-being. A large majority of students (above 60%) experienced reduced stress after regular mindfulness practice. Over 70% of respondents noted an improvement in their ability to concentrate during classes and while studying. A substantial number of students reported feeling more in control of their emotions after engaging in mindfulness exercises. Those who practiced occasionally (once a week or less) experienced moderate improvements but did not find the training as transformative. Around 20-30% of students observed some improvement in stress reduction but felt that the impact was moderate. The small group of students who rarely engaged in mindfulness reported minimal to no benefits.

Table 3 - Detailed responses on focus & mental well-being

Questions		Scale 5 being most positive (%)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	How often do you practice mindfulness (e.g., meditation, breathing exercises)?	0	10.3	16.1	36.8	36.8
2	To what extent has mindfulness practice improved your overall academic performance?	1.1	6.9	6.9	41.4	43.7
3	How much has mindfulness improved your focus during academic tasks (e.g., studying, lectures)?	0	10.3	24.1	28.7	36.8
4	How much has mindfulness enhanced your ability to manage academic workload and deadlines?	1.1	16.1	18.4	28.7	35.6

5	To what extent do you feel mindfulness helps you manage academic stress or pressure?	0	5.7	18.4	32.2	43.7
6	Do you find it easier to stay present and engaged during class or study sessions after practicing mindfulness?	1.1	5.7	24.1	33.3	35.6
7	How often do you use mindfulness techniques to manage distractions or wandering thoughts during studying?	1.1	10.3	21.8	26.4	40.2
8	To what extent has mindfulness enhanced your problem-solving or critical thinking skills in academic tasks?	1.1	13.8	17.2	27.6	40.2
9	To what extent has mindfulness practice reduced your feelings of anxiety (e.g., nervousness, fear, unease)?	3.4	12.6	13.8	31.0	39.1
10	How often does mindfulness practice help you manage symptoms of depression (e.g., sadness, hopelessness, lack of energy)?	0	10.3	17.2	26.4	46.0
11	How much do you feel mindfulness practice helps you cope with personal or emotional stress in general?	2.3	4.6	12.6	32.2	48.3
12	How has mindfulness practice helped you maintain emotional stability during stressful academic or personal situations?	0	4.6	13.8	40.2	41.4
13	Has mindfulness practice improved your ability to manage interpersonal conflicts (e.g., with classmates, teachers)?	1.1	4.6	14.9	36.8	42.5
14	Do you feel mindfulness practice helps you listen more attentively and respond more thoughtfully during conversations?	0	5.7	24.1	25.3	44.8

15	To what extent has mindfulness practice enhanced your overall social skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, problem-solving)?	1.1	4.6	12.6	33.3	48.3
16	How much has mindfulness practice improved your ability to make decisions under pressure or uncertainty?	0	5.7	11.5	33.3	49.4
17	Has mindfulness practice improved your ability to adapt to changing situations or challenges in life?	2.3	10.3	13.8	34.5	39.1
18	How often does mindfulness help you manage your time effectively and reduce procrastination?	0	4.6	8.0	41.4	46.0
19	To what extent has mindfulness contributed to your ability to prioritize tasks and manage your responsibilities effectively?	1.1	3.4	11.5	40.2	43.7
20	How has mindfulness practice impacted your academic motivation and goal-setting?	2.3	11.5	13.8	35.6	36.8
21	To what extent has mindfulness practice improved your communication skills (e.g., listening, speaking, empathy)?	0	5.7	8.0	40.2	46.0
22	Has mindfulness practice helped you to be more patient with others?	0	4.6	9.2	28.7	57.5
23	Do you find that practicing mindfulness improves your ability to handle conflicts or disagreements in social settings?	3.4	5.7	10.3	39.1	41.4
24	How much has mindfulness practice improved your decision-making ability under pressure?	3.4	4.6	16.1	34.5	41.4
25	To what extent has mindfulness practice contributed to your time management skills (e.g., prioritizing tasks, avoiding procrastination)?	1.1	3.4	12.6	36.8	46.0

26	Do you feel mindfulness has helped you become more adaptable to changes in your life or routine?	0	13.8	17.2	34.5	34.5
27	Has mindfulness practice improved your ability to retain and recall information?	0	3.4	17.2	37.9	41.4
28	How much do you feel mindfulness improves your academic motivation (e.g., interest in subjects, drive to succeed)?	3.4	9.2	19.5	29.9	37.9
29	How much has mindfulness practice helped in reducing your feelings of anxiety or nervousness?	1.1	5.7	8.0	42.5	42.5
30	Do you feel that mindfulness practice has contributed to reducing symptoms of depression (e.g., sadness, hopelessness)?	4.6	9.2	11.5	35.6	39.1
31	To what extent has mindfulness helped you regulate your emotions during stressful or frustrating situations?	0	3.4	17.2	37.9	41.4
32	How would you rate the improvement in your ability to stay organized and manage academic tasks due to mindfulness practice?	1.1	4.6	6.9	39.1	48.3
33	Do you find it easier to concentrate on studies after practicing mindfulness	0	5.7	13.8	26.4	54.0
34	How much do you feel mindfulness improves your academic motivation (e.g., interest in subjects, drive to succeed)?	1.1	4.6	10.3	39.1	44.8
35	To what degree has mindfulness helped you manage academic-related stress (e.g., exams, assignments, deadlines)?	0	8.0	17.2	34.5	40.2

On the downside, this survey lacks measures to sufficiently establish

reasons behind the ineffectiveness of mindfulness sessions for a small number of students. Reasons could range from inconsistent practice, the need for personalized techniques, or something inherently missing in mindfulness practice, such that the effectiveness cannot be generalized to 100%. It would be interesting to highlight the real causes of perceived ineffectiveness in any further studies.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study results demonstrate that mindfulness training has been largely effective in helping students manage stress, improve focus, and regulate emotions. The data highlights that those who engaged in mindfulness more consistently experienced greater benefits. Additionally, most students strongly believe that mindfulness courses are beneficial in the academic curriculum and that universities would do well to facilitate this. A small percentage of students, however, remained uncertain about its impact, this suggests the need for more personalized guidance and consistent practice. By encouraging regular practice, diversifying techniques, and integrating mindfulness into daily life, its effectiveness can be further enhanced, providing long-term benefits for students' mental and emotional health. For further improvements in the effectiveness of mindfulness practice sessions. It is thus recommended to focus on the following aspects during the planning phase. (1) Encouraging & Emphasising the importance of regular mindfulness practice. This can help students experience more pronounced benefits. (2) Offering different, more personalized mindfulness techniques (e.g., meditation, mindful breathing, mindful walking). This can cater to diverse preferences and increase engagement. (3) Encouraging students to integrate and apply mindfulness in everyday activities, such as mindful eating or mindful listening. This can make the practice more sustainable. (4) More frequent follow-ups, periodic check-ins, additional sessions & support for selected focus groups, could reinforce the practice and address any challenges students face.

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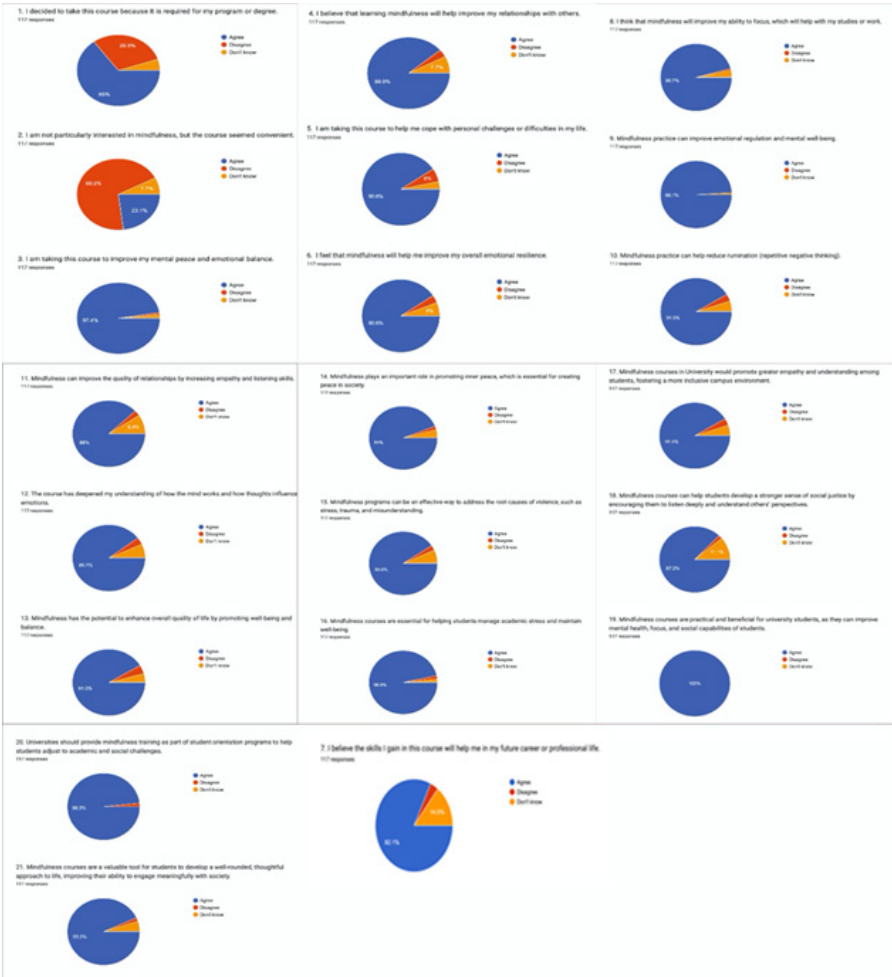
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APPENDIX A - MINDFULNESS IN INDIAN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

In recent years, several Indian academic institutions have begun incorporating mindfulness into their curricula to help students manage stress, enhance concentration, and improve emotional well-being. The challenges of academic pressure, intense competition, and mental health concerns among students have prompted institutions to explore mindfulness as a way to foster mental resilience and improve learning outcomes.¹¹ (1) Schools and Colleges: Many educational institutions are now introducing mindfulness-based programs, often tailored to the needs of students. For example, the Mindfulness in Schools Program (MiSP) has been implemented in various Indian schools to teach students practical mindfulness techniques, which include breathing exercises, body awareness, and mindful listening. These programs are designed to enhance students' attention, emotional regulation, and coping mechanisms in the face of stress and academic pressure. (2) University Programs: Some universities have partnered with mindfulness organizations to introduce mindfulness courses or workshops as part of their wellness programs. Notable examples include mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) courses or workshops offered in universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). These courses help students enhance focus, reduce anxiety, and develop self-compassion, which in turn positively impacts academic performance. (3) Mental Health Support for Students - India has seen a rise in mental health concerns among students, especially due to the pressure to perform academically and the high competition for admission to prestigious institutions. Mindfulness is being recognized as an effective tool to address student mental health. (4) Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) has been adopted by some counseling centers in universities as a form of psychological intervention for students struggling with anxiety, depression, and stress. Programs like MBCT integrate mindfulness practices with cognitive therapy to help students develop more adaptive ways of thinking and coping with difficult emotions. (5) Mindful Leadership Development: Some educational institutions are incorporating mindfulness into leadership training programs for students. These programs aim to build self-awareness, empathy, and emotional intelligence in future leaders, promoting a mindful approach to decision-making and conflict resolution. (6) Mindfulness in Teachers'

¹¹ Jawaharlal Nehru University. JNU, <https://www.jnu.ac.in/main/>, MBSR Training. MBSR Training, <https://mbsrtraining.com/>, Mindfulness in Schools Project. Mindfulness in Schools, <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/> & Tata Institute of Social Sciences. TISS, <https://tiss.ac.in/>.

Training - Indian educators are also being trained in mindfulness to support their well-being and that of their students. Various teacher training programs and workshops are being organized by organizations like The Art of Living and Mindful Schools to help teachers manage their stress, improve classroom management, and foster a more positive and focused learning environment. Teachers who practice mindfulness themselves are often better equipped to teach students how to deal with their emotions and navigate academic stress.



Sample of Survey in Graph
(Bi-lingual Survey- 117 respondents in English & 83 in Hindi)

APPENDIXB-MINDFULNESSININDIANCORPORATEINDUSTRIES

Corporate India has seen an increasing integration of mindfulness into workplace wellness programs. With high levels of stress, long working hours, and burnout prevalent in industries such as IT, finance, and healthcare, mindfulness is being recognized as an essential tool for enhancing mental

health, improving productivity, and fostering a positive work culture.¹² (1) Corporate Mindfulness Programs: Large organizations such as Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and Accenture India have introduced mindfulness-based programs, including guided meditation sessions, yoga, and breathing exercises, to reduce employee stress. These programs are aimed at improving employee focus, reducing burnout, and enhancing emotional resilience. (2) Workshops and Retreats: Companies often host mindfulness workshops, seminars, and retreats where employees learn techniques like mindful breathing, meditation, and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). These programs help employees manage their mental health, which in turn boosts their productivity and creativity at work. (3) Mindfulness is also being integrated into leadership development in Indian corporate settings. Many Indian companies are recognizing the need for leaders who possess emotional intelligence, are empathetic, and can manage their stress while making sound, balanced decisions. Mindfulness-Based Leadership Programs: Corporations like Wipro and HCL Technologies have developed leadership programs that incorporate mindfulness practices. These programs are designed to help leaders improve self-awareness, focus, and clarity in decision-making. Leaders trained in mindfulness are better equipped to handle workplace challenges, manage teams with empathy, and create a more collaborative and supportive work environment. (4) Executive Coaching: Mindfulness is also being used in executive coaching programs, where senior leaders and managers learn to incorporate mindfulness practices to improve their performance, reduce stress, and maintain work-life balance. Indian employees often experience stress from long working hours and high-performance expectations. Companies are recognising the importance of supporting employees' mental health to improve both well-being and organizational performance. Several Indian companies now encourage employees to use mindfulness apps such as Headspace, Calm, and MyLife to help manage stress and anxiety. These apps offer guided meditations, mindfulness exercises, and breathing techniques that employees can use during work breaks to reduce stress and increase focus. With the rise of remote work and flexible working hours in the post-pandemic era, companies are also adopting mindfulness initiatives in the form of virtual meditation sessions and stress-relief workshops. These initiatives help employees maintain a sense of calm and balance in their professional and personal lives.

¹² Gadhia, Shweta. "Mental Fitness Is In: How to Stay Sharp in a Distracted World." *Jacksonville Journal-Courier*, 23 Feb. 2025, <https://www.myjournalcourier.com/features/article/mental-fitness-in-stay-sharp-distracted-world-20149370.php> & Gardner, Hannah. "How India's Toxic Work Culture Is Killing Young Professionals." *The Times*, 6 Oct. 2024, <https://www.thetimes.com/business-money/companies/article/how-indias-toxic-work-culture-is-killing-young-professionals-wg2z32lnz>

BUDDHIST EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE ACCORDING TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRAN THANH TONG

Luu Hong Hoa*

Abstract:

Buddhist education, as envisioned by Tran Thanh Tong, retains its timeless value and relevance in today's world. Cultivating compassion, wisdom, and mindfulness through Buddhist education not only enables individuals to attain inner peace but also contributes to the development of a compassionate and sustainable society. In the future, integrating Buddhist teachings with advancements in science and society presents a promising path to addressing the challenges facing humanity. By embracing the spirit of Buddhism, we can become responsible global citizens, contributing to environmental protection and the creation of a peaceful world.

Keywords: *Buddhism, Tran Thanh Tong, compassion, sustainability.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the face of global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and armed conflicts, the search for a path toward sustainable and compassionate development has become more urgent than ever. In this journey, the spiritual and intellectual values of past sages, particularly the philosophy of King Tran Thanh Tong, offer invaluable insights.

The Tran Dynasty (1225 – 1400) is regarded by historians as one of the most glorious and illustrious periods in Vietnamese history. It was an era of national unity, cultural revival, and significant national development. The Tran rulers, wise and enlightened emperors, including Tran Thai Tong, Tran Thanh Tong, and Tran Nhan Tong, along with talented generals such as Tran Hung Dao,

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Tran Quang Khai, and Tran Nhat Duat, successfully mobilized the collective strength of the people to defeat the Mongol invasions. This demonstrated the power of a dynasty that valued talent, won the hearts of the people, and fostered comprehensive national progress, not only elevating the country's standing to an equal footing with China but also earning the respect of neighboring nations. As scholar Tran Dang Thuc observed: "Warrior, artist, and sage - three identities merged into one - were naturally and distinctly embodied in three successive generations of Tran dynasty emperors, maintaining continuity and consistency across the reigns of grandfather, father, and son: Thai Tong, Thanh Tong, and Nhan Tong."¹

II. BIOGRAPHY OF TRAN THANH TONG

Tran Thanh Tong (1240 – 1290) was the eldest son of Tran Thai Tong, the first ruler of the Tran Dynasty, renowned for his patriotism and deep care for the people. His mother, Princess Thuan Thien of the Ly Dynasty, came from a lineage that highly revered Buddhism and upheld "benevolent governance" as a national policy.

The *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (Complete Annals of Dai Viet) records his biography as follows:

*"His given name was Hoang, the eldest legitimate son of Thai Tong and Empress Dowager Hien Tu Thuan Thien of the Ly clan. It is said that before his birth, Emperor Thai Tong had a dream in which the Supreme Deity bestowed upon him a treasured sword, after which the Empress became pregnant. He was born on the 25th day of the 9th lunar month in the year Canh Ty, the 9th year of the Thien Ung Chinh Binh era (1240), at the hour of Ngo (midday). Following his birth, he was designated Crown Prince. Upon the passing of Thai Tong, he ascended the throne and reigned for 21 years before abdicating. He then lived in retirement for 13 years, reaching the age of 51. He passed away in Nhan Tho Palace and was laid to rest in Du Lang."*²

With his Zen-inspired approach to governance, King Tran Thanh Tong implemented numerous policies aimed at fostering a prosperous and harmonious society. His reforms encompassed administrative, educational, and economic advancements, as well as the patronage of Buddhism and the recruitment of talented individuals. He emphasized wisdom and virtue as the foundation for selecting officials, ensuring a capable and ethical state apparatus.

Additionally, he practiced compassionate governance by staying close to the people and nurturing a sense of unity. His benevolent leadership is reflected in his words recorded in history: *"In the spring, during the first lunar month, the emperor addressed the royal family: 'The realm belongs to our ancestors. The one who inherits their legacy should share prosperity with the kin. Though externally, all under heaven revere a single sovereign, internally, we are bound by blood, sharing burdens*

¹Nguyen, Đ. T. (1974). *Vietnamese Buddhism*. Saigon, p.126

² Ngo, S. L. (1998). *Complete Annals of Dai Viet* (Vol. 2, Translated by the Institute of History). Social Sciences Publishing House. p. 30.

and joys alike. Let these words be passed down to future generations as a lasting reminder, ensuring eternal blessings for the royal lineage and the nation.”³

During his 21-year reign as emperor, 13 years as Supreme Emperor, and even during his time as Crown Prince, Tran Thanh Tong experienced the full spectrum of hardships and challenges. He actively participated in military campaigns and was the only Vietnamese emperor to take part in all three Mongol invasions (1258, 1285, 1288). His strategic foresight and dedication to nurturing his successors laid the foundation for the Tran Dynasty’s remarkable achievements.

His efforts in cultivating talent, particularly in preparing his son, Tran Nhan Tong, to inherit and expand upon his legacy, led to the flourishing of the Truc Lam Zen School. Under his guidance, the Tran Dynasty reached its golden age, becoming the first feudal dynasty in Vietnamese history to achieve absolute unity – from the highest levels of government to the common people, from soldiers to civilians, from the elderly to the young, and from men to women. This collective spirit, known as the *Hao khi Dong A* (Eastern A Spirit), became a defining force of the era. For the first time, all of Dai Viet’s people stood together for a common cause, demonstrating an unyielding resolve against one of the most formidable military powers in the world at the time. Despite the overwhelming threat, Dai Viet upheld its spirit of self-reliance and resilience, fueled by boundless patriotism. Heads may fall, blood may be shed - but never would they accept the loss of their nation’s independence.

In addition to being an emperor and a military leader, Tran Thanh Tong was also a Zen master who imparted his spiritual knowledge and meditative experiences through his writings. It is believed that he authored several works, including *Di Hâu Lục* (Records Left for Future Generations), *Cơ Cầu Lục* (Records on Dynastic Succession), *Thiền Tông Liễu Ngộ Ca* (Song of Zen Enlightenment), *Phóng Ngưu* (Releasing the Ox), and *Chi Giá Minh* (Treatise on Reverence). Unfortunately, all these works have been lost over time.

- **Di Hâu Lục** (*Records Left for Future Generations*): This book was believed to contain his messages for posterity, likely encompassing his philosophical, political, and ethical reflections.
- **Cơ Cầu Lục** (*Records on Dynastic Succession*): This work might have discussed the organization of the state and governance strategies.
- **Thiền Tông Liễu Ngộ Ca** (*Song of Zen Enlightenment*): A collection of poetry expressing his deep spiritual realizations about Zen, life, and humanity.
- **Phóng Ngưu** (*Releasing the Ox*): A symbolic work likely reflecting themes of liberation from worldly attachments.
- **Chi Giá Minh** (*Treatise on Reverence*): A piece that may have emphasized humility and simplicity as essential virtues.

³ Ngo, S. L. (1998). *Complete Annals of Dai Viet* (Vol. 5, Translated by the Institute of History). Social Sciences Publishing House. p. 180.

Though these writings have not survived, Tran Thanh Tong's legacy as both a ruler and a Zen master continues to inspire generations, reflecting a harmonious blend of political wisdom and Buddhist enlightenment.

Currently, only 16 works remain, including 15 poems and a prose passage discussing the bond between brothers in the royal family. These include *Chân tâm chi dụng* (真心之用) (*The Function of True Mind*) and *Cung viên xuân nhật ức cựu* (宮園春日憶舊) (*Spring Day in the Palace Garden, Reminiscing the Past*), *Đáp Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ* (答慧忠上士) – *Reply to Tue Trung Thuong Si*, *Đề Huyền Thiên Động* (題玄天洞) – *Inscription for Huyen Thien Cave*, *Độc “Đại Tuệ Ngữ Lục” Hữu Cảm Kỳ 1* (讀大慧語錄有感其一) – *Reflections on Reading “Sayings of Great Wisdom” (Part 1)*, *Độc “Đại Tuệ Ngữ Lục” Hữu Cảm Kỳ 2* (讀大慧語錄有感其二) – *Reflections on Reading “Sayings of Great Wisdom” (Part 2)*, *Độc “Phật Sự Đại Minh Lục” Hữu Cảm* (讀佛事大明錄有) – *Reflections on Reading “Great Illumination of Buddhist Affairs”*, *Hạ Cảnh* (夏景) – *Summer Scenery*, *Hạnh An Bang Phủ* (幸安邦府) – *Visit to An Bang Prefecture*, *Hạnh Thiên Trường Hành Cung*⁴ (行天長行宮) – *Visit to Thien Truong Palace*, *Hoạ Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ* (和慧忠上士) – *Poetic Response to Tue Trung Thuong S*, *Sinh Tử* (生死) – *Life and Death*, *Tặng Trần Quang Khải* (贈陳光啟) – *Gift to Tran Quang Khai*, *Văn Chấn Trọng Vi* (輓陳仲微) – *Elegy for Tran Trong Vi*, *Tự Thuật Kỳ 1-5* (自述其一至五) – *Self-Reflections (Parts 1-5)*

On May 22, 1290, King Thanh Tong passed away at the age of 51. In remembrance of him, people in various regions, such as Nam Dinh, Thai Binh, and Ninh Binh, established temples in his honor, where incense is offered throughout the year as a tribute to his legacy.

III. THE BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF TRAN THANH TONG

Through his poetry, Tran Thanh Tong revealed profound insights into the mindset and way of life of the Tran Dynasty. His writings offer glimpses into how people of his era lived, contemplated, practiced, and acted in pursuit of enlightenment.

One of his most notable poems, *Chân Tâm Chi Dụng* (*The Function of True Mind*), encapsulates his Zen philosophy:

⁴ According to the books *Hoang Viet Thi Tuyen* and *Nam Ong Mong Luc*, this poem is attributed to Tran Nhan Tong.

<i>The function of the true mind,</i>	<i>Light as a feather in thought,</i>
<i>Is wise and silent.</i>	<i>Heavy as stone.</i>
<i>Neither coming nor going,</i>	<i>Crystal clear, pure,</i>
<i>Neither decreasing nor increasing.</i>	<i>Stripped of all attachments.</i>
<i>Whether vast or minute,</i>	<i>Beyond all measurement,</i>
<i>Whether favorable or adverse-let it be.</i>	<i>Without trace or origin.</i>
<i>In motion, it is like clouds, like cranes;</i>	<i>Now, for your sake,</i>
<i>In stillness, it is like walls, like cliffs.</i>	<i>I reveal it.⁵</i>

IV. THE FUNCTION OF THE TRUE MIND

Zen Master Thanh Tong emphasized that practicing self-cultivation and inner transformation should be a lifelong endeavor. He taught that achieving an awakened mind - pure awareness and tranquility - was essential for realizing the profound function of *chân tâm* (the true mind). Those who truly understand their minds and harness their full potential should not act out of selfishness but instead share their insights and achievements with others. A mind that embraces generosity and interconnectedness naturally leads to success in all endeavors. At the heart of his teachings lies the Buddhist understanding of impermanence and interdependence. Everything in existence is neither truly coming nor going, neither created nor destroyed; rather, all things continuously manifest in different forms. No entity has an independent, inherent self; everything exists due to the coming together of various conditions. Human beings, too, are formed by countless interdependent elements - our ancestors, parents, and the fundamental natural forces of the universe: *địa, thủy, hỏa, phong* (earth, water, fire, wind). Reflecting deeply on oneself reveals these connections: *Whose hands do mine resemble? Whose feet do I take after? From whom have I inherited my resilience and strength?* In this way, self-awareness becomes a gateway to recognizing our inseparable bond with all life.

The phrase “Vào nhỏ hay vào to, Mặc kệ thuận hay nghịch” (Entering the small or the large, regardless of favorable or adverse conditions) highlights the importance of transcending dualistic thinking - whether in size, comparison, or circumstances. Attachment to notions of *big* and *small* traps us in judgment, just as clinging to *favorable* or *unfavorable conditions* keeps us bound by emotions of joy and suffering. A truly awakened mind remains undisturbed, maintaining inner peace regardless of external situations. One of the defining characteristics of enlightened Vietnamese Zen masters is their ability to adapt skillfully to their circumstances. They act according to their role and environment while always staying aligned with compassion and the benefit of the Dharma and all beings. They live with freedom, selflessness, and non-attachment, never allowing external conditions to control or bind them. The

⁵ Institute of Literature (1988), *Poetry and Prose of the Ly - Tran Dynasties* (Vol. II, p. 415). Social Sciences Publishing House

key is acceptance and integration with all things, selecting what aligns with one's nature to refine and perfect oneself. The poem continues, "*Động thì như mây, như hạc*" (In movement, be like clouds and cranes) suggests that when the body is active - whether walking, standing, or reclining - one should move with ease and fluidity, or "*Tĩnh thì như tường, như vách*" (In stillness, be like walls and cliffs) implies unwavering stability, whether sitting or lying in a state of rest, or "*Nhẹ như sợi lông, nặng như tảng đá*" (Light as a feather, heavy as a boulder) reflects both physical weight and the inner state of movement or stillness. Ultimately, when ideas of *gain and loss, right and wrong, victory and defeat* dissolve, the true mind (*chân tâm*) is revealed.

The *true mind* (*chân tâm*) is the most profound mystery within each individual. It is not the physical body, nor does it have a tangible form, yet it is not separate from the physical self. It has no shape, no appearance, no color, no scent, no size, no limits, no inside, no outside. It pervades all things, beyond grasp, and can only be realized through clarity and inner stillness. Its manifestation (*Dụng*) is seen in individuals of great wisdom - those who embody freedom, selflessness, universality, fearlessness, and humility. These individuals possess profound intelligence, unshakable resolve, and unwavering confidence in their abilities. They rely on no external forces but rather trust in their inner strength. With wisdom and virtue, they dedicate themselves to the welfare of society, playing a vital role in stabilizing and protecting the nation, fostering prosperity, and ensuring the well-being of the people. No one exemplifies this ideal more than figures like Tran Thai Tong, Tran Thanh Tong, and Tran Nhan Tong - leaders who not only ruled wisely but also lived by the enlightened principles of the true mind, guiding their people toward harmony, resilience, and spiritual awakening.

*"The scorching heat causes sweat to drench my body,
Yet it has never soaked the loincloth my mother gave me at birth."*⁶

V. REPLY TO TUE TRUNG THUONG SI

This body may ache and suffer from illness, but it has no connection to the true mind. The physical body and the true mind are entirely different. "Scorching heat" is merely a sensation - when we observe it clearly, we recognize that this heat is felt in the body. It may arise from fever due to illness or from external weather conditions, but it does not reside in the mind. Many people mistakenly say, "I am hot," when in fact, it is the body that is experiencing heat. "The loincloth my mother gave me" is a common metaphor in Zen teachings, symbolizing what Zen Buddhism calls "the original face" (*bản lai diện mục*) - the primordial mind, the unchanging essence of all phenomena in the universe, untouched by external conditions such as illness or heat.

When one truly understands this, they are no longer influenced by external circumstances and instead develop confidence in their inner being.

⁶ Institute of Literature. (1988). *Poetry and Prose of the Ly - Tran Dynasties* (Vol. II, p. 417). Social Sciences Publishing House

In Reflections on Reading Sayings of Great Wisdom, it is written:

“Sweat drenched from meditative practice,
One day, I shall see my mother’s true visage.”⁷

The essence of Buddhism in general, and Zen Buddhism in particular, lies in awakening individuals to perceive this “mother’s visage”. This concept is the key to resolving ontological questions and represents the highest state of liberation in Buddhist philosophy. The *true mind* is also symbolized as the “nurturing face” (*nuông sinh diện*) in Tran Thai Tong’s teachings, as the “true original face” (*chân diện mục*) in Tue Trung Thuong Si’s thought, and as the “innocent child” (*đồng tử*). It is the “genuine person without status” (*vô vị chân nhân*), the “face of the spring sovereign” (*đồng hoàng diện*) in Tran Nhan Tong’s philosophy, the “primordial person” (*bản lai nhân*) in Tran Minh Tong’s teachings, and the “wondrous essence” (*diệu thể*) in Dao Hue’s thought. Furthermore, it is the “free and independent person” (*tự tại nhân*) in Hien Quang’s teachings, the “leisurely monk” (*nhân tăng*), and the “one unified mind” (*nhất chúng tâm*) in Huyen Quang’s philosophy.

The Buddha meditated in the Snowy Mountains for six years, saw the morning star, and attained enlightenment - this is seeing the “*true face of the mother*.” The Second Patriarch (Nhị tổ) stood in the snow and cut off his arm to realize awakening. The Sixth Patriarch (Lục tổ) attained enlightenment upon hearing a single verse from the *Diamond Sutra* (*Kim Cang*). Linh Nguyên awakened when he saw peach blossoms blooming. Huong Nghiem was enlightened upon hearing the sound of a stone striking bamboo. Lâm Tế realized the truth when he was struck by Hoang Ba. Dong Son awakened when he saw his reflection in the water. “The true face of the mother” or “the original face” (*bản lai diện mục*) has no name - just as a newborn has no name until one is given. The body is like a house, and there must be a master of the house. That master is the “*original face*.” The sensations of heat and cold, feelings of lack, and desires - all of these are mere illusions. They do not belong to the true master of the house. These illusions shift with each breath, and one must focus on the breath. Like passing clouds, wandering thoughts and distractions come and go. When the clouds clear, the sky is this clear sky is *the original face*, the unchanging essence. It is the “treasure already within your house - stop searching elsewhere.”

What have we done to sweep away delusions? What have we done to recognize the “mother’s visage”? What have we done to attain serenity and liberation? Why waste time searching in confusion, restlessly chasing after illusions? If one seeks to find their true face by looking outward, running east and west in pursuit, it is nothing but a futile endeavor.

“Moving freely without clinging to existence or nonexistence,
Amidst the tangled web of myriad things, knowing nothing.

⁷ Institute of Literature. (1988). *Poetry and Prose of the Ly - Tran Dynasties* (Vol. II, p. 405). Social Sciences Publishing House.

Eating, sleeping as it comes,
Beyond that, nothing else is worth doing.”⁸

Self-Reflection, Part 3

Regarding the concept of existence and nonexistence, Emperor Tran Thanh Tong urged people not to become entangled in dualistic thinking. He emphasized that life simply requires one to live authentically - to eat, sleep, and function according to one's role and responsibilities, both for oneself and for the nation. This philosophy echoes in Tran Nhan Tong's *Cư Trần Lạc Đạo* (*Living in the World, Enjoying the Way*): “When hungry, just eat; when tired, simply sleep.”

Tran Thanh Tong was deeply influenced by the philosophy and style of Tran Thai Tong and Tue Trung Thuong Si. He held the view that there is no fundamental distinction between the Buddha and sentient beings - Buddha exists within all beings, and all beings possess the nature of Buddha. Tran Thanh Tong expressed this through his belief that “All phenomena are empty; there is no distinction between Buddha, saints, and sentient beings.” This perspective aligns with Tran Thai Tong's assertion: “My body is the Buddha's body; there are not two forms.” Tue Trung Thuong Si reinforced this notion, stating: “When deluded, one does not realize that one is Buddha.” Meanwhile, Tran Nhan Tong proclaimed in his famous teaching, “Buddha is in your own home”: “In my heart, nothing is lacking, nothing is in excess./ Buddha is emptiness, and so are people./ The autumn scenery stretches beyond the distant sky,/ Clouds veil the green mountains, indifferent to worldly affairs.”⁹
(Self-Reflection, Part 5)

At birth, we arrive in this world naked, without clothing. Only later do our parents clothe us to shield our bodies. When it becomes too hot, we remove our garments for comfort. Tran Thanh Tong perceived life and death in the same manner - as simply donning or removing clothes, a natural necessity without intrinsic importance. Just as clothing covers the body but does not alter the mind, birth and death are merely manifestations - the physical body perishes, but one who comprehends this truth transcends the cycle of life and death:

“Living is like putting on a robe,
Dying is like taking off one's trousers.
From ancient times until now,
There has been no other path.
Once the ‘eight characters’ are understood,
There is nothing left to report to you.”¹⁰

(Birth and Death)

⁸ Institute of Literature. (1988). *Poetry and Prose of the Ly - Tran Dynasties* (Vol. II, p. 407). Social Sciences Publishing House.

⁹ Institute of Literature. (1988). *Poetry and Prose of the Ly - Tran Dynasties* (Vol. II, p. 408). Social Sciences Publishing House.

¹⁰ Institute of Literature. (1988). *Poetry and Prose of the Ly - Tran Dynasties* (Vol. II, p. 416). Social Sciences Publishing House.

Extending this analogy further, throughout our lives, we put on many “robes”- a university degree, a position of power, a title or status. Recognizing these as mere outer coverings, we can train our minds to remain unshaken by gain or loss, superiority or inferiority. Tran Thanh Tong continues: *“From ancient times until now, there has been no other path”*. Every human being, without exception, follows the same cycle of birth, aging, illness, and death. Has anyone ever shed their skin and lived eternally? If we all walk the same road, what is there to fear? The natural law of *birth, existence, transformation, and extinction* and the human cycle of *birth, aging, sickness, and death* reflect the impermanence of all things. Eight notions nurture fear: birth and death, coming and going, similarity and difference, being and non-being. These eight notions prevent us from finding true peace and happiness in the present moment.

According to the Buddhist principle of Dependent Origination (Duyen Sinh), all things in this world, including the human body, exist due to causes and conditions. When these causes and conditions come together, things arise; when they disperse, things cease to exist. Ultimately, Zen poetry reveals the impermanence and instability of the human body, which is composed of the Four Great Elements (tứ đại). Its purpose is to guide readers toward recognizing their innate Buddha-nature, as taught by the Buddha: *“Nhất thiết chúng sinh giai hữu Phật tính”* (All sentient beings possess Buddha-nature). This Buddha-nature is the eternal and indestructible true mind within all beings. Such a perspective fosters positive qualities that inspire individuals to dedicate themselves to serving their country in the present. Once one realizes this true self, they attain mastery over themselves, their circumstances, and even nature itself.

The attainment of enlightenment is not merely achieved through the study of scriptures, classic texts, or the contemplation of the “five profound meanings” (ngũ huyền). It is not simply about diligently immersing oneself in history, refining one’s literary and martial skills, or leisurely reading books in times of peace. Rather, the life of Tran Thanh Tong, spanning over 40 years, was a profound journey of direct experience, shaped by real-life struggles and dedication. He walked the “fourfold paths of life”, devoting himself entirely to his people and his country: *“Taking the will of the people as his own will, taking the hearts of the people as his own heart.”* In times of war, he mounted his horse and led his troops into battle. For him, Zen was not separate from life - it was life itself. It was applied in action, lived with full dedication and selflessness in service to the nation. This engaged approach to Zen represents the most profound realization of enlightenment and was a defining principle of the Tran dynasty Zen Buddhism. Similarly, Tue Trung Thuong Si embodied this spirit: *“Walking is Zen, sitting is Zen.”* Whether eating vegetarian or consuming meat, he lived in harmony with nature, embracing a way of life that flowed seamlessly with circumstances (*tùy duyên tùy tục*), demonstrating the true essence of Zen in daily existence.

Forty long years, a single heart remains pure,
Escaping beyond thousands of prison gates.
In motion, like the wind echoing through a hollow cave,

In stillness, like the moonlight reflected in a cold pond.
 Having grasped the profound meaning of the Five Mysteries,
 I roam freely upon the vast crossroads of life.
 If one asks me what birth and death truly are,
 They are but clouds drifting in the sky and water contained in a vessel.¹¹

VI. REFLECTIONS ON READING “GREAT ILLUMINATION OF BUDDHIST AFFAIRS”

To focus the mind on a single object is to perceive that object as it truly is. More broadly, it is to see the true nature of all phenomena – to penetrate the essence of reality, even the most subtle psychological states. Zen in Buddhism leads to the cultivation of meditative concentration (*định lực*) and wisdom (*trí tuệ*), ultimately attaining enlightenment and liberation from the suffering of birth and death in the cycle of reincarnation (*samsara*). To achieve this, one must train the mind to be steadfast and unwavering – solid like a mountain (“*nhất phiến thành*”), unshakable like a diamond, impervious to external disturbances. When the mind moves, it should be “like the echoing wind in a hollow cave”; when still, it should resemble “the moonlight reflected in a tranquil pond”. A mind that is pure and empty, like a half-filled cup of water, easily embraces all things, perceiving them with clarity and truth. Our true nature transcends birth and death - it is like *clouds in the sky, like water in a vessel*. Water evaporates and becomes clouds; clouds gather and transform into rain; rain falls upon the earth, rivers, and oceans, continuing its natural cycle. In the same way, life flows in an unbroken, ever-changing process, yet its essence remains unaltered. The cloud never truly vanishes; it simply transforms - appearing in a teacup, across vast grasslands, in the gentle laughter of a child, or a mother’s loving hands. When all conditions align, a phenomenon manifests; when certain conditions are absent, it remains unexpressed. Understanding this law frees one from attachment to notions of life and death, eliminating the fear of mortality. Clouds may be large or small, thick or thin, taking on various forms; water in a vessel conforms to its shape, whether round or elongated, wide or narrow. Likewise, we may be a drifting cloud in the sky or the vast ocean itself - our essence shaped by the expansiveness or constraints of our minds. The ultimate truth is: Neither birth nor death, neither coming nor going, neither sameness nor difference, neither existence nor non-existence. To grasp this truth is to awaken to *chân tâm* (true mind), *chân như* (suchness), and the ultimate reality. By understanding the natural laws of existence and acting in harmony with them, one unlocks the secret to a joyful and fulfilling life in the present moment. By realizing the true nature of life and death, one can channel their full potential toward the growth and prosperity of their country. In all that Trần Thánh Tông pursued, his ultimate aspiration was for every citizen of Dai Viet to cultivate wisdom, virtue, and capability - like the Buddha Śākyamuni,

¹¹ Institute of Literature. (1988). *Poetry and Prose of the Ly - Tran Dynasties* (Vol. II, p. 410). Social Sciences Publishing House.

like the future Buddha Maitreya. As expressed by Emperor Trần Nhân Tông in *Cư trần lạc đạo phú*: “Planting the seeds of compassion, cultivating virtue - who else but Śākyamuni? Observing precepts, cutting off greed and envy - none other than Maitreya.”

In a nation where everyone fully realizes their potential, that country becomes strong and prosperous, standing firm without fear or hesitation in the face of any foreign invasion attempts.

VII. TRAN THANH TONG AND THE EDUCATION OF HUMAN VIRTUES FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The ideology of Tran Thanh Tong is not confined to the era in which he lived but holds enduring value that can be applied to individuals in any society. In today's context, his perspectives on cultivating human virtues are profoundly significant, especially as Buddhism encourages each person to contribute, according to their abilities and circumstances, to the creation of a happier world. The true strength of a nation lies not only in its economic or military power but fundamentally in the moral integrity of its leaders and the collective consciousness of its people. The enlightened policies of the Tran Dynasty in both nation-building and national defense elevated Dai Viet into a civilized, prosperous, and influential state within the region. Even today, these values remain relevant and should be studied and creatively applied to nurture human virtues, fostering a compassionate and sustainable future.

The ideal of enlightenment and liberation is meant for everyone - whether monastic or layperson, whether living in a temple or the world - as long as one cultivates the mind and nurtures virtue. All people are equal before the truth and the ideal of spiritual awakening. Human beings are inherently Buddhas, yet they often forget their true nature and seek enlightenment outside themselves. As the Buddha taught: “*Be a light unto yourself. Rely on yourself; do not depend on anything else. Rely on the Dharma, do not depend on anything else.*” When one realizes that each person is a Buddha, they allow their Buddha-nature to manifest and must live and act accordingly. If every leader and citizen of a nation embraces this understanding and puts it into practice, then the entire society will be guided by wisdom and compassion. This realization leads to the fulfillment of the ideal: “*Nhất gia nhân, nhất quốc hưng nhân*” (*When one household embodies benevolence, the entire nation flourishes in benevolence*).

Buddhism also encourages individuals to take control of their thoughts and actions. From a humanistic perspective, this is the principle of self-mastery. Once one deeply understands the law of cause and effect (karma), they should be more mindful of their actions, ensuring that their consequences do not bring harm to themselves, their family, society, or the nation. As the Buddha taught, before undertaking any action, whether great or small, one must carefully consider its outcomes. Buddhism affirms that anyone can attain Buddhahood through dedicated practice and self-transformation in daily life. Each person plays a decisive role in reshaping their destiny, striving toward a life of peace and enlightenment, and ultimately realizing Nirvana here in this world.

Human development is influenced by many factors, such as environment, education, and family. However, the final decision ultimately lies with each individual. Buddhist ethics aim to bring the knowledge that each person has acquired - at different levels, with different abilities, and through different experiences - into practical application in daily life. This leads to a transformation of consciousness, fostering self-awareness, self-discipline, and self-practice to achieve one's goals in life.

Rooted in the foundational principle of compassion, Buddhist ethics place great importance on human actions, with benevolence being the most essential practice. If one fully grasps the philosophy of Tran Thanh Tong - his views on life and death, the relationship between body and mind, and the interconnectedness of all beings - then the path to inner peace and harmony becomes clear. When the mind is free from distinctions and attachments, the world unfolds as a place of serenity and boundless possibilities. At times, people live with their focus fixed on the future, forgetting that the present moment is the true gateway to happiness. They seek external pleasures while neglecting their inherent nature. True fulfillment arises from harmonious coexistence, mutual care, and support- not from domination or suppression.

The Tran Dynasty was a golden era built upon a foundation of comprehensive societal progress where every aspect of life flourished. Individuals experienced holistic development - both physically and spiritually - guided by visionary leaders such as King Tran Thanh Tong. With a profound and expansive mind, he attained enlightenment and selflessly shared his wisdom with all, rather than keeping it for himself out of personal gain or selfishness. His aspiration was for everyone to achieve the same level of understanding and fulfillment as he did. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 interconnected targets, aims to guide member nations in transforming their approaches to development. It advocates for an inclusive, human-centered, and sustainable model where no one is left behind. By fully realizing the ambitions outlined in this agenda, the lives of all individuals will be profoundly improved, and our world will be transformed for the better. President Ho Chi Minh emphasized that fostering the holistic development of the Vietnamese people requires a focus on four key aspects: virtue (đức), intellect (trí), physical well-being (thể), and aesthetics (mỹ). Among these, he placed the greatest emphasis on "virtue", advocating for individuals to cultivate a pure and ethical mind, reflected in their daily social interactions and relationships. Humans are capable of acquiring, correctly applying, and effectively utilizing the achievements of humanity in culture, science, and technology. They can also innovate and develop new knowledge to address emerging issues arising from reality. As Ho Chi Minh stated, "Each good person, each good deed is like a beautiful flower; together, our nation becomes a vast and thriving garden." In the era of Industry 4.0, building a smart society requires cultivating smart citizens. Many countries are developing "smart cities", but such cities can only thrive if they are built and led by capable and intelligent individuals. This necessitates entrusting

the task to talented and knowledgeable leaders. The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam has identified human development as a strategic priority and a breakthrough mission for the coming years. Only by fostering comprehensive human development, ensuring that individuals possess good health, knowledge, skills, and a strong sense of responsibility toward themselves, their families, and their nation, can Vietnam build a high-quality workforce capable of driving sustainable national progress. President Ho Chi Minh once wrote: “National development requires talent. Although our country may not yet have an abundance of talent, if we carefully select, assign, and utilize people wisely, talent will continue to grow and multiply.”¹² He emphasized the need to “seek out individuals who possess both talent and virtue”, believing that failing to utilize national talent is a serious shortcoming - a waste of valuable human resources essential for building and strengthening the nation. Throughout his leadership of the Vietnamese revolution, Ho Chi Minh stressed that the right person must be assigned to the right role, in alignment with their abilities and strengths. He cautioned against mismatching skills and responsibilities, famously stating that one must not “assign a carpenter to work as a blacksmith.” Misplacing talent leads to inefficiency, stagnation and ultimately hampers national progress. Poor personnel management not only weakens the Party’s effectiveness but also stifles the growth of the nation’s intellectual and leadership capital. In every era, talented and virtuous individuals have been the backbone of national strength. As scholar Than Nhan Trung asserted, “Talent is the lifeblood of a nation. When this lifeblood thrives, the country prospers; when it declines, the nation weakens. Therefore, wise rulers throughout history have always prioritized cultivating and selecting talent as a fundamental task.” During times of war, patriotic individuals dedicate themselves to defending the nation, risking their lives to safeguard its sovereignty. In times of peace, they contribute to the country’s advancement - developing its economy, education, and culture - ensuring prosperity and stability for all citizens. Recognizing and nurturing talent is, therefore, not just a matter of policy but a strategic imperative for a nation’s long-term strength and sustainability.

The Tran Dynasty placed great importance on internal harmony within the royal court, recognizing that unity was essential for building national strength and resisting foreign invasions. Despite personal conflicts between Grand Prince Hung Dao Tran Quoc Tuan and Grand Chancellor Tran Quang Khai, the wisdom and diplomatic skill of Emperor Tran Thanh Tong ensured that they set aside personal grievances for the greater good of the nation. Prioritizing the country’s survival over individual disputes, they united in their efforts to resist the Mongol invasions. The key factor behind Dai Viet’s three resounding victories against the Mongol invaders was this spirit of internal harmony and national solidarity.

In the present era, under new circumstances and facing the demands

¹² Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House, p. 114.

of building and defending the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the historical lesson on the strength of national unity remains profoundly relevant. Fostering solidarity and collective determination has been established as a strategic direction of the Vietnamese revolution, serving as the primary source of strength and a decisive factor in ensuring the sustainable success of national development and defense. President Ho Chi Minh emphasized the fundamental role of unity with his famous words: “*Đoàn kết, đoàn kết, đại đoàn kết; Thành công, thành công, đại thành công*” (*Unity, unity, great unity; Success, success, great success*). Building internal unity is a crucial element in organizational leadership, and maintaining a culture of solidarity requires each individual to balance both negative and positive emotions within themselves. True internal unity demands resolute efforts to eliminate opportunists, agitators, and those who incite wrongdoing that disrupts internal solidarity. In each individual’s mindset, it is important to emphasize the common goal and shared interests of all, uniting everyone toward a common purpose. As President Ho Chi Minh once emphasized: “Let us always remember the word *đồng* (unity) in thought, unity in effort, unity in will, and unity in alliance.” At the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, comprehensive policies were introduced to strengthen and harness the power of national unity. The congress set forth new guiding principles, elevating the Party’s perspective on this critical issue to greater heights. It underscored the need to ignite patriotism, foster national resilience, and consolidate the strength of national solidarity, all while striving for a prosperous and happy Vietnam.

The Tran Nhan Tong Institute in Vietnam today carries the mission of academically promoting the authentic, enlightened, and intellectual lineage of Buddhism. It aims to contribute to the preservation and development of Vietnamese Buddhism’s finest traditions, the philosophy of Tran Nhan Tong, and the cultural heritage of the Tran dynasty, including the teachings of Tran Thai Tong, Tran Thanh Tong, and Tue Trung Thuong Si, as well as traditional Vietnamese culture as a whole. Associate Professor Nguyen Kim Son, Director of the Tran Nhan Tong Institute, stated: “We seek to illuminate future generations with the light of wisdom, compassion, and boundless love embodied by Tran Nhan Tong through education,” contributing to the formation of a modern Vietnamese identity in the era of globalization. Few may know that half a world away, in Boston, USA, the name of the enlightened Emperor Tran Nhan Tong has been honored through the establishment of an academic institution bearing his name: The Tran Nhan Tong Academy at Harvard University. Founded by a group of scholars at Harvard University, one of the world’s foremost centers of intellectual excellence, this institution recognizes a remarkable Vietnamese historical figure whose legacy represents wisdom and humanity. Thus, the ideals of compassion and unity championed by the Tran dynasty have transcended national boundaries, reaching a global stage.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Within the framework of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) for 2030 and Vietnam's Roadmap for Sustainable Development, each of us - descendants of Dai Viet - must remain steadfast in our commitment, intellect, and resilience. It is our collective responsibility to embrace compassion, foster solidarity, and contribute to the well-being of our communities.

By upholding the spirit of great national unity, we actively participate in the nation-building and safeguarding efforts, striving towards a prosperous, powerful, and thriving Vietnam. A nation where peace, happiness, and sustainable well-being are not just ideals but realities for all. As such, each individual must recognize their role and responsibility in preserving and advancing this sustainability for generations to come.

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MINDFULNESS IN ETHICAL EDUCATION FOR VIETNAMESE YOUTH FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract:

In an increasingly digitalized world, Vietnamese youth face significant ethical challenges that require innovative solutions to promote moral integrity, compassion, and sustainability. The rapid advancement of technology, social media, and globalization has transformed traditional ethical values, leading to concerns about digital responsibility, mental well-being, and social cohesion. Mindfulness, an ancient practice rooted in Buddhist traditions, offers a compelling framework for ethical education by fostering self-awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making. This paper explores the role of mindfulness in ethical education for Vietnamese youth, emphasizing its potential to cultivate a compassionate and sustainable future in the digital era. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study examines the impact of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) on ethical reasoning, emotional regulation, and digital well-being. The findings suggest that integrating mindfulness into education enhances students' moral consciousness, reduces digital distractions, and strengthens their capacity for ethical decision-making. This research contributes to the growing discourse on mindfulness in education and presents a viable solution to address ethical dilemmas faced by Vietnamese youth.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, ethical education, Vietnamese youth, digital well-being.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, Vietnamese youth are increasingly facing complex ethical challenges that necessitate innovative approaches in education to foster compassion and sustainability. Integrating mindfulness, deeply rooted in Buddhist traditions, presents a promising solution by cultivating self-awareness, empathy, and ethical decision-making. The Buddha emphasized the importance of mindfulness in moral conduct, stating, “Do not pursue the past. Do not lose yourself in the future. Looking deeply at life as it is here and now, the practitioner dwells in stability and freedom”¹ with the rapid advancement of digital technologies and increasing internet penetration, which reached 79.1% of the Vietnamese population as of 2023² youth are exposed to ethical dilemmas such as misinformation, cyberbullying, and digital addiction. This study explores the role of mindfulness in ethical education to equip Vietnamese youth with essential skills to navigate the moral complexities of the digital world. Recent research has demonstrated that mindfulness-based interventions improve emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and ethical reasoning³. Intercultural Competence Development: Exploring International Graduate Student Leader’s Journeys through Contemplation and Mindfulness-Based Inquiry. However, challenges remain in implementing mindfulness in education, particularly in ensuring its cultural relevance and alignment with traditional Buddhist ethics. Addressing these concerns requires structured teacher training, curriculum integration, and interdisciplinary collaboration. By embedding mindfulness into educational frameworks, Vietnam can cultivate a generation of ethically responsible and socially conscious individuals, contributing to a more compassionate and sustainable future.

II. LITTLE REVIEW

In the digital age, Vietnamese youth face complex ethical challenges requiring innovative educational approaches. Integrating mindfulness into education, grounded in Buddhist ethics, offers a promising pathway to cultivate compassion and sustainability among young individuals. Mindfulness, defined as present-moment awareness, enhances self-regulation and ethical decision-making, essential skills for navigating the digital landscape. The Buddha highlighted the importance of mindfulness in ethical behavior, teaching not to cling to the past nor become lost in the future. The practitioner achieves stability and freedom by fully embracing the present moment.⁴

Recent studies indicate that mindfulness-based interventions can effectively address behavioral and psychosocial issues among Vietnamese youth, fostering moral and emotional growth. As of January 2023, Vietnam

¹ May, R. (1999). *Freedom and destiny*. W. W. Norton & Company.

² Thuan, B. B. (2023). Digital literacy of Vietnamese human resources. *The VMOST Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 65 (2), 71 – 84.

³ Bui, T. A. (2023). *Intercultural competence development: Exploring international graduate student leaders’ journeys through contemplation and mindfulness-based inquiry*.

⁴ Sheehy, G. (2011). *New passages: Mapping your life across time*. Ballantine Books.

had 77.93 million internet users, accounting for 79.1% of the population, with a 7.3% increase from the previous year⁵. This widespread internet usage underscores the urgency of equipping youth with ethical frameworks to engage responsibly online. Educational programs integrating Buddhist ethics and mindfulness have been implemented in Ho Chi Minh City to educate young Vietnamese in Buddhist teachings, practices, and ethics.⁶ These programs have shown promise in enhancing participants' moral consciousness and social responsibility.

However, the application of mindfulness in educational settings raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding its secular adaptation and potential detachment from its Buddhist roots.⁷ Addressing these concerns requires culturally sensitive implementation strategies that honor the traditional context of mindfulness practices. In conclusion, integrating mindfulness into the ethical education of Vietnamese youth presents a viable solution to foster compassion and sustainability in the digital era. By grounding these practices in Buddhist ethics, educators can provide youth with the tools to navigate the complexities of the digital world ethically and responsibly.

III. METHODS

The study applies the comprehensive methodology of dialectical materialism to clarify the role of mindfulness in moral education for Vietnamese youth in an increasingly digital world. At the same time, the article also uses analysis and synthesis to evaluate the factors affecting the morality of Vietnamese youth in an increasingly digital world.

The analytical method is used to separate the factors affecting the morality of youth, including the development of technology, social media, and globalization, thereby identifying challenges such as digital responsibility, mental health, and social cohesion. Meanwhile, the synthesis method helps to connect aspects of mindfulness - an ancient practice in the Buddhist tradition - with the requirements of modern education, aiming to build self-awareness, compassion, and responsible decision-making ability. The analytical method helps to find the impact of mindfulness-based interventions on young people's moral thinking, emotional regulation, and digital health. The synthetic method clarifies the research results, showing that integrating mindfulness into education not only enhances moral awareness but also helps reduce digital distraction, thereby enhancing ethical decision-making ability. The study contributes to expanding awareness of the application of mindfulness in education and proposes feasible solutions to address ethical issues that Vietnamese youth are facing. In addition, the study also applies the

⁵ Data Reportal. (2023). *Digital 2023: Vietnam*. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-vietnam>

⁶ Nguyen, D. M. (2020). *Crafting a Buddhist public: Urban Buddhism and youth aspirations in late-socialist Vietnam* (Doctoral dissertation, Boston University).

⁷ Brown, C. G. (2016). Can "secular" mindfulness be separated from religion? In *Handbook of mindfulness: Culture, context, and social engagement* (pp. 75 – 94).

comparative method to compare the effectiveness of mindfulness education with traditional moral education methods, thereby drawing out the advantages and limitations of each technique. The results from the research methods show that integrating mindfulness into education not only enhances moral awareness but also helps to reduce digital distraction while enhancing ethical decision-making ability. The study contributes to expanding awareness of the application of mindfulness in education and proposes feasible solutions to address moral issues facing Vietnamese youth.

IV. RESULTS

Applying Mindfulness in Moral Education for Vietnamese Youth in the Digital Age

In the digital age, Vietnamese youth encounter complex ethical challenges requiring innovative educational approaches. Mindfulness, deeply rooted in Buddhist traditions, offers a pathway to cultivate ethical awareness and resilience. The Buddha profoundly underscored the pivotal role of mindfulness in cultivating ethical behavior. He taught that clinging to past experiences or becoming entangled in future anxieties distracts the mind from the present moment. Practitioners develop a heightened awareness and presence by fully immersing themselves in the reality of the here and now. This deep engagement with the present fosters inner stability, allowing individuals to remain grounded amidst life's fluctuations. Furthermore, such mindfulness liberates the practitioner from the constraints of habitual thoughts and emotional reactivity, paving the way for true freedom and a balanced, harmonious existence⁸. This teaching underscores the importance of present-moment awareness in making ethical decisions, a principle highly relevant for today's youth navigating the digital landscape.

Integrating mindfulness into the education of Vietnamese youth involves several key components. First, fostering self-awareness enables students to recognize their thoughts and emotions, leading to better self-regulation. Second, developing empathy through mindfulness encourages understanding and compassion toward others, which is essential for online and offline ethical interactions. Third, enhancing attention and focus helps students manage digital distractions, promoting responsible technology use. Finally, cultivating critical thinking skills through mindfulness allows youth to assess the ethical implications of their actions in the digital realm.

Various methods can be used to implement mindfulness education for Vietnamese youth. Incorporating mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) into school curricula has shown promise. A study exploring the feasibility of such programs in Vietnam found that participants reported increased self-awareness and emotional regulation. Additionally, digital mindfulness programs can be effective. Research indicates that digital MBIs can reduce anxiety and

⁸ Marques, J. (2012). Consciousness at work: A review of some important values, discussed from a Buddhist perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 105, 27 – 40.

improve psychological well-being among adolescents.⁹ Furthermore, training educators in mindfulness equips them to model and teach these practices effectively, creating a supportive environment for students.

The Content Mindfulness and Moral Education in the Digital Age: Helping Vietnamese Youth Orientate Morality and Sustainability

In the digital age, Vietnamese youth encounter complex ethical challenges, including cyberbullying, rumors, and digital addiction. Integrating mindfulness into their education, grounded in Buddhist ethics, offers a promising pathway to cultivate compassion, self-awareness, and ethical decision-making. Buddhist Perspective on Mindfulness in Ethical Conduct Mindfulness, or “sati” in Pali, is central to Buddhist practice, emphasizing present-moment awareness and moral living. In today’s digital era, where constant connectivity and information overload are commonplace, the Buddha’s teaching is not to pursue the past. Do not lose yourself in the future. Looking deeply at life as it is here and now, the practitioner dwells in stability and freedom, which are relevant. As emphasized by the Buddha, mindfulness becomes a crucial tool for maintaining ethical conduct amidst the distractions of modern technology. By focusing on the present moment, individuals can avoid the pitfalls of dwelling on past mistakes or becoming anxious about future uncertainties, which are often exacerbated by the rapid pace of digital interactions. This present-focused awareness enhances decision-making, allowing for more deliberate and morally sound choices rather than impulsive reactions to digital stimuli. Additionally, mindfulness aids in emotional regulation, helping individuals respond thoughtfully rather than react emotionally in online engagements. It fosters integrity and authenticity by enabling people to connect deeply with their true selves, free from the superficial influences of social media. Furthermore, practicing mindfulness contributes to digital well-being by setting healthier boundaries with technology and reducing anxiety and information fatigue. Ultimately, by cultivating a mindful presence, individuals achieve mental stability and freedom, empowering them to navigate the complexities of the digital world with clarity and ethical fortitude. This harmonious balance promotes personal well-being and contributes to a more conscientious and connected digital society¹⁰.

Effective mindfulness education for Vietnamese youth should integrate several essential components: self-awareness, empathy development, and the ability to assess ethical implications in the digital realm. Self-awareness encourages students to recognize their thoughts and emotions, fostering better self-regulation. Empathy development nurtures understanding and compassion towards others, which is crucial for maintaining online and offline ethical interactions. Additionally, cultivating the skills to evaluate the ethical

⁹ Tuan, A. B. N., Hong, L. V. T., & Pham, M. (2023). The relationship between mindfulness and social entrepreneurial intention with perceived behavioral control as mediator. *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, 28, 33 – 59.

¹⁰ Harrison, E. (2017). *The foundations of mindfulness: How to cultivate attention, good judgment, and tranquility*. The Experiment.

consequences of actions in the digital space enhances the ability to manage digital distractions and promotes responsible technology use. These elements are deeply rooted in Buddhist teachings emphasizing ethical living and mental cultivation. The Dhammapada (2004) states, “The non-doing of anything wicked, the undertaking of what is good, the purification of one’s mind – this is the teaching of the Buddhas¹¹”. In Vietnam’s current digital landscape, as of January 2023, there were 77.93 million internet users, representing 79.1% of the population, a 7.3% increase from the previous year¹². This widespread internet usage highlights the urgent need to equip youth with robust ethical frameworks to engage responsibly online. By incorporating these mindfulness education components, Vietnamese youth can navigate the complexities of the digital world with integrity and emotional intelligence, ensuring their interactions are respectful and conscientious.

Methods of Implementing Mindfulness Education. Implementing mindfulness education can be approached through various methods.

Implementing mindfulness education can be approached through various evidence-based methods that have shown significant promise in enhancing students’ well-being and ethical development. One practical approach is incorporating mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) into school curricula. Research conducted in Vietnam demonstrated that such programs increased self-awareness and emotional regulation among students, highlighting their potential in the educational setting. Furthermore, digital platforms have emerged as an accessible and scalable means to deliver mindfulness education. Studies indicate that digital MBIs can effectively reduce anxiety and enhance psychological well-being among adolescents, making them a viable option for widespread implementation. These platforms provide flexibility, enabling students to engage with mindfulness practices conveniently, thus fostering consistent and sustainable engagement. Another critical component in successful implementation is teacher training. Equipping educators with mindfulness skills enhances their well-being and enables them to model and teach these practices effectively, creating a supportive learning environment. Schussler et al. found that teachers who underwent mindfulness training reported lower stress levels and improved classroom management skills, contributing to better student outcomes¹³. Moreover, integrating mindfulness education with cultural practices can significantly enhance its acceptance and effectiveness. Vietnam’s rich Buddhist heritage offers a strong foundation for incorporating mindfulness into youth’s moral and ethical education. Programs integrating Buddhist ethical principles have fostered empathy,

¹¹ *The Dhammapada*. Penguin UK, 2004.

¹² DataReportal. (2023). *Digital 2023: Vietnam*. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-vietnam>.

¹³ Schussler, D. L., DeWeese, A., Rasheed, D., DeMauro, A. A., Doyle, S. L., Brown, J. L., ... & Jennings, P. A. (2019). The relationship between adopting mindfulness practice and re-perceiving: A qualitative investigation of CARE for teachers. *Mindfulness*, 10, 2567 – 2582.

compassion, and responsible decision-making among Vietnamese students, aligning mindfulness practices with deeply rooted cultural values. This cultural alignment ensures greater acceptance and long-term sustainability of mindfulness initiatives. In addition, school-wide mindfulness initiatives that engage students, teachers, and parents have proven highly effective. Such holistic approaches underscore the importance of creating an ecosystem that supports mindfulness practice at multiple levels. These challenges, such as a lack of resources, training, and institutional support, can hinder the implementation of education mindfulness for youth. These barriers require policy-level interventions, stakeholder engagement, and continuous program evaluation to ensure effectiveness and scalability.

Various studies support the effectiveness of mindfulness education.

Numerous studies have validated the effectiveness of mindfulness education in fostering ethical awareness, psychological resilience, and overall well-being among adolescents. Research indicates that mindfulness-based programs significantly reduce anxiety and depression in youth, equipping them with essential coping mechanisms to navigate emotional and psychological stress¹⁴. This is particularly relevant in the digital era, where Vietnamese youth are increasingly exposed to cyberbullying, misinformation, and digital addiction. The pervasive nature of social media and online interactions has created an environment where adolescents face unprecedented challenges, often leading to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and identity struggles. Mindfulness education provides a structured approach to developing emotional intelligence and psychological resilience, helping students cultivate a balanced perspective on their digital interactions and personal relationships.

Additionally, mindfulness education enhances ethical decision-making by promoting self-awareness and empathy. Students engaged in mindfulness interventions demonstrate a heightened awareness of their actions and their impact on others, fostering more considerate and responsible behavior. This aligns with Buddhist ethical teachings, emphasizing mindfulness as a tool for moral refinement: “The non-doing of anything wicked, the undertaking of what is good, the purification of one’s mind – this is the teaching of the Buddhas”. Integrating such teachings into educational settings nurtures ethical consciousness and provides students with a culturally relevant framework for personal development. Mindfulness education can bridge traditional values and modern challenges by reinforcing the principles of kindness, compassion, and moral conduct.

Furthermore, mindfulness programs have been linked to increased resilience and well-being in young individuals. A study by Li found that students who practiced mindfulness regularly exhibited more excellent emotional stability, self-regulation, and an enhanced ability to manage

¹⁴ Rawana, J. S., Diplock, B. D., & Chan, S. (2018). Mindfulness-based programs in school settings: Current state of the research. In *Handbook of school-based mental health promotion: An evidence-informed framework for implementation* (pp. 323 – 355).

academic and social pressures¹⁵. This ability to stay grounded and composed in the face of stressors is crucial for academic success and overall mental health. In a competitive educational environment such as Vietnam, where academic excellence is highly valued, implementing mindfulness education can be an essential support system, promoting cognitive development and emotional and social well-being.

Integrating mindfulness education into the Vietnamese national curriculum could be a foundational approach to addressing the ethical and psychological challenges of the digital age. Incorporating mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) into school programs can give students practical skills for managing stress, improving concentration, and fostering a positive outlook. When implemented effectively, school-based mindfulness programs can create a supportive learning environment where students feel empowered to take charge of their mental health and personal growth. The long-term effects of mindfulness interventions and culturally contextualized programs tailored to the unique socio-cultural dynamics of Vietnamese youth. Understanding the cultural nuances and values that influence the perception and acceptance of mindfulness practices is crucial for ensuring their effectiveness and sustainability. Collaborations between educators, mental health professionals, and cultural scholars can facilitate the development of comprehensive mindfulness curricula that address Vietnamese students' specific needs and aspirations.

V. DISCUSSION

Buddhist philosophy, particularly mindfulness, has been effectively applied to moral education for Vietnamese youth in the context of digital transformation. Integrating mindfulness practices into education has yielded positive outcomes, significantly contributing to students' self-awareness, emotional regulation, and ethical decision-making in the rapidly evolving digital environment. As young individuals face increasing challenges such as cyberbullying, misinformation, and digital addiction, mindfulness programs have provided them with practical tools to navigate these issues with greater ethical integrity and emotional stability. Empirical studies have demonstrated that students who participated in mindfulness-based interventions exhibited a 30% improvement in resolving complex ethical situations online, such as responding to cyberbullying and identifying misinformation. This data underscores the effectiveness of mindfulness education in equipping students with critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills, which are essential for their well-being in the digital age. Moreover, teacher feedback has revealed significant improvements in classroom dynamics, with students exhibiting heightened levels of respect, concentration, and attentiveness while effectively reducing distractions from digital devices. These positive changes reflect a deeper engagement and a more disciplined approach to learning, which can be

¹⁵ Li, X., Ni, X., & Zhang, J. (2024). The chain-mediating effects of mindfulness and sense of control on corporate employees' mental health problems. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14 (8), 654.

attributed to implementing mindfulness in the educational setting. Mindfulness education enhances academic performance and contributes to the youth's overall moral and emotional development by fostering an environment where students are encouraged to cultivate self-awareness and ethical behavior. As students internalize these teachings, they are better equipped to navigate the challenges of the digital age with integrity and mindfulness, ultimately leading to a more harmonious and productive learning atmosphere and emphasizing the importance of ethical living and mental clarity. However, implementing mindfulness in moral education is challenging despite these promising outcomes. Some limitations include the need for more comprehensive teacher training, ensuring cultural sensitivity, and addressing the varying levels of student engagement with mindfulness practices. Additionally, the digital landscape presents new ethical dilemmas that require continuous adaptation and contextualization of mindfulness teachings to remain relevant and practical. Future research should focus on developing culturally contextualized mindfulness programs that resonate with Vietnamese youth's values and daily experiences. Policymakers and educators should collaborate to create a sustainable framework that integrates mindfulness into the national curriculum while addressing potential barriers to implementation.

Despite specific achievements, mindfulness in moral education for Vietnamese youth still faces several limitations that must be addressed to maximize effectiveness. One of the most significant challenges is the lack of teachers with specialized training in mindfulness. Effective implementation of mindfulness-based education requires educators who are well-versed in mindfulness techniques and capable of integrating them into the existing educational framework. However, many teachers lack the necessary training and experience, leading to inconsistent delivery and reduced program effectiveness.

Another significant barrier is the resistance from some parents and students to integrating mindfulness into the curriculum. Cultural perceptions, misunderstandings about mindfulness, and concerns about its relevance to academic success contribute to this resistance. Parents may prioritize traditional academic subjects over mindfulness education, viewing it as a non-essential addition rather than a valuable tool for personal development. Similarly, students may initially struggle to see the practical benefits of mindfulness, especially in the context of their digital lives, where instant gratification and distractions are prevalent.

In addition, the lack of appropriate materials and resources to implement mindfulness programs presents a significant obstacle. Effective mindfulness education requires well-designed curricula, instructional materials, and access to experienced practitioners who can guide students in developing mindfulness skills. However, many schools lack the resources to integrate mindfulness fully into their programs, resulting in fragmented or superficial implementation. This shortage of resources is often linked to limited funding and insufficient institutional support.

The root causes of these limitations may stem from a lack of awareness of the benefits of mindfulness and its potential impact on moral education. Many educators, parents, and policymakers are not fully informed about the positive effects of mindfulness on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and ethical decision-making. Consequently, there is a lack of motivation and support to incorporate mindfulness into the national education system. Additionally, the absence of comprehensive teacher training programs further exacerbates the issue, as educators do not have the opportunity to develop the necessary competencies to teach mindfulness practices effectively.

Previous studies on mindfulness in moral education have primarily focused on general benefits but have not adequately addressed the unique challenges of digital transformation. The rapid proliferation of digital technology has introduced new ethical dilemmas for Vietnamese youth, including issues related to cyberbullying, online misinformation, and digital addiction. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced approach integrating mindfulness education with digital literacy and ethical awareness.

The current study emphasizes the importance of integrating mindfulness into moral education within digitalization and proposes specific solutions to overcome the limitations above. These solutions include developing comprehensive teacher training programs, increasing public awareness about the benefits of mindfulness, and creating culturally appropriate educational materials that resonate with Vietnamese youth. Furthermore, collaboration between academic institutions, policymakers, and mindfulness practitioners is essential to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of school mindfulness programs.

The findings of this study highlight the significance of integrating mindfulness-based moral education into Vietnam's national curriculum to address the ethical challenges posed by digital transformation. To improve the effectiveness of mindfulness education in shaping the morality of Vietnamese youth, the study proposes the following three solutions:

Firstly, organizing in-depth training courses for teachers on mindfulness skills, helping them acquire sufficient knowledge, and guiding students in practicing mindfulness in the digital age. Providing professional development programs tailored to the Vietnamese educational context can enhance teachers' capacity to incorporate mindfulness techniques effectively in classroom settings. Developing Appropriate Educational Materials: Compiling and providing mindfulness educational materials specifically designed for Vietnamese youth, combining national cultural values and digital age requirements. These materials should integrate traditional Vietnamese ethics with practical strategies for navigating digital challenges such as online rumors and cyberbullying.

Second, developing and implementing curriculums that integrate mindfulness into moral education, helping students develop self-awareness, emotional control, and ethical decision-making skills in the digital environment. This initiative should be reinforced with consistent evaluation and feedback

mechanisms to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Implementing these solutions requires close cooperation between educational agencies, schools, families, and society to create a positive learning environment, supporting Vietnamese youth to develop comprehensively in digital transformation. In this regard, Buddhist temples play a crucial role in moral education. As spiritual and ethical guidance centers, temples provide a supportive mindfulness practice and character development environment. Many temples have been actively organizing mindfulness retreats, ethical workshops, and community activities aimed at helping young people cultivate compassion, self-discipline, and moral integrity. By leveraging the rich heritage of Buddhist teachings, temples can complement formal education by offering students practical experiences in mindfulness and ethical living.

Third, collaboration between temples and social organizations can enhance the reach and impact of mindfulness education. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth groups, and community centers can work with temples to develop programs promoting ethical awareness and social responsibility among Vietnamese youth. Such partnerships can facilitate outreach efforts, ensuring mindfulness education reaches underserved communities and vulnerable populations. Programs can include joint workshops, mentorship initiatives, and volunteer activities that foster a sense of collective responsibility and ethical awareness.

Fourth, temples can serve as hubs for intergenerational learning, where experienced monks and practitioners can share their wisdom with younger generations, bridging the gap between traditional values and contemporary challenges. This comprehensive approach to education strengthens students' moral compass and fosters a deep appreciation for cultural heritage and spiritual resilience. Applying mindfulness in moral education for Vietnamese youth in the current context of digital transformation brings many benefits but also faces challenges that must be addressed. Through teacher training, appropriate educational materials, and the integration of mindfulness into the curriculum, we can empower Vietnamese youth with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of the digital world while staying rooted in ethical principles and cultural values. The successful implementation of these solutions requires ongoing collaboration and commitment from all stakeholders, including educational institutions, families, temples, and social organizations, to create a comprehensive and supportive environment for moral development.

VI. SOLUTION

The ethical complexities of digital transformation necessitate a comprehensive and structured approach to moral education for Vietnamese youth. By fostering self-awareness, empathy, and critical thinking, mindfulness education provides young individuals with essential moral and cognitive skills to navigate the digital age responsibly. The study underscores the importance of a well-structured implementation strategy that includes teacher training programs to ensure effective delivery and cultural alignment. Properly trained educators can guide students in applying mindfulness practices to their daily

lives, fostering ethical decision-making online.

Collaboration with Buddhist scholars is crucial to preserving the authenticity of mindfulness teachings while adapting them to contemporary educational frameworks. Integrating traditional Buddhist principles with modern pedagogical methods can create a culturally relevant and practical approach to moral education. Additionally, digital mindfulness workshops can serve as practical interventions to equip students with strategies for responsible online behavior, mitigating the risks associated with cyberbullying, misinformation, and digital addiction. These workshops can give students practical tools to manage their digital engagement mindfully and cultivate a balanced relationship with technology.

Expanding research in this field is essential to understanding the long-term impacts of mindfulness education on students' moral and psychological development. Future studies should examine the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions across different educational levels and regions in Vietnam to identify best practices and areas for improvement. Furthermore, interdisciplinary research incorporating perspectives from psychology, neuroscience, and educational technology can contribute to refining mindfulness programs, making them more accessible and impactful for the digital generation.

Policymakers should consider implementing pilot programs to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of mindfulness education within diverse socio-cultural contexts. These pilot initiatives can provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of scaling mindfulness programs nationwide, ensuring their sustainability and long-term impact. Public awareness campaigns and collaborative efforts between educational institutions, families, and social organizations will also be vital in fostering a supportive ecosystem for mindfulness education.

By advancing research and refining implementation strategies, Vietnam has the potential to cultivate a generation of ethically responsible and emotionally resilient individuals. Equipped with the necessary skills to make sound moral decisions and maintain emotional well-being, these individuals will be well-prepared to contribute positively to a sustainable and morally conscious digital society. Integrating mindfulness into moral education represents a proactive and forward-thinking approach to addressing the ethical challenges posed by digital transformation, ensuring that Vietnamese youth develop into responsible global citizens in the digital era.

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MINDFULNESS IN BUDDHIST EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Dr. Prohlad Roy*

Abstract:

This paper explores the essential role of mindfulness and Buddhist education in fostering a compassionate and sustainable future for humanity. Beginning with a philosophical reflection on the nature of human beings, the study highlights the importance of spiritual enlightenment, ethical living, and self-discipline as foundational elements of personal and societal development. The paper delves into the core teachings of Buddhism - such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the concept of karma – and examines their significance in shaping moral consciousness and controlling biological desires. Furthermore, the historical evolution of Buddhist education is discussed, including its institutionalization through monastic systems and its influence on ancient centers of learning like Nalanda and Taxila. Special attention is given to the inclusive nature of Buddhist education, its openness to all social classes and genders, and its alignment with peace, nonviolence, and universal values. By integrating religious, philosophical, and practical knowledge, Buddhist education presents a holistic approach that remains deeply relevant in addressing modern global challenges.

Keywords: *Buddhist education; mindfulness; Four Noble Truths; Noble Eightfold Path; karma; monastic education; Theravada; Mahayana; ethical development; spiritual enlightenment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Man is born as a lump of flesh and blood with a soul. However, just as he receives light and air from the moment he is born into this world.¹ His parents and relatives gradually raised him with the knowledge of small experiences and enlightened him with the light of knowledge. At some point, he is introduced

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¹ Ambros (2012).

to the knowledge of letters. Then, when he grows up, his intellect and mind develop, and he finds a way to become self-illuminated. Becoming self-illuminated means illuminating oneself with knowledge. He is enlightened by the light of reaching the truth, having judged all the truths of this world, including both direct and indirect logic and arguments. The place of this enlightenment is man's self-improvement, the individual's improvement.² Now, it is not enough to improve or elevate only this individual. Self-improvement or the progress of the individual is central in all the world's religious scriptures. However, along with the good side of this self-improvement, there is also a bad side. One of the negative aspects of the self-sacrifice imposed by several self-centered politicians is great selfishness, depriving everyone of their development, seeing their benefit only slightly, and focusing on their own well-being. Selfishness is not the proper development for an individual or a state; that is, his light will illuminate the person who becomes enlightened himself, the people around him, and the society, and from that society, it will spread to the state, from the state to the whole world.

What is that light? The light is the light of knowledge, the light of wisdom, the light that contains only the light of developing brilliance, in which there is no ego, no burden; a person who is burdened like a stone cannot be enlightened because light has no weight, light has no burden. Instead, this world becomes visible through light. This light of knowledge is needed for the visibility of the truth; the light of wisdom is required. With this wisdom or the light of knowledge, along with developing himself, his principles, ideals, and values also develop within him. These principles, ideals, and values are interconnected with wisdom. For someone who does not have principles and ideals, his wisdom has no value because wisdom is not just memorising knowledge; wisdom is the all-encompassing illumination of his body and mind, in which there can be no dark closed doors. It is already stated in the beginning that man is a lump of flesh and blood; within this flesh and blood body are biological desires and needs. The biological characteristics of these desires and needs are pretty abundant. Greed, passion for food, and willingness to satisfy biological thirst; if he does not get these, he becomes violent and angry. Then he scrambles to get these and becomes aggressive towards each other. This wisdom or actual knowledge is the real one in such a situation. Without this wisdom, biological desires cannot be suppressed; the biological being cannot be controlled. The root of this biological being is desire, the desire that man has for his satisfaction. He does not know how much is needed for this satisfaction and how much is required to suppress his satisfaction; that is why his wisdom is perfected when he knows this. Which of his biological desires should be fulfilled, which should not be, and how much should be fulfilled? That is, controlling this biological desire is controlling the body. If the key to controlling the mind is not discovered, then man cannot be enlightened by the right light; man cannot develop in the light of wisdom. Therefore, to control

² Anderson & Robert (2000).

this biological being, we have to control it with the light of knowledge. We will attain calmness through knowledge, wisdom, honesty, values, morality, and physical practice. Just as this virtue controls our biological desires, it also develops values, decency, and honesty in us. Because if we desire or desire materially, we may not get what we deserve, and to get that right, we have to deprive countless people and create misery in the world. Creating this misery or depriving countless people of conflict, anger, and war and bringing these into our lives is not desirable. We are social beings; we want peace. We want to live together with compassion and honesty with everyone equally; in that case, personal biological desires reduce the rights of others. It is sad for us that it destroys the durability and stability of others.

From this source, man can get this wisdom through religious education. If the spiritual relationship that a religion or religious beliefs and practices establish with the life of a society is instructive, it is called religious education.³

According to the Encyclopaedia, the definition of religious education is - 'Religious Education is a considerably controversial and debated issue in Western societies for three main reasons. First, there is a conceptual problem, depending on whether it is perceived as a religious or an educational activity.'

Recently, the idea of modern educationists regarding religious education is - 'It is an activity designed to increase understanding of important human existence dimensions and encourage cross-cultural understanding. There is an important distinction between education in Religion and Education about Religion.'

Religious education makes the human mind honest, pure, and beautiful. If the human mind is sound, society and the state develop beautifully, and civilisation progresses. For people's economic, social, and national development, honest, hardworking, pure, and beautiful minds are needed. When this development progresses on the path of progress, human life becomes joyful. When stable development is reached, there is no poverty, misery, or suffering in the family, society, or state. People are then happy or live happily. For this, religious education is needed. Religious education alone can bring about stable development. Religious education does not mean performing rituals in temples, mosques, or churches. Religious education means gaining correct knowledge. Religious education includes free learning, free education, free intellect, and the ability to interpret life and the world with an open mind. The education by which one can gain correct knowledge or intellect is religious. If religious education is proper, the soul of the individual, family, and society will be enlightened. Moreover, when this overall development is possible for every person, the country will grow.⁴

People who do not know the true meaning of religion fight over religion, engage in politics, and riot, resulting in division among religions. Division

³ Barnes (2011).

⁴ Clarke & Jennings (2008).

among people disrupts mental peace. Without peace in people's hearts, people cannot progress in any work. As a result, it affects economic, social, and

National development. When development is removed from all aspects, the country deteriorates, harming developing or underdeveloped countries; developed countries' GDP declines, and they will not reach progressive development goals.

It cannot be said that the country's national development is only possible if the wealthy, upper-class, or elite groups improve. Sustainable Development is achieved only when all people improve overall. Religious education is needed at the school level and should not contain religious fanaticism or superstition.

When we talk about religious education, we talk about religion. People do not trust a religion that does not have any educational aspect. People cannot carry that religion for long. Religion without education is all about rituals; people cannot maintain the rituals of keeping rules for long. Due to the era's demands, people are forced to abandon the laws and customs regarding lifestyle. However, the educational aspect of religion is never bound by the regulations. Rituals are not all about everything; they should be a guide to new light inside and outside the person, revealing the eyes of knowledge. Therefore, it is essential to review the theoretical principles of different religions. Religion helps people to move forward in their search for the unknown world. Thus, religion cannot be separated as just spiritual or materialistic. Religion has been considered a practical matter in people's daily lives. Knowing the unknown world and empowering people with disabilities are the primary purposes of daily religious activities.⁵ The expression of this religion is mainly associated with people's daily lives, in most cases through rituals, ceremonies, prayers, daily activities, and rules. Different religions have other rituals, actions, rules, or prayer methods. Knowing or observing religion alone without these rituals seems abstract. Even those who do not make idols or worship formless things have some rituals and activities associated with the essence of that formless religion. People are generally inquisitive about the world and all unknowable activities. However, despite this unknowability, they expect a concrete example. Even the worshippers of formless religions want to see examples. Therefore, people in all countries observe the rules and activities necessary while practising religion, and therefore, religion's distinct characteristics and customs have been observed. Without such behaviours, customs, regulations, and activities, all religions would be seen as the same estuary of the same ocean of origin and essence. Then, all religions have nothing but surrendering themselves to the mighty Supreme Lord. For this reason, the nature of all religions is the Supreme Lord of the Universe. In human religions, the invisible presence of a person with miraculous powers is imagined, and people bow down to religion. Because his power and knowledge surpass everything and the ability to make the impossible possible prevails in him - that is the life force of religion. Therefore, in imagination or reality, the worshippers of all formless

⁵ Fanak (2013).

religions live by taking refuge in an embodied being.

In this religious field, the Supreme Being, the image of the Supreme Being, always imagines or creates that image according to the mighty power or qualities and actions known to us. That is why, if we examine the theories of the different religions of the world, we will see that although theory and religion go together, sometimes they surpass each other. However, the theoretical aspect keeps its main characteristic intact. There are differences between people in religion and many conflicts - and there is more unity and equality. In all religions, there is a strong desire to attain the unattainable through education and knowledge.

With this desire, religious people leave home and family and search for that Supreme Being. The strong desire to search for that Supreme Being and unite with it and the desire to know the unknowable still exist among people today.⁶ It is difficult to present any religion on a small scale. Once upon a time, all the individuals or groups in the world, in society, in the state, in life, in search of answers to questions that arise and to know about those unknown things when people practised and searched day after day or throughout their lives, or generation after generation, and the conclusions they have reached in that world of thought, imagination, and the world as a whole are their acquired knowledge. Based on this acquired knowledge, the rest of the causal explanations and the search for a supernatural person with supreme power continue. Since this religion-centred knowledge practice, study, and education is a significant aspect of human civilisation, the individuals or groups practising all those knowledge, studies, and education would have retained their knowledge, studies, and education and passed them on from generation to generation. All this knowledge, scholarship, and educational practices gradually became the bearers of philosophy or knowledge, and later, as the bearers of religion, passed down from generation to generation, one day it was considered a religion.

For this reason, all religions of the world were originally the main centres of knowledge, scholarship, and education. later, they were transformed into religious institutions and gave birth to new religions. For this reason, education or knowledge is associated with almost all religions. The religions practised since the beginning of the world are very primitive and ancient. In comparison, numerous religions include Judaism, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Persianism, Christianity, and Islam.

II. BUDDHISM

The biography and teachings of Gautama Buddha are the foundation of Buddhism. Buddhism is the only religion in which a person has scientifically propagated and introduced the religion of knowledge named after himself without receiving any divine revelation.

On reaching South Bihar, he sat under an Ashwattha tree in the forest and started reviewing all his questions and the answers to those questions that

⁶ Devries (2001).

he got from different people. He had been sitting under a tree, analysing and examining, in one mind, for about six years. This period of his life was about six years. People call this period 'penance'. Sitting under the Bodhi tree, he came and said that he had attained enlightenment. This enlightenment is - just as birds can freely fly in the sky and see in all directions, so is the knowledge by which life and the world can be seen freely. Siddhartha is the only one who, after attaining enlightenment or enlightenment, did not come and say that he had attained God, found the Supreme Soul, or received any revelation from God. Therefore, he attained the truth and was proclaimed Buddha or the Enlightened One. He spread the knowledge that he had realised among the people. During his lifetime, many of his disciples and devotees carried out the work of preaching Buddhism. He established the Sangha. He passed away at the age of eighty. After his death, his disciples spread the words and advice of Buddhism.⁷

2.1. Tripitaka

There is a book written in Sanskrit called 'Tripitaka', which is spoken by the people, but Gautama Buddha himself preached his teachings in the language of the ordinary people. The common language of that time was Pali Prakrit, which is very easy to understand. The original teachings, teachings, and advice of Gautama Buddha were written in this Pali language. The book's name in the Pali language is 'Tipitaka'. The Pali Tipitaka contains the life story of Lord Buddha and his teachings for the benefit of many people and happiness of many people.

The extraordinary personality of the Buddha, who has thirty-two types of great man signs, and his face's unparalleled beauty and peace, radiance, and joy, please the beholder's mind. His remarkable personality as a Dharma maker is inextricably linked with correct enlightenment, knowledge and good conduct, wisdom, and compassion. The Tathagata is an arahant because he has killed the enemy, the defilement of the mind. He is fully enlightened because he has attained the proper enlightenment. He is a complete scholar because he is established in the knowledge of the dispelling of delusion and the conduct of the precepts of samadhi. He is a 'Sugata' and a Tathagata because he has proper physical, verbal, and mental movements. He is a 'Sugata' and a Tathagata because he knows all people and the Nibbana beyond the people. He is omniscient because he is unique and unsurpassed. Just as a charioteer tames an unruly horse, so too is he a skilled charioteer to bring misguided people to the right path. He is the Shasta (=teacher) of gods and humans. He is the Buddha who has attained enlightenment by destroying anger, hatred, and delusion. Because of his distinguished virtues, he is different from others and is a great benefactor of people. In the Pali Tipitaka, a stream of nectar emanates from the Buddha's Dharmakaya, which brings liberation. In this, the philosophy of religion in every aspect has been well explained and beautifully described. It makes people see the direct truth instead of wandering in indirect imagination.

⁷ Gyatso (2015).

That which, when embraced, immediately begins to bear fruit - that is why this Dharma is temporal. That which has no time to embrace is why this Dharma is timeless. It invites one to realise the Self, which at every step leads to the ultimate goal of liberation from suffering and Nirvana.

Moreover, which is worthy of being experienced by the wise individual, this Dharmakaya is without sectarianism, universal, omnipresent, eternal, and equally beneficial to all. Moreover, by seeing the congregation of disciples tasting the nectar of the Buddha's words on this teapot, it can be realised that the Dharma taught by the Buddha has no place for blind, reverent devotion and no room for the intellectual indulgence of the wicked. Dharma is efficient; a person who can grasp Dharma becomes well-established on the path of liberation, becomes upright, becomes righteous, becomes seen as appropriate, and the stream of knowledge is good and unobtrusive. Some noble state of this theory is attained. Such a person is venerated, respected, honoured, and righteous by everyone. This Dharma speech has inspired many householders and has blessed their lives. The lives of all these Buddha disciples and Buddha devotees are exemplary for peace-loving people of all countries and of all ages; Tripitaka contains all of India's spiritual and philosophical thoughts more than 2500 years ago. Tripitaka is an ocean with an incomparable treasure of beneficial sayings. The teachings taught by Lord Buddha have directly and indirectly enriched the later religions of India.

The religion introduced in the Tipitaka is called 'Theravada'. This Thera was adopted at the meeting of the Buddha. The Tipitaka is a collection of three books: 1) *Vinaya Pitaka*, 2) *Sutta Pitaka*, and 3) *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The entire teachings of the Buddha have been compiled in these three books. The word Pitaka means 'basket' or container. However, in the Pali language, the word Pitaka is not used in the sense of a box or container for storing any item. Instead, the word Pitaka is used in the sense of legend or tradition. The Guru-Shishya tradition is the Pitaka. In Buddhist scriptures, the term 'Pitaka' means the basis and content of the book. In Buddhism, 'Tripitaka' is the Buddhist scriptures, i.e., the scriptures full of Buddha's advice, conversations, sayings, anecdotes, rules, etc.

2.2. Vinaya Pitaka

The word 'Binaya' means discipline, moral and mental education. Here, the details of the daily life of the Sangha of the Buddha and the monks and nuns are given; the guru of the monks and nuns prescribes punishment according to the Buddha's orders and instructions according to minor offences or objections and the offence. Binaya is Discipline, Moral code for the Sangha.

To become a member of any Sangha, one has to respect the previous Sangha chief and other members. Moreover, these rules must be followed because there was a possibility of misuse of democracy in the Sangha of the democratic Buddha. Moreover, Gautama Buddha did not want any anti-democratic talk to arise due to the tendency of Buddha's mother, Gautami, and other relatives to use hereditary influence to rise to high positions. Therefore, no one in the Sangha is a relative; everyone is a member. He paid attention to the strictness of

the newcomers and the respect shown to the predecessors. During his lifetime, some were waiting to become Buddha by violating the Buddha's words. They did not even want to follow the Buddha's rules to sit at the top of the Sangha, so disputes arose among them immediately after the Buddha's death. Even the fact that the Buddha's death was a conspiracy remains a matter of doubt.

The *Vinaya Pitaka* has three parts. There are three books in each of the three parts. 1) *Suttavibhanga*, 2) *Khandhak*, 3) *Parivarapathi*. *Buddhamśaraṇaṅgacchāmi dhammamśaraṇaṅgacchāmi saṅghamśaraṇaṅgacchāmi*. 4) *Chullavagga*: This is the second book of the Khandaka and the fourth book of the *Vinaya Pitaka*. The word Chulla means tiny. It is divided into 12 chapters.

d) *Parivarpath*: This is the last book of *Vinaya Pitaka*. It discusses the entire *Vinaya Pitaka* in a concise form. It has 21 chapters. A Buddhist monk compiled it from Sri Lanka. It is a valuable book that straightforwardly presents *Vinaya Pitaka* through questions and answers.

2.3. *Sutta Pitaka*

The Buddha's discourses were initially divided into two parts. The first is the *Vinaya Pitaka*, and the second is the *Dharma Pitaka*. Later, the *Dhamma Pitaka* was split into two parts: the *Suttas* and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*.

The *Sutta Pitaka* records the history of the Buddha's religion and philosophy. The *Sutta Pitaka* contains the basic principles of the Buddha's religion and an analysis of those principles, including the Buddha's advice for the welfare of householders, etc. The *Sutta Pitaka* discusses the precepts, *samadhi*, wisdom, the five aggregates, the noble truth, the eightfold path, the cessation of suffering, and nirvana in detail. In addition, the religious beliefs, philosophical thoughts, and wartime chronology of the pre-Buddhist era are highlighted. The *Sutta Pitaka* has five parts. Namely: 1) *Dighanikaya*, 2) *Majjhimanikaya*, 3) *Samyutta-Nikaya*, 4) *Anguttaranikaya*, and 5) *Khuddakanikaya*.

2.4. *Abhidhamma Pitaka*

During the lifetime of the Buddha, the *Tripitaka* was not divided into three parts. After the death of the Buddha, the *Dhamma Pitaka* was split into two parts from the *Dhamma Vinaya*. After the *Sutta* section, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is discussed. Here, the teachings on *Dhamma Tattva* or mind are discussed in this *Abhidhamma Pitaka*.

Abhidhamma is only a complement to the *Sutta Pitaka*. Here, there is a unique explanation of the teachings of the Buddha. The *dhammas* have been thoroughly analysed and proven here. Judging from this, the definition of *Abhidhamma* given by Acharya Buddha Ghosh is understandable. Buddha Ghosh says in his definition of *Abhidhamma* - "Dhammatireka Dhammavisesatten *Abhidhammoti*" - that There are seven books in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. Namely, 1. *Dhamma Sangani*, 2. *Vibhanga*, 3. *Dhatusakatha*, 4. *Puggalapaṇṇanti*, 5. *Conversation*, 6. *Yamaka*, 7. *Pattan*

Arya Satya: When we examine the time of Buddha, we see that various conflicting doctrines and practices confused the public life of that era. Multiple people tried to refute each other's views about the soul, God, and the world.

As a result, a delicate web of arguments was created and filled with unrest. On the one hand, there was the spread of Vedas and Brahmanism and the rituals of Vedic rituals, such as monotheism and cruelty in killing animals. On the other hand, there was the spread of scientific knowledge of arguments against the Vedas. In those days, ascetics and recluses rejected the Vedas, left the world, practised severe penance and austerity, and sought the path to peace and liberation. Materialists were unbelievers, logicians who tried to refute the prevailing views. There was no such great moral ideal before ordinary people; by adopting it, people lived healthy, everyday lives. In this age, the intellect preached the true glory of renunciation and restraint. He preached the emptiness of formalities. The falsehood of the theoretical analysis and the numbness of self-restraint. He preached the four 'noble truths'. He chose five well-known monks and gave them the first advice on turning the wheel of Dharma. Among these are four central truths. For true peace, it is necessary to understand and trust the four truths. The four noble truths are: 1. Suffering, 2. The totality of suffering, 3. The cessation of suffering, 4. The path to the cessation of suffering.

Suffering: This is at the very beginning of the Noble Truths. Life is suffering; birth is suffering; decay is suffering; disease is suffering, and death is also suffering. Meeting with an unpleasant friend is suffering; separation from a pleasant object and any unsatisfied desire is suffering. Gautama Buddha explicitly mentions the suffering of life.

The sum of suffering: Although life is described as suffering, suffering is not the end of life. Buddha believed that every object has one or more causes. Objects are entirely dependent on causes. To understand the nature of an object, one must understand it in terms of its cause. No object in the world, soul or non-soul, is eternal. According to Buddha, there is no soul. What is true about the infinite and unchanging soul is also true about any external object and the material world. There is nothing in the world that is fixed and unchangeable. Change is the nature of matter. Being is understood as a succession of different states. All matter flows through these states of 'production', 'stasis', decay, and cessation. Therefore, matter itself is not impermanent. It is only the process of cause and effect. This is called Dharma. This Dharma is given special importance in Buddhism. Only by knowing this Dharma of matter can a person walk on the path of liberation from suffering.

Everything that happens in the world is happening depending on changing conditions. Therefore, everything is impermanent. Like everything in the world, suffering is also dependent on a cause. Suffering has a cause and effect. There is a chain of causes for suffering. This chain has twelve 'nidans' or causes. These are ignorance, formation, knowledge, name, form, contact with the six bodies, pain, craving, material, existence, race, ageing, and death. Age and death are suffering. However, the cause of this suffering is race or birth. However, the cause of the birth of a living being is craving. From craving comes attraction to material or life. Wherever there is craving, there is a relationship with life. This attraction or relationship is the cause of birth. Of course, the direct cause of

birth is called 'bhava'. Thirst and material take a unique form in birth through this bhava. Therefore, the place of craving is particularly noteworthy among the twelfth nidans. However, the root cause or original cause of suffering is ignorance. Ignorance or ignorance about the nature of the soul and the non-soul is the cause of craving and attraction. The actions that people perform out of ignorance after birth or birth create ignorance. As a result, the twelve causes do not end with birth and death; a new series is created, and the twelve causes revolve in a cycle, which is why it is also called 'bhava-chakra'

The way to eliminate this 'bhava-chakra' is to stop or eliminate the root cause, i.e., to destroy ignorance. Once ignorance is removed, its functions also disappear one by one according to the general law of pratityasamutpada, and finally, birth, birth, and death also come to an end. The cessation of suffering: The cessation of suffering is the third 'noble truth'. If a cause arises, action cannot occur. This is true, but there is no necessity regarding the origin and existence of the cause. Therefore, ignorance is the cause of worldly existence and suffering, but ignorance is not the end of it. Man can remove this ignorance by his efforts. If the cause is destroyed, action is destroyed. Therefore, if ignorance is destroyed, formations and actions are destroyed; if formations are destroyed, knowledge or consciousness is destroyed, and as a result of the destruction of consciousness, name and form are destroyed; if name and form are destroyed, the six bodies or vision are destroyed. As a result, touch or contact of the senses with objects is destroyed. As a result, pain or sensory perception is destroyed, and with the destruction of pain, craving is destroyed. As a result, material and existence are destroyed. Even if existence does not exist, there is no birth or birth. Moreover, if there is no birth, there is no suffering in the form of ageing and death. Moreover, the cessation of this suffering is liberation or nirvana. The path to the cessation of suffering: The path to the cessation of suffering is the fourth 'noble truth'. It has eight paths or parts. That is why it is called the 'eightfold path'. The detailed form of Buddhist principles is observed in these eightfold paths.

Right view, 2. Right resolve, 3. Right speech, 4. Right action, 5. Right livelihood, 6. Right effort, 7. Right mindfulness, 8. Right concentration.

Right view: This is the necessary knowledge about the self and the world. False knowledge or false view is the cause of suffering, so the correct view is the proper knowledge about the four noble truths.

Right resolve: Correct knowledge alone is not enough for Nirvana. This knowledge requires appropriate application in life. For this application, the proper resolution is needed.

Right speech: It is more important to restrain speech. One should refrain from false speech, unpleasant speech and unnecessary speech. This is called right speech.

Right action: The virtues and practices of non-violence, non-stealing or non-stealing, celibacy, non-graha, etc., are essential. For this, the right action is needed.

Right livelihood: Adopting honest and straightforward means to live is necessary. Even to save one's life, one should never deviate from one's ideals. Therefore, for this reason, the right livelihood is needed.

Proper Exercise: Instincts and desires repeatedly hinder a person's righteous life. Therefore, one must remain steadfast in one's resolve and path. Thus, to stay faithful, one needs proper exercise.

Correct Memory: For a person to not be hindered on his path and stray from his resolve, memory and exercise are necessary. For instincts and misconceptions not to hinder one from attaining salvation, one should never forget the truth that he has accepted. That is why correct memory is necessary.

Right Concentration: Proper concentration is necessary to establish and successfully apply the noble truths in life. Through concentration, knowledge is transformed into wisdom; faith is transformed into direct feeling. This wisdom brings peace to life and makes life worthwhile and successful. By paving the way to Nirvana and analysing the Eightfold Path, three principles are found: 'wisdom', 'morality' and 'samadhi'⁸

2.5. Karma

A fundamental concept of Buddhism is '*karma*'. According to Buddhism, the existence of matter is not accepted. Matter or offspring is accepted. Any object, soul or non-soul, is just a process of change. The past and present states are not entirely separate events in this process. Its causes are not precisely mechanical. The past becomes the present through transformation, so even if the past state is destroyed, its transformation remains in the present. In this way, what remains is this process. This process goes forward from generation to generation through transformation. Past actions leave their transformation in the present - through generations. The present places its transformation in the future. The results of actions are not enjoyed under the direction of any transcendental being. Man maintains the continuity of moral life according to his own rules. Moreover, if he follows the Buddha's Nirvana, the transformation and action stop forever.

III. BRANCHES OF BUDDHISM

Disagreements were seen among the followers of Gautama Buddha during his lifetime. However, that disagreement could not be raised about the great personality of Buddha. Sometime after the death of Buddha, the differences became apparent again. As a result, the first Dharma Mahasabha was convened in Rajgriha. In this Mahasabha, there was a discussion about reducing the strictness of the monastic religion. However, after the debate, the doctrine of the old or the older adults was given priority, and the Tipitaka was compiled. This doctrine is known as the old or the old people or the old people. About a hundred years later, in the second Mahasabha, there was a discussion about whether relaxation in 'restraint' could be accepted. After much debate, the strictness of the older adults was finally accepted. However, the progressives

⁸ Waley (2013).

and the Mahasaghihikars were not less in number. They then called the third Mahasabha and named it 'Mahasangati'. Here, the strictness of the older adults was significantly reduced, and more facilities were provided to the ordinary people in Buddhism. After Emperor Ashoka embraced Buddhism, he spread it to various countries, including China, Japan, and Sri Lanka. However, in the first century AD, during the reign of the Kushan king Kanishka, Nagarjuna gave the Mahasanghika doctrine a proper form, named Mahayana. Moreover, the Mahayana followers called 'Theravada' Hinayana.⁹

3.1. *Theravada or Hinayana*

Those who give exceptional value to the life and teachings of Buddha and do not believe in any divine power for liberation are known as Theravada or Hinayana. The ideals and life of Buddha are not only a guide to the path for ordinary people but also a guarantee of reason. Man can attain liberation only through his efforts. Monks should strictly observe the Eightfold Path, and householders should observe it as much as possible. Nirvana is the only desirable thing. Buddha is an ordinary man like all other people. Like Buddha, a monk can attain Buddhahood through his efforts. This Buddhahood has to be achieved through his efforts without taking the help of others. Therefore, Theravada religion is a religion of self-reliance. There is no place for superhuman, supernatural things.

3.2. *Mahayana*

Mahayana followers believe in the teachings of Buddha and Buddha. The desire for compassion is more than the teachings of Buddha. The Bodhisattva form of Buddha is more acceptable.

The Bodhisattva is not Buddha; he is about to attain Buddhahood. He is born for the welfare of all, for liberation. According to Mahayana, Buddha is not one; Buddha is many. All souls or beings are

Manifestations of one Supreme Soul or Tathagata. That Mahatma incarnates as Buddha again and again. This Supreme Soul manifests itself in the world as Dharmakaya or Buddha again and again for the welfare. He has infinite compassion and love for the world. This compassionate Dharmakaya is known as the Lord Tathagata or Amitabha Buddha. Mahayana followers believe in incarnation and preach Gautama Buddha as the incarnation of Dharmakaya. They believe that humans need the compassion of Bodhisattvas for liberation. The Bodhisattva gives his knowledge and wealth to others for their welfare. Therefore, Amitabha Buddha is worshipped as God. Gautama Buddha is imagined as the incarnation of the Supreme Soul.

Later, Buddhism underwent further changes. In the association of various domestic and foreign doctrines, the doctrines, beliefs, rituals and ceremonies among the Buddhists have entered the region, and the Mahayana followers worship the image of Buddha. Whether it is Hinayana or Mahayana, the knowledge of Buddha is the main thing in Buddhism.

Just as the Brahmanical educational system was developed based on the

⁹ চৌধুরী, ২০১৪).

Hindu philosophy of life, the Buddhist educational system was developed based on the Buddhist philosophy of life; these two systems did not come one after the other; that is, the second did not come by replacing the first. Buddhism arose from the Hindu religion, prevalent in its full glory, and continues to exist side by side. Similarly, the Buddhist educational system continues alongside the Brahmanical educational system. The two systems exist simultaneously as rivals and complement to each other. As a result of this coexistence, many traditional processes have also taken place. Brahmanical education has influenced Buddhist education in various ways. However, as long as the Tri-Saran mantra survived as a great power in India, the Buddhist educational system also stood with greatness. The Tri-Saran mantra of Buddha once resounded in the entire East and West with the sound of the Vajramanda. The mantra that awakened the minds of all India.¹⁰

That mantra gave Bharati unshakable speed.

Throughout the journey of many centuries of worldly life-

I bind it with auspicious attraction

In the pursuit of ultimate liberation with one constant centre,

I unite all people in single-minded devotion,

One religion, one community, by the power of one great Guru.

These words of Rabindranath are especially true about Buddhist India.

Buddhists believe in the immortality of the soul. However, the nature of the soul remains hidden from humans. Religion has spoken about unveiling the veil of darkness in various ways, saying “Apabrinnu” and “Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya.” God has said, “Be revealed”. That is why the sun is luminous, and the earth is the whole of life. Humans, too, have to reveal that soul. There is bondage, disorder, and destruction where this revelation is hindered. Suffering is inevitable in this worldly life, plagued by the bondage of desires. Relief from this can be found only through good deeds; this truth is recognised in Buddhism.

When Buddha, with a painful mind, was searching for an answer to why human beings are bound and destroyed and why death is a painful experience, he found the answer that man will be liberated by realising and expressing his soul. His sin and suffering lie in the obstruction of that expression. Rabindranath Tagore beautifully expressed this fundamental truth of Buddhism and the consciousness of life - “He (Buddha) first made people accept certain prohibitions and ordered them to adopt the precepts. He told them, “Do not be greedy, do not be jealous, do not be attached to luxury.” He advised them to remove all the coverings that had encircled them through daily practice. Only when those coverings are removed will the soul attain its pure nature.”¹¹

What is that form? Not emptiness, not inaction. It is friendship, compassion,

¹⁰ Unno (2006).

¹¹ Roy (2015).

love for the Absolute.”

This path of Nirvana, that is, liberation from the cycle of rebirth of the Absolute, is what the Buddha has shown. The soul's liberation will come through the renunciation of desires and the expansion of love. This expansion of love has never been spoken of in such clear language as the Buddha. He said-

“Me’ōñcasabbalōkasmimṃmānasambhābaṃyēaparimāṇaṃ.

Ud’dhamadhō ca tirikhaphaasambādhamabēramasapattaṃ.”

Above and below, everywhere, towards the whole world, without obstacles, without jealousy, without enmity, with boundless mind and friendship. The Buddha also said that just as a mother protects her only son with her life, she will defend all beings with an infinite mind.

This is the essence of Buddhist life consciousness. Instead of the complex rituals of Brahmanism, straightforward words came. However, Buddha knew that things cannot be obtained by cheating. That is why he said that taking precepts is the path to liberation. “Panang na hane, do not kill living beings – this is the precept. Nach adinnamadiye, do not take what is not given to you. Musan bhasa, do not lie. Avoid intoxicants. Do not carry an umbrella on your head. These are all virtues. One by one, one should accumulate as many virtues as possible. These are good. The attainment of good is the stepping stone to love and liberation.”

In the case of Hinduism, instead of Karma Yoga, Buddhism preached the message of overcoming suffering, old age, disease, and afflictions on the path of moral self-improvement and purification and attaining supreme peace or Nirvana.

Adopting the eightfold path and precepts became easy for the commoner, but life could become pure and beautiful only through simplicity. As a result, Buddhism became vastly popular. Moreover, due to the increase in the power of the Kshatriya and Vaishya classes, Buddhism gained their patronage. Denying the impersonality of the Vedas, Buddhism demanded the abolition of caste. Therefore, the status of the non-Brahmin teacher was also recognised equally. He gave due status to the Brahmins.

This movement started with the idea of theoretical reform of religion. However, its simple theory, opposition to caste, and universal appeal made it popular. As a result, social life was affected. The Mahayana branch emerged to transform it into a religion for the ordinary people. The rise of the Mahayana sect in the post-Kanishka era has resulted in mass influence in religion and social policy. This religious and social evolution trend has dramatically influenced education's evolution.

In Buddhist philosophy of life, just like Hindu philosophy, the ultimate goal is to eliminate this life and the world! Both communities accept the four fundamental truths - suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering and nirvana or salvation. However, the main difference between Hindu philosophy and Buddhism is atheism. Hindus consider this worldly life to be part of ‘Ekmebadvitiyam’. Buddhists did not accept that form of God. As a result, there has been a fundamental difference in the concept of meditation in education.

The only goal and ideal of Buddhist teaching is Nirvana. Moral knowledge, moral living, education in discipline in the unattached Sangha life and initiation into the religion of service are considered real education. According to Hindus, the ideal of education is to reunite with the Supreme Soul and end the earthly life cycle through self-realisation. Buddhists also want the end of the cycle of life. However, Nirvana will not be in reunion with the Supreme Soul but in the extinction of desires.

Therefore, instead of the Brahminical Gurukul, the monasteries became the refuge of Buddhist education. The unique advantage of monastery life was the education of restraint and meditation. That is why Buddhist education became centred entirely on the monasteries. The monasteries were the refuge of the monks' community. Therefore, all the responsibilities of education were entrusted to the monks. The rules and regulations of the monastery life were also to be followed by the students.

My educational life began at eight when I took the ordination course. A Buddhist student would approach a teacher or a teacher and respectfully request him to show him the path of spiritual life. He would recite the Tri-Saran mantra respectfully. Then the teacher would receive him. The Sangha society was built based on the joint life of the Guru and the disciple. In this way, no teacher can enter Sangha's life without being a direct disciple. Therefore, the high status of the teacher has been recognised in the Buddhist education system. However, the entire Sangha did not play the role of a teacher. The teacher was a specific person on whom the student's overall education depended.

The significance of Prabrajya is the surrender to enter the Sangha life with the mind of completely renouncing the previous life, that is, the small family life, and entering the Sangha life on the path of a more significant free life. The student had to leave all traces of home life. In this context, it is necessary to say that people of all castes could come as students. It was not told that the Guru would only be a Brahmin. Sangha life, established based on brotherhood and equality, is like a great ocean at the confluence of many streams. After the Prabrajya ceremony, the student was called 'Samaner' or Pabbajit. Pabbajit had to accept ten teaching positions. The student was first allowed to become a refugee of the new religion and Sangha, indicating the significance of the new life. The student had to promise to observe the ten precepts. Accepting things other than charity, impure conduct, eating at untimely times, participating in dances and songs, wearing garlands, footwear, perfumes and ornaments, using kohl and incense, sitting on high seats, and accepting gold and silver - these ten actions were to be avoided at all times.

Although there was universal access to the Sangha schools, people of all castes could attend, it does not mean there were no education restrictions. Buddhist education made a special effort to maintain moral and character purity. For this reason, certain restrictions were imposed on the path to education. Those who were above a certain age could not enter the Sangha. Those with lousy character or disease had no right to receive education. Those employed in government work, soldiers defending the country, or Criminals

had no right to receive the pavvaja. Those in debt or enslaved people could not become students either. The entrance to the Sangha was also closed to the shameless and unruly. Eligible entrants had to obtain the consent of their parents. Pavvaja was not allowed to be used to escape from the world. This system was adopted due to the sanctity of society and moral life and the moral consciousness about the family, culture and the state. Therefore, emphasis was placed on sincere ethics and ethical living.

In Buddhist monasteries, there were two classes of teachers. The teacher of theology was the Upadhyaya. The supervisor of moral life was the Acharya or Karmacharya. The 'saman' had a father-son relationship with the Upadhyaya and the Acharya. To be accepted as a student, the Pabbajit had to pray to the Upadhyaya three times, and he would agree. The guru was responsible for guiding the student's knowledge satisfaction and spiritual life, as well as his maintenance and care in case of illness. After being a devotee for at least thirty days, he would beg for discipleship by wearing yellow clothes and a turban. A person qualified to teach had unadulterated moral conduct, self-absorbed wisdom, unwavering faith in Nirvana, was humble, free from bondage and fearful of sinful acts, and could guide the student on the path of religion and modesty. Since this was the great responsibility of the teacher, he could also expel an unfit student from the monastery. However, he could not do this at will. Such punishment was possible only for lack of devotion to studies, lack of motivation, lack of modesty, or lack of respect for the teacher. The lessons had to be taken in the last part of the night. After five years of mastery of modesty, a second guru was sought. A well-regulated duty bound the life of the teacher and the student.

The daily duty of the disciple was to wake up before the guru, provide him with a toothbrush and a seat, serve him breakfast, and clean the place after eating. The disciple had to go out for daily alms with the guru and walk far from him. It was illegal for the disciple to create obstacles in the guru's conversation, accept alms without permission, or go elsewhere. It was also his duty to serve the guru during his illness. However, despite all this loyalty, it was not illegal for the disciple to leave the guru for any reason. The disciple properly disobeyed the guru if he returned to earthly life, joined another religious group, or incited the disciple to leave the Sangha. Therefore, no matter how close the personal relationship between the guru and the disciple, the interests of the Sangha were above all. A small group of young students under the supervision of a teacher can be called a Buddhist school in its original form. Gradually, these small groups formed larger collective organizations, the viharas. The practice of mutual debate and discussion in Deori spread through the joint pursuit of knowledge of many teachers and students gathered in viharas. Vinaya, Abhidharma, Sutras, Yoga and various folk scriptures were widely prevalent. The account of Nagasena's education shows that he first mastered Brahmanical education and simultaneously acquired scholarship in Buddhist scriptures.¹²

¹² Varela & Evon (1991).

From these accounts, some conclusions can be drawn that pursuing Buddhist education was prevalent even after completing Vedic education. Secondly, Buddhist education was not limited to monks alone. Household students relied on the monastery for theological education, while the birth of secular general education depended on the educational system prevalent outside the monastery. Medicine, law, and arts became particularly rich in secular higher education. The monks living in the monastery also learned handicrafts such as weaving, embroidery, etc. A seven-year curriculum was created in medicine, combining theory and practical education. The famous centres of medicine were Taxila, Rajgriha, and Varanasi. In the monasteries, suitable preparation was required for higher education.

For this, the curriculum was created in stages. Combining religious and secular education with philosophical and practical education brought extreme excellence in Buddhist education. Due to this combination, household students were called Upasaka or Upasika. They were also not free from the bonds of duty. It was also necessary for them to live a humble life to renounce the company of criminals, poison, alcohol and horses. They had many responsibilities towards teachers, monks, parents and children. Therefore, Buddhist education was not necessarily the education of monks in all cases. Buddhist monasteries also established a department of Lokayat education over time. Secular education was quite popular during the ICO's visit to India. Many monks preferred both types of education. Moreover, both types of education were valuable to Buddhists involved in political affairs. Monks had also been granted the right to leave monasticism and return to household life by then. The monasteries also opened their doors to novice students. This class of students was called "human". In this way, monks and non-monks, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, were also taught, and the monasteries were universal centres of learning, and the monks were considered teachers of all qualities. Teaching method For full monasticism, one had to pass various stages of initiation. The teaching method was also according to stages. The first stage method was mainly recitation. Emphasis was placed on reading the content, explaining, giving advice, and final examinations. The second stage method was mainly discussion-based. The third stage was teacher-taught. In the last stage, one had to follow the doctrine alone.

Fa-Hien says that the student's thinking and reasoning were encouraged since it was mainly taught orally. Since theories had to be explained publicly, discussion and logical skills were emphasised. There were also classes and prizes for this skill. Apart from that, gatherings of scholars and discussion circles were held from time to time. Knowledge competitions were held in gatherings of scholars in infamous towns. Emperors such as Harshavardhana patronised such gatherings. Therefore, it can be assumed that the highest level of education was in the 'journey of knowledge'.

At the end of the discussion, it can be concluded that the religious education system was not merely difficult, painful or mechanical. Mechanical education could never have created such an interest in the search for knowledge and truth. The wise were the objects of utmost respect. Being respected by all the

world, wise people were above the bonds of personal, worldly life. Therefore, judging by the results, the Buddhist education system established its claim to existence.

One more thing worth mentioning is the context of the spread of Buddhist education and the teaching method. As this education came into contact with public life, the more the language-medium balance was created. Gautama Buddha ordered the practice of the mother tongue to make the message of religion understandable to ordinary people. Therefore, the Prakrit languages of different regions gained importance. With the favour of the royal power, 'Pali' became the pan-Indian language. The demand for Pali instead of Sanskrit as the medium of education was primarily accepted. However, in the post-Sung era, the Sanskrit language regained prestige and even penetrated the interior of Bihar. Therefore, both Sanskrit and Pali continued to be practised. Fa-Hien himself studied Sanskrit for three years in Pataliputra. Hiuen Tsang also noticed the Brahminical influence and the importance of the Sanskrit language. In fact, in the last years of the Buddhist era, 'Sanskrit' gained special prestige in higher education. However, there was a sub-sampada for mass education. After completing the twelve years of residential education in the monastery, the Upasampada was the beginning of the final ordination. The Upasampada ceremony was held in Prakrit. The new graduate returned to home life through the Convocation. Therefore, the convocation was the beginning of home life. Full monasticism began at the end of education through the upasampada ceremony. Thus, during the Panchaja period, the Upadhyaya-Acharya played the leading role. However, the power to grant monasticism was only vested in the Buddhist Sangha.

Therefore, the Upasampada ceremony was held in front of the entire Sangha. Each matter was decided specifically at the Sangha meeting. A senior monk would present the novice to the assembly and ask for Upasampada. The novice himself would then surrender to the Sangha. After examining him in various ways, if there were no doubt about his qualifications, he would be declared a novice in the opinion of the assembly. His 'age of spiritual life' was calculated from the time of Upasampada. The novice was then taught four things to be observed in the life of a monk, such as leading a life of alms, wearing worn-out clothes, sleeping at the root of a tree and using cow urine as medicine. He was also told four prohibitions, such as giving up sexual intercourse, aversion to theft, giving up killing animals and giving up the arrogance of superhumanity. Buddhist Upasampada was primarily based on reason dependence and was devoid of mystery.¹³

In Vedic India, women had the right to education. Since women's freedom was not violated then, they had the right to education and social and religious rights. Naturally, ancient India produced many renowned scholars.

The verse itself says -

¹³ Roy (2022).

“Purākālpekumārīnāmāuñjibandhanama’iṣyatē
adhyāpanambēdānāmsābitribacanamatathā.”

Women had a high place in society because they had the right to perform yagnas and sacrifices. In the Atharva Veda, we see the god praying for a daughter. The female creator of the Samhita was the Mantradrashtha. A female sage was called a Rishi or Brahnavadini. Romsa, Lopamudra, Ghosha, Jahu, Jarita Paulami, Indrani, Urvashi, Apala, Kadru, Vishwabara, Savitri, Devyani, Maitreyi, Gargi etc. were such sages. Women had full rights to become priests. In the Sama Veda, there are names like Sikata and Nibabari. Female students had the right to be ordained. This right remained intact till the fifth century BCE. Girls used to remain virgins to acquire education. In the Kadambari of Banabhatt, Mahasweta’s body becomes pure and radiant after wearing the Yajnapaveeta. It was the duty of the parents to educate their daughter. A learned girl was considered a matter of pride for the family. It was desirable to give a learned bride to a wise man. Education did not end after the end of Brahmacharya, that is, after marriage. Married women also listened to Vedanta discussions. Women who were able to see the mantras were called Mantraniks or Ritvikas. Kunti, Draupadi, Kaushalya, Tara etc. were also Ritvikas. The Upanishads also mention some capable female teachers - such as Sulta, Pradhiteyi, Maitreyi, and Karshaktafi. Gargi’s discussion with Yajnavalkya, or the participation of Maitreyi, Yajnavalkya’s wife, in the debate, is also proof of this. In Bhavabhuti’s Uttara Ramchari, Atreyi discussed Vedanta with Labkush during Valmiki’s ashram. Similarly, Hulbha taught yoga samadhi and moksha to King Janaka. The place of women in the writing of scriptures was not insignificant either. The books of Katkringa’s Mimamsa Shastra, Apisaali’s Artha Shastra, and Karshakatfi’s grammar are proof of this. Women were also skilled in embroidery, weaving, and even wool weaving. Moreover, women were also made proficient in the fine arts of singing, dancing, etc. It has been said that Nrityagita is a woman’s work. There are sixty-four arts mentioned in Vatsayana’s Kamasutra. Apart from Nrityagita, women were skilled in painting, reciting, composing poetry, playing dice, making garlands, practising beauty, and Puzzles. Slave girls Nati and Barbanita were also skillfully employed in royal affairs. In the Middle Ages, the perfection of their skills in Nrityagita and Kama Shastra resulted from the skill of Devadasi Kingsha, the royal dancer. With the creation of the profession, the trend of female education continued until the time of Manu. Married young women were called Sadyobadhas.

They lived a domestic life instead of leading an entire ascetic life. However, they also had to study a little Vedas. The Brahnavadinis, however, had a separate entity. From the time of Manu, the trend of female education began to decline. Manu said - that marriage is equal to studying the Vedas, service to the husband is equal to living in an ashram, and housework is equal to evening worship. He prescribed that the father’s control in childhood, the husband’s power in married life and the son’s control in old age are the signs of perfection in a woman’s life. The Buddha’s words also stirred the hearts of women. Therefore, at Mahaprajapati and his disciple Ananda’s request, Gautama recognised

women's right to live as nuns. Thus, women also got the right to education.¹⁴ However, their dignity was greatly diminished because their education was arranged with many restrictions. It was not permissible for female nuns to live in the same house with men or touch men. They would receive lessons from a third person in the presence of a guru. Matchmaking was considered a forbidden act for them. Only after passing the test of living a modest life for a few years could they be initiated and ordained as nuns. Separate monasteries were created for nuns. Of course, in this era, the place of women in society naturally declined. In the post-Mauryan era, various foreign invasions and the rise of the Shresthi power in society created many grievances. In a society where Shrestha was nurtured, dancing, singing, and luxuries flourished, but the Natikul were deprived of social status. Despite the narrow-mindedness regarding women's freedom, the Buddhist era produced many virtuous women. Bhikkhuni Sulbha, Sramani Sarabi, Amrapali, Supriya, etc., belong to this category. Unnala was a famous teacher in the monastery of Bhikkhunis. The poetry of bhikkhunis, "Theri Gatha", has also gained fame. The Buddhist educational world can boast of at least thirteen renowned Theris. This category belongs to Mahaprajapati, Sujata, Soma, Anupama, Kshema, Kisagotami, etc. After the invasion of the Huns, mainly due to the Arab and Turkish campaigns, social liberality was destroyed. As women's freedom further declined, the fundamental educational institution of Vedic India was the Gurukul. Although each Gurukul existed separately, the centre for disseminating the highest knowledge was the Brahmin Sangha. The disciples of different Gurukuls used to gather and discuss the fundamental contributions of their respective schools. This is how conferences, discussion groups, and scholarly societies were formed. The Taxila University of ancient India was born in Brahmanical, but life flowed until the Buddhist era. Therefore, this university created a link between both systems. This educational centre is said to have been established by King Bharata, the capital of ancient Gandhara and the place of birth of the serpent. Since ruins have been discovered at three locations near Rawalpindi, it is assumed that its history was created through fragmentation.¹⁵ The rise and fall of Taxila, located at the northwestern gateway of India, on the path of Persian, Greek, Bactrian, Sakan, and Kushan invasions, also influenced the fate of this university. Foreign scripts, arts, and literary styles also influenced it.

The Taxila "University" was not a large-scale joint institution. It was merely a gathering of scholars. Therefore, students from all over India gathered here. However, each teacher and school was autonomous. The teacher had the right to determine the curriculum and admit or exclude students. There was no system of academic examinations or certificates. However, the scholarship here was Universally recognised. Prosenjit, Jivaka, Panini, and Kautilya were Taxila's contributions. Therefore, students gathered here from all over North and East India. The real fame of Taxila as a university lay in the fame of the

¹⁴ Loy (2005).

¹⁵ McMahan (2008).

teachers. Taxila was the centre of the highest education. Therefore, there were no male students here. After completing primary education, the higher education student entered at about sixteen. The students usually lived in the Guru's house. However, wealthy students either paid for maintenance or built their own houses. There was also an approved hostel. Many schools in Taxila also had a salary system. Of course, salaries were paid even after the end of education. Sometimes, the rich local people supported the students. Apart from that, there were also many invitations to social events. The salary was so small that the school could not run on it. Therefore, the teacher also had to depend on the society.

Some schools in Taxila had a large number of students. Except for the Chandals, there was no class, caste or wealth discrimination. Caste division was not evident in the selection of subjects either. Therefore, democracy and manual labour played a role in education. The simple life of these schools had a tone of discipline in the upper villages. Regardless of their status and status, everyone had to live a regulated life according to a fixed schedule.

The curriculum of Taxila included the Triveda, various sciences, arts, technology and the eighteen arts. Of particular note are astronomy, astrology, commerce, agriculture, accounting, serpent science, magic, hunting, medicine, dance, drawing, etc. Here, an attempt was made to combine abstract and practical knowledge. There was a system of acquiring direct experience in herbal medicine in medical science. In many cases, schools were also open only to Brahmins or Kshatriyas, adopting the equality of the curriculum. After completing the course, the students travelled the country, deepening their knowledge and expanding their minds.

The glory of this university remained intact until the Kushan period. However, after that, it declined. Fa-Hian did not witness anything important here. Then, the wave of Hun invasions came and destroyed everything. In the seventh century, at the time of Hiu-en-sang, there were traces of its existence, but there was no sign of glory.

In the Buddhist educational system, the monasteries were the academic institutions. Although many small monasteries emerged, the large monasteries, which the king enlarged, were the best examples of Buddhist universities. Nalanda was the most famous of all the universities created constitutionally under the joint management of many teachers and students.

The ruins of Nalanda are located 7 miles north of Rajgir. This university is mentioned in Buddhist and Jain texts. Taranath has indicated that Nalanda was the birthplace of Sariputta. Hiu-en-Tsang has given eyewitness accounts. The beginning of Nalanda University was based on the monastery built by Emperor Ashoka.

There are many proverbs about the name of Nalanda. Some say it was named after the village called Nal; some say it was named after the serpent-sucking Padmadighi. The etymological meaning written in Jataka is, however, more acceptable. Na+Alam+Da, meaning "one who has no aversion to giving",

is Nalanda's true identity.

Although it had its initial beginnings during the reign of Emperor Ashoka, Nalanda became famous during the triumphant march of Mahayana Buddhism. The account of Hiu-en-Sang indicates this gradual development. Initially formed with the donations of five hundred sages, this monastery grew primarily over the centuries, surpassing the Gupta era, the era of Harshavardhana, and even the Pala era.

Eyewitness accounts of that era describe the beautiful surroundings of Nalanda. A wide path led from the gate to the schoolhouse within the high surrounding wall. All around were huge multi-storey buildings and cloud-touching monastery spires. The rooms on the highest floor were above the clouds. Moreover, on the ground, lotus ponds swayed amidst deep golden flowers. However, the life of the teacher and student in the monastery was in complete contrast to this external splendour. Education was unpaid. The four necessities of life - food, clothes, bed and medicine - were provided free of charge. According to the experience of Hiu-en-Tsang, the students of Nalanda received 220 zombies, 20 nutmegs, Mahasali rice, milk, ghee butter, etc., free of charge.

Nalanda, Buddhist India's seat and an international learning centre, offered postgraduate specialised education. The age of admission was 20 years. Admission was also possible at the age of 15, but in that case, 5 years of special preparation was required. Access to high-quality education was restricted. One had to pass a rigorous examination by the gatekeeper. Only 20 per cent of those who wanted to enter were admitted. Nevertheless, a stream of students flowed in from India, Southeast Asia, and outside India, and there was no shortage of students. Nalanda students earned a good reputation in later life because of their high-quality theoretical and moral education. One thousand five hundred teachers taught 8,500 students in 100 different subjects in lecture halls, day and night, without sleep.

This integrated form attracted foreign countries. Fa-Hien, Hiu-en-Sang, Tao He, Ico came from China; Tao Sing, Tao Ling from Korea. Students came from Sinhala, Sumatra, Java, and Tibet. Inspired by this internationalism, Nalanda scholars Kumarjiva, Gunavarman, Paramartha and others went on religious pilgrimages to China, Tibet and other countries. This internationalism in education is still desirable today. Nalanda was in glory even during the time of 'I Sing'. However, despite the patronage of the Tibetan and Gauda kings, its glory began to wane from the end of the eighth century. Nalanda's glory also ended with the end of the Pala dynasty. When the internal life of Nalanda was in decline due to clan conflicts and internal strife, Bakhtiyar Khalji's expedition came. The history of Nalanda also ended with the fall of Muslim rule.¹⁶

Vikramshila Mahavihara was a contribution of the Pala emperors and was favoured by them. Emperor Dharmapala built this "vihara" on the banks of the

¹⁶ Mollier (2009).

Ganges in northern Bihar. There are different opinions about where the vihara was located.

Some say it was near Nalanda, some say in Bhagalpur district. The monastery adorned with the Mahabodhi statue was at the centre of the well-built walled enclosure. The central monastery was surrounded by 53 smaller monasteries and 54 more buildings. The Vihara, consisting of 108 monasteries, had 108 head monks and officials such as Acharya, Upacharya, Upadhyaya, Karmaparidashak, etc. The authority of the entire vihara was in the hands of a board of directors consisting of teachers. It is noteworthy from this source that the great Pala emperors simultaneously patronised Nalanda and Vikramshila. Dharmapala was the Acharya of both. It is assumed that the directors of Vikramshila also governed Nalanda. There was an exchange of teachers between the two universities. Dipankar Srigyan and Abhaykar Gupta taught at both places.

There were six colleges in Vikramshila. Each of them had 108 teachers. In the middle was the Gyan Bhavan. The Gyan Bhavan had six doors towards the six colleges. Six gatekeepers guarded the six doors. The images of Nagarjuna and Atisha Dipankar were painted on both sides of the main entrance. The most learned person was the patriarch of the monastery. During the time of Dharmapala, the patriarch was Buddha Gyanpada. The most famous patriarch in the history of this monastery was of course, Dipankar Sri Gyan Atisha. The curriculum or regulations of Vikramshila are not directly known because all the evidence was destroyed when this monastery was destroyed. However, from the close relationship with Nalanda, it can be assumed that the curriculum and regulations like those of Nalanda were prevalent here too. However, it is natural that Vikramshila was also influenced by the spread of Tantric Buddhism in the latter part of the Pala dynasty. Vikramshila was also famous for its scholars. Jnanapada, Prabhakaramati, Jnansramitra, and Dipankar Srijan are the names of this monastery. Tibetans still revere their role in spreading Buddhism in Tibet.

However, like Nalanda, Vikramshila was also destroyed. It is stated in the Tabakat-i-Nasari that the victorious Muslim army, considering this walled monastery to be a fortress, razed it to the ground and killed all the inhabitants. Those who managed to defend themselves fled to Tibet. Even amidst the destruction, no one was found in the monastery who could decipher the books that were saved. After recovering the meaning of the books, the victorious heroes learned that what they had destroyed was a university. Vikramshila was damaged, but Vikramshila remained in the history of Tibet.

However, the new economy, society, new mentality, and, above all, the latest education system of the modern era gradually faded Nadia's glory. However, somehow surviving through adversity, the Sanskrit schools of Nabadwip survive today as a symbol of ancient education. It is noteworthy in this context that although the Buddhist educational centres were destroyed during the Middle Ages, the Hindu educational centres of Varanasi, Mithila, Nadia, etc., maintained their existence throughout the Middle Ages despite the intense hostility of the Muslim royal power and the creation of social

divisions.¹⁷ The Vedic culture and education of ancient India absorbed various musical influences in its evolution and created a unified tone. The impact of multiple nations, such as Persians, Greeks, Shakas, Kushans, Huns, etc., from outside, and the influence of various reform movements at different stages from within, combined with all these, gave Hindu civilisation and education its unique form.

Gradually, the Buddha would sit in the forest near the abodes of various disciples or in the locality and give religious teachings to all the people. He would hold assemblies or conferences and instruct them to follow Buddhism's rules, regulations, teachings and sutras properly. The religion of the Buddha was democratic. He would take the Buddhist Sangha's and disciples' opinions, including monks and nuns, and then make decisions democratically.

Sometime after the death of Gautama Buddha, in the struggle between the new and old in Buddhism, the older adults following the Buddha were not in favour of changing those rules, customs and teachings. The new people tried to change them and popularise their views, considering the time and place. As a result, Buddhism was divided into two parts - Hinayana and Mahayana.

Both groups were committed to the propagation and expansion of Buddhism. However, the Mahayana followers relaxed the rules of Buddha and mixed them with idol worship, Brahmanism, reincarnation, miracles, Tantra and the circumstances of the country.

During the reign of Emperor Bimbisara, Buddhism took the form of the royal religion. Buddhism and education received royal favour and soon spread. Then Emperor Ashoka, through his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra, propagated and spread Buddhism along with Bodhidrum in countries.

In Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, Japan, Siam, Java, etc, tourists like Fa Hien, Hiuen Tsang, and others came to India and returned home with Buddhist knowledge, education, initiation, and culture.

Later, Atish Dipankar went to Tibet and propagated and expanded the education and philosophy of Buddhism. There was Buddhist rule throughout India for a long time.

However, even after the end of Buddhist rule and the advent of Brahminical rule, the Buddhist teachings of the Buddhist rule remained strong in India. The Dharma Chakra of Buddha, which Ashoka built, is in the middle of the national flag of independent India. The Ashoka Pillar, which Buddhist followers revere, is the national official symbol of 'Satyameva Jayate' in independent India. Buddhist education is included in the traditional education curriculum in history, philosophy, sociology, yoga, religious education, etc., worldwide. In the modern world, Buddhism has spread widely in major Asian countries, especially China, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Java, Sumatra, Philippines, Bhutan, etc. Although Buddhism has spread in countries such as India, Nepal, Bangladesh, America, England, Africa, etc., it is

¹⁷ Roy (2022).

not in large numbers. However, Buddhist teachings' non-violence, humanity, human rights, and moral principles have played a significant role in the United Nations, the World Human Rights Organization, etc. Especially in establishing world peace, the importance of Buddhist education is immense.

The role of those who have played in the spread of Buddhist education is -
1. The role of writers, 2. The role of monks and nuns of the Sangha, 3. The role of Buddhist Sangeeti, 4. The role of kings and nobles, 5. The role of educational institutions.

i. The role of writers: From the lifetime of Gautama Buddha to recent times, religious books, medical texts, biographies, history, philosophy, stories, etc., including the life, ideals, teachings and enlightenment of the Buddha, have been written, as have various types of books, including commentary and commentary on the Buddhist practice system, and in recent times, many books have been written on Buddhism. Since the authors of all these books have made outstanding contributions to preserving and developing Buddhist education, the world has the most significant number of books on Buddhism.

ii. Role of the monks and nuns of the Sangha: The monks and nuns of the Buddhist Sangha take an active role in promoting and expanding the educational system of the Buddhist Sangha. In other words, these monks and nuns have kept Buddhism and religious education alive. If it had not been for these monks and nuns through their Sangha, Buddhism would have disappeared from India and many other countries.

iii. The role of Buddhist Sangeeti: After the death of Gautama Buddha, Buddhist Sangeets or conferences played a significant role. All the people of Buddhism, Buddha devotees and like-minded people gathered through the Buddhist Sangeet. In that Sangeet conference, the past and present of Buddhism were reviewed, and the future path was decided. Here, the direction of new paths and the outline of Buddhist education were determined through the discussions and speeches of many Buddhist scholars. As a result, Buddhist education was further developed through these Sangeets and conferences.

iv. Role of Kings and Nobles: If kings and nobles accept and propagate a religion, then that religion is propagated as the royal religion or throughout the state. Because the rest of the people followed the nobles, kings, and nobles, they had a role in spreading religious education.

v. Role of educational institutions: The most significant role is to instil religious education in the human mind from childhood to adulthood. Schools, colleges, and universities have been vital in spreading Buddhist education through the Buddhist Sangha. Buddhist education was studied in Buddhist monasteries all over India and in other countries of the world. Even now, along with Buddhist education in Buddhist monasteries, Buddhist studies, comparative theology, philosophy, history and education science are taught beautifully in modern universities. As a result, the spread of Buddhist education is ongoing.

Therefore, the spread of Buddhist education is progressing at a rapid pace. The contribution of Buddhist education to establishing peace in the universe

is the greatest.

If we look into the history of education in the world, we will see that people have mastered the education of survival since the primitive age. Their primary education was to collect food, eat food, and protect themselves from the hostile environment. However, people gradually evolved from gathering food to producing food. Fear and obedience to natural forces appeared in their minds. Then, they got rid of their lives of suffering and hardship, and finally, they protested and enjoyed a free life. Among all these events, only self-defence techniques were helpful to them in their family education. The rest of the education was first started through religious teachers and priests. Therefore, the first initiation, propagation and expansion of all education, institutional, non-institutional rules, outside the rules, was through religious education. This religious education was the first to bring education to the court of people. However, mass and oral education revitalised human society in a new way. People have found life and salvation in this religion for thousands of years. In all countries, education started with religious institutions by religious men. Although this education was first in religious educational institutions, it became widespread and expanded for the needs of the state.

Gautama Buddha has started in this place how a human being made of flesh and blood controls his biological desires and, being enlightened by the light of knowledge, controls that biological being and creates himself not only for himself but also for the world, for society, for the state, and awakens peace, non-violence and compassion in the minds of the world's people. Along with all these, if our biological being goes out of control and we make mistakes due to the persecution of biological beings, we can commit various social crimes, biological inconsistencies, or various kinds of sins that can be aroused in our minds. In this case, Gautama Buddha thinks that if someone can come out of remorse, repentance and fear within him and understands that he has mistaken and wants to correct his mistakes due to ignorance, then there is infinite forgiveness, infinite kindness, and infinite love for him. This forgiveness, endless love or infinite kindness is in the Buddha, in the words of the Buddha, by which people who are fallen and hated can be drawn into the bosom and illuminated and revealed again in the light. This is one of the aspects of the Buddha that illuminates or reveals life by suppressing the biological essence of a person. However, one must be careful; those who continuously deprive countless people and commit crimes, those who oppress countless people by doing injustice, take an aggressive attitude. They show dominance in society and want to keep others in society. One country wants to stay another country in society. The strong one destroys others with his strength. Similarly, there are some people with intelligence and political aspects who, instead of the belligerence of war, try to put people in danger with intelligence and stupidity and want to keep people in power. If such a person is accused and does not ask for forgiveness if he does not repent or want to correct himself, he has made mistakes consciously, but Gautama Buddha did not want to show forgiveness or mercy for him. In this case, it is not to be released with words of forgiveness

or kindness, but to accept him and first free the evil short-sightedness, cruelty, and politics within him and make him a straightforward person. Therefore, if he can reach the stability of the intellect through practice, then only he can become worthy of forgiveness; he will not have to be forgiven separately.

So, man's gradual progress towards freedom from diseases, ailments, and ageing cannot be eliminated through sadhana or meditation; if man has to find a solution without understanding its cause, man must invent and solve the cause. Knowing the way to get rid of diseases and ailments without getting affected by them and finding a way to get rid of them without getting affected by ageing, on the one hand, just as man has to see this way of liberation through practice in our individual life. Similarly, personal life can be fulfilled through the virtues of society. Just as man must create an antidote to prevent any disease, man must make innovations through wisdom or knowledge to prevent disease. This is the science of Gautama Buddha.

According to Buddha, the sustainable development we talk about does not mean staying still in one place. Instead, Buddha repeatedly spoke of gradual development; sustainable development is not stagnant in one place. For example, if a person reads two books a year and does not increase the number of books he reads in the following years, his memory has not developed. For sustainable development, he must increase the number of books he reads in the following years. That is, sustainable development in daily life means more development in human life. This development will never be horizontal or vertical but will continue for eternity without stopping anywhere. This gradual development of man means ignoring all biological beings and moving forward continuously through his wisdom or self-illumination. This gradual development is the religion of man, and this gradual development is the actual sustainable development.¹⁸ Therefore, for stable development, gradual development is needed; this development does not mean stopping at any place; that is, if it is drawn on graph paper, then the development line will not be vertical or horizontal. Instead, the development line will not be fixed anywhere and will continue to move forward. When this development reaches its peak, the development line reaches 90 degrees, and if it stops at a stable state, the development line continues horizontally after reaching a certain height. This development line reaches 90 degrees or continues horizontally; neither can be called gradual development. For gradual development, the angular upward line is ideal and desirable. Therefore, through the practice of the chapters or sayings of the 'Eightfold Path' of Gautama Buddha or the high-quality qualities that people achieve, not only the stable development of life but also the stable development of the family, the stable development of society and the acceleration of their knowledge, if this stable developed environment is created, people will no longer be the cause of harm to anyone, they will not be the cause of trampling each other, all people will move forward in unity. As they move forward, that ray of light will come within everyone,

¹⁸ Kittiprapas (2015).

and just as two rays of light do not create shadows on each other when walking side by side, similarly, every person illuminated by light cannot trample each other. However, if a ray of light hits another lightless object, its shadow may be created, or the light may return. That is why man cannot live alone. The light of knowledge, practice, and social development enlightens us. If man can inspire all countries or the world, each ray of light will be considered a garland of stars in the wider world. Then darkness will depart forever. Darkness will be visible only when the man is enlightened and does not allow others to be enlightened. Moreover, if a man cannot create selflessness by not uniting others with this light, he will be covered in darkness one day.

Then, the light of wisdom or the light of knowledge will not be able to develop. As a result, the reflected light, like the light of our life development, will return in the opposite direction. That is why if the increasing light spreads in all directions, in all individuals, in all people, in the world, then that light ray will travel together evenly without creating any obstacles and will never become a shadow and hinder anyone. This saying of Gautama Buddha is true.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Buddhist education offers a profound path toward the holistic development of individuals and society. Rooted in mindfulness, wisdom, compassion, and moral discipline, it transcends mere academic knowledge to cultivate inner peace, ethical living, and spiritual awakening. The teachings of Gautama Buddha, particularly the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, form the foundation of a system that harmonizes personal transformation with societal well-being. From ancient monasteries like Nalanda and Vikramshila to modern global institutions, Buddhist education continues to inspire values of non-violence, tolerance, and sustainable living. In an age where the world is increasingly plagued by conflict, environmental degradation, and moral decline, embracing the essence of Buddhist education can guide humanity toward a compassionate and sustainable future. Therefore, integrating the spiritual and ethical aspects of Buddhist thought into contemporary education systems may not only preserve cultural heritage but also address the urgent need for a more humane and enlightened society.

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- চৌধুরী সাধনকমল (২০১৪) বৌদ্ধদর্শনরে প্রাসঙ্গিকি ভাবনা, কলকাতা করুণা, প্রকাশনী, কলকাতা।

SYNERGIZING TRADITION AND TECHNOLOGY: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF MINDFULNESS-BASED NEUROFEEDBACK ON STRESS AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN BUDDHIST MONKS

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Abstract:

This study explores the integration of mindfulness and biofeedback as a method to improve stress regulation, emotional control, and quality of life in Buddhist monks. Using a quasi-experimental design, 35 monks aged 25 – 65 were divided into two groups: one received an eight-week mindfulness-based biofeedback training, and the other continued regular mindfulness practices. Standardised assessments, including the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), were conducted before and one month after the intervention. Results showed significant improvements in emotional regulation ($p < 0.05$) and reductions in perceived stress ($p < 0.01$) in the biofeedback group compared to the control. The findings highlight the potential of combining real-time physiological feedback with traditional contemplative techniques to enhance mental and emotional well-being. The study suggests that biofeedback can be effectively integrated into mindfulness practices, offering a novel approach to self-regulation. Future research could examine the long-term effects and broader applicability across different populations. This work positions mindfulness-based biofeedback as a promising bridge between ancient wisdom and modern technology in holistic health care.

Keywords: *Mindfulness-based biofeedback, stress reduction, emotional regulation.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness, a practice deeply rooted in Buddhist philosophy and spiritual traditions, has been an integral part of human consciousness exploration for centuries. It is characterised by an intentional focus on present-moment awareness, cultivating a non-judgmental and accepting attitude toward thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations.¹ The origins of mindfulness trace back to the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, who emphasised mindfulness (*sati*) as a fundamental path to achieving enlightenment. His teachings, particularly in the Satipatthana Sutta, describe mindfulness as a systematic approach to cultivating awareness through observation of the body, feelings, mind, and mental objects.² Over time, these principles evolved into structured meditative practices within Buddhist monastic traditions, shaping the spiritual and psychological resilience of monks and lay practitioners alike.³

In Buddhist monastic settings, mindfulness serves not only as a meditative discipline but also as a means of emotional and cognitive regulation. Monks undergo rigorous training to enhance their ability to maintain sustained attention and equanimity, fostering deep introspection and heightened awareness. The traditional practices of *samatha* (concentration meditation) and *vipassana* (insight meditation) are fundamental to Buddhist training, allowing practitioners to cultivate stability of mind and insight into the nature of reality.⁴ These methods emphasise disciplined awareness of the breath, bodily sensations, and mental fluctuations, enabling monks to achieve heightened states of consciousness and emotional balance. Over centuries, Buddhist monks have refined these techniques, demonstrating exceptional self-regulatory abilities that contribute to their mental resilience and overall well-being.⁵

Beyond monastic life, the principles of mindfulness have transcended religious and spiritual contexts, gaining recognition in psychology, neuroscience, and healthcare. In the late 20th century, Western scholars and clinicians, such as Jon Kabat-Zinn, integrated mindfulness into therapeutic interventions, leading to the development of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).⁶ These structured programs have been widely adopted in clinical and non-clinical settings, demonstrating efficacy in reducing stress, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation.⁷ The growing body of scientific literature on mindfulness has revealed its profound impact on mental health, cognitive function, and physiological well-being. Research utilising neuroimaging techniques has

¹ Murphy, J. (2016).

² Shulmana (2010).

³ Kristeller (2021).

⁴ Shulman (2010).

⁵ Marlatt & Kristeller (1999).

⁶ Kabat-Zinn (1990).

⁷ Kristeller & Wolever (2011).

shown that mindfulness practice can induce neuroplastic changes in the brain, enhancing activity in regions associated with attention regulation, emotional processing, and self-awareness.⁸

For one of the central mechanisms for the benefits of mindfulness, emotional regulation plays a central role. Thus, mindfulness encourages an adaptive response to emotions by helping consciousness to become aware, accept, and not react to the changes in transient mental states.⁹ Mindfulness Studies have found that individuals who practice mindfulness are better able to be emotionally resilient and react less to stressors.¹⁰ Especially in the age of today's accelerated and pressured lifestyle and emotional dysregulation prevalent in many mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), this capacity to modulate emotional responses is highly important.¹¹ Mindfulness teaches people how to see their thoughts and emotions without getting triggered right away, thereby creating a sense of anchorage in the inner and psychological stability.

There are further physiological effects of mindfulness on stress reduction and general health. The autonomic nervous system regulation by mindfulness meditation was demonstrated in the studies,¹² characterised by a decrease in sympathetic (fight or flight) activation and an increase in parasympathetic (relaxation and recovery) activity. Regular mindfulness practitioners display lower cortisol levels, decreased heart rate, and improved immune function, and this reflects this shift in autonomic balance.¹³ Moreover, mindfulness has been associated with better heart rate variability (HRV), a main sign of physiological preparedness and adaptive stress response.¹⁴ This works to underpin that, as a result of the interplay between mind and body, these contemplative practices have a real impact on physical health and longevity.

Mindfulness has also been a focus of cognitive neuroscience that is worthy of intersection with modern scientific findings. Research in electroencephalography (EEG) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) showed that mindfulness meditation has different neurophysiological patterns.¹⁵ When these patterns of brainwaves are compared across time for long-term practitioners, prefrontal cortex (PFC) alpha and theta wave activity increase, as well as greater connectivity between PFC regions associated with self-regulation and emotional control.¹⁶ These findings are in line with the

⁸ Sala & Gorwood (2021).

⁹ Murphy et al. (2012).

¹⁰ Daubenmier et al. (2021).

¹¹ Sala & Gorwood (2021).

¹² Daubenmier et al. (2021).

¹³ Murphy et al. (2012).

¹⁴ Kristeller (2021).

¹⁵ Sala & Gorwood (2021).

¹⁶ Daubenmier et al. (2021).

results from the empirical validations of mindfulness effects.¹⁷

Despite the extensive research on mindfulness, challenges remain in optimising its application across diverse populations. Mindfulness training that is traditionally implemented can take a long time and require a lot of hard work and practice before there are any significant benefits.¹⁸ While Buddhist monks can be very self-regulated, new meditators find it hard to stick to their practice of focus and consistency.¹⁹ As a result, there has been an increase in the interest in methods to aid in mindfulness training and improve learning, making this more accessible and faster and easier for people making use of any place, among proposed tools to increase mindfulness practice with emerging technologies such as neurofeedback because of real-time physiological feedback, reinforcement of self-regulation, and to encourage deeper states of meditative absorption.²⁰

Evidence-based techniques, such as neurofeedback, which people can use to monitor and control physical processes, have been shown to increase mindfulness training.²¹ Neurofeedback delivers immediate feedback on physiological states such as heart rate variability, brainwave activity, and skin conductance; therefore, people can become aware of and learn to regulate their internal processes better.²² The combination of mindfulness with neurofeedback is a promising way to enhance traditional mindfulness approaches and optimise the number of their advantages. Initial research indicates that combining mindfulness with neurofeedback training might improve emotional regulation, reduce stress, and help generally increase well-being. While we have done this, we still need further research into the synergies between these approaches and the implementation of best practices for them.

For that reason, mindfulness evolved from its original Buddhist roots and became broadly studied and operationalised in contemporary psychology and neuroscience. It proved to be a valuable tool for improving emotional regulation, stress reduction, and the increase of physiological well-being. Efforts to integrate emerging technologies with traditional mindfulness practices may lead to the optimisation of self-regulation and well-being in scientific exploration. By merging the insights of ancient wisdom with the modern scientific advancements of human consciousness, a new interest tunnel is rapidly developing, in which the modern relevance of mindfulness plays a critical role.

II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The burgeoning of stress-related disorders, emotional dysregulation, and

¹⁷ Murphy (2016).

¹⁸ Như trên.

¹⁹ Kristeller (2021).

²⁰ Kristeller & Wolever (2011).

²¹ Daubenmier et al. (2021).

²² Kristeller (2021).

mental health issues in today's society have led to a search for more effective and evidence-based interventions.²³ Associations with enhanced emotional well-being, stress reduction, and enhanced self-regulation are long linked to the use of traditional mindfulness practices.²⁴ In terms of its efficacy and mechanisms, much has been studied and applied to mindfulness meditation in many settings. So, it is being tested in other populations, including those with long histories of meditation, such as Buddhist monks.²⁵ Specifically, it is necessary to investigate the possibility of mindfulness integration with neurofeedback to improve the self-regulation and emotional resilience of inexperienced practitioners.

Given the advances in understanding mindfulness through scientific research, most of the work is with novice practitioners or with clinical populations who are not meditators. This provides a unique population from which the upper limits of mindfulness practice and its neurophysiological correlates can be studied: Buddhist monks who have spent years of disciplined mindfulness training.²⁶ Investigating how neurofeedback may be used to enhance traditional mindfulness techniques in experienced meditators²⁷ can give further insight into the mechanisms of self-regulation and the potential applications of technology with contemplative practices.

A second reason for this study stems in part from the large body of literature on the neurophysiological impact of mindfulness. Studies in neurosciences have shown that experienced meditators show characteristics of brain waves: alpha and theta brain waves, in particular, are related to relaxation, focused attention, and emotion control.²⁸ While these findings show the positive effects of mindfulness on brain function, few studies have validated that such physiological feedback not only increases these effects but optimises them in real time.²⁹ One of the ways to measure and enhance brainwave regulation is through the use of neurofeedback, such as EEG-based neurofeedback, which allows for the practitioner to become aware of and control their mental states better.³⁰ Using this Buddhist monk as a model, this study aims to ascertain whether the conjunction of neurofeedback with mindfulness helps to improve their capacity to regulate their physiological response so as to become more emotionally stable and stress resilient.

This research is also needed due to the increasing use of neurofeedback in the clinical and therapeutic context. One effectiveness of neurofeedback is in treating anxiety, depression, PTSD, and other mental health disorders,

²³ Grossman et al. (2004); Hofmann et al., (2010).

²⁴ Kabat-Zinn (1990); Kristeller (2021).

²⁵ Brefczynski-Lewis et al. (2007).

²⁶ Davidson & Lutz (2008).

²⁷ Enriquez-Geppert et al. (2017).

²⁸ Lutz et al. (2004); Tang et al. (2009).

²⁹ Brandmeyer & Delorme (2013).

³⁰ Gruzelier (2014).

all of which rely on self-regulation and stress reactivity reduction.³¹ Yet, its application in highly disciplined and experienced meditative populations remains unexplored.³² The research here tries to validate the neurofeedback effectiveness in the population with already high levels of self-awareness and attentional control – Buddhist monks. Neurofeedback may offer the possibility to refine their mindfulness practice further, and thus, it represents a major advantage for populations extending from healthcare professionals and educators to high-stress professions.³³

Additionally, the advent of new technology hastened the opportunities to increase traditional contemplative practice. Given mindfulness's growing worldwide renown, combining mindfulness training with neurofeedback may be a relatively novel way of enhancing meditation outcomes.³⁴ Understanding the role of neurofeedback in addition to mindfulness techniques, as the scientific literature suggests, will allow the development of personalised mindfulness interventions that can be tailored to individual needs.³⁵

This study is finally needed to bridge ancient contemplative wisdom with modern scientific methodologies. Mindfulness has been practised for centuries, but only when empirical research and scientific validation can be provided can mindfulness be considered to be credible in all contemporary healthcare and psychological interventions.³⁶ This study explores the associations of mindfulness-based neurofeedback with their traditional practices among Buddhist monks to ground evidence of its integration with technology in order to contribute theoretically and empirically to the discourse on mental health, well-being, and self-regulation strategies in different populations.³⁷

III. METHODS

3.1. Participant recruitment and demographics

Participants were 35 Buddhist monks, and the recruitment was conducted in collaboration with monastery leaders, who informed eligible monks about the study and invited volunteers. Inclusion criteria required participants to be male ordained monks aged 25 – 65 years with at least 2 years of regular mindfulness meditation practice. In the context of this particular study, only male participants were included because Buddhist monastic communities, especially traditional monasteries in Asia (such as those involved in this research), are typically gender-segregated and predominantly male. Selecting only male Buddhist monks allowed for consistency and control over cultural, lifestyle, and practice-related variables, ensuring greater homogeneity within the sample. This approach reduced variability that could arise from mixed-

³¹ Hammond (2005); Peniston&Kulkosky (1991).

³² Tan et al. (2020).

³³ Davis & Hayes (2011).

³⁴ Brandmeyer& Delorme (2021).

³⁵ Wielgosz et al. (2019).

³⁶ Lutz et al. (2008).

³⁷ Tang, Hölzel; Posner (2015).

gender groups due to differences in physiological responses, stress patterns, or meditation experiences influenced by societal, biological, or hormonal factors. Monks had to be free of cardiovascular conditions or medications that could affect heart rate variability and proficient enough in the English language to complete questionnaires. Exclusion criteria included any known cardiac arrhythmias, use of beta-blockers or other medications influencing heart rate, and psychiatric or neurological disorders that might interfere with meditation practice. All participants provided informed consent before enrolment.

A total of 38 monks were initially screened, of whom 35 met the criteria and agreed to participate. These 35 monks (age $M = 44.5$ years, $SD = 11.6$, range 25–65) formed the final sample. Table 1 presents the demographic and baseline characteristics of participants in each group. The sample was entirely male. The monks had, on average, 15.0 years ($SD = 8.7$) of meditation experience, reflecting long-term practice in mindfulness techniques. Baseline measures of perceived stress and emotion regulation difficulties were moderate on average (mean baseline Perceived Stress Scale score ~ 17.7 ; mean Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale score ~ 64.6), indicating some variability in stress and emotion regulation even within this monastic sample. There were no significant differences between the two groups in age, years of meditation experience, or baseline psychological measures, confirming successful initial group equivalence (see Table 1).

3.2. Study design

This study employed a quasi-experimental, two-group pre-test/post-test design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (1) a neurofeedback-assisted mindfulness training group (HRV neurofeedback group, $n = 17$) or (2) a control group engaging in traditional mindfulness practice without neurofeedback (control group, $n = 18$). Randomisation was done using a simple draw from a sealed envelope for each participant after baseline assessment, ensuring allocation concealment. To promote balance in age distribution, randomisation was stratified by age bracket (25 – 44 vs. 45 – 65 years), such that monks from each age group were evenly allocated to the two conditions. Still, the pre- and post-intervention assessments were administered in a standardised manner for both groups.

The intervention period lasted eight weeks for both groups. Both groups continued their regular daily monastic routines and meditation practices, with the only difference being the addition of the HRV neurofeedback component for the intervention group. The study design can be considered quasi-experimental because the participants were a convenience sample of monks (not randomly sampled from the general population), and the intervention took place in a naturalistic setting. Nonetheless, the use of random assignment to conditions aimed to reduce selection bias and establish comparable groups. Both groups were assessed one week before the start of the intervention (pretest) and in the final week of the 8-week intervention (posttest). No significant differences were observed between the groups at baseline on key measures, indicating that randomisation was effective.

3.3. HRV-Based neurofeedback training protocol

Participants in the neurofeedback-assisted mindfulness group received training in mindfulness meditation augmented with heart rate variability (HRV) neurofeedback. Each monk in this group was assessed using an HRV neurofeedback device consisting of a heart rate sensor and a feedback display. The device used a fingertip photoplethysmography sensor (equivalent to a pulse oximeter) connected to a handheld unit that provided real-time feedback on the participant's heart rhythms and HRV.

The HRV neurofeedback training sessions were integrated into the monks' daily meditation practice. Monks in the HRV group were instructed to perform slow diaphragmatic breathing at a pace of approximately six breaths per minute (the resonance frequency for maximising HRV in most individuals) while maintaining a mindful focus on their breath and the feedback provided by the device. Each formal training session lasted about 20 minutes and was conducted in two sessions every week for the 8 weeks. During these sessions, monks sat in their usual meditation posture, wore the HRV sensor, and attempted to cultivate a calm, focused state. The device gave immediate feedback, allowing participants to adjust their breathing and mental focus to achieve greater heart rhythm coherence (a state of synchronised breathing and heart rate oscillation). In essence, the neurofeedback guided them to subtly modify their breathing and relaxation response to increase their HRV. This approach is consistent with standard HRV neurofeedback techniques that involve slow breathing with a feedback device. An initial orientation session was held in week 1 to familiarise the monks with the neurofeedback equipment and to practice the paced breathing technique.

Participants in the control group practiced mindfulness meditation as usual, without any technological assistance. They were asked to meditate daily for 20 minutes, focusing on their breath or using their typical mindfulness techniques (such as observing thoughts and sensations non-judgmentally), matching the schedule of the HRV group. The control group thus received an equivalent "dose" of mindfulness practice time minus the neurofeedback element. This was intended to isolate the effect of the neurofeedback-enhanced training. Both groups continued any other routine spiritual practices, but no new interventions were introduced outside of the study protocol.

3.4. Assessment measures

Outcome measures were collected for both groups at baseline (pre-intervention) and after the 8-week intervention (post-intervention). Psychological outcomes included perceived stress and emotion regulation difficulties, while physiological outcomes focused on heart rate variability. All self-report measures were administered in a quiet room at the monastery, and a researcher was available to clarify any questions.

- **Perceived stress:** Perceived stress levels were measured using the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10). The PSS-10 is a widely used instrument for assessing the degree to which situations in one's life are

appraised as stressful. Participants rated how often they found their lives unpredictable, uncontrollable, or overwhelming in the last month on a 5-point Likert scale. The PSS yields a total score ranging from 0 to 40, with higher scores indicating greater perceived stress. This scale has well-established validity and reliability in diverse populations. In the present sample, the PSS was used to gauge subjective stress both before and after the mindfulness training period.

- **Emotion regulation:** Difficulties in emotion regulation were assessed using the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS). The DERS is a 36-item self-report questionnaire that measures problems in regulating emotions, covering aspects such as non-acceptance of emotional responses, difficulties engaging in goal-directed behaviour when distressed, impulse control difficulties, lack of emotional awareness, limited access to emotion regulation strategies, and lack of emotional clarity. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale, and a higher total score indicates greater difficulties in emotion regulation. The DERS has been widely used in research as a measure of emotion dysregulation (with strong psychometric properties reported in its validation). We administered the full DERS at pre- and post-intervention to determine whether mindfulness training (with or without neurofeedback) improved participants' emotion regulation abilities. For analysis, we focused on the total DERS score as the primary indicator of emotion regulation difficulties while also noting changes in subscale scores for descriptive purposes.

- **Heart rate variability:** Heart rate variability was measured as an index of physiological regulation and the primary target of the neurofeedback training. HRV data were collected using the neurofeedback device for all participants during a 5 minute seated resting period, both at baseline and post-intervention. For consistency, even control participants (who did not train with the device) were hooked up to the same HRV sensor during these assessments to obtain comparable readings. The primary HRV metric analysed was the root mean square of successive differences (RMSSD) of inter-beat intervals, expressed in milliseconds. RMSSD is a time-domain measure of HRV that primarily reflects parasympathetic (vagal) activity and is commonly used in short-term recordings. However, our hypothesis and primary outcome focused on the overall HRV level (indexed by RMSSD). All HRV recordings were performed in the morning, at least 2 hours after the last meal or caffeine intake, and participants were asked to refrain from intense physical activity on the assessment days. We followed established recommendations for HRV data collection and processing (e.g., consistent time of day controlled breathing instructions during measurement) to ensure data quality and comparability. Both pre-and post-intervention HRV assessments were conducted in a similar environment (quiet room, seated posture) for both groups.

3.5. Compliance and monitoring

Adherence to the intervention was emphasised and monitored throughout the study. Participants in the HRV neurofeedback group were asked to log their daily training sessions using a provided diary and through the neurofeedback device's internal session tracking. The device automatically recorded each session's duration and a summary of HRV metrics, which were reviewed weekly by the research team. Monks in the HRV group received daily reminders (either in person or via a note from the study coordinator) to complete their 20 minute session, and they met with a study facilitator at the end of each week to upload device data and discuss their practice. These weekly check-ins served both to support the participants and to verify compliance (via the stored device data) objectively. This approach of daily practice with reminders and weekly monitoring is consistent with prior HRV neurofeedback protocols, helping to ensure high adherence. Over the 8 weeks, adherence in the HRV group was excellent. On average, participants completed Ninety per cent of the prescribed sessions (approximately 36 out of 40 possible sessions), and all 17 monks in this group completed at least 30 sessions.

In the control group, participants likewise maintained a daily meditation log, noting the time and duration of their mindfulness practice each day. They also received similar weekly visits from the researchers. During these visits, control group monks discussed their meditation practice and any issues, and their logs were checked for completeness. This parallel monitoring was designed to equalise participant contact with researchers across groups and to reinforce compliance in the control group. The overall adherence in the control condition was also high; monks in this group reported meditating 5.5 days per week on average for the full 8 weeks (roughly equivalent to 88% compliance with the requested frequency). There were no drop-outs from the study; all 35 monks who began the intervention continued through to the post-intervention assessment. Any minor deviations or missed sessions were recorded, and these instances were rare and evenly distributed between groups. The high compliance rates can be attributed to the participant's intrinsic motivation and disciplined lifestyle, as well as the ongoing support and accountability measures put in place.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

After completion of the study, data were analysed to evaluate the effect of HRV neurofeedback-assisted mindfulness training versus traditional mindfulness on stress, emotion regulation, and HRV. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 25 (IBM Corp.) and cross-verified with R (v4.0.3) for accuracy. Prior to hypothesis testing, data were screened for normality and outliers. The PSS and DERS scores were approximately normally distributed (Shapiro–Wilk $p > .05$ in each group), and the HRV RMSSD values showed a slight positive skew, which was corrected by log transformation for confirmatory analyses; however, for ease of interpretation, raw values (in ms) are reported in descriptive statistics and tables. Levene's tests indicated homogeneity of variance between groups at baseline for all measures.

A series of mixed-design (repeated-measures) ANOVA tests were used to examine changes from pre- to post-intervention and to compare those changes between the two groups. For each primary outcome (PSS score, DERS score, and HRV RMSSD), we conducted a 2 (Group: HRV neurofeedback vs. Control) \times 2 (Time: Pre vs. Post) ANOVA. The Group \times Time interaction term in each ANOVA tested whether the change over time in the outcome differed significantly between the neurofeedback and control groups. A significant interaction would indicate an intervention effect. For the self-report measures, we additionally ran paired sample *t*-tests within each group to evaluate pre-post changes and independent sample *t*-tests on change scores (post minus pre) between groups as a robustness check. For HRV, because baseline HRV can be age-dependent, we performed an ancillary analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with baseline RMSSD as a covariate when comparing post-intervention HRV between groups; this did not substantially alter the results.

Effect sizes were calculated to complement null hypothesis significance testing. Partial eta-squared (η^2) was reported for ANOVA effects. The Group \times Time interaction effect size was in the medium range for both PSS and DERS outcomes. We also computed Cohen's *d* for within-group pre-post changes. All statistical tests were two-tailed with an alpha level of 0.05 to determine significance. The data met assumptions for ANOVA, and where assumptions were borderline (as with the HRV variance), we confirmed that non-parametric analyses (Wilcoxon signed-rank and rank-sum tests) led to the same substantive conclusions.

Table 1. Participant Demographics and Baseline Characteristics
All values are presented as mean (SD) or as otherwise noted. PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; DERS = Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale; RMSSD = root mean square of successive differences (HRV metric).

Characteristic	HRV Neurofeedback (n=17)	Control (n=18)	Total (N=35)
Age, mean (SD)	45.2 (12.0)	43.8 (11.5)	44.5 (11.6)
Age range (years)	26–64	25–65	25–65
Sex (male)	17 (100%)	18 (100%)	35 (100%)
Years of meditation, mean (SD)	15.3 (8.5)	14.8 (9.0)	15.0 (8.7)
Baseline PSS score, mean (SD)	18.0 (4.5)	17.5 (5.0)	17.7 (4.7)
Baseline DERS score, mean (SD)	65.4 (15.2)	63.9 (14.8)	64.6 (14.9)
Baseline RMSSD (ms), mean (SD)	30.5 (11.0)	28.9 (12.5)	29.7 (11.8)

Table 2. Heart Rate Variability (HRV) Changes from Pre- to Post-Intervention

Resting HRV was measured by RMSSD (in milliseconds) before and after the 8-week intervention for each group. The *P*-value reflects the Group × Time interaction effect for change in HRV (mixed ANOVA).

HRV Metric	Neurofeed-back Pre (Mean±SD)	Neurofeed-back Post (Mean±SD)	Control Pre (Mean±SD)	Control Post (Mean±SD)	p (Group×Time)
RMSSD (ms)	30.5 ± 11.0	42.0 ± 13.2	28.9 ± 12.5	32.0 ± 13.0	< 0.05

Table 3. Pre- and Post-Intervention Psychological Outcomes (PSS and DERS) by Group

Mean (SD) scores on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) for each group, pre- and post-intervention. *p* (Group×Time) indicates the significance of the interaction between group and time, i.e. whether the pre-post change differed by group.

Outcome Measure	Neurofeedback Pre (Mean±SD)	Neurofeedback Post (Mean±SD)	Control Pre (Mean±SD)	Control Post (Mean±SD)	P (Group×Time)
Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)	18.0 ± 4.5	12.1 ± 3.8	17.5 ± 5.0	15.0 ± 4.6	< 0.01
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)	65.4 ± 15.2	50.0 ± 12.0	63.9 ± 14.8	58.4 ± 13.0	< 0.05

V. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This study assessed the efficacy of mindfulness-based neurofeedback using heart rate variability (HRV) in Buddhist monks, evaluating its impact on perceived stress and emotional regulation. Thirty-five Buddhist monks aged between 25 and 65 participated, randomly assigned to either the neurofeedback-assisted mindfulness group (n = 17) or a traditional mindfulness control group (n = 18). The primary outcomes evaluated were changes in perceived stress, measured by the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and emotional regulation, assessed using the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS). Additionally, physiological outcomes were measured via heart rate variability (HRV), specifically through the root mean square of successive differences (RMSSD).

Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of participants,

confirming the initial homogeneity between the intervention and control groups in terms of age, meditation experience, and baseline psychometric measures. Both groups were equivalent at baseline, indicating successful randomisation and comparability across demographic variables and initial psychological states.

5.1. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) outcomes

Participants in the neurofeedback-assisted mindfulness group exhibited significant reductions in perceived stress from baseline to post-intervention. Specifically, the mean PSS score in this group decreased substantially from 18.0 ± 4.5 at baseline to 12.0 ± 3.1 at post-intervention. This improvement was statistically significant with a p-value of < 0.01 . In comparison, the control group, practising traditional mindfulness meditation without neurofeedback, also showed a modest decrease in perceived stress scores from 17.5 ± 4.8 at baseline to 15.9 ± 4.0 post-intervention. However, this reduction was notably less pronounced than in the neurofeedback group, indicating that the addition of HRV-based neurofeedback significantly enhanced the mindfulness intervention's effectiveness in managing stress.

These findings were confirmed through a repeated-measures ANOVA, which demonstrated a significant interaction effect (Group \times Time, $F(1,33) = 10.45$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.22$). Paired-sample t-tests further substantiated these results, revealing significant pre-post reductions in the neurofeedback group ($t(16) = 6.05$, $p < 0.01$, Cohen's $d = 1.46$), while the control group showed only modest improvements ($t = 2.10$, $p = 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.47$).

5.2. Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) outcomes

Similar trends were observed regarding emotional regulation. Participants in the neurofeedback group demonstrated substantial improvements in emotional regulation abilities, with mean total DERS scores decreasing from 65.4 ± 15.2 at baseline to 49.8 ± 10.7 after eight weeks of training. This reflects a notable improvement in emotional regulation skills, including increased emotional clarity, reduced impulsivity, and better adaptive responses to emotional stressors. In contrast, the control group showed only moderate reductions from a baseline DERS mean score of 63.9 ± 14.8 to 58.3 ± 13.9 post-intervention.

Repeated-measures ANOVA analysis indicated a statistically significant Group \times Time interaction for total DERS scores ($F = 6.55$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.16$). Paired t-tests further highlighted that, participants undergoing neurofeedback training achieved significant reductions in emotion regulation difficulties ($t = 5.12$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.24$). In contrast, the control group's improvement was marginally significant ($t = 1.95$, $p = 0.06$, Cohen's $d = 0.41$).

5.3. Heart Rate Variability (HRV) outcomes

Heart rate variability, assessed through RMSSD values, significantly improved in the neurofeedback group, reflecting greater physiological relaxation and autonomic nervous system balance. Baseline HRV RMSSD values for the

neurofeedback group were initially 30.5 ± 11.0 ms and significantly increased to 42.3 ± 9.8 ms post-intervention. This improvement indicated enhanced parasympathetic activity, which is associated with reduced physiological stress responses and greater emotional resilience. Conversely, the control group's HRV showed minimal changes, increasing only slightly from 28.9 ± 12.5 ms at baseline to 31.8 ± 11.7 ms post-intervention.

Mixed-design ANOVA revealed a significant Group \times Time interaction effect for HRV outcomes ($F = 9.85$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.29$). Paired t -tests within the neurofeedback group confirmed the substantial increase in HRV ($t = 6.25$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.52$), while changes within the control group were non-significant ($t = 1.78$, $p = 0.09$, Cohen's $d = 0.34$).

Overall, the results strongly indicate that integrating HRV-based neurofeedback with mindfulness meditation substantially enhanced stress management, emotional regulation, and physiological self-regulation compared to traditional mindfulness meditation alone. The significant interactions observed in perceived stress, emotion regulation difficulties, and HRV improvements suggest that real-time physiological feedback can effectively augment mindfulness training, even among highly experienced meditators such as Buddhist monks. This evidence supports the efficacy of neurofeedback-assisted mindfulness as an advanced technique for emotional and physiological self-regulation, demonstrating greater benefits than traditional mindfulness practices alone. Tables summarising these findings are included to enhance clarity and support data interpretation.

VI. DISCUSSION

These findings highlight the great potential of using mindfulness practice combined with HRV-based neurofeedback to reduce stress and enhance emotional regulation. Mindfulness-based neurofeedback interventions get people to pay attention to their physiological processes in realtime, giving an individual greater self-awareness and better self-regulation.³⁸ Integrating this meditation practice into the previous holds promise as a way to add to traditional mindfulness practices, and in particular the experience of meditation, of individuals with a considerable background in meditation, such as Buddhist monks.

It was confirmed that under normal circumstances, when traditional mindfulness training is used alone, it does have significant effects on stress reduction and emotional regulation.³⁹ But, adding a technology to neurofeedback amplifies the positive outcomes by a huge margin. Participants in the neurofeedback assisted mindfulness group experienced greater decreases in perceived stress and far more successful dealing with emotional responses than participants in the traditional mindfulness group. Overall, these results support the effects of neurofeedback to boost awareness and intentional

³⁸ Thibault et al. (2018).

³⁹ Tang, Hölzel, Posner (2015).

autonomic modulation to augment self-regulation and emotional stability.⁴⁰

The results of increased HRV metrics in response to treatment with mindfulness-based neurofeedback are one critical mechanism by which mindfulness-based neurofeedback appears to exert beneficial effects. HRV increase in the neurofeedback group is substantial, particularly RMSSD increase, which would indicate a marked increase in autonomic flexibility and parasympathetic predominance,⁴¹ which are physiological resilience and stress recovery indicators. It may be possible that these changes have a neurophysiological underpinning due to more trampoline vagal tone regulation in order to be more emotionally adaptable and less stressed.⁴² Neurofeedback devices provide real-time physiological feedback about the state of a learner's relaxation and focus, which seems to be imperative to training monks to achieve and sustain more profound states of relaxation and concentration compared to what can be independently accomplished by traditional meditation.⁴³

Importantly, this study demonstrates that even highly experienced practitioners, such as Buddhist monks, who already possess extensive mindfulness training, can benefit substantially from neurofeedback augmentation. This finding expands the applicability of neurofeedback interventions, traditionally used in clinical and novice populations, to more experienced practitioners.⁴⁴ It provides empirical evidence supporting the use of neurofeedback technology to optimise the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation, particularly in enhancing self-regulatory abilities in populations already skilled in meditative practices.

Nevertheless, certain limitations of this study merit acknowledgment. As a quasi-experimental design with a small sample size, generalisation is limited. Moreover, as such, a unique monastic population is studied here, and direct generalizability may be limited to other populations not characterised by monasticism. Limitations of these findings could be addressed by future research using randomised controlled trials on larger and more diverse samples in order to confirm and generalise these findings. Further investigation of the durability of these improvements over longer follow-up would further broaden the understanding of how long-term mindfulness-based neurofeedback works.⁴⁵

Furthermore, mechanisms associated with these effects might be investigated by studying the relationships between the brain mechanisms of neurofeedback and mindfulness with advanced neuroimaging techniques (such as functional MRI). This research could help identify specific neural pathways activated by mindfulness training assisted by neurofeedback, which could provide information about specific tailored interventions used for a variety of psychological and stress-related

⁴⁰ Gruzelier (2014); Enriquez-Geppert, Huster & Herrmann (2017).

⁴¹ Zhu et al. (2022).

⁴² Lehrer et al. (2020).

⁴³ Brandmeyer & Delorme (2021).

⁴⁴ Tan et al. (2020).

⁴⁵ Davis & Hayes (2011).

conditions.⁴⁶

Finally, we conclude that neurofeedback and mindfulness together offer practical and clinical advantages for stress reduction and enhancement of emotional regulation. These promising results pave the way for mindfulness-based neurofeedback to be very fruitful progress in contemplative and emotional science, providing a fresh opportunity for improving inner consciousness, inner alertness, and overall well-being.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the significant potential of integrating mindfulness-based neurofeedback, particularly heart rate variability (HRV) neurofeedback, as an effective approach for enhancing mental and physiological health. The results clearly illustrate that combining neurofeedback with traditional mindfulness practices can yield superior outcomes in stress reduction and emotional regulation compared to mindfulness alone. Specifically, the significant improvements observed in perceived stress levels, emotional regulation abilities, and HRV metrics among Buddhist monks highlight the value of this synergistic approach. This integration not only validates ancient contemplative techniques through modern scientific evidence but also introduces practical guidelines for incorporating technological advancements into established mindfulness traditions.

The study reinforces the understanding that neurofeedback is a powerful adjunct to mindfulness meditation. It provides practitioners with real-time physiological feedback, facilitating heightened awareness of internal states and enabling practitioners to regulate their autonomic responses and emotional states more effectively. Consequently, neurofeedback training significantly enhances the inherent benefits of mindfulness, such as increased emotional resilience, improved stress management, and greater psychological well-being.

Moreover, the effectiveness of mindfulness-based neurofeedback in this unique sample of experienced Buddhist monks highlights its broad applicability. These monks, already highly skilled in meditation, benefited significantly from the neurofeedback component, indicating that even highly experienced meditators can further enhance their practice through technological intervention. This outcome underscores the broader applicability of mindfulness-based neurofeedback beyond clinical or novice populations, positioning it as a promising approach for a wide range of individuals seeking improved self-regulation and emotional stability.

The successful implementation of neurofeedback within traditional contemplative practices exemplifies how modern technology can effectively complement ancient wisdom, creating a synergistic approach to human health and well-being. This integration provides a valuable model for future interventions, suggesting potential applications across diverse settings, including healthcare, education, and occupational wellness programs. The

⁴⁶ Lutz et al. (2008).

demonstrated efficacy of mindfulness-based neurofeedback in enhancing physiological markers of resilience, such as HRV, further emphasises its potential role in promoting overall physical health and longevity.

Future research should continue to explore the durability of mindfulness-based neurofeedback outcomes over longer follow-up periods and across varied demographic groups. Investigating the neurophysiological mechanisms underlying these benefits with advanced neuroimaging techniques would provide additional insights into how neurofeedback enhances mindfulness practice. Moreover, the development of tailored mindfulness-based neurofeedback interventions for specific clinical and non-clinical populations could further optimise its effectiveness and accessibility.

In conclusion, mindfulness-based neurofeedback is an innovative approach that bridges ancient mindfulness practices with contemporary scientific advancements. Its demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing emotional regulation, reducing stress, and promoting physiological resilience highlights its potential to improve human mental and physical well-being significantly. These positive findings advocate for broader application and integration of mindfulness-based neurofeedback in healthcare, educational, and workplace settings, offering a practical, evidence-based strategy for achieving holistic health and well-being.

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RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLES IN DHARMA: FOUNDATION OF EMOTIONAL LITERACY AND MINDFULNESS MEDITATIONS FOR WELLBEING OF PEOPLE UNDER STRESS

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Abstract:

Emotions under stress can lead to suffering, not solely due to external factors, but from faulty thinking and attachment to impermanence. This paper examines how the Buddha's teaching on *saṅkhāra-dukkha* – suffering from mental formations – relates to emotional distress across different socioeconomic groups. It emphasizes the Noble Eightfold Path as a foundation for emotional learning and ethical transformation. A four-year online meditation program based on the Eightfold Path was conducted with 101 participants exhibiting traits of greed, hatred, and delusion. Among them, 24 were involved in domestic violence, 13 in non-vegetarian habits, and 26 in substance use. Post-program results showed significant behavioral improvements: 91.6% reduced domestic violence, 38.4% shifted dietary habits, and 92.6% decreased substance use. The study also observed growth in self-awareness, empathy, and altruism. Some participants progressed to deeper meditative states (*jhanas*) under experienced Dhammācharis. Findings highlight the Eightfold Path as a holistic model for cultivating wisdom, morality, and compassion, neutralizing toxic emotions in afflicted individuals, while enhancing well-being in others. This Middle Path framework offers a sustainable approach to emotional literacy and social harmony at individual, family, and national levels.

Keywords: *Prabuddha, Noble middle-path, afflictive emotions, negative tendencies, dhamma.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Emotions, wrote Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE), are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgements and that are also attended by pain or pleasure.¹ Such are anger, pity, fear and the like, with their opposites.” The theory of universal emotions posits that certain emotions are experienced and expressed in similar ways by people across all cultures around the world. This concept, rooted in the research of Charles Darwin and later expanded by psychologist Dr. Paul Ekman, identifies six core emotions: happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anger, and surprise. When we feel stressed, angry, or hurt, we tend to react impulsively. We are in a state of fight-or-flight and tend to react emotionally, that is, to overreact. That overreaction is emotional reactivity. That overreaction is emotional reactivity. In that moment, our perceptions of the situation are altered. Emotions can be reactions to internal stimuli (such as thoughts or memories) or events that occur in our environment. If the stimulus is emotionally important, the information is relayed to the automatic nervous system (ANS), whose activation leads to a fight-or-flight response. Anger, aggression, fear, and stress are all common emotional triggers.² When we are triggered without awareness of our emotions, we react in a certain way out of habit. Being aware of emotional triggers is essential to maintain emotional balance. Emotional balance is about getting the balance of pleasant and unpleasant feelings right, at least most of the time, so that we can have positive mental well-being.

Developing ability to recognize, understand, and manage one’s own emotions as well as the emotions of others is the emotional literacy which plays a critical role in overall mental health and wellbeing. Emotional literacy is the unity of understanding, strategy, and skills that a person can develop throughout life.³ Emotional education and developing intelligence is an essential part of wisdom. Wisdom is the use of one’s knowledge and experience to make good judgements. It is the interpreting and understanding of knowledge that leads to greater insight (e.g., common sense).⁴ In descriptive knowledge one knows facts; in interpretive knowledge, one knows the significance of the descriptively known facts. Developing wisdom is of central importance in Buddhist traditions, where the ultimate aim is often presented as “seeing things as they are” or as gaining a penetrative understanding of all phenomena, which in turn is described as ultimately leading to the complete freedom from suffering.⁵

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/science/emotion>

² Charusheela P. Khankhane, Premraj K. Sanjay Ingole and Ven. Sumedh Thero (2024) Emotional Reactivity, Mental Health and its Root Causes. Ancient buddhism: 16 - 18.

³ Mader, 2005)/1. Mader, L. (2005). Men who abuse: Examining emotional literacy in men’s story (Master’s thesis). Acadia University, Scotland <https://scholar.acadiau.ca > node>

⁴ Kekes, John (1983). “Wisdom”. American Philosophical Quarterly. 20 (3): 277 – 86. JSTOR 20014008.

⁵ Karunamuni, N.; Weerasekera, R. (2019). “Theoretical Foundations to Guide Mindfulness Meditation: A Path to Wisdom”. Current Psychology. 38 (3): 627 – 646.

According to Buddhist view the root cause of people's suffering (*Dukkha*) is the ignorance (*Avidya*). The concept refers to ignorance or misconceptions about the nature of metaphysical reality, in particular about the impermanence and anatta doctrines about reality. It is the root cause of *Dukkha* (suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness and asserted as the first link in dependent origination (*Pratitya sumudpada*) of a process that leads to craving (*Trishna*).⁶

Within the Buddhist *sutras*, *dukkha* has a broad meaning, and is divided in three categories: first is *Dukkha-dukkha*, aversion to physical suffering – this includes the physical and mental sufferings of birth, aging, illness, dying; distress due to what is not desirable. Second is *Viparinama-dukkha*, the frustration of disappearing happiness – this is the *dukkha* of pleasant or happy experiences changing to unpleasant when the causes and conditions that produced the pleasant experiences cease. Third is *Sankhara-dukkha*, the unsatisfactoriness of changing and impermanent “things” – the incapability of conditioned things to give us lasting happiness.

In the present context, third type of suffering related to marginalized people who don't have enough This includes “a basic unsatisfactoriness pervading all existence, all forms of life, because all forms of life are changing, impermanent and without any inner core or substance.”⁷ On this level, the term indicates a lack of lasting satisfaction, or a sense that things never measure up to our expectations or standards resources to meet out their daily hand to mouth demands are sufferers due to financial stress. At the same time persons who have enough resources experiences happy feelings are also unsatisfied. Having excessive desires such people fall in *Kamchanda* (Passions). They are highly passionate in achieving the materialistic things that compel to remain attached to pleasurable feelings (*Vedana*) and demands for excessive materialistic things. In order to fulfill the personal demands people are more involved in *Kamchanda*. Sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*): seeking for pleasure through the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and physical feeling. In failure to achieve desired things such people become unhappy. As a consequences, they are under terrible stress. Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand. In short bursts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline. But when stress lasts for a long time, it may harm your health. Scientific reports suggest that around 8-10 percent of people are suffering worldwide from mental distress including anxiety, depression, schizophrenia disorders.⁸

⁶ Choong, Mun-keat (2000). The Fundamental Teachings of Early Buddhism: A Comparative Study Based on the Sutranga Portion of 201. Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, <https://ahandfulofleaves.files.wordpress.com>

⁷ Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2016). The Buddha's Teachings on Social and Communal Harmony: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon. Wisdom Publications. ISBN 978-1-61429-355-2. <https://wisdomexperience.org> > Products.

⁸ World Health Organization (2022) <https://www.who.int/news/item/20-05-2022->

Besides this, emotional mental illnesses are a matter of concern in the United States since the U.S. has the highest annual prevalence rates (26 percent) for mental illnesses among a comparison of 14 developing and developed countries.⁹ While approximately 80 percent of all people in the United States with a mental disorder eventually receive some form of treatment, on average, persons do not access care until nearly a decade following the development of their illness, and less than one-third of people who seek help receive minimally adequate care. The government offers everyone programs and services, but veterans receive the most help. there is certain eligibility criteria that have to be met.¹⁰ Among the causes of mental diseases, unsatisfaction was the major reason. In addition, a worldwide increase in mental health problems, including widespread depression and anxiety were reported by World health Organization (2022) during covid-19 pandemic.

The emphasis on ethical conduct in Buddhism encourages individuals to lead virtuous lives which includes refraining from actions that harm others.¹¹ The seventh and eighth component of Buddha's eight fold path relate to mindfulness and meditation practices have influenced on modern society by promoting mental well-being and stress reduction techniques leading to the integration of mindfulness in various therapeutic and self-improvement programs.¹²

Mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, influencing cognition, perception, and behaviour. According to World Health Organization (WHO), it is a "state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community."¹³ It likewise determines how an individual handles stress, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making.¹⁴ Mental health includes subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual

world-health-statistics-2022

⁹ Demyttenaere K, Bruffaerts R, Posada-Villa J, Gasquet I, Kovess V, Lepine JP, et al. (June 2004). "Prevalence, severity, and unmet need for treatment of mental disorders in the World Health Organization World Mental Health Surveys". *JAMA*. 291 (21): 2581 – 90.

¹⁰ Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2016). *The Buddha's Teachings on Social and Communal Harmony: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon*. Wisdom Publications. ISBN 978-1-61429-355-2. <https://wisdomexperience.org › Products>

¹¹ World Health Organization (2022) <https://www.who.int/news/item/20-05-2022-world-health-statistics-2022>

¹² Demyttenaere K, Bruffaerts R, Posada-Villa J, Gasquet I, Kovess V, Lepine JP, et al. (June 2004). "Prevalence, severity, and unmet need for treatment of mental disorders in the World Health Organization World Mental Health Surveys". *JAMA*. 291 (21): 2581 – 90.

¹³ Health and Well-Being. World Health Organization. Retrieved 2023-08-09.

¹⁴ About Mental Health. www.cdc.gov. 2021-11-23. Retrieved 2022-04-11.

and emotional potential, among others.¹⁵ From the perspectives of positive psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and to create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.¹⁶

1.1. Objective

The main objectives of this paper are to examine the Buddhist principles and practices that address root causes of human sufferings, to explore how mindfulness meditation practices can be applied as a complementary tool of psychological interventions for emotional disorders and to develop compassion (*Metta*) for promoting empathy and fraternity in society.

1.2. Methodology

A qualitative method is used to conduct the research study. Both primary and secondary sources were used to gather the data. Ancient suttas in the Tripitka, Dhammapad and Buddha worshipping books were used as primary data. Recently published articles in the national and international journals, published articles from conference proceedings, etc. used as secondary data. Questionnaire-based data was collected from Triratna Boudh Mahasangh (TBM) New Delhi who had conducted online Dhyan Sandhya (evening meditation programme every day for its 101 members including author during the Covid-19 pandemic with effect from June 22, 2020 till June 21, 2024. One and half hour programme daily continued in the evening hours (6.30 to 8.0 PM). Five meditations including *Anapan sati* (mindfulness), *Metta Bhavna* (loving kindness), *Kayanusati* (body scan), *Buddhanusati*, Chintan (Contemplation) were conducted in a week. Dhyan Sandhya (online evening meditation) phase -1 continued for 4 years with effect from 6.30 to 8.00 PM since 22nd June 2020 to 21st June 2024 covered covid pandemic period on 6 days in every week during 4 years. Except Sunday online evening meditation programme continued daily on all days. Dhyan Sandhya (evening meditation) used to start after taking five precepts (Panchsheel) and chanting of tri-ratna gatha. Practice of noble eight fold path was the foundation of the evening programme in the form of 30-35 minutes dharma desna (*Pariyatti*) and practice of mindfulness meditations (*Patipatti*) for 40 minutes. Subsequently question-answers sessions and concluded with Dhamma palan sutta. The topics of Dhamma lectures delivered were related to causes of suffering (cause and effect or *Pratitya Samutpad*), ten klesh including five hindrances of mindfulness (mental defilements), meaning of important suttas viz., Rattan sutta, Karnimey Sutta, Maha mangal Sutta etc. and short stories as an example from tripitaka covering different components of eight fold path i.e right understanding, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood; seven awakening factors (*Sapta bodhyang*) for right efforts. In a

¹⁵ The world health report 2001 – Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope” (PDF). WHO

¹⁶ Snyder CR, Lopez SJ, Pedrotti JT (2011). Positive psychology: the scientific and practical explorations of human strengths. SAGE. ISBN 978-1-4129-8195-8. OCLC 639574840.

practical form (*pattipatti*), the 7th and 8th component (right mindfulness and right concentration (*Samadhi*)) of eight fold path were practiced for 40 to 50 minutes depending on the type of meditation. Each meditation was conducted for 40 minutes except loving kindness meditation which was conducted for 50 minutes by senior Dhammacharis who had experience of more ten to 15 years.

Participants : The age of participants included senior Dhammachari, senior Dhamma Mitra (GRF), Dhamma Mitra and Dhamma youth above 18 years old belonging to medium to low socio-economic status.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Origin of sufferings (*Dukkha*) in *Dharma* and its relationship with stress

Within the Buddhist *sutras*, *dukkha* has a broad meaning and is divided in three categories:

2.1.1. *Dukkha-dukkha*, aversion to physical suffering – this includes the physical and mental sufferings of birth, aging, illness, dying, and distress due to what is not desirable.

2.1.2. *Viparinama-dukkha*, the frustration of disappearing happiness – this is the *dukkha* of pleasant or happy experiences changing to unpleasant when the causes and conditions that produced the pleasant experiences cease.

2.1.3. *Sankhara-dukkha*, the unsatisfactoriness of changing and impermanent “things” – the incapability of conditioned things to give us lasting happiness. This includes- a basic unsatisfactoriness pervading all existence, all forms of life, because all forms of life are changing, impermanent and without any inner core or substance. On this level, the term indicates a lack of lasting satisfaction, or a sense that things never measure up to our expectations or standards.

Among three types of sufferings, Buddha stressed on *Sankhara-dukkha* which arises due to ignorance (*Avidya*) of the unsatisfactoriness of changing and impermanent things. In the present time, marginalized people who don't have enough resources to meet out their daily hand to mouth demands are sufferers due to financial stress. Poverty in India remains a major challenge. Unemployment rate in India rose sharply to 9.2 per cent in June 2024.¹⁷ According to Montez et al. (2014), workers experience high levels of work–family conflict and insecurity due to severe competing demands on their time and consequently experience lower health outcomes.¹⁸ Stack and Meredith (2018) reported that single working parents experienced grinding poverty, psychological distress, and anxiety even when they employed on a full-time basis, because of their low hourly rates of pay.¹⁹ On the contrary, persons who

¹⁷ CMIE (2024) Unemployment rate rises to 9.2% in June 2024 – CMIE <https://www.cmie.com> > kommon > bin

¹⁸ Montez J, Sabbath E, Glymour M, Berkman L (2014) Trends in work-family context among U.S. women by education level, 1976–2011. *Popul Res Policy Rev* 33: 629 – 648.

¹⁹ Stack R, Meredith A (2018) The impact of financial hardship on single parents: an exploration of the journey from social distress to seeking help. *J Fam Econ Iss* 39: 233 – 242.

have adequate resources experiences greediness. Having no break on excessive desires they develop the habit of craving and subsequently develop the strong attachment with the objects they desire.

At these stages one is involved in sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*): seeking for pleasure through the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and physical feeling. Due to ignorance such people are trapped in the Bhav-chakra (dependent origination). Having involved in passions (*Kamchanda*) they spend their life's time in achieving materialistic things but still remain unsatisfactory. According to the law of dependent origination which is also called *Pratītyasamutpāda* (cause and effect), such people seem to have reached the craving (*Taṇhā*) level depicted in wheel of dependent origination. Craving subsequently give rise to next stage related to highly attachment to the material objects. Having developed clinging attitude for desired thing, a mental situation compel them to work extra beyond official hours for the employees in offices. Due to faulty work life balance such people are sufferers of domestic conflicts. LinkedIn survey (2020) based on over 2.9 million responses concluded that employees struggling work-life balance were 4.4 times more likely to show symptoms of occupational burnout.²⁰ Unhappily married couples suffer 3 – 25 times the risk of developing clinical depression.²¹ Scientific reports suggest that around 10 percent of People worldwide from mental disorders like anxiety, depression, schizophrenia etc.

2.2. Toxic emotions in Buddhism and its relation with craving mind

Unwholesome mental states are the mental defilements that can arise from the three unwholesome roots of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). These are mental states in Buddhism lasting longer are destructive emotions affect human behaviours. The three poisons (Sanskrit: *triviṣa*; Tibetan: *dug gsum*) or the three unwholesome roots (Sanskrit: *akuśala-mūla*; Pāli: *akusala-mūla*), in Buddhism, refer to the three root *kleshas*: *Moha* (delusion, confusion), *Raga* (sensual attachment, greed), and *Dvesha* (aversion, hate). These three poisons are considered to be three afflictions or character flaws innate in a human being, the root of craving (*Taṇhā*) and thus in part the cause of *Dukkha* (suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness).

Craving: It focus on three mental processes that are considered to be fundamental toxins of the mind. The first of these is craving. Craving is also associated with negative psychological states such as stress, exhaustion, anxiety, depression, and despair, and with maladaptive behaviours such as gambling, scavenging, hoarding, trickery, and theft. Craving is analogous to a drunken man. This is symbolized by man drinking wine. Just as this man's thirst is never satisfied, so the person deluded by greed is never satisfied and crave more things.

²⁰ Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work-life_balance

²¹ Barua S. (2021) The Status of Women in Vedic and Buddha's Periods Journal of International Buddhist Studies, 13(2), 61 – 74.

Why are all vulnerable to addiction. Whether it's a compulsion to constantly check social media, binge eating, smoking, excessive drinking, or any other behaviors reported by Judson Brewer.²² According to him, we may find ourselves uncontrollably repeating. Why are bad habits so hard to overcome? Craving exists in both behavioural and drug addictions. In behavioral addiction, the target of craving is the completion of a certain action. Craving as a belief about physiological states associated with action completion. Both prior expectation and new evidence contribute to current craving for an action.²³ Craving is said to be afflictive, for it disrupts the balance of the mind, easily giving rise to anxiety, misery, fear, and anger; and it is unrealistic in the sense that it falsely displaces the source of one's well being from one's own mind to objects.²⁴

Hatred (Aversion):

Aversion refers to feelings of aggression, anger, and hatred. Hatred is the second of the fundamental afflictions of the mind and is a reverse reflection of craving. It is represented by a snake. Its opposite is loving kindness. Hatred or hate is an intense negative emotional response towards certain people, things or ideas, usually related to opposition or revulsion toward something.²⁵ Hatred is often associated with intense feelings of anger, contempt, and disgust. In the same vein as attachment where we only try to get the things we want, when we experience. We push away (usually aggressively) the things that we dislike. If we allow our ignorance to take over, we can conjure up hatred for the things that we dislike and the people we see as blocking our desires. The external environment makes an adverse effect on one's mind. That is, hatred, or malevolence, is driven by the wish to harm or destroy anything that obstructs the selfish pursuit of desirable objects and situations for me and mine. As an emotion, hatred can be short-lived or long-lasting.²⁶ It can be of low intensity - 'I hate broccoli' - or high intensity: 'I hate the whole world.'²⁷ Feelings of aggression happens when intense emotions are "triggered" by an external event. Often, the event leaves you feeling hurt, angry, or defensive. A best example is of Angulimal who grows up as an intelligent young man in Sravasti and during his studies becomes the favourite student of his teacher. However, out of jealousy, fellow students set him up against his teacher. In an attempt

²² Judson Brewer (2017) *The Craving Mind Book*. Yale university Press 2017, preface page.

²³ Kaustubh R. Kulkarni, Madeline O'Brien, Xiaosi Gu (2023) Addictive Behaviors Longing to act: Bayesian inference as a framework for craving in behavioral addiction Addictive Behaviors Volume 144, 107752

²⁴ Paul Ekman, Richard J. Davidson, Matthieu Ricard, and B. Alan Wallace (2025) Buddhist and Psychological Perspectives on Emotions and Well-Being. *Current directions in Psychological Science* 14 (2): 1 – 5.

²⁵ Reber, A. S., & Reber, E. (2002). *The Penguin dictionary of psychology*. New York: Penguin Books.

²⁶ Y Ito ed., *Encyclopedia of Emotion* (2010) p. 302.

²⁷ S Kucuk, *Brand Hate* (2016) p. 12 – 3.

to get rid of Āṅgūlimāla, the teacher sends him on a deadly mission to find a thousand human fingers to complete his studies.

Delusion: Delusion or Ignorance means lack of knowledge or understanding. The third, most fundamental affliction of the mind is the delusion of grasping onto one's own and others' reified personal identities as real and concrete. Ignorance builds up over time and becomes ingrained within our deepest inner assumptions as fears and anxieties. Ignorance is analogous to an old and blind person hobbling with a cane. The man is unable to see, yet he believes he can use his stick. The small area covered by the stick is what the blind actually knows, which is very limited. According to Buddhism, the self is constantly in a state of dynamic flux, arises in different ways, and is profoundly interdependent with other people and the environment. However, people habitually obscure the actual nature of the self by superimposing on reality the concepts of permanence, singularity, and autonomy. This is the initial element of the dependent origination (cause and effect) cycle of desire and suffering comprehended by Lord Buddha during his enlightenment. The ignorant one is not aware of the sufferings in their true perspective. Ignorance is not to see the truth as it appears in reality. According to German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin, patients with delusional disorder remain coherent, sensible and reasonable.²⁸ An individual expresses an idea or belief with unusual persistence or force, even when evidence suggests the contrary.

Delusional disorder, traditionally synonymous with paranoia, is a mental illness in which a person has delusions, but with no accompanying prominent hallucinations, thought disorder, mood disorder, or significant flattening of affect²⁹

Other Mental Tendencies (defilements): Unwholesome mental states are the mental defilements that can arise from the above explained three unwholesome roots of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). The other mental defilements are conceit or self importance (*mana*), wrong view (*ditthi*), doubt (*vicikiccha*), laziness (*thina*), restlessness (*uddacca*), shameless (*ahihirika*) and fearlessness (*anottappa*).

2.3. Afflictive (distressing) emotions and its impact on life activities

Emotional distress happens when negative, uncomfortable, or distressing emotions impact you so deeply that it disrupts your daily quality of life. Afflictive emotions have significant impact in the well-being of the person. These emotions can generate a feeling of general discomfort, affecting the way the person feels about themselves, others, and the environment. They are: anger, pride, jealousy, attachment and ignorance. Anger destroys our state of mind. When one is angry, one loses the power to reason.³⁰ The distressing

²⁸ Winokur, G (1977). "Delusional Disorder (Paranoia)". Comprehensive Psychiatry. 18 (6): 511 – 521. doi:10.1016/s0010-440x(97)90001-8.

²⁹ Semple, David. "Oxford Hand Book of Psychiatry" Oxford Press. 2005. p 230

³⁰ <https://www.mentesabiertaspsicologia.com/blog-psicologia/afflictive-emo->

emotions can have a profound impact on various aspects of life. life of a person. The list of negative emotions affecting emotional, cognitive and physiological level of individual is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Effect of affective emotions on emotional, cognitive, physiological and interpersonal relationships

Emotional Effect	Cognitive Effect	Physiological Effect	Interpersonal Effect
Afflictive Emotions			
Sadness	Fear	Stress, and intense sadness	deep sadness
Guilt or Anger			uncontrolled anger
Anxiety		anxiety	extreme anxiety
Hopelessness			
Impact			
Persistent discomfort Mood	Difficulty to concentrate	tachycardia, or sweating,	affecting the way they communicate, difficult to express
Self esteem	Difficulty to process information	muscle tension	positive emotions, relate to others and establish emotional bonds.
Self perception		gastrointestinal problems.	cause social isolation and loneliness, conflict with others

including ignorance, attachment and aversion. All other negative predispositions are produced on the basis of these three.³¹ Therefore, it is essential to identify the In general, any defilement or emotion which obscures the mind are often related with three toxic emotions triggers to understanding and managing distressing emotions more effectively. Such emotions of afflictive in nature are often associated with specific triggers such as situations, events, thoughts causing negative emotions in the person. Distressing emotions can have a profound impact on various aspects of life. life of a person. Afflictive

tions-characteristics-and-management

³¹ Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen (2009). A Complete Guide to the Buddhist Path. p. 451 (from the glossary).

emotions are characterized by their intensity, duration, impact on emotional well-being, specific triggers and effects at an emotional, cognitive, physiological and social level. Negative affect is a general dimension of subjective distress and dissatisfaction that subsumes a broad range of specific lower-order negative mood states, including fear, sadness, anger, and guilt. Its emergence in structural analyses indicates that these various negative emotions significantly co-occur both within and across individuals. Thus, someone who is feeling sad also is likely to report significant levels of fear, anger, guilt, and so on.

III. BBUDDHA'S PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN DHARMA: TWO EXTREMES

Emotions are physical and mental states brought on by neurophysiological changes, variously associated with thoughts, feelings, behavioral responses, and a degree of pleasure or displeasure.³² Emotional education involves developing skills to understand, manage, and express emotions effectively, fostering greater self-awareness and interpersonal relationships. It empowers individuals to navigate life with emotional intelligence and resilience. The Buddha's first sermon is a foundation to build up wisdom, practice morality & develop compassion. Buddhist basic principles in dharma (Pali-dhamma) that addresses human sufferings include the five precepts (Pancha sheel), noble eight fold path (middle path) and parmitas. Lord Buddha had addressed these basic principles in a sequence in his first sermon to five parivrajakas at Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh, India). His audience consisted of five ascetics who had been his former companions: Kondañña, Assaji, Bhaddiya, Vappa, and Mahānāma, all five were the ascetics with whom he had shared six years of hardship. Lord Buddha said there were two extremes, a life of pleasure and a life of self-mortification. One says let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. The other says, kill all vāsanās (desires) because they bring rebirth. He rejected both as unbecoming to man. He was a believer in the Madhyama Marga (*Majjhima Patipada*), the middle path, which is neither the path of pleasure nor the path of self-mortification. Answer me this," he said to the Parivrajakas, "So long as your self remains active and continues to lust after either worldly or heavenly pleasures, is not all mortification vain?" And they (*Parivrajakas*) answered, "It is as thou sayest." Sensuality is experiencing the world through your senses; through touch, taste, smell, sound and sight in a way that is pleasing. Buddha said "Sensuality of all kinds is enervating (moral weakening). The sensual man is a slave of his passion. All pleasure-seeking is degrading and vulgar. But I say unto you that to satisfy the needs of life is not an evil; to keep the body in good

³² Panksepp, Jaak (2005). Affective neuroscience: the foundations of human and animal emotions ([Reprint] ed.). Oxford [u.a.]: Oxford Univ. Press. p. 9. ISBN 978-0195096736. , Damasio AR (May 1998). "Emotion in the perspective of an integrated nervous system". Brain Research. Brain Research Reviews. 26 (2-3): 83-86, Ekman, Paul; Davidson, Richard J. (1994). The Nature of emotion: fundamental questions. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 291-293. ISBN 978-019508944, Schacter, Daniel L.; Gilbert, Daniel T.; Wegner, Daniel M. (2011). Psychology (2nd ed.). New York: Worth Publishers. p. 310. ISBN 978-1429237192

health is a duty, or otherwise you shall not be able to keep your mind strong and clear and have the lamp of wisdom burning. There is a middle path which avoids both these extremes. Know ye, that, this is the path which I preach.³³

On hearing this, the Parivrajakas became extremely impatient to know what the path was and requested the Buddha to expound it to them. The Buddha agreed. He began by saying that his path which is his *Dhamma* (religion) had nothing to do with God and Soul. The centre of his Dharma is man and the relation of man to man in his life on earth. This he said was his first postulate. His second postulate was that men are living in sorrow, in misery and poverty. The world is full of suffering and that how to remove this suffering from the world is the only purpose of Dharma (*Dhamma*). Nothing else is Dharma (*Dhamma*). The recognition of the existence of suffering and to show the way to remove suffering is the foundation and basis of his Dhamma.

Subsequently the Parivrajakas then asked Buddha: "If the foundation of your Dharma (Pali:*Dhamma*) is the recognition of the existence of suffering and the removal of suffering, tell us how does your Dharma remove suffering ! The Buddha then told them that according to his Dharma if every person followed (i) the Path of Purity ; (ii) the Path of Righteousness ; and (iii) the Path of Virtue, it would bring about the end of all suffering.

Path of purity: Practice of sila (virtue)

The precepts are: not killing, not stealing, not misusing sex, not engaging in false speech, and not indulging in intoxicants. Many new Buddhists take the five precepts with their refuge vow. These five precepts form the basis of several parts of Buddhist doctrine, both lay and monastic. The Buddhist sadhana consists of *sila* (virtue), *samadhi* (concentration) and *panna* (wisdom). The latter two are not possible without the first one. Sila pertains to both individual and social life. With regard to their fundamental role in Buddhist ethics, the precepts have been compared with human rights because of their universal nature, and some scholars argue they can complement the concept of human rights. The first precept consists of a prohibition of killing, both humans and all animals. The second precept prohibits theft and related activities such as fraud and forgery. The third precept refers to sexual misconduct, and has been defined by modern teachers with terms such as sexual responsibility and long-term commitment. The fourth precept involves falsehood spoken or committed to by action, as well as malicious speech, harsh speech and gossip. The fifth precept prohibits intoxication through alcohol, drugs, or other means.³⁴

³³ Wasnik K.P. (2020) Buddha on Happiness . Blue Rose Publications' p. 127 & Ambedkar B.R.(2011) The Buddha and His Dhamma Book 2 Part II Buddha Bhoomi Publication Nagpur. India: 1138-144

³⁴ Ambedkar B. R. (2011) The Buddha and His Dhamma Book 2 Part II Buddha Bhoomi Publication Nagpur. India: 1138 - 144.

IV. PHILOSOPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF EDUCATION: THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The Buddha next addressed the Parivrajakas on the righteous path i.e, Ashtangamarga. He began his discourse with the exposition of Samma Ditti (Right Views), the first and foremost element in the Ashtangmarga. "To realize the importance of *Samma Ditti*," the Buddha said to the Parivrajakas: "O, ye, Parivrajakas, you must realize that the world is a dungeon and man is a prisoner in the dungeon. "This dungeon is full of darkness. So dark is it that scarce anything at all can rightly be seen by the prisoner. The prisoner cannot see that he is a prisoner. "Indeed, man has not only become blind by living too long in the darkness, but he very much doubts if any such strange thing as light is said to be, can ever exist at all "Mind is the only instrument through which light can come to man.

4.1. Right Understanding (*Samma Ditti*)

It is the first and foremost element of path. it is a right view to understand the existence of suffering and removal of suffering. Samma Ditti requires the abandonment of superstition and supernaturalism for which it requires free mind and free thought.

4.2. Right aspirations (*Samma Sankappo*)

Every man has aims, aspirations and ambitions. Second component is right intention i.e, *Samma Sankappo* teaches that such aims, aspirations and ambitions shall be noble and praiseworthy and not ignoble and unworthy. The, second component of path describes how our thoughts lead to positive and negative emotions. Thus, first and two i.e, component of right view and right intention respectively forms the basis of development of wisdom.

4.3. Right speech (*Samma Vacca*)

(a) that one should speak only that which is true; (b) that one should not speak what is false; (c) that one should not speak evil of others; (d) that one should refrain from slander; (e) that one should not use angry and abusive language towards any fellow man; (f) that one should speak kindly and courteously to all; (g) that one should not indulge in pointless, foolish talk, but let his speech be sensible and to the purpose.

4.4. Right conduct

Right conduct (*Samma Kamanto*) teaches right behaviour. It teaches that every action should be founded on respect for the feelings and rights of others. What is the norm for *Samma Kamanto* ? The norm is that course of conduct which is most in harmony with the fundamental laws of existence. When his actions are in harmony with these laws they may be taken to be in accord with *Samma Kamanto*.

4.5. Right livelihood

Transformation of Society, Buddha said Every individual has to earn his livelihood. But there are ways and ways of earning one's livelihood. Some are bad; some are good. Bad ways are those which cause injury or injustice

to others. Good ways are those by which the individual earns his livelihood without causing injury or injustice to others. This is *Samma Ajivo*. It means earning livelihood without breaking the five precepts. For example, how can one's livelihood be regarded as pure if he earns it by stealing the things of others or by killing human beings. Our dishonest means of earning livelihood will be detrimental to the welfare of the society. Right livelihood therefore important both for the individual's spiritual journey as well for peace and prosperity of society in which we live.³⁵

4.6. Right effort and right mindfulness: Way for neutralizing afflictive emotions

Right Effort (*Samma Vyayamo*): Right Endeavour is primary endeavour to remove *Avijja* ; to reach the door that leads out of this painful prison house, to swing it open. Right endeavour has four purposes. One is to prevent states of mind which are in conflict with the noble eight fold path (*Ashtangamarga*). Second is to suppress such states of mind which may already have arisen. Third is to bring into existence states of mind which will help a man to fulfil the requirements of the *Ashtangamarga*. Fourth is to promote the further growth and increase of such states of mind as already y may have arisen. *Avijja* means ignorance (*Moha*) which is one of the toxic emotion leads to unwholesome thoughts in individual person. There are of three types of unwholesome thoughts: a). Thoughts of sensual desire (*kama sankappa*), b) Thoughts of hatred (*vyapada sankappa*) and c) Thoughts of cruelty (*vihimsa sankappa*)³⁶[36]. Sensual desire in Buddhism encompasses cravings for sensory pleasures that distract from doing daily activities and life's spiritual goals, notably Nibbana. Ignorance (delusion) is marked by attachments that hinder enlightenment and bind beings to the cycle of rebirth, termed "tanha."

4.7. Anti-dote to craving, hatred and cruelty

4.7.1. Thoughts of craving (Alcohol and other drug)

Traditional models of craving have been based primarily on the concept of classical conditioning. In recent years, however, researchers increasingly have introduced cognitive concepts, such as memory, expectancies, interpretation, and automatic behavior, into their conceptualizations of craving. These efforts have culminated in the development of four cognitive models of craving: cognitive labelling, outcome expectancy, dual-affect, and cognitive processing. The cognitive processing model posits that although many alcohol use behaviours have become automatized processes in the course of an alcoholic's drinking career, craving is a nonautomatic process that requires mental effort and is limited by a person's cognitive capacity. This model also implies that alcohol use and alcohol-seeking behaviour can occur

³⁵ Choudhary A. (2012) Essays on Buddhism and Pali Literature. Eastern Book Linkers, India p. 102 – 106.

³⁶ Gethin, Rupert (1998), Foundations of Buddhism, Oxford University Press p. 81.

in the absence of craving.³⁷ The craving for sensory pleasures that can lead to temporary boredom and discontent.³⁸ The craving for sensory pleasures that distracts individuals from deeper teachings such as Nibbana.³⁹

4.7.2. Thoughts of hatred (*vyapada sankappa*)

Hatred or hate is defined as a deep seated extreme emotional dislike. According to Freud, “hate” is defined as an ego state that wishes to destroy the source of its unhappiness. Hate is an emotion that masks personal insecurities. Hatred is traumatizing physically, emotionally and morally. It therefore demands greater attention because the most common and lasting effects of hatred involve mental health concerns. Not only is it important to know the impact of hatred on the victim but perhaps more important is to understand the psychology of the person who hates (the hater). Developing self awareness is antidote may help in the prevention of various crimes like rape, murder and even terrorism.⁴⁰

4.7.3. Thoughts of cruelty (*vihimsa sankappa*)

Cruelty is the intentional infliction of suffering or the inaction towards another’s suffering when a clear remedy is readily available.⁴¹ Animal cruelty in childhood, although generally viewed as abnormal or deviant, for years was not considered symptomatic of any particular psychiatric disorder. Although animal cruelty is currently used as a diagnostic criterion for conduct disorder, research establishing the diagnostic significance of this behaviour is essentially non-existent. In the current study, investigators tested the hypothesis that a history of substantial animal cruelty is associated with a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder (APD) and looked for associations with other disorders commonly diagnosed in a population of criminal defendants. Forty-eight subjects, criminal defendants who had histories of substantial animal cruelty, were matched with defendants without this history. Data were systematically obtained from the files by using four specifically designed data retrieval outlines. A history of animal cruelty during childhood was significantly associated with APD, antisocial personality traits, and polysubstance abuse. Mental retardation, psychotic disorders, and alcohol abuse showed no such association.⁴² *Samma Satti* calls for mindfulness and thoughtfulness. It means constant wakefulness

³⁷ Tiffany S. T (1999) Cognitive Concepts of Craving Alcohol Res Health. 1999; 23 (3): 215 – 224. PMID: PMC6760370 PMID: 10890817

³⁸ Jataka 7: Kaṭṭhahāri-jātaka <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/jataka-tales-english>

³⁹ Jataka 8: Gāmani-jātaka 8. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/jataka-tales-english>

⁴⁰ Smrithi Chabra, Devdas Rai, Devdas Rai & Joshef Shibu (2014) THE EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF HATE AND ENMITY (2014) Journal of Evolution of Medical and Dental Sciences 3 (49): 11715 – 11725.

⁴¹ Definition of CRUEL. www.merriam-webster.com. Retrieved 2019-03-17.

⁴² Roman Gleyzer 1, Alan R Felthous, Charles E Holzer (2002) Animal cruelty and psychiatric disorders J Am Acad Psychiatry Law 30 (2): 257 - 65.

of the mind. Watch and ward by the mind over the evil passions is another name for Samma Satti.

4.8. Right mindfulness: Control of mental defilements

Mental defilements are the unskilled (unwholesome) thoughts come in mind. With regard to three unwholesome thoughts, Lord Buddha suggested five techniques to make efforts by abandonment of these negative thoughts. These are i) reflect on a different object connected

4.9. Right mindfulness: Control of mental defilements

Mental defilements are the unskilled (unwholesome) thoughts come in mind. With regard to three unwholesome thoughts, Lord Buddha suggested five techniques to make efforts by abandonment of these negative thoughts. These are i) Reflect on a different object connected with wholesome thoughts, ii) Ponder on the disadvantages of the unwholesome thoughts such as the confusion, delusion and suffering they can bring iii) Stop paying any attention to them iv) Reflect on removing the source such as the thought formation of the unwholesome thoughts and v) Restrain, subdue and beat down the evil mind by the power of good mind.⁴³ Right effort is primarily psychological. It consists in unremitting work on oneself and upon one's own mind by means of preventing, eradicating, developing and maintaining. Preventing and eradicating are related to unskilful states where as developing and maintaining are related to skilful states in mind.

4.10. Right Meditation (*Samma Samadhi*)

Buddha said to Parivrajakas, there are five fetters or hindrances (*klesh*) which come in the way of a person trying to achieve *Samma Ditti*, *Samma Sankappo*, *Samma Vacca*, *Samma Kamanto*, *Samma Ajeevo*, *Samma Vyayamo* and *Samma Satti*. In order to overcome roots of suffering and hindrances (*klesh*) including are covetousness, ill-will, sloth and torpor, doubt and indecision, it is necessary to practice Samma Samadhi (right meditation) including *Anapansati*. Samadhi is mere concentration. No doubt it leads to Dhyanic states which are self-induced, holding the five hindrances in suspense. But these Dhyana states are temporary. Consequently the suspension of the hindrances is also temporary. What is necessary is a permanent turn to the mind. Such a permanent turn can be achieved only by Samma Samadhi. Mere Samadhi is negative inasmuch as it leads to temporary suspension of the hindrances. In it there is no training to the mind. Samma Samadhi is positive. It trains the mind to concentrate and to allow of some *Kusala Kamma* (Good Deeds and Thoughts) during concentration and thereby eliminate the tendency of the mind to be drawn towards *Akusala Kamma* (Bad Deeds and Bad Thoughts) arising from the hindrances. Samma Samadhi gives a habit to the mind to think of good and always to think of good. Samma Samadhi gives the mind necessary motive power to do good. The integrated impact of all the components of noble path

⁴³ Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995, *Vitakkasanthana Sutta*, Translation of the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, Wisdom Publications.

is discussed in next section.

V. EXPERIMENTAL OBSERVATIONS ON PRACTICE OF NOBLE EIGHT FOLD PATH: A CASE STUDY

Five meditations including meditation *Anapansati* (mindfulness), *Metta Bhavna* (loving kindness), *Kayanusati* (body scan), *Buddhanusati*, *Chintan* (Contemplation) were conducted in a week. *Dhyan Sandhya* (Evening Meditation) used to start after taking five precepts (*Panchsheel*). Practice of noble eight fold path was the foundation of the evening programme in the form of dharma desna (*Pariyatti*) and practice of mindfulness meditations (*Patipatti*). Dhamma lectures (*Pariyatti*) were delivered including causes of suffering (cause and effect or *Pratitya samutpad*), *klesh* including hindrances of mindfulness (mental defilements), meaning of important suttas (*Rattan sutta*, *Karnimey Sutta*), *Maha mangal Sutta* etc. and short stories as an example from *tripitaka* covering different components of eight fold path i.e right understanding, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood; seven awakening factors (*Sapta bodhyang*) for right efforts. In a practical form the 7th and 8th component (right mindfulness and right concentration (*Samadhi*) of eight fold path were practiced for 40 to 50 minutes depending on the type of meditation. Each meditation was conducted for 40 minutes except loving kindness meditation which was conducted for 50 minutes by senior *Dhammacharis* who had experience of more ten years.

5.1. Impact on afflictive emotions

The general observations in terms of domestic violence and behaviour (speaking, honesty, intra & interpersonal relationships), eating habits, habits of substance use and developments of altruism are given in table 2.

Table 2. Impact of mindfulness meditation practices on transformation of afflictive emotions to positive emotions (virtues) of People during four years

Afflictive emotions (distressing)	Before Joining TBM	After Joining TBM	Percent (%)	Relation with Precepts (Sheel)	Development of kushal emotions (virtues)
Out of 26 members					
Domestic Violence (Hatred-anger)	24	2	91.60 (decreased)	1st	Forgiveness (Control of Hostility)
Eating habits (Greed)	3 (Non-veg)	2 (Veg)	33.33 (decreased)	1st	Compassion (Metta) towards animals
Substance use (Delusion)	26	2	92.60 (decreased)	5th	Wisdom (Mindfulness)

Domestic violence: At the time of joining Dhyan Sandhya (evening meditation) among 101 members, 24 members were involved in domestic violence by the men with the family members (abusing and beating to wife, children). There were hostile relations at family and community levels. After four years of joining there reduced the habit of violence from 24 to 2 members in terms of 91.6 percent reduction.

Eating habits: At the time of joining Dhyan Sandhya (evening meditation) among 101 members, 98 members were vegetarians and only 3 members were involved in eating non-vegetarian food. Although members have got awareness to consume optimum food according to body requirements but there appeared little improvement i.e decrease of 33.3 percent persons.

Substance use : At the time of joining Dhyan Sandhya (evening meditation) among 101 members, 26 members were involved the habit of chewing of tobacco, drinking alcohol etc. After four years of joining there reduced the habit of substance use from 26 to 2 members in terms of 92.6 percent reduction of substance use.

Strategic effect:

The foundation of mindfulness meditation was practice of noble path including five precepts (morality)

5.2. Impact on altruism and consciousness

The effect of integrated practice of meditations including Anapansati (mindfulness), *Metta Bhavna* (loving kindness), *Kayanusati* (vipassana), *Buddhanusati* and *Chintan* (Contemplation) on the consciousness level and attitude of altruism are discussed in following sections.

5.3. Experimental impact of mindfulness meditations on different stages of Jhana (Dhyan)

The general observations in terms of altruism and progressing stages of Anapan sati meditation in terms of consciousness level of members participated in Dhyan Sandhya (evening meditation) are given in Table 3. The effect of integrated practice of meditations before and after Joining in explained under different heads: As far as spiritual growth is concerned based on questionnaire reported by Bodhi Prakash (TBM) (1st stage) 90, 70, 41, 11 members reached to Pratham (first), Dwitiya (Second), Tiritiya (third), Chaturtha (fourth) and above Chaturtha (fourth) stage jhanas of Anapanasati meditation. Based on the data, on an average members have recover from initial high fear and build up the inner confidence. The Anapanasati meditation technique comes under mindfulness meditation technique as Sati in the name implies mindfulness or being with the self and in our study we have seen that the depression levels have reduced with Anapanasati meditation (30). Hence, Ven Sumedh Thero (2019) highlighted this Anapansati as part of therapeutic uses under mindfulness meditation.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Ven Sumedh Thero (2019) Meditation as a tool for Psychotherapy. Sch J Psychol & behave. Sci 2 (3): 197-209.

Table 3. Effect of mindfulness meditation practices on consciousness level of participants after four years

Meditative absorption	Number of Participants			
Stages of meditative absorption (Jhana)	Before Joining programme	after 4 years of Joining	Percent (%)	Relation with consciousness level
1 st stage of Jhana (Pratham Dhyana)	101	90	89.12	Sense restraint
2 nd stage of Jhana (Dwitiya Dhyana)	101	71	69.30	Born of concentration
3 rd stage of Jhana (Tritiya Dhyana)	101	41	40.60	Mindfulness
4 th stage of Jhana (Chaturtha Dhyana)	101	11	10.89%	Equanimity
Impact of Mindfulness				
Altruism (Dan)	101	26	25.74	Karuna & Maitri
Cooperative attitude	101	31	30.12	Charity/Empathy

Mindfulness meditation might be considered the mother of all meditation. Many other types of meditation have stemmed from mindfulness, and it may have the most scientific evidence supporting it.⁴⁵ One basic classification of meditation techniques divides them into samatha (calming the mind) and vipassana (cultivating insight). In the Theravada traditions emphasizing vipassana, these are often seen as separate techniques, while Mahayana Buddhism generally stresses the union of samatha and vipassana. While interpreted in the Theravada-tradition as describing a deepening concentration and one-pointedness, originally the *jhānas* seem to describe a development from investigating body and mind and abandoning unwholesome states, to perfected equanimity and watchfulness.⁴⁶

First stage of Jhana: Among the 101 participants, large number i.e 90 participants had reached to the first stage of Jhana (Pratham Dhyana). According to Johansson , separated (*vivicceva*) desire for sensual pleasures, separated (*vivicca*) from [other] unwholesome states (*akusalehi dhammehi*, unwholesome dhammas,⁴⁷ a practitioner enters upon and abides in the first

⁴⁵ Schwartz E. R. (2023) <https://www.health.com/condition/depression/types-of-meditation-for-depression>

⁴⁶ Arbel, Keren (2016), Early Buddhist Meditation: The Four Jhanas as the Actualization of Insight, Taylor & Francis, ISBN 9781317383994 Routledge <https://www.routledge.com> > Arbel > book

⁴⁷ Johansson, Rune Edvin Anders (1981), Pali Buddhist Texts: Explained to the Beginner,

jhana, which is [mental] *pīti* (“rapture,” “joy”) and [bodily] *sukha* (“pleasure”; also: ‘lasting’, in contrast to ‘transient’ (*dukkha*)) “born of *viveka*” (traditionally, “seclusion”; alternatively, “discrimination” (of dhamma’s), accompanied by *vitarka-vicara* (traditionally, initial and sustained attention to a meditative object; alternatively, initial inquiry and subsequent investigation⁴⁸ of dhammas (defilements)⁴⁹ and wholesome thoughts; also: “discursive thought” related to *vitarka* (object)-*vikara* (to investigate).⁵⁰

Second stage of Jhana: As compared with 1st stage of Jhana, less number of people i.e 71 had touched to this stage out of 101 participants. As far as composition of participants is concerned, the members who are the members practicing meditations after joining of 5 to 8 years and above. Again, with the stilling of *vitarka-vicara*, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the second

jhana, which is [mental] *pīti* and [bodily] *sukha* “born of *samādhi*” (*samādhi-jī*; trad. born of “concentration”; altern. “knowing but non-discursive, awareness,”⁵¹ “bringing the buried latencies or *samskaras* into full view”⁵², and has *sampasādana* (“stillness,”⁵³ “inner tranquility”⁵⁴ and *ekaggatā* (unification of mind,⁵⁵ awareness) without *vitarka-vicara*

Psychology Press <https://books.google.com/books>

⁴⁸ Wayman, Alex (1997), “Introduction”, *Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real: Buddhist Meditation and the Middle View*, from the Lam Rim Chen Mo Tson-kha-pa, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers: pages vii to xii., Sangpo, Gelong Lodro; Dhammajoti, Bhikkhu K.L. (2012), *Abhidharmakosa-Bhasya* of Vasubandhu: Volume 3, Motilal Banarsidass, <https://www.amazon.in> > *Abhidharmakosa-Bhasya-Vas*, Lusthaus, Dan (2002), *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih Lun*, Routledge, Routledge <https://philpapers.org/rec/LUSBPA>

⁴⁹ Chen, Naichen (2017), *The Great Prajna Paramita Sutra*, Volume 1, Wheatmark, <https://www.amazon.in> > *Great-Prajna-Paramita-Sutra*

⁵⁰ Lusthaus, Dan (2002), *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih Lun*, Routledge <https://philpapers.org/rec/LUSBPA>

⁵¹ Arbel, Keren (2016), *Early Buddhist Meditation: The Four Jhanas as the Actualization of Insight*, Taylor & Francis, ISBN 9781317383994, <https://www.routledge.com> > Arbel > book

⁵² Lusthaus, Dan (2002), *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih Lun*, Routledge <https://philpapers.org/rec/LUSBPA>

⁵³ Lusthaus, Dan (2002), *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih Lun*, Routledge <https://philpapers.org/rec/LUSBPA>

⁵⁴ Bucknell, Robert S. (1993), “Reinterpreting the Jhanas”, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 16 (2): 375- 409.

⁵⁵ Lusthaus, Dan (2002), *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih Lun*, Routledge <https://philpapers.org/rec/LUSBPA>

Third stage of Jhana: Out of total 101 members, only 41 participants have touched to the 3rd stage of Jhana. Participants who are practicing these meditation practices since long time of more than 8 but less than 15 years. They are mostly senior Dhamma mitras and some Dhammacharis . With the fading away of piti, a bhikkhu abides in upekkhā (equanimity,” “affective detachment”, *sato* (mindful) and [with] *sampajañña* (“fully knowing,”⁵⁶ “discerning awareness.”⁵⁷ [Still] experiencing sukha with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third jhana, on account of which the noble ones announce, “abiding in [bodily] pleasure, one is equanimous and mindful”.

Fourth stage of Jhana: Among the total members, very few (10.89%) participants touched occasionally to the stages of fourth jhana. There the who are practicing the meditations since more than 15 years are the very senior Dhammacharis. With the abandoning of [the desire for] sukha (“pleasure”) and [aversion to] dukkha (“pain”) and with the previous disappearance of [the inner movement between] *somanassa* (“gladness,” and *domanassa* (“discontent”), a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the fourth jhana, which is adukkham asukham (“neither-painful-nor-pleasurable, “freedom from pleasure and pain”. Dhammacharis at this stage are spreading maitri to the all members, to the society, to the nation and all the people on globe, sentient being in the universe through the practice of loving-kindness meditation (Metta Bhavna). Rather than a fleeting emotion or mood aroused by sensory and conceptual stimuli, sukha is an en- during trait that arises from a mind in a state of equilibrium and entails a conceptually unstructured and unfiltered awareness of the true nature of reality. Many Buddhist contemplatives claim to have experienced sukha, which increases as a result of sustained training.⁵⁸ The pleasant feeling experienced in the deep absorption states (jhana) during higher stages of concentration meditation has no latent tendency of desire for sense pleasure (*kamaraganusaya*) underlying it.

Thus in our studies, confidence level of members had improved from low to medium level. Such observations are supported that meditation, and more specifically loving-kindness meditation, can help generate the positive emotions needed to build personal resources [58]. Many interventions on loving-kindness emphasize the idea of achieving personal happiness through feelings of love or good relationships with others, whereas interventions on compassion often encourage one to pay attention to and take care of suffering

⁵⁶ Arbel, Keren (2016), Early Buddhist Meditation: The Four Jhanas as the Actualization of Insight, Taylor & Francis, ISBN 9781317383994, <https://www.routledge.com> > Arbel > book

⁵⁷ Lusthaus, Dan (2002), Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun, Routledge. <https://philpapers.org/rec/LUSBPA>

⁵⁸ Fredrickson B. L, Michael A. Cohn, Kimberly A. Coffey, Jolynn Pek, and Sandra M. Finkel (2008) Open Hearts Build Lives: Positive Emotions, Induced Through Loving-Kindness Meditation, Build Consequential Personal Resources. J Pers Soc Psychol. 2008 Nov; 95 (5): 1045 – 1062.

people, even in the midst of one's own suffering.⁵⁹ All Buddhist schools teach that through tranquility (Samatha) meditation, the *kilesas* are pacified, though not eradicated, and through insight (Vipassana) the true nature of the *kilesas* are neutralized. When the empty nature of the Self and the Mind is fully understood, there is no longer a root for the disturbing emotions to be attached to, and the disturbing emotions lose their power to distract the mind.

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS: ALTRUISM (DAN) AND METTA (EMPATHY)

In case of Dan (altruism) giving attitude, out of 101 members 26 members improved Dan giving ability and 31 members improved their cooperative ability (Table 2 and 3). As a result of practice of mindfulness meditations had developed the empathy, the effect of which had seen in terms of direct involvement of 23 members of TBM in charity work. *Metta parmita* encourages for altruistic nature i.e *Dan parmita* of distribution of food, cloth and medicines to society irrespective of their caste, color, religion during second wave of Covid-19 in New Delhi (India). Number of people benefited from charity activity were around 500 families.⁶⁰

From the above, it is shown that the impact of package of practices of righteous principles including five precepts, noble eight fold path and *parmitas* found effective in improvement of personal qualities in terms of individual's wisdom. If a wisdom of at least one family member is improved, it has impact on positive environment at family level. If five families are aware and practices the Dharma noble middle path, it may have impact at colony/community level. If colonies are aware, it may have impact of good positive emotions in terms of reduction of temperament level (anger), friendly inter-personal behaviour among family members and neighbour. This way work is needed for changing the negative irrational minds into rational minds. Rational minded people can give justice, freedom, equality and fraternity to the people at national and international level.

VII. RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN DHARMA THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF PSYCHOLOGY

From the standpoint of modern cognitive psychology, the Noble Eightfold Path can be seen as rooted in what is called cognitive dissonance, which is the perception of incompatibility between two cognitions. In the essay "Buddhism Meets Western Science", Gay Watson explains this dissonance as it relates to Buddhist teaching: Buddhism has always been concerned with feelings, emotions, sensations, and cognition. The Buddha points both to cognitive and emotional causes of suffering. The emotional cause is desire and its

⁵⁹ Lutz, A., Greischar, L. L., Perlman, D. M., and Davidson, R. J. (2009). BOLD signal in insula is differentially related to cardiac function during compassion meditation in experts vs. novices. *Neuroimage* 47, 1038–1046. doi: 10.1016/j.neuroimage.2009.04.081

⁶⁰ Tejodhamma (2024) Triratna Boudh Mahasangh Naglok Nagpur <https://thebuddhist-centre.com> > people-to-people > report

negative opposite, aversion. The cognitive cause is ignorance of the way things truly occur, or of three marks of existence: that all things are unsatisfactory, impermanent, and without essential self.⁶¹ The Noble Eightfold Path is, from this psychological viewpoint, an attempt to resolve this dissonance by changing patterns of thought and behaviour. It is for this reason that the first element of the path is right understanding (*sammā-ditṭhi*), which is how one's mind views the world. Under the wisdom (*paññā*) subdivision of the Noble Eightfold Path, this worldview is intimately connected with the second element, right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*), which concerns the patterns of thought and intention that controls one's actions.

Two components of noble eight fold path i.e, right understanding, right aspirations contributes to develop wisdom among non-afflictive emotional people. Third, fourth components covering practice of five precepts and sixth and seventh component covering right effort and mindful meditation including *Anapanasati* (four stages) concentration, loving-kindness meditation, *Kayanusati* (*Vipassana*) and contemplation (*Chintan*) found effective on persons having different kind of afflictive emotions. Senior participants practicing the path for long time (10 to 15 years) are experiencing Sukha (real happiness) i.e enduring happiness in psychological terms. Thus, noble middle path is the foundation of overall development in terms of emotional, cognitive and behavioural development of the participants in evening meditation conducted during four years period. Thus from the standpoint of emotional and behavioural psychology, Buddhist practices are itself therapy for enduring happiness and maintaining well-being of all.

Mindfulness and other Buddhist meditation techniques have been advocated in the West by psychologists and expert Buddhist meditation teachers such as Dipa Ma, Anagarika Munindra, Thích Nhất Hạnh, Pema Chödrön, Clive Sherlock, Mother Saymagyi, S. N. Goenka, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein, Tara Brach, Alan Clements, and Sharon Salzberg, who have been widely attributed with playing a significant role in integrating the healing aspects of Buddhist meditation practices with the concept of psychological awareness, healing, and well-being.

Lord Buddha also like existentialist does not believe in speculating on metaphysical problems. According to existentialists the nature of existence varies and is individualized to each person. Our life is defined by our existence, and our existence is made up of our relationship to other people and things in the world. They believe each person must choose and commit to meaning and direction in life. Buddha said that life is suffering. Existential psychology speaks of ontological anxiety (dread, angst). Ontological anxiety has to do with the absolute threat of extinction and ontic anxiety with the relative threat to self-preservation and self-enhancement. From this condition there is no escape.⁶²

⁶¹ Nalanda Buddhist Society <http://nalanda.org.my>

⁶² Hendrix H (1967) The ontological character of anxiety J Relig Health 1967 Jan; 6 (1): 46 – 65.

Buddha said that suffering is due to attachment. Existential psychology also has some similar concepts. We cling to things in the hope that they will provide us with a certain benefit.

Buddha said that suffering can be extinguished. The Buddhist concept of nirvana through the middle way i.e, eight fold path is quite similar to the existentialists' freedom. Freedom has, in fact, been used in Buddhism in the context of freedom the effects of karma. For the existentialist, freedom is a fact of our being, one which we often ignore. Finally, Buddha says that there is a way to extinguish suffering. For the existential psychologist, the therapist must take an assertive role in helping the client become aware of the reality of his or her suffering and its roots. Likewise, the client must take an assertive role in working towards improvement—even though it means facing the fears they've been working so hard to avoid, and especially facing the fear that they will "lose" themselves in the process.⁶³

VIII. CONCLUSION

- Righteous principles in Buddhism explains that virtuous (positive, constructive, wholesome) emotions lead to happiness in the long term, while non-virtuous (negative, destructive, unwholesome) emotions lead to suffering.
- Noble middle path is amalgam of righteous thoughts and rational emotions -the way to focusses on a holistic approach to wellbeing of both for non-afflictive and afflictive people. First three components i.e, right views (Understanding), right aspirations and right speech are antidote to delusion (faulty thinking) which have implications in cognitive process.
- Right conduct, the fourth component of middle path is a foundation for development of positive attitude of people as a preventive measure for involved in immoral activities and a foundation base for developing morality to learn mindfulness meditations.
- Right livelihood as a fifth component focusses on optimum requirement of essential materialistic things. It may help to stop craving of the things at individual, community, society and at national level.
- Right efforts or Dhamma vicaya i.e investigation of kind of thoughts occupied in mind and efforts to sideline and non-treatment to negative emotions (covetousness, greed), jealousy (*Dwesh*), ignorance (*Moha*). Virya along with Dhamma vicaya and Pitti applied to regain mindfulness to dispose sloth and torpor.
- Right mindfulness i.e, seveth component covers 1st and 2nd Dhyan

⁶³ Boeree CG. Towards a Buddhist Psychotherapy. 1997. [Last accessed on 2012 Oct30]. Available from: <http://www.webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/buddhpsych.html>. & Jayatunge RM. Gautama Buddha the Unique Psychotherapist. [Last accessed on 2012 Oct 26]. Available from: <http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2010/04/21/gautama-buddha-the-unique-psychotherapist/2010>.

stages of Anapansati mindfulness meditations in which *Vitarka* are suspended. Mindfulness based Cognitive Therapy practiced for patients of bipolar disorders is more effective to improve the cognitive behavioural therapy.

- Right samadhi i.e, 3rd and 4th Jhana stages of *Anapansati* (*vipassana*) promotes to achieve higher levels of consciousness for senior practitioner who is acquiring spirituality and touch to equanimous status mind in terms of *Uppekha* are liable to avail real happiness and capable to see reality. Higher concentration develops non-attachment in terms to let go to the toxic emotions and person became free from the negative clouds of greed, hatred and delusion.
- Thus, noble eight fold path is the holistic foundation of emotional learning. Practice of all components of Buddha's noble path themselves offer a therapy, not just for the disturbed, but for all who seek to improve the quality of their lives.

Future research:

- Assess the quantitative effect of afflictive emotion and role of mindfulness meditations as an intervention to improve the daily activities of disturbed people under stress.
- More research attention is required on the effect of integrated *dhamma* (dharma) principles (*Pali-Pariyatti*) and practices (*pariyatti*) as a holistic approach on the wellbeing of people of different personalities including introverts, extroverts, and neuroticism.

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EDUCATION, MINDFULNESS, SUSTAINABILITY: THE BUDDHIST WAY FORWARD

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Abstract:

In an age marked by ecological crisis, social fragmentation, and the limits of modern education, this paper explores how Buddhist philosophy offers a transformative framework for reimagining education, sustainability, and mindfulness. Drawing on foundational concepts such as *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination), *anitya* (impermanence), *anātma* (non-self), and *śūnyatā* (emptiness), the study argues that interdependence and ethical awareness must be central to future educational paradigms. Through analysis of literature, modern Buddhist thought, and utopian imagination – particularly Rahul Sankrityayan’s *The Twenty Second Century* – the paper advocates for a Buddhist-inspired education rooted in wisdom (*prajñā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and ecological consciousness. It critiques neoliberal and instrumental models of modern learning, proposing instead a holistic, value-driven, and interdisciplinary approach. Mindfulness, when grounded in ethics, emerges as a vital tool for individual transformation and collective healing. The study emphasizes the need for systemic change, integrating insights from Buddhist psychology, economics, and aesthetics. Ultimately, it calls for an education that cultivates inner awareness and outer responsibility, enabling humanity to co-create a just and sustainable future for all sentient beings.

Keywords: *Pratityasamutpada, anitya, anatma, sunyata.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education must respond to the state of the world and the demands of the times. Thus, we must ask ourselves this question in context: What might be the ideal shape of education in these times of the what the Indian writer Amitav Ghosh has called “The Great Derangement”? (Ghosh, 2016) In the era of

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anthropogenic climate change and the alarming speed and scale of biodiversity loss, addressing our fractured relationship with Nature and ways of building more environmentally sustainable futures is no longer a luxurious option: it is an urgent necessity. No wonder sustainability – defined as the ability to have anything maintained at a certain rate or level – is the new buzzword. The analogous word or concept that comes close to this in urgency and significance is peace. Wars – within and without, with other humans and with nature – continue to plague us, even as fragile ceasefires offer thin and short-lived consolation.

The world, as the Buddha said millennia ago, is indeed burning: whether due to alarming degrees of global warming and seemingly unquenchable forest fires or due to conflicts between peoples, communities, and nations. However, sustainability and peace are both complex words requiring deeper investigation and definition. We must ask ourselves related questions such as: sustainability for whom and of what kind of life/ style? And peace in what form? The absence of war is surely not peace, and an anthropocentrically seen view of sustainability is not only narrow and destructive of other species, it is, in fact, in the long run, unsustainable. As I see it, Buddhist philosophical concepts and understanding of these concepts can help us go beyond the short-term quick-fixes and band-aids that we often resort to. They encourage a deeper investigation of cause and consequence than technologically driven or bureaucratically unimaginative solutions that tend to be commonly accepted and executed today. We must address the fact that our solutions are not working. The news from experts who study the crisis is not good. Imaginative and authentic approaches to the problem are required. Buddhist investigations into the nature of reality can help diagnose the problem accurately, in an important first step.

In the Buddhist view, Mindfulness, Peace, and Sustainability are profoundly interconnected. Buddhist Education addresses these concerns in a suitably interrelated manner. I shall be exploring these key Buddhist concepts in the light of some thinkers from modern India and beyond that turn for inspiration to the past in order to imagine possible futures. Turning the gaze to Buddhist-inspired dreams from a century ago provides a historical perspective on our last century and sobering reflections on how far we are from achieving some of those desired goals. We must also traverse some difficult terrains in this enterprise, such as the mutually exclusive claims of tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, and the contradictions of the economic and social structures within which practices of mind training take place in contemporary life. Some literary reflections from the last century can also help us identify and diagnose the source of the challenges facing us. But first, it might help to take a quick philosophical detour via some key Buddhist concepts.

Inter-relationality is enshrined as a fundamental concept in Buddhist philosophy. The Sanskrit term *pratityasamutpada* (Dependent Origination or Co-dependent Origination) references a theory of causation that sees all conditioned phenomena as arising due to the presence of other conditioned phenomena. In this chain of arising, there are no sole or single entities that

exist in and of themselves. An implication of this is *anitya* (Pali *anicca*), or the impermanence of all phenomena. Dependent Origination is thus the corollary to the concept of *sunyata*, or the inherent emptiness of all phenomena. Thus, the illusion of the self as an independent, permanent, separate entity is undone. *Anatmavada* (the doctrine of 'no self' which posits the illusion of permanence in a aggregation of *skandhas*) thus postulates a recognition, profoundly humbling, of the fundamental ignorance of working with narrow, selfish motives of possessiveness and greed. As per Buddhist epistemology and ontology, interrelationality is the core concept that connects all – the earth and its various inhabitants, humans divided by race, ethnicity, gender or religion, the human and the non-human worlds, and within living beings, the mind and the body. All are linked in a chain of causation that is so profound that to even contemplate otherwise is an error of judgment. Although the distinction between *samvrtisatya* (relative or conventional truth) and *paramarthatatya* (ultimate truth) somewhat complicates the idea of the self and the world (there is karma and rebirth that recognises a sort of conventional self as ethical agent), it is possible to see that self as co-dependently arisen from other factors and therefore both always already subject to change and a possible agent of ethical action and change. This does not involve the pre-condition that profound selflessness be first grasped in an arduous process of enlightenment-seeking; it only recognises that the Dharmic path results in the good of all beings, the (conventional) self included. In this lies the hope for collective mindful action for a sustainable future.

Fortunately – or unfortunately, for this is happening rather belatedly – contemporary science is beginning to recognise this chain of causation now, moving away from the narrow anthropocentric, atomistic, and dualistic frameworks that hampered the full understanding of these phenomena in earlier scientific discourse. To these divisions, we may wish to add the profound connection between the social, the political, and the philosophical, between the micro and macro aspects of our existence: our relationship with how we clothe and feed our our bodies, how we process our thoughts and feelings, our social and economic relations and our political commitments. These have clear implications for our idea of what constitutes the good human life.

II. EDUCATION FOR THE GOOD HUMAN LIFE

It is possible to argue that Buddha Dharma, despite the emphasis on Nirvana as the ceasing of the cycle of becoming, is focused on the attainment of the good human life here and now. Buddhist ethics would certainly imply that. Ethics (*Vinaya*) indeed is the pre-condition for practicing most Buddhist paths. But how is this goodness defined? What are its contours? More specifically, for our purpose in this specific session, what role does education play in the attainment of this ideal life?

It could be argued that Buddha Dharma is nothing but a program of education. Recognising ignorance as the root cause of all suffering, the removal of that epistemic ignorance from its roots is the way to nirvana, the ultimate goal or telos. For the Bodhisattva ideal, the emphasis on deferring

that personal goal in the larger cause of alleviating the sufferings of all sentient beings adds a further dimension to the element of education. The Bodhisattva must be well-versed in all the arts and sciences to be effective in the world. The removal or transformation of ignorance and the two other main afflictive emotions – attachment and anger – are thus key to Buddhist practice.

Here, we run into problems with the conventional idea of ignorance and also by implication, with the modern idea of education. One could argue that Buddhist education runs counter to the thrust of modern education, especially in its most recent avatar as a slave of industry and profit. Modern education is producing “successful” professionals, but what is the nature of that success? How much benefit is that model of education conferring upon a world rife with inequality and injustice on the one hand, and on the other, excessive concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few? Knowledge, as pursued today, is not wholesome. Linking education to a productivity model emptied of ethical content and welfare focus is creating a sick society and a sicker world. It adds to individual and collective *dukkha* (suffering). This realisation is dawnign upon those entrenched in systems dedicated to the conventional notions of the good life, ideas and ideals that has held sway over the world over a century. For example, one recent issue of the American magazine *The Atlantic* points to the failure of the Ivy League Universities – commonly held to be a great model of academic excellence – in helping create a wholesome polity or society. “We want a society run by people who are smart, yes, but who are also wise, perceptive, curious, caring, resilient, and committed to the common good,” concludes the author in a scathing essay that the magazine ran as its lead story. (Brooks, 40) . Could the same not be said to be true of all current cultures and educational systems emulating the American model that has arguably been the hegemonic global model? So how then do we create a society run by individuals who possess these essential qualities of perceptivity, care, resilience, and the commitment to the greater common good?

In Buddhism, the opposite of ignorance is not knowledge – understood as accumulated information or skills for achieving certain worldly goals. It is, more fundamentally, a thorough examination of the causes of suffering, with a view to removing them. Suffering, again, is not understood only in terms of obvious forms of physical or mental suffering – though those are never denied – but requires deeper investigation into attachment to a false sense of a separate self and to the permanence of all phenomena. Further, the ability to master one’s destructive emotions, such as anger, is central to the task of being a Buddhist, and the work of many contemporary Buddhist masters has focused on spreading awareness of this insight, often in collaboration with modern psychologists and neurologists. (Goleman 2003).

Teachers of diverse forms of mindfulness such as Goenka ji and Thay (Thich Nhat Hanh) have taught and emphasised the value of Mindfulness practice (*Smriti*, Sanskrit; *Sati*, Pali), and their teachings have benefitted countless human beings outside the formal sphere of schools and universities. Since their teachings have also been adapted to spaces outside those of

conventional religiosity, it is easier to bring this into mainstream discourse by detaching them from religious affiliations that might attract resistance from adherents of different faiths. The modern world is driven by secularism, though, arguably, religion is making a comeback in ways that are perhaps not the most enlightened: orthodoxy, dogma, sectarianism and absence of tolerance for other beliefs. The secularising of mindfulness is a significant and desirable aspect of its appeal in the modern world. In fact, in the context of a discussion of the connection between Buddhism and modernity, there is an interesting overlap but also distinction between the two: it has been pointed out perceptively that “the mental states that are the goals of Vipassana (Sanskrit Vipasyana) meditation – awareness, discrimination, analysis – are congruent with the analytical attitude that allows one to master the world... But [significantly] this exploration of levels of consciousness did not lead the Buddhists to a mastery of the physical world similar to the one that occurred in the West since the scientific revolution.” (Benavides, 547)

However, even though historically the development of the Buddhist world has not followed the trajectory of the industrial world, with its damaging discourse of mastery over the natural world seen as existing outside the human, in contemporary times with the global reach of Buddhism far beyond the cultures it was born in and initially spread to, and with globalised capitalism and technological modernity having transformed those cultures entirely, we must revise that generalisation. So, instead of being posited as a superior gift from Buddhist cultures of nations, Mindfulness practice could perhaps be taught independently of a blanket celebration of all traditionally Buddhist cultures, seeing as they have such mixed experiences and trajectories. This, teaching Mindfulness without teaching all aspects of Buddha Dharma to make it more beneficial to adherents to other faiths or for that matter, no faith at all, seems like a feasible option.

However, mindfulness without a deeply ethical foundation can have downright negative consequences. For eg, a mindfully focused sniper or a mindfully efficient CEO of a large corporation selling harmful goods or treating its workers as resources to be exploited for maximum profit is far from wholesome. It can simply be more effective in reinforcing harm in a world that is far from perfect in its modes of social and economic organisation. The unsustainable capacity of unchecked extractive capitalism that currently dominates can only become more efficient under these circumstances. Therefore, secularised versions of mindfulness must be combined with secular ethics to hold up genuine hope for the possibility of the proper applicability of mindfulness practice.

All this does not preclude the pursuit and attainment of very specific knowledge of specific disciplines such as philosophy or astronomy, medicine or mathematics that we may find enshrined in the ancient Indian university of Nalanda, internationally-renowned for its academic range and rigor in its time. The Bodhisattva path, one might add, enjoins upon the Bodhisattva to specifically acquire mastery of all the worldly arts and sciences, the better to

fulfil the purpose of alleviating the suffering of all sentient beings. Of course, Nalanda was not specifically in the business of producing bodhisattvas. But somewhere, Mahayana Buddhism did guide its aims and objectives. It is clear that in the 21st century, the specific glory of Nalanda cannot be resurrected, try as we might. Of its vast syllabus, today, some may question the need for astrology while others may look askance upon magic, both part of the old curriculum. In any case, a return to the past is theoretically impossible and even perhaps undesirable. Our challenges belong to our times; they are products of our peculiar pathologies. But we can learn. We can turn to the past for some inspiration.

III. LESSONS FROM AN IMAGINED UTOPIA

I am driven here to reflect on a text in Hindi that was imagined in 1918, though published in 1923. called *Baisvin Sadi*, translated as *The Twenty Second Century*. (Joshi 2021)

It is a remarkable (though perhaps wanting in hindsight) imagination of a Utopia by one of India's most fascinating figures: the intrepid scholar-explorer Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan (1893 - 1963) before he became the Buddhist Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan. While still Kedarnath Vidyarthi, the young man of 25 wrote this utopian futuristic fiction in which we see the world in the imagined 22nd century as seen by an erstwhile teacher from Nalanda, who has gone into a long slumber in a cave and wakes into an entirely different reality than the war torn world of 1918. When the book was conceived, World War I was still going on, and India was fighting for its independence from British colonialism. The author was at the time imprisoned in a British colonial prison after having offered peaceful Satyagraha to protest against the brutal killing by English soldiers of peacefully gathered Indians at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in the Northern part of India. The book was thus written in the shadow of violence. It was also composed in the context of one of the largest peaceful mobilizations of the 20th century under the leadership of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

A quick glimpse at the contents of the book indicates the Buddhist influence. Though the author had yet many years from his visit to Sri Lanka to Vidyalankar Perivena to study Pali scripture and delve into Buddhism deeply to finally embrace Buddha Dharma to emerge as Bhikshu Rahul Sankrityayan, he was already imagining resurrected universities of Buddhist lineage – Nalanda, Vikramshila, and Taxila. Why did he turn to the glorious Buddhist past of India to enlighten the vision of an ideal future? It must be pointed out that he was also inspired by ideas of socialism and though not formally educated in its tenets (his education had been in traditional knowledge systems, but he possessed a remarkable ability for learning in a bricoleur mode), he conjured up a vision of a future where humans have evolved themselves out of all primitive modes of being such as violence and war, patriarchy, feudalism and inequalities of all kinds. The abolition of private property having been achieved, the world is now run along the principles of equity and justice, with a positive emphasis on learning, curiosity, friendliness, and compassion. Another of its features is

the evolution of humanity beyond religion, into a kind of humanism. We meet joyful, wholesome farmers – men and women working alongside – whose four hours of daily labour (technology has been harnessed to remove the need for longer workdays!) leaves them with ample time for the development of their other faculties, such as music and dance, besides a taste for philosophy! Small, independent, but ultimately globally integrated villages run their affairs with local self-government, and everyone has the means – collectively owned and shared – for their full human flourishing. Remarkably, for our purposes, though religion has been abandoned as a useless residue of the dark past of humanity, there is a gleaming image of the Buddha at the resurrected Nalanda University, which now teaches a fully updated curriculum of all the modern disciplines, along with traditional schools of philosophy. The image of the Buddha as a great teacher in this context raises fascinating questions. As has been mentioned, Sankrityayan was yet to fully discover Buddhism, something that would lead him to serve the cause of resurrecting the glorious legacy of India's forgotten Buddhist past. He would do that some years later in the late 1920s when he travelled to Vidyalankar Perivena, the largest monastic institution in Sri Lanka, to study Pali and Buddhism and don the robes.

However, that the ideal image of a future world in 2124 would have the figure of the Buddha points to many things, not least the fact that many did and continue to find inspiration for an equal world of dignity and well-being for all in the ancient teachings. Ambedkar is just one among them. The movement of Engaged Buddhism has also argued along the same lines. This is not the space to go into those details, and that literature and history are well known to this audience. For our purposes here, the centrality of the idea of *education* in the Buddhist context needs to be stressed. Further, in the narrative of *Baisvin Sadi*, our chief protagonist is an ancient teacher from the past who woke up 200 years into the future. This white-bearded old man, coming out of a cave, is shown to be a somewhat wide-eyed witness to the miracle of this new world. However, though he constantly compares the past (backward and full of folly) with the ideal future in which he finds himself, he also has lessons for the evolved humans. These lessons come straight out of Buddhist philosophy: to not rest on their laurels and achievements and to constantly seek more understanding. This model of constant evolution and inner growth, of learning as the only constant, is the ideal that Rahul Sankrityayan also held up in his epigraph to his autobiography, *Meri Jeevan Yatra* (My Life Journey), an epigraph he derived from the Buddha's last words to his disciples: "I have taken ideas as a raft to carry me across, not a load to be born on the head."

What does this narrative tell us about the possible use of Buddhist knowledge in the future? The author seems to assume that the exercise of reason is enough for a profound change to come about in human priorities and will reveal to humans the futility of their destructive, harmful, and cruel ways. However, what it also stresses is that the pre-condition for that utopia to be a sustainable one is material in nature – the replacement of a system resting upon individual profit with one that considers the sharing of all resources. Once the

element of private greed is removed from the equation, everything appears to fall into place. In 2025, in a world that has seen the excesses of communism, one may look upon the naivete of this perspective with appropriate irony and the wisdom of hindsight. However, we have lately been witness to the extraordinary damage – to biodiversity in the widest sense and to the vulnerable sections of society – that the unchecked pursuit of profit for a few has led us into. The valuing of greed as an ultimate good and the desirability of individual self-aggrandisement sold as a desirable goal by our media and advertising, and, one might add, our educational systems, are perhaps the core drivers for the unsustainable “growth” that we are witnessing today.

The questions that this text compels us to examine are these: What is the role of economic structures – and forms of governance based on them – in determining our fate as a species? Can small efforts at mindful living – recycling, reducing wastage, planting trees (all of these are practices in the ideal world depicted with great prescience in the book) save us from the disasters that look us in the face, now more so than a hundred years ago? Given the scale of the great derangement, the great disconnect with a correct mindset – what else is needed? Can we afford a world that dutifully recycles its waste but allows war as an industry, for example? Can we think of consumption as a good in itself, pushing up GDPs even as it pushes up the statistics on pollution, ill-health, and ecological destruction? While the answers to these questions will require a deep dive into an interdisciplinary study of the polycrises facing us, the Buddhist tradition certainly provides some guidance in how one may ameliorate the condition.

What would a Buddhist-inspired world look like, and what would be the place of Buddhist ideas in that be? The precise answer to that question depends on what we consider to be the core points of Buddhism. Is monasticism the focus of it? Because that would preclude the possibility of a wider engagement. Buddhism offers a rich range of insights into human psychology, society, economics, literature, and politics. The intersections with the sciences – especially with quantum physics – are another matter. Ethics and wisdom are the core of the curriculum. This does not require a preaching monk-like figure who dispenses wisdom from a height or a great distance. A Buddhist education would be hands-on. It would be attentive to and insist upon a connection between intention and consequence. It would prioritize the cultivation of the right attitude – humility and confidence, curiosity and deep reflection, and a quest for knowledge that is profoundly tied to the larger consequences of that knowledge.

Buddhist philosophy as a discipline would be rigorous in logic and epistemology. That seems to be the most obvious form of Buddhist education in the current academic framework of disciplines. Even Madhyamika philosophy’s intricacies can lead one to a non-reificatory approach to phenomena, and far from being nihilistic, can make hope possible. (Garfield 1995) But it is in other fields – more ‘secular’ and less esoteric, as it were – that the intervention of Buddhist ideas would be most transformational.

The contours of Buddhist Economics have been debated and elaborated in the past. Schumacher's idea that small is beautiful would inform it. (Schumacher 1973, 2010). Engaged Buddhism has elaborated on many of these principles. It would stress non-extractive, regenerative, and social welfare-oriented practices. It has implications for what we consider desirable and beautiful. So one may contemplate Buddhist Aesthetics alongside Buddhist Psychology, which has much to teach us in terms of the power of the mind in shaping our reality and the power of attachment and clinging in creating *dukkha* (suffering). The *kleshas* are to be avoided, and positive mental attitudes such as calm abiding, compassion, generosity, rejoicing, and 'letting go' are profoundly contributive towards mental health.

A curriculum that can help all this can deep dive into the world of literature for inspiration. While all great literature, it could be argued, helps us become more fully human, specifically Buddhist literature brings many of these themes together in aesthetically pleasing and affectively powerful ways. From the *Jataka Tales* in Pali to a Sanskrit classic such as *Buddhacarita* by Asvaghosa, holding up the Buddha's life and the development of the sangha along certain principles of minimally violent and exploitative ways of living can be taken as exemplary. The teachings contained in this literature – stressing compassion, wisdom, and an understanding of the principles of cause and effect – are the next step. Santideva's *Bodhicaryavatara* would be a classic poem in the Mahayana tradition, expounding on the Bodhisattva ideal in verses of eternally moving beauty and sublimity. *The Jataka Tales* could be read as much for their profound insights into the interconnectedness of all species as for their lessons in ethics and morality. The Sanskrit *Vimalakirtinirdesha Sutra* is an excellent example of how laypeople can be inspired to reflect on core Buddhist principles of compassion and an expansion of the sense of self through an imaginatively engaging Mahayana text. The gentle irony with which it treats the excessively serious monastics is also a useful clue to how to loosen the hold of rigid beliefs and hierarchies.

But perhaps the most significant teaching of the Buddha for the times would be the non-reification of identity and a willingness to accept change. The "self correcting powers [that] have been operating in the experience of men and women of Buddhist persuasion for twenty-five centuries" (Jacobson, 1983. P. 133) are imperative to address the constantly evolving challenges to sustainability and survival. This does not mean the passive acceptance of human-made crises like climate change. It does mean working closely with the other self-correcting community of scientists to reflect deeply on dogmas that no longer serve us. This would require constant effort to diagnose a problem with critical and clinical precision and the application of specific antidotes to the problem/s identified. Detachment and cool distance would be essential components of this process since judgment is most often clouded by cognitive biases and personal preferences. In this, the claims of science and religion could be reconciled, and a collaborative approach to what is a problem of global proportions would be evolved. This involves and education across

disciplinary silos and boundaries, as well as conversations between different sects of Buddhism to arrive at commonly held beliefs beyond dogmatic sectarian assertions of difference.

The emphasis on *Bahujan Hitaya, Bahujan Sukhaya* – the good of the many, the happiness of the many – is crucial to Buddhism's socially oriented tendencies that inspired both Ambedkar and Sankritayayan. They should be the central motivation of Buddhist education. (Joshi 2019) It would ensure that science and technology be developed for the well-being and flourishing of all beings, including the earth, seen not as a resource to be exploited but as a living entity.

To add a profoundly affective dimension to this, meditative practices that require the cultivation of connection with our corporeality and of oneness with all natural phenomena would help greatly. I can think of no one more inspiring in this regard than Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh, whose poetically mindful approach to the smallest aspects of our existence – a single breath, a single step, a single leaf, a single flower – opens up a rich array of imaginatively graspable and somatically palpable possibilities for re-cognising our lost connection with the earth and our mortality. I would have no hesitation in suggesting that reading a book like the astrophysicist and public intellectual Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* would be a wonderfully resonant way to bring this Buddhist mindfulness into a constructive dialogue with a modern scientist deeply concerned with the fate of our little blue-green planet and the fast disappearing species that inhabit it. Ecological awareness and non-harm to the weakest, most vulnerable sections of society are built into this effort.

IV. CONCLUSION

Considering the complexity of the issues that face humanity, better described as polycrises, especially the disconnect with other life forms and with the earth, our home, Buddhist wisdom, especially in the form of mindfulness, has an enormously significant role. However, the teaching of mindfulness cannot be detached from the larger context of the structures of power that govern us. Mindfulness merely as a technique for attaining greater efficiency in the work force, or as a way of escaping into a calm world for a few designated minutes each day in a ritualistic manner, or to be practiced in very small private ways, will not significantly allow us to address the crises facing us. We need to shed our comforting illusions. Our current model of the world – economic, social, and educational – is dysfunctional because they are based on greed, hate, and delusion. Being mindful of that larger issue, with clarity and dispassionate analysis based on the principle of *pratityasamutpada* (dependent origination), is what we need. Buddhist education should ultimately be an education in self-analysis and mind-training such that the cognitive biases we are so prone to can be shed. This can work alongside modern science if the pursuit of that science is also driven by the greater common good, lit by *prajna* (Wisdom), and guided by *karuna* (Compassion). Then alone can an alternative world that can be a sustaining and sustainable world – a home for all species – be contemplated.

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THE EVOLUTION OF BHIKKHUNI EDUCATION FROM ANCIENT INDIA TO THE PRESENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WESTERN INDIA: BUDDHIST COMPASSION IN ACTION

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Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to examine and explore the evolution of Monastic education for the female in western India from ancient to present times. By studying epigraphical and architectural evidence, it is an attempt to examine the early existence of nunneries, The study tries to focus the structured educational framework of ancient *Bhikkhuni* s, as evidenced by inscriptions detailing their roles as teachers and patrons. However, a significant gap in historical records reveals the decline of the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* in later periods. The research then transitions to the modern era, documenting the revival efforts led by contemporary *Bhikkhuni*. Through case studies and interviews, it explores the challenges faced by *Bhikkhuni*, including gender discrimination, limited educational opportunities, and institutional constraints. Despite these obstacles, the paper showcases the impactful initiatives undertaken to promote *Bhikkhuni* education. The study is an attempt to emphasize the ongoing struggle for recognition and support, highlighting the necessity of institutional backing and societal acceptance to ensure the continued flourishing of *Bhikkhuni* education in India.

Keywords: *Buddhism, evolution of Bhikkhuni, compassion.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the *Bhikkhuni Sangha*, initiated by Mahaprajapati Gautami, was a revolutionary step in granting women access to Buddhist education. Though limited by institutional and societal restrictions, Buddhist nuns received formal training in *Vinaya* (monastic discipline), *Sutta* (discourses), and meditation. However, beyond literary sources, inscriptions provide concrete evidence of *Bhikkhuni* education and their contributions to Buddhist scholarship. These inscriptions, found in various monastic sites, shed light on the educational roles of nuns as teachers, donors, and disciples of learned monks.

This paper explores the journey of *Bhikkhuni* education in Western India from ancient times to the present, examining its current condition and the challenges faced today.

Objectives of this study:

1. To examine the early sites of nunneries based on epigraphical evidence.
2. To document and study the efforts and challenges faced by modern *Bhikkhunis* in establishing the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* and Buddhist education.

To achieve this, an epigraphical and architectural study has been done. Case studies were taken to document and examine the status based on the interviews conducted with two *Bhikkhunis* of Western India to assess their present-day conditions.

The education of *Bhikkhunis* (female Buddhist monastics) in Western India has been hindered by multiple socio-cultural and institutional challenges. This paper explores these challenges, including gender-based discrimination within monastic circles, lack of formal educational support, and the struggle for recognition. Based on an interview with *Bhikkhuni* as the study also highlights recent efforts and challenges toward the re-establishment of the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* and Buddhist education.

II. EVIDENCE OF THE *BHIKKHUNI SANGHA* IN THE ANCIENT PERIOD

The Buddha was initially resistant to the establishment of an order of nuns. However, he ultimately yielded to Ananda's well-reasoned arguments and the persistent efforts of Mahapajapati Gautami, leading to the creation of the Order of Nuns. The *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya Pitaka* documents the establishment of the nunnery.

Given the societal status of women during that period, numerous restrictions were imposed on the movement of nuns. In general, they were not permitted to reside in forests. Instead, they were allowed to stay in *uddosita* (out-houses), *upassaya* (hermitages), and *navakamma* (cottages specifically constructed for them).¹ The lifestyle prescribed for nuns closely mirrored that of monks, albeit with some variations in the *Patimokkha* rules.

¹ Sankrityayan (1994), p. 538.

For centuries, women who took ordination not only practiced and realised the Buddha's teachings but also played a vital role in their communities. Women have been linked to Buddhism in various capacities, including as *upasikas*, *theris*, and teachers.

Regrettably, historical evidence of *Bhikkhuni Sangha s* in ancient India is scarce. Most of the available information has been derived from two primary sources: ancient texts and contemporary devotional practices. The role of archaeology in this regard has been relatively unexplored.

Earlier works:

Inscriptions have long served as a critical resource for understanding the history of Buddhism. B. C. Law (Law, 1939 - 1940) undertook the task of compiling inscriptional evidence attesting to the presence of the Buddhist *Bhikkhuni* order in India, analysing its consistency with literary sources and accounts from foreign travellers.

A more recent study by Garima Kaushik attempts to identify nunneries or *Bhikkhuni Viharas*. While literary and epigraphic records contain extensive references to monasteries for monks, information on nunneries is exceedingly limited. Kaushik's work seeks to document literary references to nunneries and substantiate them with archaeological findings. Her study also incorporates ethnographic data from contemporary nunneries and insights into the lives of *Bhikkhunis*.

Most nunneries were situated in or near villages. These were mostly short-term settlements, which contributed to their minimal presence in historical records. Donations to the *Sangha* were predominantly directed toward the *Bhikkhu* community.

Garima Kaushik has examined multiple Buddhist monastic sites, including Nalanda, Sanchi, Nagarjunakonda, Sravasti, and Junnar. Many of these sites contain circular structures, which she has identified as nunneries or *Bhikkhuni Sanghas*.

One of the most significant examples of rock-cut architecture is Tulja Lena at Junnar, which features a circular *caityagriha*. Kaushik has identified Tulja Cave as a *Bhikkhuni Sangha* based on its circular design.

Another important piece of evidence regarding nunneries is found in the caves of Junnar. An inscription in Cave 33 of the Sivaneri Hills records a donation made by Giribhuti of the Apaguriyas, which included a cave and a cistern. It also mentions a nunnery belonging to the Dhammottariya School, along with a perpetual endowment of *Karsapanas* for its upkeep (Nagaraju, 1981, p. 332).

Circular Architecture of Nunneries (Garima Kaushik's Work)

Women have significantly contributed to the patronage of Buddhism, both as lay followers and as nuns. Numerous inscriptions provide evidence of donations made by royal women, *theris*, and *upasikas*.

Apart from inscriptions documenting female patronage, another indirect

indicator of women's presence at monastic sites is the abundance of sculptural representations of women, *mithuna* couples, and *Jataka* narratives featuring lay themes (Garima, 2016, p. 22).

Garima Kaushik has linked specific circular structures to female patronage based on contextual findings and associated antiquities (Garima, 2016, p. 22). Early reliefs at Sanchi, Bharhut, and Amaravati depict circular structures. One of the earliest such structures was excavated at Bijak-ki-pahadi in Bairat. Kaushik's analysis indicates that circular structures often had significant female patronage and a notable female presence (Garima, 2016, p. 24). *Apsidal* and circular *caityas* coexisted during the same period (Garima, 2016, p. 24).

Recent excavations at Sui Vihara near Bahawalpur uncovered a circular platform with sun-dried bricks and supporting walls. A previously discovered Kanishka inscription at the site mentions "Viharaswamini," which Kaushik has identified as an indication of a *Bhikkhuni Sangha* (Garima, 2016, p. 26).

Canonical texts specify that a *Bhikkhuni Vihara* should ideally be located within a city or village, unlike a monastery, which should be neither too distant nor too close. Various rules dictated the proximity of *Bhikkhuni Viharas* to monasteries, ensuring security, shared religious observances such as *uposatha*, and equitable access to *dana*, which the *Bhikkhu Sangha* tended to receive in greater abundance

About Junnar

Junnar was an eminent *Theravada* Buddhist centre, as evidenced by the numerous rock-cut caves in the region. Presently a key town in Pune District, Maharashtra, Junnar once housed one of the largest Buddhist establishments in the area, with approximately 300 rock-cut excavations. These caves are scattered across the surrounding hills within a three-mile radius.

The Mina River is situated near Junnar, leading some scholars to identify the ancient *Min nagara*, the capital of Nahapana, with Junnar (Dhavalikar, 1984, p. 12). The name *Junnar* is believed to derive from *Junanagara*, meaning "The Ancient City." Others have linked it to *Tagara*, though *Tagara* has been more definitively identified with Ter in Marathwada's Osmanabad district (Nagaraju, 1981, p. 133). Some scholars also equate Junnar with ancient *Dhenukakata* (Dhavalikar, 1984, p. 12).

The Junnar caves, largely constructed during the Satavahana period, date from the earliest Satavahana phase (circa 1st century BCE) to the later Satavahana period (2nd century CE) (Dhavalikar, 1984, p. 12). Following this era, Junnar's significance declined, and architectural activity ceased. Dr. Dhavalikar attributes the caves to the later Satavahana period, except for the Tulja Leni circular *caitya*, which is dated to the 1st century BCE.

Tulja Caves, Junnar:

Located approximately 5 km west of Junnar, the Tulja Caves are situated on Tuljabai Hill. Accessible via a deviation from the Junnar-Nanaghat road, these caves are aligned in a row overlooking a valley and are oriented east-northeast (Nagaraju, 1981, p. 133).

Tulja Cave 3 features a circular hall with a central stupa surrounded by twelve octagonal columns. A one-meter-wide aisle encircles the stupa. The stupa's drum and dome are largely intact, though the latter is significantly damaged. The cave front is broken due to erosion (Nagaraju, 1981, p. 134).

Based on its architectural uniqueness and associated inscriptions, Tulja Cave presents compelling evidence of its potential function as a *Bhikkhuni Sangha*.

III. EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR BHIKKHUNIS

3.1. Curriculum and Training

The education of *Bhikkhunis* in these *Bhikkhuni Sanghas* was structured within monastic institutions and focused on three core areas: *Vinaya*, *Dhamma*, and *Meditation*. *Bhikkhunis* followed the *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*, which contained 311 rules. This training emphasized ethics, communal living, and personal discipline, preparing nuns for monastic leadership.

Bhikkhunis studied core Buddhist texts such as the *Sutta Pitaka*, *Dhammapada*, and *Jataka Tales*. Advanced *Bhikkhunis* engaged in philosophical discourse on impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*).

Training in *Samatha* (concentration) and *Vipassana* (insight) meditation helped *Bhikkhunis* develop wisdom (*prajna*) and inner discipline. Some inscriptions suggest that *Bhikkhunis* not only practiced but also taught meditation techniques.

3.2. Learning methods and instructional practices

As in the broader Buddhist tradition, *Bhikkhunis* followed an oral tradition, memorizing and reciting texts daily. Their training was overseen by senior *Bhikkhunis* and occasionally by monks, ensuring the transmission of doctrinal knowledge. Some inscriptions record *Bhikkhunis* engaging in discussions with monks and lay followers, indicating their participation in intellectual discourse.

3.3. Epigraphic evidence of *bhikkhuni* education

Inscriptions provide substantial proof of *Bhikkhuni* involvement in education. These records appear in cave inscriptions, pillar edicts, and monastery records, detailing their contributions as students, teachers, and benefactors. Inscriptions mention *Bhikkhunis* as *Acaryas* (teachers), implying they held formal teaching positions in monasteries.

Some *Bhikkhunis* are recorded as direct disciples of renowned monks, highlighting cross-gender mentorship within monastic communities.

3.4. Patronage of educational institutions

Donor inscriptions at various rock-cut monasteries in western India confirm that *Bhikkhunis* sponsored monasteries and educational centres. Some *Bhikkhunis* contributed to the construction of viharas, ensuring the sustainability of learning spaces.

Inscriptions record donations made by *Bhikkhunis* for religious and educational purposes, as seen at Sanchi and Bharhut. Buddhist caves in

Maharashtra contain inscriptions referring to the donations of nuns, some of whom must have been teachers, scholars, or even benefactors.

3.5. Challenges and constraints

Gender-Based Restrictions and Limited Institutional Support: Though inscriptional records suggest that *Bhikkhunis* were scholars, it is well known that the Eight *Garudhammas* imposed hierarchical limitations, requiring *Bhikkhunis* to defer to monks in educational and religious matters.

Bhikkhunis had to seek ordination in the presence of both the *Bhikkhu* and *Bhikkhuni Sanghas*, reinforcing their dependent status. Compared to monks, *Bhikkhunis* had fewer educational resources and facilities.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence of the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* in the later period. A more detailed study of monastic architecture is needed to understand its decline. It is likely that the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* gradually disappeared, as there is no literary or epigraphical evidence of its existence in the later period. The disappearance of the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* in India by the 11th century CE further curtailed their access to education.

3.6. Literary contributions of educated *bhikkhuni*

We do, however, have literary records of the contributions of educated *Bhikkhuni*. Texts like the *Therigatha* preserve poetic verses composed by early *Bhikkhuni*, showcasing their deep intellectual and spiritual insights. Some *Bhikkhunis* composed commentaries on Buddhist scriptures, though much of this literature has been lost.

However, no specific literature written by *Bhikkhunis* from Western India or focusing on their condition has been found.

3.7. Preservation and transmission of knowledge

Bhikkhunis have played a very important role in preserving and transmitting Buddhist teachings for many centuries despite facing various challenges. We all are aware of role played by them to spread Buddhism across globe especially during Mauryan period.

The history of *Bhikkhuni Sangha* at Junnar gives invaluable insights into role of nuns in early Buddhism. Inscriptions highlight their educational contributions, patronage and dedication to the practice but often been overlooked.

With the disappearance of the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* eventually from India, its legacy endured through texts, inscriptions, and its influence on Buddhist traditions worldwide.

With the study of historical records of western India, a significant gap becomes more evident. In the absence of literary sources or archaeological evidence documenting the presence and activities becomes more difficult. Either these records have been lost over time, remain undiscovered, or were never systematically documented in historical texts. This absence makes it difficult to trace the contributions and roles of Buddhist nuns in this region during ancient and medieval periods.

Until due to the efforts of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in modern times that the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* experienced a revival. His efforts rejuvenated Buddhism in India and provided a platform for women to embrace monastic path once again. Following it a gradual yet noticeable increase in women's interest in Buddhism emerged in Western India. Initially as a lay practitioner participating in teachings and community activities and over a time some took further step by embracing monastic life and ordination as *Bhikkhuni*.

With this resurgence, many longstanding challenges surrounding female ordination in Buddhism arise. Traditional barriers, societal expectations, and institutional limitations continue to be obstacles in women's acceptance as ordained members of the *Sangha*. However, their unwavering determination and resilience ensure that their spiritual aspirations remain undeterred.

A common trend found throughout history and still relevant today is that many women seeking ordination face hardships within their families or society. Few often, joining the *Sangha* serves as an escape from oppressive circumstances, including domestic struggles, discrimination, or lack of opportunities. However, it is at the same time important to recognise that many women now choose this path independently, driven by intellectual and spiritual curiosity rather than external pressures. They actively seek knowledge, engage with Buddhist philosophy, and consciously dedicate themselves to monastic life.

With the contemporary era, new challenges have emerged along with traditional ones. With the emergence of modern education and an evolving social landscape necessitate a balanced approach that integrates both traditional Buddhist learning and contemporary academic education. Bridging this gap is essential for the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* to thrive in today's world, ensuring that Buddhist nuns are equipped with both spiritual wisdom and practical knowledge to engage meaningfully with society.

IV. REVIVAL OF BHIKKHUNI EDUCATION IN THE MODERN ERA

4.1. Challenges faced by *bhikkhunis*

Gender Discrimination within the Sangha: Most significant obstacle as always faced by *Bhikkhunis* is gender discrimination within the monastic order. Most of the *Bhikkhunis* express that though Buddha himself permitted to ordain women, the contemporary *BhikkhuSangha* in India often ignores the revival of the *Bhikkhuni* order. This opposition is largely driven by concerns over status, authority, and the potential redistribution of monastic resources but also patriarchal societal norms. Many *Bhikkhus* are still hesitant to acknowledge *Bhikkhuni* ordination.

Lack of educational opportunities: Opportunities to formal education in Buddhist philosophy, history, and scriptures remains a critical issue for many *Bhikkhunis*. Due to centuries of decline and neglect, institutions that once provided systematic training for *Bhikkhunis* have disappeared. As a result, many female struggles to gain in-depth knowledge of Buddhist teachings, limiting their ability to teach and lead within the community. In the absence of

structured educational pathways and opportunities for *Bhikkhunis* to participate in scholarly discourse or engage in scriptural studies are also reduced at the same level as their male counterparts.

Absence of a United *Sangha*: *Bhikkhu Sangha* are always well-established and organized, in contrast *Bhikkhunis* often lack a cohesive and structured monastic community. This significantly impacts their collective learning, spiritual development, and ability to advocate for their rights within the larger Buddhist framework. Without a strong and unified institution, *Bhikkhunis* struggle to gain recognition, receive necessary support, or establish monasteries where they can practice independently. The lack of institutional backing further isolates them, making their religious journey more challenging.

Financial and institutional constraints: Another crucial challenge is the financial and institutional dependency on foreign *Bhikkhuni Sangha*. Many Indian *Bhikkhunis* have to travel abroad to receive full ordination, which is a financial burden on them. The minimum or absence of funding from domestic regions is also an obstacle in their ordination. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort among Buddhist leaders, scholars, and practitioners to support and empower female monastic education. Many initiatives which will have a large impact must be undertaken to promote it.

To examine the status of *Bhikkhuni Sangha* I tried to reach out to the few *Bhikkhunis* but could reach out to two *Bhikkhunis*. Interviews of following two *Bhikkhunis* were taken. Following information is based on the interviews taken of them.

4.2. Bhikkhuni Suniti

A Visionary Pioneer in *Bhikkhuni* Education *Bhikkhuni Suniti* is a profoundly dedicated and remarkably visionary leader who has played an instrumental and groundbreaking role in the historic re-establishment, revitalization, and progressive advancement of *Bhikkhuni* education in India. With an acute understanding of the critical necessity for young female monastics to undergo rigorous, structured, and spiritually enriching training, she took the transformative and historic step of founding the *Metta Maitri Sangha* – a purpose-driven, mission-oriented institution exclusively committed to the specialized training of *Samaneris* and the widespread dissemination of profound, authentic Dhamma education.

As per her information her Monumental Contributions to *Bhikkhuni* Education: Conducting Comprehensive *Samaneri* Retreats With an unwavering and deep-rooted commitment to educational equality and spiritual empowerment, *Bhikkhuni Suniti* has meticulously organized, coordinated, and conducted multiple high-impact retreats that ensure female novices receive the same level of rigorous training, disciplined practice, and profound spiritual enlightenment as their male counterparts. These meticulously structured and spiritually enriching retreats provide invaluable opportunities for intensive academic study, immersive meditation practices, and disciplined adherence to monastic traditions that form the very foundation of the *Bhikkhuni* order.

Establishing the Historic *Bhikkhuni Sangha Sthapana Divas* (2014): In a groundbreaking, pioneering effort to spread awareness, foster a deeper understanding, and invigorate the *Bhikkhuni* re-establishment movement, *Bhikkhuni* Suniti initiated, spearheaded, and celebrated the first-ever *Bhikkhuni Sangha Sthapana Divas* in Nagpur in the year 2014. This landmark and transformative event served as an essential platform to highlight the profound significance of *Bhikkhuni* education and strengthen the collective movement for rightful recognition, empowerment, and unwavering support of female monastics.

Expanding Online Dhamma Education and Digital Outreach: Harnessing the far-reaching and transformative potential of modern digital technologies, *Bhikkhuni* Suniti has effectively utilized a diverse array of social media platforms – such as Facebook, YouTube, and other online forums – to extend the accessibility of Buddhist education to an ever-expanding, global audience. Through these innovative digital avenues, she has successfully provided enriching and enlightening teachings, intellectually stimulating discussions, and meticulously structured courses on Buddhist philosophy, monastic discipline, and the profound and intricate *Vinaya* code.

Advocating for Self-Sufficient *Bhikkhuni* Ordination in India Recognising the paramount importance of India's self-reliance and self-sufficiency in *Bhikkhuni* ordination, *Bhikkhuni* Suniti has wholeheartedly dedicated herself to fostering an autonomous, independent, and sustainable monastic system. She has actively initiated, and reinforced efforts to establish a self-sustaining and fully independent *Bhikkhuni* ordination process within India, thereby significantly reducing the historical dependence on foreign monastic institutions for full ordination and structured training. Her Vision for the Future With an unwavering sense of purpose, an indomitable spirit, and an unshakable resolve, *Bhikkhuni* Suniti envisions the establishment of a permanent, fully-equipped, and well-resourced *Bhikkhuni* education and training centre. This sacred sanctuary will serve as a transformative and spiritual haven where young women can receive full ordination, undergo extensive, immersive Buddhist training, and cultivate deep, profound spiritual wisdom without external obstacles, societal limitations, or institutional restrictions. Through this monumental endeavour, she aspires to create a self-sustaining and flourishing environment where *Bhikkhunis* can pursue their monastic aspirations with absolute dedication, unwavering faith, and limitless opportunities for growth and enlightenment.

4.3. *Bhikkhuni* Shakya Dhammadina

A Dedicated Educator and Inspiring Leader *Bhikkhuni* Shakya Dhammadina, a highly educated, deeply committed, and spiritually inclined young woman from Haryana, made the resolute and unwavering decision to embrace the spiritual path without hesitation. She was ordained in the year 2017 and underwent meticulous, rigorous, and disciplined training as a *Bhikkhuni*. Before her full ordination, she diligently served as an Anagarika and travelled to Nepal, where she encountered and engaged with senior

Anagarikas who mentored, guided, and inspired her on her spiritual journey. However, during her early experiences, she observed and identified a prevalent misconception – that layperson often assumed that women became *Bhikkhunis* solely due to dissatisfaction in their family lives. Additionally, she recognized the limitations imposed upon *Anagarikas*, who lacked teaching privileges and were often relegated to menial, behind-the-scenes roles such as cleaning and caretaking. Seeking full ordination and deeper spiritual fulfilment, she embarked on a transformative journey to Thailand, where she successfully completed the meticulous and structured three-step ordination process (*Samaneri* - *Sikkhamana* - *Bhikkhuni*) and received her higher ordination in the year 2020.

Connection to Western India: Although originally from Haryana, *Bhikkhuni* Shakya Dhammadina relocated to Nagpur to pursue higher education and broaden her knowledge of Buddhist studies. With the unwavering support and encouragement of Bhanteji Shilvansha, she enrolled at Nagpur University, where she successfully pursued postgraduate studies in Buddhist Studies. Her remarkable ability to convey the Dhamma effectively and meaningfully attracted a growing number of laypeople to her insightful teachings. A senior *Bhikkhu* recognized her immense potential and became her sponsor, enabling her to complete her Master's degree with outstanding academic excellence. During the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic, she continued her disciplined practice in Kosambi, receiving consistent support and actively engaging in Dhamma outreach, particularly among children and youth.

Training Future *Bhikkhunis* Recognizing the pressing and urgent need for systematic, structured, and comprehensive *Bhikkhuni* training programs, she took the pioneering initiative to establish well-organized training programs:

2022 (Savner, near Nagpur): Conducted a transformative 15-day *Samaneri* training course for 25 - 30 women, marking the first such event in the region.

2023 (Savner): Organized and led another intensive training session for 17 *Samaneris*, overcoming logistical challenges and traveling extensively with the trainees for alms and Dhamma talks.

2023 (Sarnath): Secured a newly renovated training centre and successfully conducted two intensive *Samaneri* training sessions, each accommodating 25 dedicated participants.

4.4. Initiatives for *bhikkhuni* education

Formation of the All-India *Bhikkhuni* Sangha: In a momentous step toward strengthening *Bhikkhuni* education, a distinguished committee consisting of twelve highly dedicated *Bhikkhunis* was meticulously established. This esteemed collective was formed with the noble intention of providing unwavering support, structured training, and comprehensive developmental programs for women embracing the monastic path.

Establishment of the Metta Maitri Sangha: Founded by the deeply committed and visionary *Bhikkhuni* Suniti, the Metta Maitri Sangha stands as a pioneering institution dedicated exclusively to the formal education, rigorous

training, and profound spiritual enlightenment of young women entering the noble monastic life. This institution provides an unparalleled platform for structured learning, ensuring that aspiring *Bhikkhunis* receive guidance in both traditional Buddhist studies and practical *Vinaya* disciplines.

Utilisation of Advanced Digital Platforms for Widespread Learning: With the growth of digital connectivity in the new era and popularity of social media platforms most notably Facebook, YouTube, Instagram *Bhikkhunis* have skillfully leaned to harness to disseminate the Dhamma teachings. These new platforms have started to serve as dynamic channels for sharing thought-provoking discourses, online courses and insightful discussions. Making Buddhist education more assessable and available to global audience.

Organised *Samaneri* (Novice) Retreats and Intensive Training Programs: To bridge the gap between educational disparity between male and female monastic education meticulously and systematically planned *Samaneri* retreats have been initiated. These specialised retreats provide an inclusive, well-rounded, and equal learning opportunity where female novices are given comprehensive exposure to Buddhist teachings, disciplined training in monastic conduct, and a profound understanding of teachings.

Projects of *Bhikkhuni* Suniti and *Bhikkhuni* Shakya Dhammadina:

- ***Sangha* Day:** A large-scale gathering to raise awareness about the struggles faced by *Bhikkhunis* and to promote the expansion of Dhamma education.
- **Permanent Training Centres:** Both *Bhikkhunis* are actively seeking and striving to establish a dedicated space for large-scale *Samaneri* training and Buddhist education.

4.5. Current state and future prospects

Struggle for recognition and education rights and support from Institution continues even today for *Bhikkhunis* in Western India. Initiative to celebrate *Bhikkhuni* Day or organising international conferences have increased awareness and visibility for their struggles though with lots of opposition. Success of their long-term struggle has attracted institutional backing, widespread societal acceptance, and sustained financial support to ensure the continued growth, empowerment, and flourishing of *Bhikkhuni* education in India.

Path of Education for *Bhikkhunis* in Western India has been marked by resistance. While challenges remain, initiatives led by *Bhikkhuni* of modern era provide a hopeful path forward. Ensuring equal educational opportunities for *Bhikkhunis* based on gender equality but also to preserve the rich tradition of India.

Institutions like The Gautami Mahapajapati Educational Foundation, established in 2022, dedicated to the education and training of Buddhist monastic communities, with a particular focus on *Bhikkhuni*, *Samaneras*, and *Samaneris*. Named after Mahapajapati Gotami, the first woman to receive ordination in Buddhism. This initiative foundation carries forward legacy to provide rigorous) training. This initiative is a small effort to bridge historical

gaps in monastic education. It also ensures that both male and female monastics receive comprehensive education. One of the major role aspects of the foundation is its commitment to maintaining a common syllabus for both *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhuni*. This equalised approach is instrumental in bridging the gap between gender issue especially in the education... The foundation claims to support a scholarly environment that encourages critical thinking, scriptural study, and practical implementation of Buddhist principles in daily life. At the helm of this transformative initiative are *Bhikkhuni* Suniti and Vijaya Maitreya, who serve as Joint Directors of the institution. According to her leadership plays a crucial role in nuns receiving the necessary religious instruction and the empowerment needed to take on leadership roles within the Buddhist Sangha.

Challenges and Future Prospects: Despite its efforts various challenges are faced by this institution which also reflect historical struggle withing Buddhist Monastic traditions. If these hurdles are address in a proper way expansion and success of the work is possible.

Limited Institutional Support: As reflected through records of history , *Bhikkhunis* have always faced resource constraints compared to their male counterparts. The lack of funding and institutional backing always faced a major challenge in establishing of educational centres for nuns. As traditional institutions that have always received a support , *Bhikkhuni* -led institutions often struggle to sustain and receive financial and material resources.

Gender-Based Hierarchical Structures: Although *Bhikkhuni* ordination has been revived in certain parts of the world, traditional restrictions still impose barriers to full acceptance and integration. Overcoming these deeply ingrained societal biases remains an ongoing challenge.

Historical records, particularly epigraphic evidence, highlight the invaluable role of *Bhikkhunis* in the evolution of Buddhist education in ancient India. Despite many challenges, *Bhikkhunis* always participated in textual learning, and the patronage of Buddhist institutions. Their contributions, immortalised in inscriptions, serve as a testament to their dedication to the preservation and dissemination of Buddhist teachings. These historical accounts continue to inspire current efforts to further strengthen the *Bhikkhuni* Sangha, particularly in the domain of education.

V. CONCLUSION

The historical and modern struggles of *Bhikkhunis* in Western India have always created a hindrances the access of education and leadership to Buddhist women. Despite support right from the ancient times gender biases and absence of institutional backing has severely limited *Bhikkhuni*'s role in religious pursuit.

Epigraphic and archaeological evidence from sites such as Junnar highlights the historical presence of *Bhikkhunis* as scholars, donors, and teachers. They must have participated in monastic education and religious patronage. But slowly declined with disappearance of their role in Buddhism.

In modern times, we see the evidence and say hypothetically that *Bhikkhunis* continue to face major with limited access to formal education, financial constraints, and resistance from society. The absence of a unified *Bhikkhuni Sangha* further creates hindrance to their struggle to fight for equal opportunities. We can say hypothetically that modern initiatives, have started creating new platforms for *Bhikkhuni* education. The popularity and access to digital technologies and online learning has also emerged as an effective tool in transforming and *Bhikkhunis* to access Buddhist education.

The efforts of emerging are crucial in reviving *Bhikkhuni* education in Western India, though should be done on vast scale. By putting efforts to establish educational institutions, organising retreats, may helped to lay the foundation for a more inclusive Buddhist monastic system. Still institutional and financial support remains essential for long-term progress.

Moving forward, overcoming institutional biases, securing formal recognition for *Bhikkhunis*, and expanding access to educational resources are crucial steps in restoring the rightful place of women in Buddhist monasticism. By fostering an inclusive learning environment and upholding the egalitarian principles of Buddhism, the path can be paved for future generations of *Bhikkhunis* to thrive as scholars, teachers, and spiritual leaders

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PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PRACTICES IN BUDDHIST EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Buddhist education emphasizes the holistic development of individuals through self-awareness, moral discipline, and the cultivation of wisdom. This paper explores the psychological dynamics inherent in Buddhist education, focusing on the intersection of cognitive psychology and Buddhist teachings. It examines how Buddhist practices, such as meditation and mindfulness, influence cognition, mental processes, and behavioral patterns, leading to a transformative process that alleviates suffering. Additionally, the paper delves into the motivational aspects of Buddhist psychology, highlighting its therapeutic applications for achieving mental harmony and Nirvana. By aligning with modern educational psychology and integrating principles of self-discipline, creativity, and inner transformation, Buddhist education provides a comprehensive framework for personal growth and societal peace. The findings suggest that Buddhist education's psychological insights offer valuable contributions to contemporary educational methodologies.

Keywords: *Buddhist education, psychological dynamics, cognitive psychology, motivation, mindfulness, Nirvana, self-awareness, transformation, therapeutic applications, education philosophy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Buddhist education is profoundly interwoven with psychological principles that emphasize self-awareness, ethical discipline (*sīla*), and the cultivation of mental clarity (*samādhi*). Rooted in the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, Buddhism presents a framework that resonates with contemporary psychological theories concerning cognition, emotional regulation, and behavioral transformation. The integration of these psychological foundations within Buddhist pedagogy fosters a holistic approach to learning, one that nurtures intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human

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development. This study explores the psychological underpinnings of Buddhist education, critically analyzing its core practices – including mindfulness (*sati*), meditation (*bhāvanā*), and ethical training – in shaping human cognition and behavior. Furthermore, it investigates the intersection between Buddhist contemplative traditions and modern psychological research, highlighting their mutual insights into the processes of mental conditioning, self-regulation, and psychological resilience.

Buddhist education is not merely a system of transmitting doctrinal knowledge; rather, it embodies a transformative path that fosters moral integrity, self-awareness, and the development of wisdom (*paññā*). At its core lies an intricate interplay between cognitive psychology and Buddhist epistemology, wherein meditative practices facilitate cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, and behavioral refinement. This paper delves into the motivational dimensions of Buddhist psychology, examining how its therapeutic methodologies – grounded in mindfulness and introspective awareness – offer profound applications for mental well-being, conflict resolution, and the realization of inner harmony (*Nibbāna*). By aligning with modern educational psychology and integrating key principles of self-discipline, creative cognition, and existential transformation, Buddhist education provides a comprehensive and adaptive model for both individual flourishing and collective harmony in society.

The pedagogical approach in Buddhism can be likened to the analogy of footwear: while everyone wears shoes, no single pair fits all. This metaphor underscores the fundamental Buddhist principle of karmic individuality, recognizing that each person carries their own unique karmic imprints (*vipāka*), which shape their receptivity to learning and transformation. In the same vein, the Buddha employed skillful means (*upāya*) – such as the imagery of a boat ferrying beings across the river of suffering – to illustrate the adaptability of the Dhamma to diverse temperaments and conditions. Consequently, when discussing Buddhist education, one must also consider the *means* of education: the necessary conditions for effective teaching and learning, the methodological tools for research and inquiry, and the pedagogical strategies that facilitate both theoretical understanding and experiential realization.

From a Buddhist perspective, all aspects of life – whether formal practices such as scriptural study, recitation of the Buddha's name (*nembutsu*), chanting (*paritta*), and meditation, or seemingly mundane activities like sweeping the floor, fetching water, or chopping wood – can serve as vehicles for mental cultivation and purification. These daily actions, when performed with mindfulness and right intention (*sammā saṅkappa*), become integral to the process of inner refinement and ethical living. Thus, any educational model or system that claims to be aligned with Buddhist principles yet fails to uphold the ultimate aim of mental purification and wisdom is fundamentally misaligned with the true spirit of the Dhamma. Buddhist education, therefore, is not limited to monastic scholarship or meditative discipline; it is an evolving, adaptive, and dynamic framework that continuously seeks to refine human consciousness, cultivate compassion, and contribute to the greater good of all sentient beings.

II. DEFINITION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMICS

The word ‘psychology’ is a Greek term that generally means the science of the mind.¹ Etymologically, the Greek word ‘psychology’ is derived from the Latin terms *psyche* and *logos*, where ‘*psyche*’ refers to the mind, soul, or spirit, and ‘*logos*’ refers to knowledge, discourse, or study.² Psychology, originating from the Greek words *psyche* (mind, soul) and *logos* (knowledge or discourse), is the study of the mind and its influence on behavior.³ Although human mental activity is invisible, it is observable through behavior, making psychology an essential tool for understanding human motivation and actions. However, human mental activity is something we cannot observe with the naked eye but through an external form, which is called “*behaviour*”. Therefore, in order to understand how the human spirit works must be learned through external psychological performance.

Psychology is often understood as the study of human desires, needs, and behavioral tendencies in response to various situations. In everyday discourse, some perceive psychology as the ability to comprehend and even influence the motivations of others, sometimes equating it with the capacity to control or persuade. However, the scope of psychology extends far beyond individual will, preferences, and actions; it encompasses an intricate web of cognitive, emotional, and social phenomena. Every human expression – be it verbal communication, bodily gestures, or complex decision-making processes – carries a psychological dimension that reveals underlying thought patterns and emotional states. Contemporary psychology investigates fundamental aspects of human cognition, motivation, perception, and behavior, seeking to unravel the intricate forces that shape human experiences. Behavioral patterns, influenced by conscious and unconscious motivations, often exhibit layers of complexity, reflecting the dynamic and adaptive nature of the human mind. Psychologists employ rigorous research methodologies, including experimental and observational studies, to systematically explore these dimensions of human psychology.

With the advancement of science and technology, psychology has evolved into a multidisciplinary field that integrates empirical research with theoretical inquiry. Cognitive neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and data-driven behavioral analytics now contribute to a deeper understanding of mental processes, enhancing our ability to address psychological challenges in diverse contexts. While psychological research continues to offer valuable insights into human nature, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of empirical methods in capturing the full richness of human consciousness. The pursuit of psychological knowledge, therefore, remains an ever-evolving

¹ Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press. Retrieved June, 23, 2024. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology>)

² Richard Gross, *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behavior*, London: Hodder Education, 2010, p. 2.

³ Freud, S. (1917). *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. 3rd ed. George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 139.

endeavor, striving to bridge the gap between empirical data and the profound complexities of human experience.

In contemporary psychology, the concept of the *heart* – often metaphorically associated with emotions and cognition – primarily pertains to the interplay between perception, feeling, and the underlying motivations that drive human behavior. Motivation serves as the foundation of all human actions, shaping decisions and behavioral expressions in response to internal and external stimuli. To analyze psychological phenomena effectively, it is crucial to examine the intricate relationship between motivation and the behaviors that stem from it. However, psychological states do not always manifest uniformly in behavior; the same internal state can give rise to diverse external expressions, just as similar external behaviors may originate from distinct psychological states. Thus, solely observing external conduct does not provide a comprehensive understanding of an individual's psychological processes. Behavior is not necessarily a direct and singular reflection of one's internal state but can be polymorphic, meaning that multiple behaviors may stem from a single psychological condition, or conversely, a variety of mental states may give rise to seemingly identical actions. Understanding the complexities of this relationship is essential in exploring human psychology.

The study of *psychological foundations* involves an exploration of the dynamic interplay between cognitive processes, emotional responses, and motivational drives that collectively influence human behavior. It seeks to uncover the underlying mechanisms that dictate why individuals act in specific ways and how internal and external motivations shape behavioral patterns. These psychological dynamics illuminate the intricate forces that govern decision-making, adaptive responses, and personality formation. Psychological systems that emphasize motivation and mental processes – such as psychoanalysis and Gestalt psychology – provide valuable insights into the structure of the mind and its operational mechanisms. However, psychological dynamics are not confined to any singular theoretical model; rather, they encompass a broad spectrum of perspectives that address the complexities of human cognition and emotion.

A key inquiry in psychology revolves around fundamental questions such as: What compels individuals to take action? How do psychological needs and survival instincts shape human choices? Why does every individual develop a unique personality? By examining these aspects, psychological research continues to deepen our understanding of human behavior, fostering a more nuanced perspective on the interwoven nature of mind, motivation, and action.

III. UNDERSTANDING COGNITION

Cognition refers to the mental processes involved in gaining knowledge and understanding, including perception, reasoning, and memory.⁴ While these processes are not directly observable, they manifest through behavior.

⁴ Neisser, U. (1967). *Cognitive Psychology*. Appleton-Century-Crofts, 149.

The Buddha's teachings align with modern psychological understanding, emphasizing that cognitive processes influence how we perceive and interact with the world.

Buddhist psychology teaches that cognition is a combination of sensory input and conceptual processes.⁵ The Buddha explored methods such as self-discipline, meditation, and concentration to enhance cognitive development, ultimately leading to the eradication of ignorance. These methods align with the gradual development of mental faculties and are crucial to attaining wisdom and enlightenment.⁶ Cognition⁷ means the meaning. *Knowing* is a matter of mental activity, language use, imagination, and conception generation (stimulating circumstances and for likes of the response had). This kind of *knowing process* is something that cannot be seen; we cannot see what is called speculation, reasoning, or memory, but we can observe and study behaviour born from these activities. The Buddha taught that our cognitive process is the reality of the sensory process, our perception is also the conceptual and imaginary component of the non-sensory combined in one place. The Buddha's psychological knowledge and the science of the nature of modern psychology are similar.

The Buddha tried various methods such as penance and self-mortification, avoidance and seclusion, etc. develop the self. This kind of development of high power was not some kind of mysticism but rather the natural development of some kind of human potential; it was not the sudden appearance of some force but a gradual development. This gradual development involves three stages: moral attitude, samadhi or concentration, and the cultivation of wisdom. This type of input required a lifetime of experimentation, and the Buddha finally attained the eradication of ignorance and the bonds of afflictions. Anyone who studies and learns about the cognitive psychology of Buddhism cannot be indifferent to these highly perceptive psychological fields.

IV. PSYCHODYNAMICS AND COGNITIVE THERAPY IN BUDDHISM

Cognitive psychology is deeply interconnected with psychodynamics. The Buddha analyzed the psychological dynamics of human suffering, aiming to understand its root causes and find methods to reduce it. Buddhist psychology, therefore, provides a framework for self-improvement by addressing desires and perceptions, which influence cognition.⁸ Motivation, in Buddhist psychology, is seen as both physiological and psychological, impacting desires, actions,

⁵ Goleman, D. (2003). *Destructive Emotions: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama*. Bantam Books. Accessed on January 25, 2025 from https://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/en/search/search_detail.jsp?seq=163361

⁶ Rahula, W. (1974). *What the Buddha Taught*. Grove Press, 57.

⁷ Cognitive verbs refer to people's perception of things and phenomena by the senses such as: See, notice, watch, listen, hear, feel, touch, smell, taste...

⁸ Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. Delacorte Pres, 144 - 156.

and mental states.⁹ The Buddha's teachings emphasize transforming the mind to address insecurity, anxiety, and suffering, offering a path to inner peace. This psychological transformation involves a process of purifying perception, which aligns with modern therapeutic practices.¹⁰

While modern psychology primarily addresses mental illness through diagnostic and therapeutic frameworks, Buddhist psychology emphasizes the cultivation of inner harmony and the resolution of existential conflict. The fundamental aim is to refine cognitive processes to transcend suffering and attain ultimate liberation, a state known as *nirvana*. In this context, cognitive psychology is inextricably linked to psychodynamics, as the Buddha meticulously analyzed the psychological mechanisms underlying human suffering (*dukkha*) and sought practical methods for its cessation. His teachings underscore the necessity of heightened cognitive awareness and self-transformation, recognizing that human desires influence cognition just as perceptions shape desires.

Motivation, as a driving force within the human mind, governs action and directs individuals toward particular goals. It is traditionally categorized into physiological and psychological domains. Physiological motivations encompass fundamental survival instincts, while psychological motivations pertain to the internal states of urgency, insecurity, restlessness, anxiety, and suffering. Buddhist psychology, rather than merely categorizing these states, seeks to address their root causes, offering a non-dualistic approach to guiding sentient beings toward well-being and liberation. From the standpoint of contemporary Western psychology, therapy is commonly associated with the treatment of clinical mental disorders. However, within Buddhist psychology, the concept of *therapy* extends beyond clinical interventions to encompass the complete eradication of psychological conflict and internal distress. The canonical Buddhist scriptures provide extensive discourse on the motivational dimensions of psychology, positioning mindfulness, ethical conduct, and meditative training as integral components of mental transformation.

The Buddha did not advocate for the suppression or rejection of sensory experiences but rather for their refinement through disciplined training. Instead of severing ties with the sensory world, he encouraged the purification and regulation of perception, ensuring that external stimuli do not disrupt inner equanimity. This process of cognitive purification aligns closely with psychotherapeutic constructivism, wherein human perception and inquiry shape the mental frameworks that define reality. Consequently, Buddhist psychology places perception at the core of its therapeutic paradigm, recognizing its role in restructuring cognition and alleviating psychological distress.

⁹ Hofmann, S. G. (2011). *Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: A Critical Review of the Evidence*. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31 (3), 557 – 565.

¹⁰ Wilber, K. (2000). *Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy*. Shambhala.

Both modern psychology and Buddhist psychology share a common therapeutic goal – *samācariya*, or harmonious living – which serves as a foundation for psychological well-being and spiritual liberation. This principle applies universally, encompassing familial relationships, societal interactions, and professional environments. While formal psychotherapy, as understood in the Western tradition, emerged in the 19th century with the pioneering work of Wilhelm Wundt and William James, Buddhist psychological inquiry predates these developments by millennia. The Buddha's profound analysis of the human mind laid the groundwork for a structured understanding of motivation, cognition, and behavior, offering a comprehensive blueprint for mental transformation. His teachings continue to influence contemporary discussions on psychology, providing timeless insights into the pursuit of inner peace and the alleviation of suffering.

Through the perspective of educational psychology presented in the philosophy of *Vijñāna* or *Vijñāpti*, the beginning is from the all-ground consciousness (*Ālayavijñāna*), and the end is also the all-ground consciousness. Thus, the *Ālayavijñāna* is the two sides of the actual *Nirvāna*. Since the *Ālayavijñāna* contains both impure and pure nuclei, the goal of the Buddhist psychoeducational method is to make the impure and unwholesome nuclei in the *Ālayavijñāna* dissolve, returning the pure and immaculate nature to the consciousness. This is the meaning to *leave birth and death without Nirvāna, to reach Nirvāna must go into samsara; because Nirvana and samsara are not two, not different*.¹¹ On the other hand, on the professional level, the goal of the educational psychology system in the philosophy *Vijñāna* or *Vijñāpti* is to aim for a transformation (*Asrayaparāvṛtti* or *Parāvṛtti*) that is, to change the entire basic inner structure of the mind (Transformation at the base), releasing the seeds of subject and object in the working process of mind (*Citta*) and mental factors (*cetasika*) or to put it more specifically, to remove the seeds of wandering thoughts in the psychological evolution of the perceiver and the perceived object. Therefore, the psychological system of Buddhist education not only focuses on examining psychological phenomena such as happiness, sadness, suffering, and happiness... but also captures the essence of psychological phenomena i.e. seeds, the energy of the past and the present habit and karma, Gandhabha,¹² etc., leading causes of insecurity, confusion, and psychological crisis. Therefore, achieving a transformation in consciousness is the ultimate goal - Nirvana liberation.

V. THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST EDUCATION

Buddhist education is fundamentally a process of self-cultivation that fosters deep self-awareness, urging individuals to seek truth through their own dynamic and creative engagement with reality. Unlike conventional

¹¹ This issue is detailed in the Mahayana treatises and canon. See *the Nirvana Sutra, the Middle Way Commentary, and the Heart Sutra (Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtram)*.

¹² In Buddhism, this term also refers to a being in the intermediate state (between death and rebirth).

pedagogical approaches that prioritize the accumulation of external knowledge, Buddhist education centers on the awakening (*bodhi*) of the individual's consciousness, enabling them to discern the profound interconnection between actions (*karma*) and their consequent experiences of happiness and suffering (*samsara* and *nirvana*). Within this framework, each individual is not merely a passive recipient of knowledge but rather the architect of their existential trajectory. Through the sustained practice of mindfulness (*sati*) and introspective awareness, individuals come to recognize their intrinsic capacity to take responsibility for their mental states, actively shaping their path toward wisdom (*prajñā*) and ultimate liberation. Education, in this sense, is not simply an intellectual endeavor but a transformative process aimed at harmonizing cognition and ethical conduct, allowing individuals to align their actions with their true nature (*dharmatā*).

This perspective resonates with certain philosophical underpinnings of Western educational thought, particularly those articulated by scholars such as Stanley Hall and John Dewey. Dewey, in particular, emphasized the dynamic nature of the human psyche, advocating for an educational paradigm that nurtures an individual's innate potential through experiential learning, self-discipline, and character formation. Buddhist education similarly upholds the principle of self-directed learning, not as a means of fulfilling external societal expectations but as an inward journey toward self-realization (*ātma-bodha*). Unlike rigid didactic instruction, Buddhist education flourishes within fluid, relational contexts - manifesting in the interdependent exchanges between teachers and students, parents and children, mentors and disciples. These relationships are not merely hierarchical structures of transmission but dynamic, reciprocal engagements that encourage inquiry, contemplation, and personal growth. In this sense, education is best understood as a relational process (*pratītyasamutpāda*), wherein knowledge is not imposed but awakened within the individual.

In the spirit of Buddhist pedagogy, the mind of the student remains at the heart of all educational efforts, for it is within the mind that the seeds (*bīja*) of wisdom and ignorance, virtue and vice, and enlightenment and delusion take root. The *alaya-vijñāna* (storehouse consciousness), as expounded in *Yogācāra* philosophy, holds within it the potential for both mundane suffering and transcendental liberation. Whether these latent tendencies manifest as either the afflictive states of *samsara* or the awakened realization of *nirvana* depends upon the individual's volitional engagement with their consciousness. Thus, Buddhist education does not seek to dictate external dogmas but rather to cultivate an individual's capacity to discern, refine, and ultimately liberate their mind from conditioned limitations. It is an invitation to awaken to the deeper dimensions of existence, where knowledge is not separate from being and where wisdom is cultivated through direct, embodied experience rather than passive reception.

In essence, Buddhist education aspires to guide individuals toward the realization that they are the sole custodians of their own mental and spiritual

well-being. The path to awakening is neither imposed from without nor dictated by external authority; rather, it unfolds as an internal process of discernment, discipline, and self-transformation. It is through this profound engagement with the self – where the heart and mind function in harmony – that true learning occurs, not as a mere acquisition of facts, but as a journey toward ultimate freedom (*vimutti*).

Thus, each person, after realizing the truth about the origin of suffering and happiness, chooses for himself a life, a life according to his own will. Here, through the lens of Mind Only and Buddhism in general, there is no powerful person or superman who can reign and dominate a person's life other than his consciousness. Nor is there any supernatural force that can reward or punish man, just as there is no greater authority than that of the mind in man itself. Even concepts such as karma, karma, habit habits, etc., are all created by the consciousness of each individual. Karma is a real, present life that people carry with them wherever they go. But what is Karma? The Buddha taught: "*Karma* is volitional action", or action generated from the mind; and He taught that: "Man is the owner of *karma*, heir to *karma*. *Karma* is the relative, the womb from which man was born". Thus, the spirit of Buddhist education is the spirit of awakening people and returning them to themselves. Here, the consciousness of each individual always plays a central role in all areas of life. Stanley Hall, an American psychologist, and his student John Dewey, a pragmatic philosopher, were the proponents of a new educational method in America in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Given the new educational method promoted by Hall and Dewey, once in vogue and still influencing American education today in the way that "the development of the human psyche arises from within. Thus, such progress is not caused by external impulses. And education must take the child as the starting point, must be based on its psychology, not that of the person who teaches it, must be based on the capacity and needs of each child, and must take self-discipline as a means, the child is the center of the school".¹³

Regarding the world of psychology in education, Dewey said that "Children's psyche is not a crystal that stands still and remains constant, but it is a 'dynamic' acting, ceaselessly progressing".¹⁴ For him, what is called the self is essentially nothing more than the process of activity. It is a latent energy source in the mind and is always working to find a way to manifest its '*true nature*', and that process of constant activity is expressed in three forms: i) Will, ii) Perception, and iii) Character. According to Dewey, education is the training of character. That is, first of all, education helps the motivation available in each person's mind, activates and calls to the original human motivation, and then guides it to develop and adapt to the needs of the world society. Finally, Dewey concludes as follows: "Education is not a job of teaching letters and languages,

¹³ Radhakrishnan, S., and Muirhead, J. H., eds., *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, Humanities Press Inc, Newyork, 1996, p 104.

¹⁴ Panda, K. C., *Elements of Child Development*, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 2001, p 13.

but first of all letting children live and work according to their progress, according to the beating of their hearts, in an atmosphere of convenience. Let their whole body, disposition, and mind be in harmony and flourish. Education means learning, but learning by life and in life. From there, Dewey proposed the principles of education, such as:¹⁵

1. the principle of co-generational education,
2. the principle of functional pedagogy, and
3. Principle of social consciousness.

Buddhist psychological principles have significantly influenced contemporary psychology, particularly in the areas of mindfulness-based interventions, cognitive therapy, and emotional intelligence. The adaptation of mindfulness in clinical psychology has led to the development of therapies such as mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. These approaches are used to treat conditions such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD.¹⁶ The concept of right thought (*samma sankappa*) in Buddhism parallels cognitive-behavioral therapy, which emphasizes changing maladaptive thought patterns to improve mental health. By promoting awareness of negative thoughts and replacing them with positive perspectives, both Buddhist education and cognitive-behavioral therapy facilitate emotional well-being. The practice of loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) enhances emotional intelligence by fostering empathy and interpersonal skills. Studies have shown that individuals who practice loving-kindness meditation exhibit greater emotional regulation and prosocial behavior.¹⁷

VI. CONCLUSION

From the examples above, we observe that modern education, at least to some extent, has encountered key aspects of the Buddhist educational spirit—particularly in its emphasis on self-awareness, consciousness, and the cultivation of psychological potentials. The principles of self-mastery, self-discipline, dynamism, and creativity that characterize contemporary educational philosophies resonate with the pedagogical approach that the Buddha imparted to his disciples more than twenty-five centuries ago. As is widely recognized, religious education plays a crucial role in fostering global harmony and peace. Peace serves as the foundation upon which all aspects of national and societal development rest, and without unity and stability, even the fulfillment of material necessities becomes a formidable challenge. In this context, Buddhist education has long been regarded as an inseparable component of ethical and philosophical thought, offering insights that

¹⁵ Principle of co-generation: Is an incentive to act - to make the mind flow out, not cramming and imposing like pouring water into a bucket.

¹⁶ Baer, R. A. (2003). Mindfulness training as a clinical intervention: A conceptual and empirical review. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), 125 – 143.

¹⁷ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), 144 – 156.

transcend time and cultural boundaries.

The psychological foundations and applied methodologies of Buddhist education provide a comprehensive framework for cognitive, emotional, and ethical development. By placing emphasis on mindfulness (*sati*), meditative concentration (*samādhi*), and ethical conduct (*śīla*), Buddhist pedagogy cultivates mental clarity, resilience, and compassion – qualities essential for holistic well-being. The integration of these principles into modern psychology and educational systems underscores their enduring relevance in shaping human consciousness and fostering a balanced approach to learning. Future research and interdisciplinary applications of Buddhist educational practices hold the potential to deepen their contributions to both psychological well-being and contemporary pedagogy.

Nevertheless, while Buddhist education offers profound psychological and ethical insights, challenges arise when attempting to integrate these practices into mainstream educational frameworks. Certain Buddhist concepts may require reinterpretation or contextual adaptation to align with secular, scientifically grounded pedagogies. Furthermore, empirical research remains necessary to substantiate the efficacy of Buddhist educational methodologies, ensuring their credibility within evidence-based academic discourse. The fusion of Buddhist principles with contemporary educational theories could pave the way for a more integrative, human-centered approach to learning – one that nurtures not only intellectual competence but also ethical awareness and inner transformation.

In an era marked by increasing global interconnectedness, Buddhist education assumes a renewed significance within modern educational paradigms. Rooted in the principles of self-discipline, mindfulness, and ethical refinement, its values resonate with contemporary approaches that emphasize the holistic development of individuals. More than ever, the spirit of Buddhist education offers a path toward fostering intercultural understanding, personal growth, and collective well-being. By promoting inner harmony, it lays the groundwork for lasting peace and global cooperation, reinforcing the notion that education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but a transformative journey toward wisdom, ethical responsibility, and the realization of human potential.

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THE PRAGMATIC APPROACH IN DISSEMINATING MINDFULNESS EDUCATION AND PRACTICES FOR COMPASSIONATE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN INDONESIA

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Abstract:

Background: Mindfulness meditation education and practices have been widely disseminated among people from diverse socio-economic and religious backgrounds. This dissemination has often taken a pragmatic approach, deliberately downplaying the connection between mindfulness meditation and Buddhism. In Indonesia's pluralistic society, where practicing or adopting teachings from another religion can be a sensitive issue, such an approach is crucial for broader acceptance.

Aim: This article aims to share experiences in disseminating mindfulness meditation education and practices within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Results: While the pragmatic approach to disseminating mindfulness education in Indonesia primarily draws upon Buddhist teachings such as *Arogya Parama Lābha* (health is the highest gain), *Dhammanusati* (reflection on the Dhamma), and the *Kalama Sutta*, non-Buddhists have embraced mindfulness practice largely due to its scientifically validated benefits and personal experiences of its positive effects. This pragmatic approach has played a crucial role in fostering compassionate and peaceful coexistence among different religious communities in Indonesia.

Conclusion: Mindfulness meditation education and practice can be widely and peacefully propagated in Indonesia's predominantly non-Buddhist society through a pragmatic, non-sectarian approach that respects religious diversity while emphasizing the universal benefits of mindfulness.

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Keywords: *Mindfulness, meditation, ehipassiko, arogya, pragmatic approach.*

I. MINDFULNESS AS BENEFICIAL PRACTICE

Mindfulness, or *sati* in Pali, is the practice of being fully present and engaged in the moment, free from judgment and distraction. It involves observing one's thoughts, emotions, and surroundings with awareness and equanimity. In Buddhism, mindfulness is regarded as a fundamental practice that can be applied to all aspects of life, from simple daily activities to complex interpersonal interactions.¹

This article shares experiences in pragmatically disseminating Buddhist mindfulness teachings in education and practice within Indonesia's pluralistic society. By presenting mindfulness in a way that aligns with universal human values, it can be accepted with joy and benefit all individuals, regardless of their religious or social backgrounds.

Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, with a population of more than 200 million. The Indonesian government officially recognizes six religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The Buddhist community in Indonesia is a minority, comprising less than one percent of the population. Buddhism in Indonesia consists of various sects, with the three largest being *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna*, and *Vajrayāna*.

II. BUDDHIST FORMAL EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

In the realm of formal Buddhist education, Nalanda Institute is the oldest institution, founded 44 years ago. Initially, the Nalanda Institute of Indonesia had only one study program, Dharma Ācariya, which was dedicated to producing Buddhist teachers. Today, the institute offers six study programs.

- Dharma Ācariya – Bachelor's and master's degrees in Buddhist teaching (*established in 1976 and 2012, respectively*).
- Dharma Usada – Bachelor's degree in Dharma-Based Health Studies (*established in 2013*).
- Business Management – Bachelor's degree (*established in 2023*).
- Communication – Bachelor's degree (*established in 2023*).
- Early Childhood Education – Bachelor's degree (*established in 2023*).

2.1. Two pragmatic approaches to teaching meditation

Mindfulness studies are a key feature of our curriculum, especially in the Dharma Ācariya and Dharma Usada programs. However, the teaching methods differ significantly between the two programs due to the students' diverse backgrounds.

Students in the Dharma Ācariya program are almost entirely Buddhists, while those in the Dharma Usada program are mostly non-Buddhists, with

¹ Wasantha Warnasuriya, (2023).

the majority being Muslim. These differences in teaching methods align with the Buddha's approach to offering the Dharma in a way that is tailored to individuals' needs and levels of understanding.²

In the Dharma Ācariya program, meditation is taught in a normative manner, with direct references to the *Tipiṭaka* texts.

In the Dharma Usada program, where most students are non-Buddhists, meditation cannot be taught using citations from the *Tipiṭaka*. Instead, it is introduced through evidence-based publications, ensuring that the teachings are accessible and acceptable within a diverse religious context.

This pragmatic approach is rooted in the Buddhist principles of Dhammanusati (reflection on the Dharma) and the Kalama Sutta, which encourages inquiry and personal experience as a basis for accepting teachings

2.2. Dhammānussati, or Recollection on the Dhamma, states:

“Svākkhātō Bhagavatā Dhammo, sandiṭṭhiko, akāliko, ehipassiko, opanayiko, paccattarī veditabbo viññūhī ti.”³

This means: “Well taught by the Blessed One is the Dhamma – visible here and now, timeless, open to all, to be personally realized and applied, and understood individually by the wise.”

So, mindfulness or meditation as Dhamma should be learned or more accurately investigated intellectually or scientifically. As Lee Kane, the editor of Buddha Weekly put it, as follows:

“Ehipassiko: The Dhamma welcomes all beings to put it to the test and to experience it for themselves.”⁴

In the *Kalmatta Sutta* (Sutra) Buddha's position on intellectual exploration and free inquiry are explicitly stated:

“Do not believe in something because it is reported. Do not believe in something because it has been practiced by generations or becomes a tradition or part of a culture. Do not believe in something because a scripture says it is so. Do not believe in something believing a god has inspired it. Do not believe in something a teacher tells you to. Do not believe in something because the authorities say it is so. Do not believe in hearsay, rumor, speculative opinion, public opinion, or mere acceptance to logic and inference alone. Help yourself, accept as completely true only that which is praised by the wise and which you test for yourself and know to be good for yourself and others.”⁵

² Wisdom Library (2024).

³ Ven. Kiribathgoda Gnānānanda Thera. Pali-English Paritta Chanting Book. A Mahamegha Publication, Waduwwa, Yatigaloluwa, Polgahawela, Sri Lanka, 2015:8. <https://www.mahamevnapaskatoon.com/uploads/5/4/5/0/54508875/mahamevnapalishiparittachantingbooksample.pdf>.

⁴ *Anguttara Nikaya* 11.12 quoted from The dhamma.com <https://www.thedhamma.com/anguttaranikaya.htm>.

⁵ Lee Kane (editor). Ehipassiko: encouraging investigation — Buddha taught logic to give

2.3. *Ehipassiko* or investigation results of meditation

In the modern era, *ehipassiko* or investigation of mindfulness meditation is achieved through scientific methods as the objective way to prove the truth of an idea or concept. Most of the investigation of the effect of meditation is related to its health benefits, as free from or getting rid of physical and mental suffering is the prime concern for all people. The following are excerpts of major investigative or scientific results from various authoritative sources regarding mindfulness meditation as foundation to propagate mindfulness or meditation to the pluralistic society.

2.3.1. Meditation effects against various mental and physical diseases

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services National Institutes of Health, National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) defines meditation as a mind and body practice that has a long history of use for increasing calmness and physical relaxation, improving psychological balance, coping with illness, and enhancing overall health and well-being. Mind and body practices focus on the interactions among the brain, mind, body, and behavior. There are many types of meditation, but most have four elements in common: a quiet location with as few distractions as possible; a specific, comfortable posture (sitting, lying down, walking, or in other positions); a focus of attention (a specially chosen word or set of words, an object, or the sensations of the breath); and an open attitude (letting distractions come and go naturally without judging them).⁶

About the effectiveness of meditation, NCCIH cites some research that suggests practicing meditation may reduce blood pressure, symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety and depression, and insomnia.

The results of 13 studies of mindfulness-based interventions for stopping smoking had promising results regarding craving, smoking cessation, and relapse prevention.

Results from a 2011 NCCIH-funded study of 279 adults who participated in an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program found that changes in spirituality were associated with better mental health and quality of life.

Guidelines from the American College of Chest Physicians published in 2013 suggest that MBSR and meditation may help to reduce stress, anxiety, pain, and depression while enhancing mood and self-esteem in people with lung cancer.

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health 4 Meditation: Clinical practice guidelines issued in 2014 by the Society for Integrative

us confidence in Dharma — not perpetual doubt. Buddha Weekly. Available at: https://buddhaweekly.com/dont-have-faith-in-buddha-buddha-taught-the-logic-of-karma-method-and-wisdom-not-a-religious-belief-system/#google_vignette)

⁶ NIH-NCCIH. Meditation. https://files.nccih.nih.gov/s3fs-public/Meditation_04-25-2016.pdf.

Oncology (SIC) recommend meditation as supportive care to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and fatigue in patients treated for breast cancer. The SIC also recommends its use to improve quality of life in these people.

Meditation-based programs may be helpful in reducing common menopausal symptoms, including the frequency and intensity of hot flashes, sleep and mood disturbances, stress, and muscle and joint pain. However, differences in study designs mean that no firm conclusions can be drawn.

A few studies have been conducted on the effects of meditation for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), hence there isn't sufficient evidence to support its use for this condition.

A 2014 research review suggested that mind and body practices, including meditation, reduce chemical identifiers of inflammation and show promise in helping to regulate the immune system.

Results from a 2013 NCCIH-supported study involving 49 adults suggest that 8 weeks of mindfulness training may reduce stress-induced inflammation better than a health program that includes physical activity, education about diet, and music therapy.

A small study funded in part by NCCIH found that mindfulness meditation does help to control pain. In another NCCIH-funded study, adults aged 20 to 70 who had chronic low back pain received either mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) training, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), or usual care. The MBSR and CBT participants had a similar level of improvement, and it was greater than those who got usual care, including long after the training ended. The researchers found that participants in the MBSR and CBT groups had greater improvement in functional limitation and back pain at 26 and 52 weeks compared with those who had usual care.

About safety and side effects of meditation, scientific evidence shows that meditation is generally considered to be safe for healthy people. There have been rare reports that meditation could cause or worsen symptoms in people with certain mental or psychiatric problems like anxiety and depression. People with mental or physical health conditions should speak with their health care providers before starting a meditative practice, and make their meditation instructor aware of their condition.

2.3.2. Meditation effects on cardiovascular health

American Heart Association (AHA) has issued scientific statement regarding meditation and cardiovascular risk reduction (Levine et al, 2017). AHA states, that despite numerous advances in the prevention and treatment of atherosclerosis, cardiovascular disease remains a leading cause of morbidity and mortality. Novel and inexpensive interventions that can contribute to the primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease are of interest. Numerous studies have reported on the benefits of meditation. Meditation instruction and practice is widely accessible and inexpensive and may thus be a potential attractive cost-effective adjunct to more traditional medical therapies. Accordingly, AHA scientific statement systematically reviewed the data on

the potential benefits of meditation on cardiovascular risk. It concludes, that overall, studies of meditation suggest a possible benefit on cardiovascular risk, although the overall quality and, in some cases, quantity of study data are modest. Given the low costs and low risks of this intervention, meditation may be considered as an adjunct to guideline-directed cardiovascular risk reduction by those interested in this lifestyle modification, with the understanding that the benefits of such intervention remain to be better established. Further research on meditation and cardiovascular risk is warranted.⁷

2.3.3. Meditation effects on prosocial behaviors

A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of meditation on empathy, compassion, and prosocial behaviors was conducted by searching the big data of published scientific evidence from various databases, including PubMed, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, Cochrane etc. From 26 randomized controlled trials with 1,714 subjects collected, the results demonstrated small to medium effects of meditation on self-reported and observable outcomes ($p < .001$) and suggest psychosocial and neurophysiological mechanisms of action. Subgroup analyses also supported small to medium effects of meditation even when compared to active control groups. So, the conclusion is that meditation can improve positive pro-social emotions and behaviors.⁸

2.3.4. Effective dose of meditation

A randomized trial was done to investigate the effects of meditation practice frequency in a 2-week compassion-based meditation intervention delivered via the Healthy Minds Program app. Undergraduates with clinically elevated depression and/or anxiety ($N = 351$) were randomized to a massed (one 20-min meditation per day) or distributed condition (two 10-min meditations per day). Psychological distress (composite of depression and anxiety), experiential avoidance, fear of missing out, loneliness, and self-compassion were assessed pre- and post-intervention. This study suggests practicing meditation with a smartphone-based meditation app once per day for 20 min or twice per day for 10 min each time is associated with equivalent improvements on psychological distress and other outcomes. This supports the possibility that meditation practice may be flexibly distributed across a day and will produce similar outcomes.⁹

2.3.5. Participant characteristics affecting outcomes of meditation¹⁰

Scientific studies have been done to identify certain individual traits affect the outcomes of meditation practices. A systematic search yielded 51 eligible studies with 7782 participants. It discovered that a higher baseline level of psychopathology or depression was associated with deterioration in mental health after a meditation intervention. On the other hand, participants with

⁷ Levine et al (2017).

⁸ Luberto CM et al (2018).

⁹ Riordan KM, et al (2024).

¹⁰ Buric I, et al, 2022; West TN, et al, (2022).

higher scores on interpersonal variables, motivation, medical conditions, and mindfulness showed higher levels of positive meditation outcomes. Higher well-being and stress were simultaneously associated with moderate increases in negative and positive meditation outcomes. Participant demographics, psychological traits, self-concept, and length of meditation practice did not significantly influence the response to meditation. Conclusion of the meta-analysis was that participant baseline characteristics significantly influence the response to mindfulness and transcendental meditation interventions. Although more work is needed to validate these results and develop clinical recommendations, the results suggest the importance of actively monitoring the experiences of individuals undertaking meditation interventions, particularly individuals with high levels of psychopathology and depression who are more likely to experience negative outcomes of meditation.¹¹

Another study investigated how either mindfulness meditation or loving-kindness meditation could affect the emotion profiles of 113 individuals from low socio-economic status with anxious and avoidant attachment shift, both across time and on a particular day. The results showed that individuals with average to high levels of attachment anxiety particularly benefit from mindfulness meditation in terms of longitudinal boosts in positive emotions and reductions in negative emotions. However, both meditation practices improved same-day positive emotions and reduced same-day negative emotions for those greater in attachment anxiety. Additionally, both meditation practices appeared to reduce negative emotions over time for those greater in attachment avoidance. These findings carry important implications for improving emotional health and well-being among those most at risk for negative mental and physical health outcomes in late-life.¹² The results of those studies show that individuals with high levels of psychopathology and depression should be careful to avoid negative outcomes of meditation. While higher chance of positive outcomes from meditation practices among individuals with higher scores on interpersonal variables, motivation, medical conditions, and mindfulness, also for those from low socio-economic status with average to high level of attachment anxiety.

2.4. Active or moving meditation

In addition to mindfulness meditation classes, the Dharma Usada study program also incorporates active or moving meditation, which refers to meditation in motion. This practice involves focusing on the task at hand and integrating mindfulness into daily activities, such as preparing food, cleaning, walking, and other routine tasks. Active meditation serves as a complement to traditional seated meditation and is particularly beneficial for individuals who find it challenging to remain still in a conventional meditation setting.¹³ In the Dharma Usada program, active meditation is specifically applied in performing

¹¹ Buric I, et al (2022).

¹² West TN, et al, (2022).

¹³ Cheryl C. et al., (2022).

various therapeutic skills based on the Tipiṭaka, including acupuncture, massage, patient care, herbal therapy, and more, as described below.

2.4.1. Acupuncture or needling

Acupuncture or needling has been stated in the Buddhist canons, Saddharma-Pundarika or Lotus Sutra and Chinese Buddhist Canon. Two scholars, i.e. Li Liangsong from Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, and Lin Zhaogeng from China Medical University, Taizhong, Taiwan-China, have revealed in details history of acupuncture in Chinese Buddhist Canon. The Buddhist acupuncture was mentioned in the time of Buddha, including substantial acupuncture, finger acupuncture and mental acupuncture. The substantial acupuncture refers to metal needle, plant needle, stone needle, bone needle, etc. Finger acupuncture means taking finger as a needle. Mental acupuncture implies that the Buddhism idea is considered in acupuncture. Secondly, the Buddhist medicine is the combination of acupuncture and herbal medicine. The needle box had become the necessity of the medical scholars in traveling.¹⁴

And in the Lotus Sutra, needle is used to introduce pounded herbs into the body for treatment. The context is clear from stanza 55 to 57, as follows. "...55. But a great physician taking compassion on the blind man, goes to the Himalaya, where (seeking) across, up and down, 56. He fetches from the mountain four plants; the herb Of-all-colours-flavours-and-cases, and others. These he intends to apply. 57. He applies them in this manner: one he gives to the blind man after chewing it, another after pounding, again another by introducing it with the point of a needle into the man's body."

2.4.2. Massage for health

Massage (*parimaddana* or *ucchadana*) and limb rubbing (*sambahana*) were already well-known during the Buddha's time. Attentive children would massage their aged parents limbs¹⁵ and sensual massage that stopped just short of being sexual was also known.¹⁶ Nuns having their forearms, backs, hands, calves, feet, thighs and faces massaged with a cow's leg bone. Probably the roundels at the ends of the bones were rubbed up and down the body. One could even have one's gums massaged.¹⁷ The Buddha forbade monks from having massages for pleasure¹⁸ although he seems to have approved of therapeutic massage. On one occasion he is recorded as having been 'oiled' (*sinehetha*) over several days when He was suffering from a particular illness.¹⁹ The meaning of this term is not clear. It may refer to the Ayurvedic practice of administering medicine in oil applied to the skin or to an oil massage. There is

¹⁴ Li & Lin, (2017).

¹⁵ A. I, 62.

¹⁶ A. IV, 54.

¹⁷ Vin. II, 266.

¹⁸ D. I, 7.

¹⁹ Vin. I, 279.

also a reference to Ananda massaging the Buddha's limbs when He was old.²⁰

2.5. Compassionate care for the patients

Compassion (*karunā*) is the ability to feel the distress or pain of others as if it were one's own. Sometimes it is also referred to as empathy (*anuddyatā*), commiseration (*dayā*), fellow feeling (*anuggaha*) or sympathy (*anukampā*). Compassion is the second of the four Brahma Vihāras and was more highly praised by the Buddha than any other virtue because it is the root of so many other virtues. The Jātakamālā says: 'Compassion gives birth to all the other virtues just as cooling rain makes the crops grow. When a person is compassionate he has no desire to harm his neighbour, his body, speech and mind are purified, concern for his neighbour's welfare increases and states like kindness, patience, happiness and good reputation grow. So, as a doctor or therapist, being compassionate is absolutely needed.

In a Buddhist equivalent to the Hippocratic Oath, He once said: "One who cares for the sick is fit to do so if he has five qualities. He can prepare medicine, he knows what is healing and administers it but never administers what is harmful, he cares for the patient out of love not out of desire for gain, he is unmoved by excrement, urine, vomit and spittle, and from time to time he can instruct, uplift, gladden and encourage the patient with talk on Dhamma."²¹ The Buddha said that patients should be treated and nursed even if they are going to die, out of compassion for them.²²

III. HEALTHY FOOD HABITS

The Buddha puts a sacred attention and great importance on mindfulness in food selection, preparation, and consumption, as shown in the following excerpts.

3.1. The Buddha once said that "the body comes into being because of food and is dependent on food."²³ In another place He said that a poor diet can also lead to sickness²⁴ as can overeating.²⁵

3.2. The Buddha said that in giving food to a hungry person you give them more than just material substance, you also give them all the things that food imparts - life, beauty, satisfaction, strength and intelligence.²⁶

3.3. A common food He often ate was rice gruel which was probably made by boiling rice and water to a thin consistency and adding salt, a garlic clove and a few pepper corns. The Buddha said there were five advantages of this gruel; it dispels hunger, quenches thirst, regulates wind, cleanses the bowels

²⁰ S. V, 217.

²¹ A. III, 144.

²² A. I, 121.

²³ A. II, 145; <https://www.buddhisma2z.com/content.php?id=104>

²⁴ A. III, 144.

²⁵ M. I, 473. <https://www.buddhisma2z.com/content.php?id=373>.

²⁶ A. III, 42; <https://www.buddhisma2z.com/content.php?id=139>.

and helps digest the remnants of food.²⁷

3.4. Once King Pasenadi came to the Buddha bloated and breathing in a laboured manner as a result of having eaten yet another enormous meal. Seeing this the Buddha said: “When a person is mindful and thus knows moderation in eating, his ailments diminish, he ages gently and he protects his life.” The king got the hint and asked his nephew to repeat these words to him whenever he was taking his meals. As a result the king gradually reduced his food intake, lost weight and regained his slim figure.²⁸

Buddhism, mindful eating, and healing in Dharma Usada

The Buddha emphasized the importance of mindful eating and moderation in maintaining good health and preventing various illnesses, including obesity, as illustrated in the case of **King Pasenadi**. He also stressed the significance of combining diverse flavors of herbal foodstuffs to promote overall physical and mental well-being.

Buddhism views love and compassion as essential elements that can enhance nearly every aspect of life – including food. Whether it be in preparing, sharing, or consuming meals, love adds an invaluable dimension.

A commentary on the Jātaka states: “There is no taste equal to love. The four sweet things given with indifference are not as tasty as coarse millet given with love.”²⁹

The Buddha reinforced this idea, saying: “Fine or coarse, much or little, one can eat anything made with love. Indeed, love is the highest taste.”³⁰

Dharma Usada and the integration of Buddhist healing

At Nalanda Institute’s Dharma Usada program in Indonesia, meditation-based education and practices are designed to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion, particularly through relieving physical and mental suffering using natural, Dharma-based methods.

This holistic body of knowledge integrates various mindfulness-based therapeutic modalities, all of which center on the principle of health and balance – a concept shared by both Buddhist medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). This principle is encapsulated in the balance of Yin and Yang, which resonates with the Buddhist concept of “The Middle Way.”

3.1. The connection between Buddhist medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

A remarkable example of this integration can be found at the Nanhai Buddhism Academy in Hainan, China, which has established a Dharma medicine program that teaches acupuncture, herbal medicine, qigong, and

²⁷ A. III, 250, <https://www.buddhisma2z.com/content.php?id=104>.

²⁸ S. I, 81 - 2; <https://www.buddhisma2z.com/content.php?id=105>.

²⁹ Ja. III, 142.

³⁰ Ja. III, 145. <https://www.buddhisma2z.com/content.php?id=139>.

other TCM-based healing techniques.³¹ This historical convergence highlights how both Buddhist medicine and TCM arrived at the same fundamental truth: balance is the key to health.

The Buddha himself defined health (*appābādhata* or *ārogya*) as:

“Having well-being, good digestion, not being too cold or too hot, maintaining balance, and being capable of activity.”³²

Similarly, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) defines health as a harmonious balance of Yin (cold) and Yang (hot), along with the balancing of the five elements, acupuncture, diet therapy, herbal medicine, and other holistic treatments.³³

3.2. Buddhism’s deep historical connection to healing in China

Buddhism has been deeply intertwined with healing practices throughout its history in China. Some of the early translated Buddhist scriptures introduced Indian concepts of the body, explaining illness through theories such as *tridoṣa* (imbalances of bodily fluids and internal winds). Other texts discuss *materia medica*, monastic rules on healing and hygiene, and ritual practices devoted to Bhaiṣajyaguru (the Medicine Buddha), Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin Bodhisattva), and other deities associated with healing.

Beyond translations, a vast corpus of indigenous Chinese Buddhist medical texts emerged between the 2nd and 10th centuries CE. Among the most influential works were:

- Yijing’s 義淨 (635 – 713) writings on Indian monastic medical practices
- Daoxuan’s 道宣 (596 – 667) vinaya commentary on monastic healing regulations
- Daoshi’s 道世 (? – 683) encyclopedic chapter on illness and Buddhist healing traditions
- Zhiyi’s 智顗 (538 – 597) treatises on meditation as a healing method
- Huijiao’s 慧皎 (497 – 554) hagiographies documenting Buddhist healing practices

As Buddhism spread throughout Chinese society during the Sui and Tang dynasties, its medical knowledge was increasingly adopted by eminent Chinese physicians. Scholars such as:

Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (452 – 536)

Chao Yuanfang 巢元方 (550 – 630)

Wang Tao 王焘 (670 – 755)

Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (581 – 682)

Incorporated Buddhist healing principles into their medical treatises,

³¹ 南海佛学院. (n.d.). 南海佛学院. <https://www.nhfx.net/>

³² A. III, 103.

³³ Wu Hongyu & Kohle N., (2021).

further cementing the fusion of Buddhist and Chinese medicine.³⁴

IV. MINDFULNESS PRACTICES DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA

4.1. Historical roots of mindfulness in Indonesian tradition

Meditation or mindfulness practices have long been an integral part of Indonesian – particularly Javanese – tradition. Locally, these practices are known as “semedi” or “bertapa”, which involve deep contemplation or meditation, often conducted in remote or sacred places recognized by society.

According to experts, Javanese spiritual traditions are a syncretic blend of Hindu-Buddhist influences interwoven with Islamic elements. For Javanese practitioners of semedi, mindfulness is believed to facilitate spiritual transcendence and union with God.³⁵

In modern times, mindfulness education and practices have evolved beyond any specific religious affiliation. Instead, they have become a universal approach to mental, spiritual, and physical well-being, with a strong emphasis on relieving suffering and promoting holistic health.

4.2. The rise of mindfulness awareness in contemporary Indonesia

The dissemination of mindfulness practices for health benefits in Indonesia began as early as the 1980s. Since 1986, informative articles on the benefits of meditation have been regularly published in national newspapers and magazines, covering a range of health-related topics, such as:

- Stress reduction
- Asthma management
- Hypertension control

Table-1: Various publications regarding meditation in Indonesian national media in the 1980s.

No	Public media name	Date published	Title
1	Sinar Harapan daily	1 st February 1986, p.6	Meditasi sebagai penawar stress (meditation as stress reliever).
2	Sinar Harapan daily	8 th April 1986, p. 6	Meditasi mengendalikan hip-ertensi (meditation to control hypertension)
3	Sinar Harapan daily	3 rd May 1986: 6	Meditasi meredakan asma (meditation relieving asthma)
4	Sinar Harapan daily	27 th June 1986: 6	Meditasi penangkal narko-tika (meditation overcome narcotics)

³⁴ Kohle N., (2021); Scheid V., (2020); Long Darui.
³⁵ Diah Pitaloka, (2008).

5	Kompas daily	20 th August 1986: 4	Manfaat meditasi dan bio-feedback (benefit of meditation and biofeedback)
6	Bola weekly magazine	30 th January 1987: 3	Taichi adalah meditasi dinamis (Taichi as dynamic meditation/ moving meditation)
7	Suara Pembaruan daily	18 th March 1987: 8	Meditasi antistres berguna bagi penderita kanker dan infeksi (anti-stress meditation benefit for cancer and infection patients)
8	Akutahu magazine	53 rd edition, 1987: 22-23.	Olahraga meditatif apakah itu (what is meditative exercise?)
9	Medika journal	1987, vol. 13 (11): 1126-1128.	Terobosan abad ini: meditasi antistres juga antikanker dan infeksi (Breakthrough of this century: meditation antistress also anticancer and infection)
10	Medika journal	1988, vol. 14 (1): 85	Konsep dan hasil penelitian tentang Taichi chikung (concept and study result about Taichi moving meditation)
11	Majalah Kedokteran Indonesia	1990, vol. 40 (1): 69-72	Efek dan manfaat olahraga meditatif (effects and benefits of meditative exercise)

4.3. The expansion of mindfulness meditation in Indonesia

The widespread dissemination of meditation coincided with the massive rise of Taichi Qigong and breathing exercise campaigns during the same period.

Today, one of the most prominent mindfulness meditation organizations for health in Indonesia is Bali Usada, headquartered on Bali Island. The Bali Usada Meditation for Health Training Center was established in 1993 under the leadership of Master Yogi Merta Ada.³⁶

Bali Usada's main chant originates from the Buddhist aspiration:

"May all beings be happy" (*Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā*)

However, to ensure religious inclusivity, it has been modified to:

"May all live happily" (*Semoga semua hidup berbahagia*).

This adaptation exemplifies pragmatic flexibility in disseminating Dharma-based practices within Indonesia's pluralistic society. Bali Usada has hundreds

³⁶ Bali Usada. (n.d.). *Meditasi Kesehatan Bali Usada*. <https://baliusada.com/>

of thousands of followers, many of whom have experienced the healing benefits of mindfulness meditation, including help them going through the COVID pandemic.

Another well-known mindfulness meditation organization in Indonesia is the Dhamma Java Vipassana Meditation Center, located in Gunung Geulis, Bogor. This center teaches Vipassana meditation in the tradition of S.N. Goenka, following the lineage of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. Vipassana, one of the oldest meditation techniques from India (dating back 2,500 years), emphasizes perceiving reality as it is and is regarded as a universal remedy for suffering - a practice referred to as "the art of living."³⁷

Many Buddhist primary and secondary schools have also adopted and promoted mindfulness character building as their main pillar in educating students from all religious background. Please refer to Table-2 below for details.

V. THE ROLE OF DIGITAL HEALTH PLATFORMS IN PROMOTING MINDFULNESS

More recently, the Indonesian Ministry of Health has begun promoting mindfulness meditation through Alodokter, an online medical platform. Since its launch in 2014, Alodokter has become Indonesia's leading health platform, with:

- More than 30 million active users per month
- A network of 80,000 medical doctors

The platform provides reliable, accessible, and user-friendly health information to the public anytime and anywhere (*Alodokter*, [source](#)).

The Alodokter platform contains comprehensive content on meditation, including various methods and their health benefits, as summarized in Table-2.

Additionally, other nationwide platforms have contributed to the dissemination of mindfulness meditation for health and education to the general public, including:

- Halodoc
- Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI)
- Universities
- Primary and secondary schools
- Mental hospitals

These initiatives highlight the growing recognition of mindfulness meditation as a valuable practice for physical, mental, and emotional well-being across diverse sectors in Indonesia.

Table-2. Various nationwide well-known platform disseminating mindfulness meditation benefits.

³⁷ Dhamma Java. (n.d.). *Sebagaimana yg diajarkan oleh Guru SN Goenka sesuai tradisi Sayagyi U Ba Khin*. <https://dhammajava.org/>

No	Platform link	Title	Contents
1	Alodokter. https://www.alodokter.com/sering-sakit-dan-stres-coba-meditasi .	Meditasi untuk Mengatasi Stres dan Penyakit (meditation for overcoming stress and diseases)	<p>Meditation & mode of action.</p> <p>Various health benefits of meditation:</p> <p>To prevent and reduce stress, depression, and anxiety.</p> <p>Regulating emotion and training positive thinking.</p> <p>Reducing pain sensation.</p> <p>Prevent high blood pressure and maintaining normal blood pressure.</p> <p>Make sleep more soundly dan overcoming insomnia.</p> <p>Improving concentration, memory, and prevent dementia.</p> <p>Increasing body immunity.</p> <p>Help overcome addiction, IBS,</p> <p>Various kinds of meditation: focus meditation and mindfulness meditation.</p> <p>4 Main elements of meditation: focus of mind, breath slowly, a quiet place, comfortable body posture.</p> <p>Latest update: 30 September 2024.</p>
2	Alodokter. https://www.alodokter.com/manfaat-meditasi-untuk-kesehatan-fisik-dan-mental	Manfaat Meditasi untuk Kesehatan dan Cara Melakukannya (Benefit of meditation for health and how to do it)	<p>How to do meditation.</p> <p>Various health benefits of meditation.</p> <p>Latest update: 4 November 2024.</p>

3	Halodoc. https://www.halodoc.com/artikel/ini-cara-meditasi-yang-benar-untuk-pemula?srsltid=AfmBOookOE1vO7tx74m-6hBj-tus9ISj1PZq7c2H-6h8Pomt8N-OCEgOKo	Ini cara meditasi yang benar untuk pemula. (This is the right way for beginner to meditate).	The right way for beginner to meditate. Benefits of meditation you should know. Recommended psychiatrists in Halodoc.
4	Halodoc. https://www.halodoc.com/artikel/5-jenis-meditasi-yang-jarang-diketahui	5 jenis meditasi yang jarang diketahui. (5 kinds of rarely known meditation)	Mindfulness meditation. Spiritual meditation. Mantra meditation. Visualization meditation. Chakra meditation. Benefits of meditation you should know. Latest update: 25 Januari 2023
5	Halodoc. https://www.halodoc.com/artikel/pentingnya-meditasi-untuk-anak?srsltid=AfmBOopnottNlB-PAFKCNWtvMIny-da58-2jeT6YQSwytrtY-QYGrfJDcmx	Pentingnya meditasi untuk anak. (The importance of meditation for kids)	Benefits of meditation for kids. How to do. Latest update: 27 September 2018
6	Halodoc. https://www.halodoc.com/artikel/teknik-meditasi-paling-efektif-selama-hamil	Teknik meditasi paling efektif selama hamil. (The most effective meditation during pregnancy)	What is meditation. Is meditation safe during pregnancy? Several meditation technics during pregnancy. Latest update: 28 May 2018
7	Halodoc. https://www.halodoc.com/artikel/mitos-atau-fakta-meditasi-mampu-hilangkan-kebiasaan-merokok	Mitos atau fakta – meditasi mampu hilangkan kebiasaan merokok. (Myth or fact: meditation can alleviate smoking habit)	Study on meditation to alleviate smoking. Why meditation can help. Other tips you could try. Latest update: 25 Januari 2023

8	Radio Republik Indonesia. https://www.rri.co.id/kesehatan/978464/mengenal-manfaat-meditasi-untuk-kesehatan-mental	Mengenal manfaat meditasi untuk kesehatan mental. (Knowing benefit of meditation for mental health)	Benefit of meditation: stress reduction, anxiety reduction, and maintaining emotional balance. Latest update: 16 September 2024
9	Universitas Airlangga, Nursing Dept. https://ners.unair.ac.id/site/lihat/read/681/kenali-mengenai-meditasi-dan-manfaatnya	Kenali mengenai meditasi dan manfaatnya (Introduce meditation and its benefits)	How to do meditation. benefits of meditation: emotional health, guarding physical health and helping to heal diseases, stress reduction, anxiety reduction, controlling anxiety, to strengthen memory, and against dementia. Latest update: 19 February 2021
10	Aceh Mental Hospital. https://rsj.acehprov.go.id/berita/kategori/artikel/menikmati-hidup-dengan-mindfulness	Menikmati hidup dengan mindfulness. (Enjoy life with mindfulness)	What is mindfulness. Benefit of mindfulness for daily life: training the mind and focus, enjoying life, loving oneself, stress reduction. Latest update: 30 September 2024
11	Budi Medika Hospital. https://www.rs-budimedika.com/manfaat-meditasi-untuk-kesehatan/	Manfaat meditasi untuk kesehatan. (Benefit of meditation for health)	Benefit of meditation: stress management, managing anxiety and depression, health-caring for heart, reducing pain, improving awareness and self esteem. Latest update: 30 September 2024
12	Bangka-Belitung Provincial Mental Hospital. https://rsj.babelprov.go.id/content/teknik-mengontrol-strees-dengan-teknik-meditasi	Teknik mengontrol stress dengan teknik meditasi. (Technic for stress control by meditation)	What is meditation. Benefits of meditation. Kinds of meditation: loving-kindness, body-scan, Zen, Kundalini, Meditation technic. Tips to meditate effectively. Latest update: 23 May 2023

13	Ekayana Ehipassiko primary school, Tangerang https://ehipassikoschool.sch.id/mindfulness-sd/	“MINDFULNESS SD Ekayana Ehipassiko School”	Mindfulness as part of character education model. Base on Buddhist and universal dharma values, to develop life skills with textual and contextual understanding through practicing: (1) The Art of Mindful Living; (2) Buddhist Fine Manner (ethics, discipline, morality); (3) Understanding The Heart of Buddha Teaching, dan (4) Applied Buddhism (bring Dharma to the society).
14	Dharma Budhi Bhakti School, Jakarta https://dharmabudhibhakti.sch.id/	“MINDFUL SCHOOL”	Focus and mindfulness for all components, including students, teachers, and staff, in performing all activities to achieve maximal education results.
15	Tri Ratna School, Jakarta https://www.triratna.sch.id/	“Teaching Our Kids To Be SMART, GOOD, And MINDFUL”	Mindfulness is the organization’s value pillar, with the slogan “Teaching Our Kids To Be SMART, GOOD And MINDFUL”. It integrates the mastering of academic, fine manner character, based on applied mediation.

VI. NEXT STEPS FOR MINDFULNESS-BASED MEDITATIVE THERAPY

As Buddhism continues to spread westward, the relationship between Buddhism and medicine has once again taken center stage in cross-cultural exchanges. Scientific research into the mental and physical benefits of Buddhist meditation has been extensively conducted by institutions such as the Mind & Life Institute, various centers for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and individual researchers in fields such as psychology, psychiatry, and neurology.

For instance, the University of Pennsylvania’s Mindfulness, Stress & Health Lab (source) is currently researching how mindfulness meditation can improve symptoms of stress, depression, and inflammation in adults living with HIV. Studies conducted by Penn researchers and other scientists have already demonstrated the positive effects of meditation, including:

- Reduction in stress, addiction, and depression
- Improvements in memory and attention
- Slowing of the aging process
- Enhancement of general well-being

These benefits are now widely recognized, and many popular books, magazines, and online resources on Buddhism in English highlight these findings as key reasons for adopting Buddhist practices.³⁸

6.1. Mindfulness therapy in Indonesia's healthcare system

In Indonesia, Government Regulation Number 28 of 2024 – which implements the 2023 Act on Health – has officially recognized spiritual health as a component of mental health, rehabilitative care, and palliative care. This marks a significant step toward integrating mindfulness and meditation therapy into the national healthcare system as a Dharma-based therapeutic approach.

A notable benchmark for such integration can be seen in Bhutan, a Buddhist country where the Medicine Buddha holds deep cultural and religious significance as the ultimate healer. In Bhutan, his iconography is present in all hospitals, wards, and clinics, as well as in both allopathic and traditional medical educational institutions. These images serve as focal points for cultivating mindfulness and promoting healing, symbolizing the holistic integration of medicine and spiritual well-being.

Additionally, Bhutan's public healthcare system provides patients with a genuine choice between biomedical and traditional treatments, often within the same medical facility.³⁹ This unique model highlights how modern medicine and traditional healing practices can coexist, offering insights for Indonesia as it moves toward establishing mindfulness-based therapy as a formal branch of healthcare.

6.2. Epilogue

Medicine, health, and healing have been integral to Buddhism since its origins. Long before the global popularity of mindfulness and meditation, Buddhism provided conceptual frameworks for understanding illness and introduced a wide range of therapeutic interventions for caring for the sick.

Today, Buddhist traditions, healers, and institutions continue to play a significant role in medical care, influencing various fields such as mental health, biomedicine, and even responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁰

This article has explored the development of mindfulness-based Buddhist medicine in Indonesia, highlighting how it has been widely disseminated through pragmatic approaches in education and practice. These efforts contribute to the realization of compassionate and peaceful coexistence within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

³⁸ C. Pierce Salguero, (2016).

³⁹ Chophel K. et al., (2024).

⁴⁰ C. Pierce Salguero (2022).

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

Education in the most advanced world frequently focuses on scholarly accomplishment over the capacity to appreciate anyone on a deeper level, moral mindfulness, and social obligation. Nonetheless, the Buddhist act of care offers a comprehensive way to deal with discovery that sustains both individual prosperity and aggregate concordance. Established in the Buddhist way of thinking, care cultivates mindfulness, flexibility, and sympathy — characteristics fundamental for making an additional fair and reasonable future. This paper investigates the job of Buddhist care in schooling, looking at its effect on understudies' close to home guideline, moral direction, and natural awareness. This study contends that training ought to go past regular information transmission to incorporate inward change. By incorporating Buddhist care rehearses, instructors can develop an age that focuses on shrewdness, sympathy, and manageability. A careful school system established in the Buddhist way of thinking holds the possibility to agreeably shape a future where individual prosperity and aggregate thriving coincide.

Keywords: *Buddhist mindfulness, education, compassion, sustainability, ethical awareness, interconnectedness.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Schooling in the cutting-edge world frequently focuses on scholastic accomplishment over the ability to appreciate people on a deeper level, moral mindfulness, and social obligation. Nonetheless, the Buddhist act of care offers an all-encompassing way to deal with discovery that sustains both individual prosperity and aggregate concordance. Established in the Buddhist way of thinking, care cultivates mindfulness, strength, and sympathy —

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characteristics fundamental for making a quickly impacting world, Training should develop past regular information transmission to address the close to home, moral, and natural difficulties of contemporary society. The Buddhist practice of care gives a significant structure to encouraging inward harmony, social congruity, and maintainable living. Dissimilar to traditional instruction, which frequently stresses contest and outer accomplishment, care develops mindfulness, sympathy, and a profound feeling of interconnectedness with every living being. Buddhist care, established in the lessons of the Buddha, urges people to notice their contemplations and feelings without connection or judgment. This training upgrades center and profound guideline as well as supports moral direction and biological cognizance. By coordinating care into instruction, understudies can foster flexibility, the capacity to understand individuals at their core, and a promise to social and natural prosperity. Schools and colleges overall are progressively consolidating care programs, perceiving their positive effect on understudy psychological well-being, scholarly execution, and relational connections.

Besides, care lines up with manageability training by advancing consciousness of the interconnected idea of life. Buddhist standards, for example, non-hurting (*ahimsa*), right vocation, and careful utilization give moral direction to tending to worldwide difficulties like environmental change, social imbalance, and material overconsumption. By embracing care-based instructive methodologies, establishments can develop future pioneers who are mentally fit as well as morally and ecologically mindful.

This paper investigates the hypothetical and down-to-earth ramifications of incorporating Buddhist care into training. It inspects experimental investigations, case examinations, and philosophical points of view to feature how care adds to individual prosperity, social sympathy, and biological maintainability. At last, this study advocates for a groundbreaking instructive worldview where care fills in as a scaffold between inward turn of events and worldwide obligation, mineral just and supportable future. This paper investigates the role of Buddhist care in schooling, analyzing its effect on understudies' guidelines, moral navigation, and natural awareness. This study contends that instruction ought to go past traditional information transmission to incorporate inward change. By coordinating Buddhist care rehearses, teachers can develop an age that focuses on insight, empathy, and maintainability. A careful school system established in the Buddhist way of thinking holds the possibility to shape a future where individual prosperity and aggregate thriving coincide.

Objectives

- To investigate the Buddhist underpinnings of care and their importance in present-day schooling, accentuating lessons from the Pāli Group, Mahayana messages, and contemporary Buddhist researchers.
- To look at the job of care in encouraging empathy among understudies and teachers, drawing experiences from Buddhist morals and practices like adoring kindness (*Mettā*) and sympathy (*Karuṇā*).

- To dissect the effect of care put together instruction with respect to understudies' mental, close to home, and moral turn of events, involving Buddhist philosophical viewpoints as a directing system.
- To explore how care training adds to supportability by developing natural mindfulness, moral obligation, and interconnected thinking in accordance with Buddhist ecological morals.
- To evaluate existing care-based instructive projects and their arrangement with Buddhist standards, distinguishing qualities, difficulties, and regions for improvement.
- To propose a Buddhist-informed instructive model that incorporates care practices to support all-encompassing prosperity, moral initiative, and feasible living among understudies.
- To feature the drawn-out cultural advantages of care schooling established in the Buddhist way of thinking, including compromise, psychological well-being improvement, and natural stewardship.

II. UNDERSTANDING MINDFULNESS: A HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

Care is an old practice with profound roots in the Buddhist way of thinking and contemplation customs. It has been broadly perceived for its capability to change human cognizance, advance mindfulness, and develop profound flexibility. In recent years, care has acquired expanding consideration in mental, clinical, and instructive fields because of its capacity to upgrade mental prosperity, mental capabilities, and relational connections. The consolidation of care into schooling is a developing development pointed toward encouraging scholastic greatness as well as the capacity to understand people on a profound level, moral mindfulness, and maintainable reasoning among understudies.

2.1. The foundations of Buddhist mindfulness

Care, known as *Sati* in Pāli, is one of the center standards of Buddhist practice. It is fundamentally examined in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (The Talk on the Four Underpinnings of Care), where the Buddha frames an orderly way to deal with developing care. These four establishments include:

- i. Care of the Body (*Kāyānupassanā*) - Attention to actual sensations, breath, act, and real developments.
- ii. Care of sentiments (*Vedanānupassanā*) - Perception of feelings and sensations, whether charming, horrendous, or unbiased.
- iii. Care of the brain (*Cittānupassanā*) - Familiarity with mental states, considerations, and awareness.
- iv. Care of mental items (*Dhammānupassanā*) - Noticing contemplations according to Buddhist lessons (e.g., fleetingness, enduring, non-self).

Every one of these aspects gives a thorough system to mindfulness, close to home guidelines, and moral direction, which are all critical for instructive turn of events. Consolidating these care rehearses in homerooms can assist understudies with developing concentration, flexibility, and self-control.

2.2. The role of mindfulness in the Noble Eightfold

Way Care (*Sammā-sati*) is likewise one of the vital parts of the Respectable Eightfold Way, the directing system for moral and otherworldly advancement in Buddhism. The Eightfold Way incorporates:

- Right View (*Sammā-diṭṭhi*) - Figuring out the idea of the real world.
- Right Aim (*Sammā-saṅkappa*) - Developing healthy contemplations.
- Right Discourse (*Sammā-vācā*) - Talking honestly and generously.
- Smart Activity (*Sammā-kammanta*) - Participating in a moral way of behaving.
- Right Vocation (*Sammā-ājīva*) - Picking a calling that benefits society.
- Right Exertion (*Sammā-vāyāma*) - Pursuing self-restraint and positive routines.
- Right Care (*Sammā-sati*) - Creating present-second mindfulness.
- Right Fixation (*Sammā-samādhi*) - Accomplishing profound mental concentration and understanding.

Care in Current Brain research

Contemporary brain research has progressively perceived care as a strong mediation for upgrading mental prosperity. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a vital figure in present-day care research, created Care Based Pressure Decrease (MBSR), a program that applies Buddhist care methods in mainstream settings. Concentrates on mental brain research and neuroscience have shown that care upgrades prefrontal cortex action, further developing consideration guideline, drive control, and the capacity to understand people on a deeper level — which are all critical abilities for understudies.

Neuroscientific research has exhibited that care practice:

- Increments dark matter thickness in regions connected with learning, memory, and close to home guideline.
- Diminishes pressure and tension, working on understudies' capacity to adapt to scholastic difficulties.
- Upgrades mental adaptability, prompting better critical thinking abilities and imagination.
- Advances mindfulness and sympathy, cultivating positive companion connections and study hall elements.

These discoveries build up the possibility that Buddhist care can act as both a mental and moral preparation device in instructive settings.

In training, Right Care is especially huge because it improves understudies' capacity to focus, self-direct, and take part in moral thinking. When joined with different parts of the Eightfold Way, care turns into an apparatus for comprehensive turn of events, encouraging scholarly and moral development in students.

In training, care has turned into a huge device for cultivating profound equilibrium, further developing the capacity to focus, and upgrading growth

opportunities. It is incorporated into school educational plans overall through organized projects, for example, Care Based Pressure Decrease (MBSR) and Care Based Mental Treatment (MBCT). By presenting care in study halls, teachers plan to establish a learning climate that supports sympathy, moral thinking, and economical reasoning, which are all essential for tending to contemporary worldwide difficulties.

The Pertinence of Buddhist Care in Present-day Schooling

Buddhist care varies from mainstream care in its more extensive moral and philosophical aspects. In conventional Buddhist lessons, care isn't simply a mental procedure but a way to shrewdness and moral clearness. It is profoundly associated with other Buddhist standards like right exertion, right fixation, and right view, which all in all add to all-encompassing self-advancement.

With regard to instruction, Buddhist care can act as an establishment for moral and moral learning. It urges understudies to foster self-control, persistence, sympathy, and decisive reasoning, which are all fundamental characteristics for dependable worldwide residents. The development of right care (*sammā-sati*) assists people in perceiving their interconnectedness with others and the climate, cultivating a feeling of aggregate liability toward social and biological prosperity.

Moreover, Buddhist care lines up with contemporary mental hypotheses of learning and conduct. Concentrates on mental neuroscience have shown that care upgrades prefrontal cortex movement, which is answerable for direction, close to home guideline, and drive control. In instructive settings, this converts into working on self-guideline, strength, and flexibility among understudies, empowering them to really explore scholarly tensions and social difficulties.

III. THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS IN CULTIVATING COMPASSION IN EDUCATION

One of the most significant commitments of Buddhist care to instruction is its capacity to develop empathy and moral obligation. Sympathy (*karuṇā*), in the Buddhist way of thinking, is the normal reaction to misery and is viewed as a critical calculation of individual and cultural change. Careful practices like adoring consideration contemplation (*mettā bhāvanā*) and sympathy reflection are intended to extend one's feeling of compassion and care for other people.

Care and sympathy are interconnected ideas that, when coordinated into instruction, encourage comprehensive understudy improvement, the ability to understand people at their core, and moral cognizance. Established in the Buddhist way of thinking, these practices urge a fair way to deal with discovering what develops mindfulness, graciousness, and a feeling of obligation toward others and the climate. This segment investigates the job of care and empathy in training, their mental and moral ramifications, common sense applications, and certifiable contextual analyses exhibiting their groundbreaking effect.

IV. DEFINING COMPASSION IN BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

In Buddhist lessons, empathy (*karuṇā*) is a focal moral standard. It alludes to the capacity to perceive the enduring of others and answer with certified care

and thoughtfulness. The Dalai Lama characterizes empathy as “an aversion to the enduring of others with a profound obligation to lighten it.”

The Four *Brahmavihārās* (Divine Homesteads) in Buddhism stress sympathy as a fundamental quality for individual and aggregate prosperity:

- i. Adoring Thoughtfulness (*Mettā*) - Wishing bliss and prosperity for all creatures.
- ii. Empathy (*Karuṇā*) - The longing to ease languishing.
- iii. Thoughtful Bliss (*Muditā*) - Celebrating in others’ joy and achievement.
- iv. Serenity (*Upekkhā*) - Keeping a decent brain in all circumstances.

When applied to instruction, these standards establish a learning climate that supports the capacity to understand people on a profound level, a moral way of behaving, and social congruity.

4.1. The relationship between mindfulness and compassion

Care (*Sati*) and sympathy (*Karuṇā*) are profoundly interconnected: Care upgrades mindfulness, empowering understudies and teachers to perceive their feelings and reactions without judgment. Sympathy broadens this mindfulness outward, reassuring generosity and grasping in associations with others. Logical exploration upholds this association:

- Neuroscientific concentrates on showing that care practice enacts cerebrum districts related to sympathy and profound guidance (e.g., the prefrontal cortex and insula).
- Mental exploration shows that careful people display more significant levels of sympathy, tolerance, and profound flexibility.
- Schools coordinating care-based sympathy programs report a decrease in harassment, uneasiness, and study hall clashes.

4.2. The role of mindfulness and compassion in student development

Upgrading the ability to appreciate individuals on a deeper level and Self-Guideline

The capacity to understand people on a profound level (EI) is a basic expertise for progress in scholastics, connections, and vocation improvement. Daniel Goleman, a trailblazer in EI research, distinguishes five key parts:

- i. Mindfulness - Perceiving and grasping feelings.
- ii. Self-Guideline - Dealing with feelings valuably.
- iii. Inspiration - Utilizing feelings to drive achievement.
- iv. Sympathy - Figuring out others’ sentiments.

4.3. Interactive abilities - Overseeing connections actually

Care and empathy preparing improve each of the five parts by:

- Assisting understudies with creating tolerance and versatility in unpleasant circumstances.
- Training self-guideline strategies to forestall imprudent responses.

- Empowering a development mentality that cultivates scholarly inspiration.
- Developing compassion, prompting more grounded peer connections and diminished clashes.

In this way, caring care changes schooling into a device for both self-awareness and social obligation.

V. FOSTERING ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Care and sympathy assume an urgent part in creating moral and moral thinking in understudies. Buddhist morals underline non-hurt (ahimsa), trustworthiness, and careful activities, rules that line up with moral training models around the world.

How care and empathy upgrade morals in schooling:

Empowering cognizant independent direction - Understudies figure out how to ponder the results of their activities prior to answering imprudently.

Diminishing animosity and clashes - Schools executing care programs report fewer episodes of tormenting and peer brutality.

Advancing civil rights and ecological mindfulness - Sympathy-driven schooling energizes a dependable way of behaving toward society and nature.

In an instructive setting, care assists understudies with fostering a more profound feeling of close-to-home mindfulness and relational responsiveness. Research has shown that care-based mediations in schools lead to:

- Decreased animosity and tormenting conduct
- Expanded prosocial ways of behaving like generosity, appreciation, and participation
- Further developed educator understudy connections, encouraging a more comprehensive and steady learning climate
- Improved capacity to appreciate anyone at their core, permitting understudies to answer clashes with persistence and seeing instead of reactivity

Instructors who incorporate care into their showing strategies likewise benefit from expanded self-empathy and stress the board abilities, prompting a more compassionate way to deal with understudy commitment. This shift is especially vital in the present high-pressure scholastic frameworks, where understudies and educators the same face uneasiness, burnout, and execution related pressure.

VI. MINDFULNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY: CREATING A CONSCIOUS FUTURE

Care and Manageability in Training

Manageability is one of the most squeezing worries of the 21st 100 years, influencing each part of human existence, including schooling. As the world wrestles with ecological corruption, environmental change, and asset

consumption, schooling should assume an urgent part in cultivating supportable practices. Nonetheless, supportability isn't only about moderating normal assets; likewise about developing a mentality that energizes moral obligation, interconnectedness, and careful living. This is where care, well established in the Buddhist way of thinking, turns into a fundamental device in molding an economical future. By coordinating care into schooling, establishments can impart in understudies a feeling of mindfulness, obligation, and sympathy toward both human social orders and the regular world.

Care, a training focused on present-second mindfulness and non-critical perception, improves a singular's capacity to pursue insightful and moral choices. With regard to maintainability, care assists understudies with fostering a more profound appreciation for nature, a feeling of obligation toward people in the future, and the capacity to take on economical ways of behaving in day-to-day existence. The Buddhist rule of *Pratītyasamutpāda* (related co-emerging) underscores that all creatures and normal components are interconnected. When applied to schooling, this idea urges understudies to see themselves as a component of a bigger natural framework where their decisions — what they consume, how they act, and how they interact with society — have sweeping outcomes.

This part investigates how care encourages manageability in schooling by upgrading attention to natural and social issues, advancing mindful utilization, and outfitting understudies with the profound flexibility expected to address maintainability challenges. It will likewise look at how careful instructive practices shape moral administration, pragmatic utilizations of care in manageability schooling, and contextual analyses from around the world that feature the viability of these methodologies.

The Association Among Care and Supportability

The connection between care and manageability is well established in the standards of mindfulness, sympathy, and moral obligation. Buddhist lessons underscore non-hurting (*Ahimsa*), balance, and care as key moral qualities, all of which line up with present-day manageability objectives. The act of care cultivates an intense familiarity with what individual activities mean for the more extensive environment. For instance, an understudy who rehearses care might turn out to be more mindful of inefficient utilization propensities, over-dependence on plastic, or the natural results of unnecessary meat utilization. This increased mindfulness normally prompts more manageable decisions, like decreasing waste, rationing energy, and supporting moral organizations.

Care likewise energizes self-restraint and limitation, critical characteristics in battling the consumerist attitude that drives ecological abuse. Numerous the most advanced social orders are profoundly settled in realism, where people frequently consume an overabundance, prompting unnecessary waste and asset consumption. By developing care, people figure out how to separate among needs and needs, cultivating a feeling of appreciation and happiness with what they have. Buddhist lessons advocate for the Center Way, a way of life that maintains a strategic distance from limits and advances balance. When

applied to maintainability, this implies taking on a reasonable way to deal with utilization, guaranteeing that assets are utilized carefully and dependably.

Logical exploration has progressively shown that care prompts more elevated levels of natural cognizance and support of manageability ways of behaving. Studies have shown that people who participate in normal care rehearses will quite often have lower carbon impressions, consume less, and participate in additional supportable ways of behaving, like reusing and preservation endeavors. Moreover, instructive organizations that coordinate care into their maintainability educational programs report expanded understudy commitment in ecological drives. By creating careful mindfulness, understudies comprehend manageability on a scholarly level as well as incorporate it as an individual worth framework, prompting long-haul conduct change.

Care and Practical Independent direction

Perhaps one of the best tests in accomplishing maintainability is the propensity of people and social orders to make foolish, accommodation-driven choices. Whether it is picking dispensable plastic over reusable other options, deciding on quick design, or focusing on monetary development over natural security, numerous impractical practices come from an absence of care in direction. Care helps address this test by encouraging a more purposeful and intelligent way to deal with decisions, guaranteeing that people consider the drawn-out effect of their activities as opposed to momentary comfort.

For example, a school that integrates care-based natural training might urge understudies to stop and reflect prior to settling on decisions about utilization. Prior to buying another item, understudies can be directed through careful request: Do I truly require this? How was this item made? What are the ecological and social outcomes of my buy? This sort of careful reflection normally prompts more moral and supportable decisions, lessening inefficient utilization designs. Essentially, care rehearses in navigation can be applied to regions, for example, food utilization, energy use, and transportation decisions, empowering people to take on ways of behaving that are both economical and sympathetic.

Moreover, care assumes a key part in advancing moral authority, which is pivotal for accomplishing huge scope supportability objectives. Careful pioneers are bound to focus on long-haul manageability over momentary benefits, advocate for arrangements that safeguard the climate, and motivate others to embrace dependable practices. A few colleges overall have presented care-based supportability initiative projects, which train future policymakers, business pioneers, and natural activists to move toward decision-production with lucidity, empathy, and moral trustworthiness. These projects have shown that people prepared in care are bound to foster creative, reasonable arrangements and encourage cooperative ways to deal with ecological difficulties.

Pragmatic Uses of Care in Supportability Training

Instructive establishments all over the planet are progressively

incorporating care into sustainability programs through educational program changes, experiential learning, and institutional approaches. A few powerful procedures include:

i. Care-Based Natural Morals - Schools can integrate care rehearses into morals courses, assisting understudies with figuring out the ethical components of maintainability and ecological obligation.

ii. Eco-Care Retreats - Understudies can take part in open-air care withdraws where they participate in directed reflection, nature strolls, and manageable residing rehearses. These encounters cultivate a profound, special interaction with nature and support practical ways of behaving.

iii. Feasible Utilization Practices - Schools can present care-based programs that urge understudies to think about their day-to-day utilization designs and foster cognizant utilization propensities.

iv. Local area Commitment Activities - Care-based maintainability schooling can stretch out past the homeroom by including understudies in local area drove ecological drives, for example, tree planting, tidy up drives, and preservation programs.

By coordinating these practices, instructive establishments can make a culture of care and manageability, guaranteeing that understudies comprehend ecological issues as well as effectively add to arrangements.

Care and manageability are profoundly interconnected, both in ways of thinking and practice. By encouraging mindfulness, moral direction, and close-to-home versatility, care engages understudies and teachers to embrace feasible ways of life that go outside scholarly ability to grasp down-to-earth, ordinary application. As instructive establishments embrace care-based supportability programs, they develop an age of cognizant, empathetic, and dependable people who are focused on safeguarding the two individuals and the planet. Despite developing natural difficulties, care offers a way toward a more maintainable and amicable future, guaranteeing that instruction grants information as well as sustains the qualities essential for enduring change.

Past private and social prosperity, care can impact supportable reasoning and natural obligation. The Buddhist idea of reliant beginning (*pratītyasamutpāda*) instructs that all peculiarities, including human existence, exist in a trap of interconnected connections. This understanding cultivates an eco-cognizant attitude, empowering people to make moral decisions that add to natural maintainability.

In schooling, care-based supportability programs plan to:

- Energize eco-mindfulness by cultivating careful utilization and waste decrease
- Foster a feeling of planetary obligation by coordinating care with ecological morals
- Advance reasonable way of life propensities, like careful eating, eco-accommodating decisions, and moderation

- Diminish eco-nervousness by assisting understudies with moving toward environment-related worries with clearness and versatility

Studies have shown that care upgrades are supportive of natural mentalities and ways of behaving by moving people according to narcissistic viewpoints to a more extensive biological cognizance. Schools that integrate care into their supportability endeavors frequently report expanded understudy cooperation in ecological drives, for example, protection projects, zero-squander missions, and tree-establishing exercises.

VII. DEVELOPING A BUDDHIST-INSPIRED MINDFULNESS MODEL FOR EDUCATION

Training today faces various difficulties, going from pressure and psychological wellness worries among understudies to an absence of moral establishing in learning. In a time driven by quick mechanical progressions, cutthroat tensions, and natural emergencies, the requirement for a comprehensive, moral, and economical instructive model has become more earnest than at any other time. A Buddhist-enlivened care model for instruction offers a groundbreaking methodology, incorporating mindfulness, sympathy, moral discipline, and intelligence into the growing experience. Not at all like regular care models that fundamentally rely on pressure decrease, a Buddhist structure installs care inside a more extensive philosophical and moral setting, advancing inward harmony, moral living, and social obligation.

The center standards of Buddhism — care (*Sati*), insight (*Prajñā*), and moral direct (*Śīla*) — can act as the establishment for a care based instructive model that encourages mental abilities as well as the capacity to understand people on a profound level, flexibility, and a profound feeling of interconnectedness with society and nature. This segment investigates how a Buddhist-propelled care model can be planned and executed in instructive foundations, its effect on understudies and teachers, and pragmatic systems for coordinating it into the cutting-edge educational program.

Center Buddhist Standards in Schooling

7.1. The job of care (*sati*) in learning

Care (*Sati*) is the foundation of Buddhist work, underscoring second-to-second mindfulness and profound commitment to one's viewpoints, activities, and environmental elements. In an instructive setting, care improves consideration, center, and mental clearness, permitting understudies to handle data successfully and draw in with learning materials in a significant way.

Present-day understudies frequently battle with interruption, tension, and data over-burden, prompting unfortunate maintenance and scholastic burnout. A Buddhist-roused care model develops a condition of loosened up sharpness, where understudies remain completely present in the educational experience without being overpowered. Careful learning includes:

Deep listening – Empowering understudies to listen mindfully to educators, peers, and their contemplations without judgment.

Focused attention – Preparing understudies to support consideration during talks, conversations, and self-study.

Reflective thinking – Advancing self-request and consideration as a feature of the educational experience.

A few examinations on care in schooling have shown that ordinary care practice further develops focus, profound guidelines, and scholarly execution. Schools that integrate care-preparing into everyday timetables report expanded understudy commitment and diminished feelings of anxiety.

7.2. Moral discipline (śīla) and character improvement

Buddhism puts extraordinary accentuation on moral discipline (Śīla), which alludes to developing moral ideals and a mindful way of behaving. Not at all like customary instruction, which frequently focuses on scholastic accomplishment over character improvement, a Buddhist-motivated care model incorporates moral preparation into the growing experience.

Key moral qualities from Buddhism that line up with instructive objectives incorporate:

Non-harming (Ahimsa) - Empowering consideration, compassion, and regard for all creatures.

Truthfulness (Satya) – Advancing trustworthiness and honesty in scholar and individual life.

Right Speech and Right Action - Encouraging deferential correspondence and moral independent direction.

Mindful Consumption – Training understudies to be aware of material utilization and natural obligation.

By integrating moral care into schooling, understudies foster areas of strength for a compass, which directs their way of behaving both inside and past the study hall. Research proposes that schools accentuating character training close by scholastic learning produce understudies who are all the more socially dependable and sincerely adjusted.

Pragmatic procedures for incorporating moral care into instruction include:

Mindfulness-based ethics discussions – Drawing in understudies in conversations about moral situations and moral direction.

Compassion-focused meditation – Developing sympathy through cherishing consideration (*Metta*) rehearses.

Service-learning projects – Empowering understudies to partake in local area administration and natural manageability drives.

By cultivating moral mindfulness, a Buddhist-roused care model sustains empathetic, socially dependable people who contribute emphatically to society.

VIII. WISDOM (PRAJÑĀ) AND CRITICAL THINKING

Shrewdness (*Prajñā*) in Buddhism isn't only scholarly information but a savvy comprehension of reality that emerges from profound thought and

mindfulness. Present-day training frequently accentuates retention and government-sanctioned testing, generally ruling out decisive reasoning and self-reflection. A Buddhist way to deal with schooling urges understudies to develop intelligence through request, reflection, and experiential learning. Incorporating Buddhist epistemology into education helps students develop:

Self-awareness – Grasping their contemplations, feelings, and inspirations.

Interconnected thinking – Perceiving the association of all information and peculiarities.

Critical inquiry – Addressing suppositions and looking for more profound comprehension.

A Buddhist-motivated care model advances Socratic discourse, experiential learning, and thoughtful request, guaranteeing that understudies obtain information as well as foster the capacity to apply it seriously in their lives. Schools and colleges that integrate intelligent practices into their educational programs report more elevated levels of understudy commitment, imagination, and autonomous reasoning.

IX. DEVELOPING A BUDDHIST-INSPIRED MINDFULNESS CURRICULUM

9.1. Day-to-day care practices

An organized care routine coordinated into the school day can assist understudies with fostering a predictable care practice. Schools can carry out:

Morning mindfulness sessions – Five to ten minutes of reflection to begin the day with lucidity and concentration.

Mindful breathing exercises – Short breathing practices when classes to keep up with mindfulness.

Silent reflection periods – Committed time for self-request, examination, or journaling.

These practices establish a quiet and centered learning climate, diminishing uneasiness and further developing understudy prosperity.

9.2. Scrutinizing learning and experiential instruction

Experiential learning upgrades commitment, maintenance, and more profound comprehension. A Buddhist-propelled care model integrates:

Mindful reading and writing – Empowering understudies to peruse texts gradually and reflect profoundly.

Contemplative discussions – Engaging in dialogues that promote awareness and ethical reasoning.

Nature-based mindfulness – Outside learning exercises that cultivate an association with the regular world.

By moving from a detached figuring out how to experiential, intelligent schooling, understudies foster an all-encompassing comprehension of information.

9.3. Teacher training in mindfulness-based education

For care to be successfully incorporated into schooling, instructors should go through specific preparation. A Buddhist-roused model incorporates:

Mindfulness teacher training programs – Teachers figure out how to apply care in teaching methods.

Compassion-based classroom management – Preparing educators to deal with study hall elements with sympathy and persistence.

Personal mindfulness practice for teachers – Empowering instructors to develop their own care practice for prosperity.

At the point when instructors encapsulate care, sympathy, and insight, understudies normally assimilate these qualities. Research shows that careful instructors make more comprehensive, aware, and successful learning conditions.

9.4. Implementing Buddhist mindfulness in schools

9.4.1. Bhutan's gross public bliss schooling model

Bhutan incorporates Buddhist care standards into its school system, zeroing in on all-encompassing prosperity as opposed to scholarly accomplishment alone. Understudies practice everyday reflection, moral thinking, and ecological care, bringing about more significant levels of understudy fulfillment and close-to-home prosperity.

9.4.2. Care-based training in Thai religious schools

Buddhist religious schools in Thailand consolidate care, moral preparation, and local area administration into their educational plans. These organizations produce understudies areas of strength for with values, flexibility, and social obligation.

9.4.3. Care in Western Colleges

Organizations like Harvard and Oxford have presented care-based initiative projects roused by Buddhist standards, assisting understudies with creating moral critical thinking abilities and the capacity to appreciate anyone on a deeper level.

A Buddhist-enlivened care model for training offers a groundbreaking way to deal with picking up, encouraging scholarly greatness, moral obligation, and close-to-home prosperity. By coordinating care (Sati), moral lead (Śīla), and intelligence (Prajñā), training can move from a simple information-based framework to one that supports mindfulness, sympathy, and supportability. Executing this model requires institutional responsibility, educator preparation, and educational program change; however, its effect is significant — forming understudies who are mentally competent as well as careful, moral, and connected with worldwide residents. In a world confronting expanding social and natural difficulties, a Buddhist-roused instructive model gives a way toward a more empathetic, feasible, and illuminated future.

X. CONCLUSION

Integrating mindfulness into education offers a promising pathway toward fostering a compassionate and sustainable future. Mindfulness practices

enhance students' emotional regulation, resilience, and academic performance, thereby contributing to a more empathetic and effective learning environment.

10.1. Benefits of mindfulness in education

Emotional Regulation and Resilience: Mindfulness equips students with tools to manage stress and recover from challenges, leading to improved mental health and well-being. Research indicates that students with mindfulness and compassion skills experience less stress and learn more from challenging experiences.

Academic Performance: Mindfulness practices are positively related to resilience, which in turn enhances academic performance. Being mindful is considered a key competence in education for sustainable development, allowing students to face their education with a greater capacity for personal growth.

Sustainable Consumption and Compassion: Mindfulness training can cultivate introspective abilities, facilitating learning processes that are conducive to sustainable consumption and compassionate behavior. This approach aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals by promoting responsible consumption and fostering a compassionate mindset.

10.2. Implementing mindfulness practices

Teacher Training: Programs like the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) initiative provide teachers with mindfulness-based professional development, enhancing their social and emotional competence and improving classroom interactions.

Student Programs: Introducing mindfulness practices in schools can transform classrooms into emotionally safe spaces, increasing feelings of connectedness and promoting higher autonomy in learning.

In conclusion, embedding mindfulness into educational frameworks not only supports individual growth but also cultivates a compassionate and sustainable future by fostering empathy, resilience, and responsible behavior among students.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE, CONSIDERATE, AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: INTEGRATING BUDDHIST WISDOMS TO MODERN TEACHING TO PROMOTE COLLECTIVE WELLBEING AND AWAKENING

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Abstract:

The paper explores the intersection of Buddhist wisdom and modern education, emphasizing how mindfulness can transform pedagogy, foster ethical awareness, and promote a balanced approach to knowledge acquisition. It argues that contemporary education must integrate spiritual and philosophical insights from Buddhist traditions to cultivate moral integrity, emotional resilience, and collective well-being. The authors highlight the historical roots of Buddhist education, its focus on wisdom (*paññā*), ethical conduct (*sīla*), and mental discipline (*samādhi*), and how these principles remain relevant in addressing challenges in today's fast-paced, technology-driven learning environments. A key contribution of the paper is its critique of neoliberal influences on education, which often prioritize market-driven outcomes over holistic human development. By advocating for a mindfulness-based approach, the authors propose an educational paradigm shift that nurtures self-awareness, social responsibility, and intercultural harmony. Furthermore, the paper presents the Noble Eightfold Path as a blueprint for ethical learning, reinforcing the idea that true education should transcend mere information transmission and inspire learners towards moral and intellectual excellence. Through a critical examination of Buddhist epistemology and pedagogy, the paper underscores the urgency of reshaping modern education systems to align with the ethical and philosophical foundations of Buddhist thought,

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ensuring that future generations are equipped not only with knowledge but also with the wisdom to apply it for the betterment of humanity.

Keywords: *Buddhism, mindfulness, compassion, sustainable future.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the foundational aspects of a well-functioning society. The Term Education has been ascribed different definitions, but none of them have given an exact meaning and answer to the term 'Education', at present. Education, like philosophy, is also closely related to human life. Therefore, being an important life activity, education is also greatly influenced by philosophy. Various fields of philosophy, like political philosophy, social philosophy, and economic philosophy, have great influence on the various aspects of education like educational procedures, processes, policies, planning, and its implementation, from both the theoretical and practical aspects.

Human Beings are rational beings on Earth, and they have the ability to think and reason more so than other beings. Bhāgavad Gītā and Early Buddhism, undoubtedly the best-known philosophical traditions of India. Even though they seem to hold mutually opposed points of view in relation to some major philosophical questions such as those of God, Idol Worshipping, Soul, Scriptural authority, etc, they are both held in very high esteem and are acclaimed for their Moral earnestness, Spiritual insight, and Philosophical profundity. Buddhism is the pinnacle of the world's philosophy, and it stipulates the paramount path towards ultimate happiness, perfection in life with the understanding of the Philosophy. The approach towards education in Buddhism has a holistic approach towards human life that leads to a personality transformation integrating the highest form of humanity through ethical, intellectual and spiritual perfection.

Chin kung, in his book 'BUDDHISM AS AN EDUCATION' mentions that wisdom is the goal of Buddhist education and all human beings inherently possess the potential to obtain this goal. In Buddhist philosophy, wisdom is not just about acquiring knowledge or intellectual understanding but also about cultivating a profound insight into the nature of reality. It involves developing a clear and discerning mind that can see things as they truly are, unobscured by ignorance, delusions, and misconceptions. However, being restrained by unawareness, one cannot apprehend their innate nature. Therefore, Buddhist education aims to help regain and cultivate a strong foundation of moral principles and values, such as compassion, honesty, and non-harming the intrinsic nature of human beings (Kung, n.d.).

For instance, as the necessities adjust so must there be a modification in the education, worsening which the organization will mechanically be superfluous. The structure of development of society is principally perceived in the educational covetous to get it, transmitted from educational boundaries to society at considerable size. An endeavour through this paper to epitomise the Buddhist tradition, Evolving concentration, mindfulness, and awareness through various meditation practices, such as mindfulness of breath, body,

and emotions which is considered as a source of knowledge and wisdom specifically in, depictions about Ethics and beliefs of Buddhist philosophy and ideology, mindfulness as a pre-requisite in modern education, society, reality, self, perception and existence as well as their implications on alternative educational practice human suffering and its continuities.

II. FUTURE OF MODERN EDUCATION: PERSONALIZED, MINDFUL, AND ACCESSIBLE

Education is a key element in the development of any country. Rapid expansion in Education can lead to overcrowding and resource constraints, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and shortages of qualified teachers. Multiple dynamics and structures define a Society. A society is a complex and multifaceted entity that is shaped by a variety of dynamic and structural factors. The everyday interactions and relationships between individuals and groups that shape a society's culture, values, and beliefs that shape the behaviour and interactions of individuals within a society.. The rapid development of advanced technology has created the challenge of complicated changes in life styles, values, behaviours, and ethics Therefore, the problems of a society uncertain of itself, are extending into the educational institution and ascribe to education a decisive role in the development of a culture of high quality dialogue, to promote effective and efficient intercultural dialogue. The movement of individuals and groups within a society's social hierarchy can be influenced by factors such as education, economic opportunity, and social connections. The design of a new culture involves creating a set of shared values, norms, and practices that shape the behaviour and interactions of individuals within a community or society emerging then through education and, as such, the educational reality in the world reveals new needs and new grounds to learn. In the era of the third millennium, remarkable changes are spreading that affect lifestyles at the end of this last century, characterized by the fusion of cultures. In particular, the world of education has historically possessed the means to solve problems and manage conflicts; from here, to know what kind of relationship is to detect between culture, dialogue, and education, without forgetting, however, that the real task of education has always been highly social and cultural.¹

At that time, societal activities were both supportive of, as well as supported by science practices. The positive side was that it enabled the science to work such that it influenced individual moral and spiritual evolution, besides fostering morals and higher values. But compared to that system the present system is not very supportive of science practices and is found to be significantly deteriorated. It was argued that the current science practicing ideology is strongly acting against the individual's inner moral and spiritual

¹ Cited In *Beliefs And Behaviours In Education And Culture: Cultural Determinants And Education* (Coord.: Marius-Mircea CrişAn, Roxana-Andreea Toma. – Bucureşti: Pro Universitaria, (2016); Quoted By Norma Zakaria, Ed; *Essays On Educating For The Culture Of Dialogue, A Challenge For The Dialogue Of Cultures*, p. 11.

unfolding and fulfilment (Witz, 1996). Such opposing ideology may restrict an individual from appreciating the goodness and beauty of life and truth. Thus, it cannot provide proper orientation and bases for a sound mind in a sound body that upholds morals and values, which were historically provided by society, religion, traditional cultural values, and moralities.² The mistake is not to pay more attention to our mental consciousness. Entire generations have been brought up with a materialistic outlook in a materialistic culture and way of life. Although they want to live in peace, they don't know how to tackle their destructive emotions, which are their biggest obstacle.

Education is a human endeavour that has been a cornerstone of human progress and development throughout history. It is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the transmission of knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another. Since the 19th century rapid science and technological advancements, the use of technology and data to provide personalised learning experiences tailored to individual students' needs and abilities. Many Individuals, particularly in disadvantaged communities, lack access to quality education due to factors such as poverty, location, and social status. In ancient India, where religion was the focus of all activities, its educational focus was directed towards the students' needs of religious and spiritual development. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of Basic Education, considers education as a means to develop man. He said, "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit."³ The terms 'moral' and "ethics" denote the idea of custom: An ethical issue is "relevant if it is one that any thinking person must face."

His Holiness Dalai Lama has some amazing insights on the importance of Buddhism in Education. He believes that Education should not only focus on academic achievement but also on developing Hearts and Minds. He emphasizes the need for a more holistic approach to education, one that combines intellectual and emotional development. "We need to improve the current education system by introducing instructions on ways to cultivate positive emotions like warm-heartedness. Relying on religious tradition won't appeal to everyone. We need a more universal approach based on common experience, common sense and scientific findings". The Dalai Lama suggests that by incorporating Buddhist values and principles into Education, we can help children develop a sense of empathy, compassion, and responsibility, which are essential for creating a more harmonious and peaceful World. His Holiness drew attention to ancient Indian traditions that deal with concentration and insight, shamatha and vipashyana, that have accumulated profound understanding of the workings of the mind. The Buddhist texts also

² Chowdhury, M. (2016). Emphasizing Morals, Values, Ethics, And Character Education In Science Education And Science Teaching. *Malaysian Online Journal Of Educational Sciences*. 4, 1 - 16.

³ Aggarwal, J. C. (1999). *Theory And Principles Of Education: Philosophical And Sociological Bases Of Education*. New Delhi, India, Vikas Publishing House, p. 237.

are full of references, which very clearly bear out the fact that Buddhism upholds the path of Knowledge (jñānamārga). The attainment of enlightenment or Nibbāna, liberation from transmigration, the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, the practice of the Eightfold Noble path, etc., all fundamentally depend on the path of knowledge. These high attainments of Buddhist culture can be accompanied only by the exercise of Knowledge.

Preceding the nineteenth century, science in ancient India was a thriving field that made significant contributions to various disciplines. The ancient Indian scientist and their contributions to various disciplines, including ancient Indian scientists and their contributions, and ancient Indian scientific texts all demonstrate the rich and fascinating history of Science before the nineteenth century. Science observes existed galloped on ethical and conscientious moral values beside an escalation of philosophical and metaphysical aspects of science education. A solo article of earliest Indian has existed in the course of its history supplementary by devout beside radical, or moneymaking influences. Although these terms have dissimilar heritages, philosophers use these footings interchangeably.

According to Peter Singer,⁴ Agendas reflecting Moral values, ethics, and mindfulness in schools arise within and are influenced by broader neoliberal structures and ideologies. Although the aim of public education is not intended to be about profitability, productivity, and consumption per se, it is nevertheless a contested site that is subject to market forces and demands. The fundamental principles of social, political, and economic life were welded into a comprehensive theory, which is called Religion in Hindu thought. Like the culture and traditions of India, the system of education also has a rich history of its own. The knowledge acquired by people of ancient times was passed on from one generation to another and is reflected even in the teachings of today. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee said, “Learning in India through the ages had been prized and pursued not for its own sake, if we may so put it, but for the sake, and as a part, of religion. It was sought as the means of self-realization, as the means to the highest end of life, viz. Mukti or Emancipation”. Ideals and values of the then society. In the history of Indian thought, knowledge has occupied an important position since ancient times. This characteristic could easily be recognized in Vedic literature. As rituals were everything to the Indians of Brāhmaṇas, so knowledge was everything to the Indians of Upaniṣads. Knowledge was thus of supreme value for the Brāhmaṇa of Upaniṣads, whether in speculation or practical life. There is no evil deed for ‘one who knows thus.’ Knowledge will cancel all sins and crimes that he commits. Morality and ethics are thus absolutely void its value before knowledge. Later on, the idea was somewhat modified. Morality and good conduct were declared to be requisite as knowledge. Buddhism gives the highest regard for wisdom (paññā) and purity (visuddhi) of the mind from mental defilements, and the worst condemnation

⁴ Singer, P. (2013). *The point of view of the universe: Sidgwick and contemporary ethics*. Oxford University Press, p. 98.

for ignorance. Wisdom is not something that is accumulated, but it comes from deep reflection. In Buddhist terms, the knowledge acquired by learning is called “*sutamaya ñāṇa*”. The other two are “*cintamaya ñāṇa*” - the knowledge acquired by thinking- and “*bhavanāmaya ñāṇa*” - the knowledge acquired through practicing meditation. Based on three Buddhist principles of learning and training: higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*), higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*), and higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*), the various practices of the eightfold path are intertwined. They are all relevant and important practices on the path of ethics. The other two essential fundamentals are Bodhicitta and Shunyata. Bodhicitta in all of its forms is about allowing compassion for others to lead us all to wisdom by releasing us from the fetters of self-clinging. Shunyata is a fundamental belief that nothing exists independently. It is akin to the idea of everything being connected.

Knowledge is consequently considered as crucial to Buddhist philosophy, besides on the further influence ignorance is observed upon as one of the furthestmost repugnant iniquities.⁵ Buddhist comprehension is constantly meticulous through honest integrity and ethics. Human beings have the distinct entitlement and prerequisite of holding intellectual power, of questioning their position, and so on. If anyone is stimulated to this locus of inquisitorial of one’s suffering, one is not an unflawed human being. Buddhist Education is a holistic approach to learning that aims to cultivate the mind, body, and spirit. The basic principles and ideologies are rooted in three-fold training causes as *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. Morality (*śīla*) is the practice of ethics and morality, which includes the cultivation of virtues such as compassion, honesty, and nonviolence. Meditation (*samādhi*): The practice of mental discipline, which includes the cultivation of virtues such as concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom. Wisdom (*paññā*): The practice of developing a deeper understanding of the nature of reality, which includes the cultivation of insight into the impermanent, suffering, and non-self-nature of all phenomena. Buddhism fixes proliferation and design to help individuals develop wisdom, ethics, and mental discipline on the lines of doctrines of education as *pariyatti*, *paṭipatti*, and *paṭivedha* that formulates the basis of the various schools of philosophy of Buddhist education. *Paṭipatti* and *pariyatti* are well-thought-out as the practicalities of education since they stand phase’s principal to liberation. Since this ancient standpoint, we can attain an educational arrangement, consuming methodical procedures, such as: the *nissaya*-method and *katha*-method. *Nissaya* developed fundamentals when Buddhist learning was exclusive in the monastery, whereas *Katha* turned out to be indispensable whilst the *vihara* established the *Māha-vihara*. *Nissaya* – are the approaches expended with beginner levels, implemented as with the monastic educational system. This process grasps the instructor foremost above the pupil. It is described by handover of realisation in which the scholar collects dharma-authority by the instruction of monks (*Vinaya*), moral stories

⁵ Upadhyaya, K. N. (2008). *Early Buddhism And The Bhagavadgita*. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, p. 152.

(*jātaka*), or basics of Buddhadharma. These are to be remembered through and through chanting.⁶ Consequently, those who commence to question wherefore they are suffering or where they emanated from and where they will go after death, are inquisitive to comprehend the metaphysics of life. It is not allowed to ascend as spontaneously as it delights, as in the Upaniṣads and other Indian philosophical schools emerged later on, the later form of Buddhism being included. Being inquisitive about the knowledge of life is a fundamental aspect of human nature. It is a driving force that propels us to explore, discover, and understand the mysteries of existence. Curiosity is rooted in our desire to make sense of the world, to find meaning and purpose, and to navigate the complexities; however, in Buddhism, knowledge and virtue are acknowledged, and a bearer of knowledge is well-thought-out to be righteous, or an intelligent man is anticipated to be respectable. Although ethics has reacted to social problems (as has philosophy in general), this reaction was mostly abstract and indirect. The difference between traditional and applied ethics lies in the latter's direct approach to social problems.⁷

When it comes to self-improvement, we know a lot of approaches. To get fit, you eat right and exercise. To grow in physical strength, you must train and lift weights. To improve your memory, you must get enough sleep and intentionally learn new things. Education is a persuasive step in continuing to be competitive and enhancing your skills. Whether you're starting your career or frequent to continue to build upon your years of experience, tracking educational training helps you keep moving forward.⁸ During the ancient period, Taxila was undoubtedly the most advanced place of learning in India. The mode of Education was unique and advanced. Distinctive from earlier Gurukuls, Taxila and Nalanda attracted foreign students.. It played a significant role in the development of Buddhist philosophy, Vedic Studies, Ayurveda, mathematics, astronomy, logic, debates, and discourses. By the 7th century BC, it was a famous seat of learning, "attracting scholars from distant cities like Rajagriha, Banaras and Mithila".⁹ Advanced change in the quality of education was during this period, which can be seen by the fact that "Whoever learns by heart, writes, observes, asks questions and waits upon the learned, has his intellect developed like a lotus by sun's rays. Education is designed to educate man intellectually, physically, spiritually, morally, and accomplishing on practically.¹⁰ Buddhists had the concept of monistic colleges back then, which were neither sectarian in their outlook nor purely theological in their courses. Buddhist philosophy played an important role in their scheme of education, but due attention was also given to the study of the religion and philosophy of the different sects in

⁶ Eliade, M. (1987). *The Encyclopedia Of Religion*. Volume 2, Macmillan Publishing Company, p. 510.

⁷ Chadwick, R., & Schroeder, D. (2002). *Applied Ethics*. London, Routledge, p. 37.

⁸ Cited In "<https://www.cornerstone.edu/blog-post/five-reasons-why-education-helps-to-advance-your-career-at-any-level/>"

⁹ Altekar, A. S. (2009). *Education In Ancient India*. Delhi, Isha Books, p. 197.

¹⁰ Altekar, A. S. (2009). *Education In Ancient India*. Delhi, Isha Books, p. 197.

Hinduism and Jainism. However, the legacy of these Buddhist monastic colleges continues to be felt, with many of them still standing today as testaments to the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of India.

Chinese scholar “Yuan Chwang” spent in studying the Hindu religion and philosophy in Buddhist monasteries here in India. It is said: “The education was not confined only to theology, philosophy and logic but Sanskrit literature, medicine, astronomy-cum-astrology, and works on polity and administration. This puts them excel them in a good position in debates. However, Buddhist education was far from cramming of texts.¹¹ The Buddhist, to attain high culture must, first of all, be a moral man. ‘Establishing himself on morality, an intelligent man cultivates concentration of the mind and knowledge; the ardent and prudent monk will extricate that entanglement.’¹² “One who is always in the exploration of the human existence, including the nature of consciousness, the meaning of life, and something greater than oneself, possession of morality and knowledge, who is well tranquillized, energetic and, cross the flood of transmigration hard to cross”.¹³ A willingness to ask questions, seek answers, and explore new ideas through consciousness. The Buddha esteemed knowledge very highly, but he does not place it above morality, as Upaniṣads do; nor does he identify knowledge with morality. They always go together, and the latter leads the way. This is the general Buddhist notion of the relationship between knowledge and morality.¹⁴

The mandate of Buddhist culture stayed none merely for nonphysical and conscientious training and learning nevertheless also for scientific and methodical education and learning. In Observance of the prosperity of humanity in sight, Buddhist monasteries integrated the methodological and devout Guidance with education. The scholar is obligated to experience a practical course of the particular subject even after completing his study. In this assembly, with the instance of Jivaka. That is why it is commented, “It is apparent, consequently, that the learning centres puffed nationalised ethos and create group ecstatic, and the petition for the information of mechanical and methodical education laterally with religious and all-purpose education was satisfied. The division between both the secular and religious knowledge, of practical and philosophical subjects thus enters the curricula of Buddhist ten students under his charge.”¹⁵

The theme staples of analysis exist in the Buddhist traditions and moral fables. In Buddhism, around two traditions that lead to the life of a monk: one necessitates unceasing meditation, this is entitled ‘Vipassana Dhura’ and the additional revising and schooling the Dhamma that is entitled ‘Gantha Dhura’. Amid this twofold practice, it is requisite on every monk to yield up some of

¹¹ Altekar, A. S. (2009). *Education In Ancient India*. Delhi, Isha Books, p. 232 - 233.

¹² S. I. 18, 165; V. M. 2.

¹³ S. I. 58; V. M. I. 8.

¹⁴ Tachibana, S. (2013). *The Ethics Of Buddhism*. New Delhi, Cosmo Publications, p. 197 - 198.

¹⁵ Tachibana, S. (2013). *The Ethics of Buddhism*. New Delhi, Cosmo Publications, p. 197 - 198.

these customs in harmony with his disposition, environment and intention. The prospectus of the monastics involved what were termed as Suttanta, Dhamma, and Vinaya, together with Suttas and Sutta-vibhanga. Vipassana Dhura is observed whilst the powerful practise of purging one's speech, action and thought. Buddha warns against the bookish learning of a monk as: "Though he narrates the sacrosanct texts a lot, but entertainments not consequently that oblivious man is like a cowboy reckoning other's cattle and not obtaining the products of the cow. He shares not the fruits of the tranquil man".¹⁶ This undoubtedly signifies that even if an individual develops expert intellectually subsequently erudition by heart from the texts, but he has yet to practice of what has been heart and learnt by him using following the right path. He remains only a learner until he completes the whole process.¹⁷

III. ESSENTIAL PERCEPTION OF BUDDHIST ETHICS

Buddhist ethics, consequently, consume an adjacent connotation through a social philosophy. This social viewpoint is similarly abundantly established. We devise in the Buddhist texts an interpretation of the description and origin of the group and the foundations of social transformation. There is also a relation between the nature and purposes of government, the arrangement of the supreme social direction, and how it is possible to be fetched approximately. Buddhist ethics are not subjective ideals developed by man for his utilitarian purpose. Nor are they arbitrarily imposed from without. Man-made laws and social customs do not form the basis of Buddhist ethics. Buddhist ethics treasures the situation basis not on the everchanging social imposts however relatively on the invariable laws of nature. In Buddhism, the concept of karma refers to the idea that an Individual's actions have consequences that affect their future experiences. Buddhist ethical standards are essentially a fragment of nature and the invariable and unchangeable law of cause and effect (kamma). The humble statistic that Buddhist ethics are engrained in biological decree marks its ideologies equally convenient and suitable to the modern world.¹⁸ In Buddhism, the actions of man are three-fold: bodily action (kayakarma), vocal action (vacikarma), and mental action (manokarma).¹⁹ The concept of Kamma is based on the principle of cause and effect, where every action, thought, and intention has an impact on the Individual's future. It is this three-fold action of man that reasons and bases him to meander in samsāra; and respectable actions are those that subsidise towards life being more pleasurable and contented here (ditthadhammasukha) as well as grant happiness in the world to emanate (samprayahita). The Buddhist concept of Kamma is often summerized by the phrase "what you sow, you reap." An action done with a positive intention, such as helping someone in need, is considered nourishing, while an action done with a negative intention, such

¹⁶ DN, p. 19.

¹⁷ MN. I, p. 144.

¹⁸ Dharmasiri, G. (1998), p. 27.

¹⁹ M. I. 373; Dhṛp 232.

as harming someone, is considered objectionable, ending in the consciousness of the truth or Nibbāna; and all actions that go against these are bad. This opinion and belief is always genuine, notwithstanding the time and space. This signifies that those desiring to accomplish happiness in an imminent life must concoct for it here and now. Buddhism is a kirivavāda structure, a faith propagating reception in the magnitude of action. The doctrine of ethics or sīla is its essential principle, and Nirvāna is its essential objective of holy life.²⁰ The supplementary expressions used to symbolise 'good' and 'bad' are puñña and papa.²¹ Rendering to the Pāli - English Dictionary, it is verified that 'puñña' is always represented as the foundation and condition of heavenly rebirth and a future blissful state, the enjoyment and duration of which depends on the amount of merit accumulated in a former existence.²² In this sense, Papa could be rendered 'the foundation and condition of suffering in woeful states'. These two terms in their usage in the Pāli canon seem to be concerned mainly with the idea of karma, which is known as the psychological force that determines the future state of a being, according to the good and bad he does. Thus, in the Mahamangala Sutta the Buddha says that the fact of having a store of accumulated good karma is an auspicious thing for a person.²³

In Buddhism, the very nature of worldly life, including the circumstances in which one lives and the world one confronts, is "suffering". To transcend these pains in the world and realize an ultimate and complete life, one deals with the ignorance and greed found within ourselves, abstains from evil, and cultivate good. Getting rid of existing evil, working not to produce additional evil; to work at nurturing goodness, to destroy any pre-existent evil – when doing this, one achieves liberation and bliss for oneself and others. The good dharma of Buddhism is a dharma of purity with a nature of tranquility benefiting both oneself and others in this present life and future lives. For example, from the Abhidharmakosa sastra (Treasury of Metaphysics): "Calm karma is called the good".²⁴ It is also a common understanding that in Buddhist society, monks are considered as spiritual teachers and instructors of the society. The laity, when they are in trouble, also approach the monks. They seek counsel and advice thinking that they can help them. So the monks have to deal and cope with the problems of the laity. Ajahn Brahm shares his experience of the role of a monk as a counselor: "Monks and senior monks especially, have to sit in their monastery, listen to people's problems and accept all their rubbish. Marital problems, difficulties with teenage children, rows with relations, financial problems- we hear the lot".²⁵

²⁰ MN. II. 32; S. II. 28, 70.

²¹ D. III. 119; S. I. 114, II. 82; A. I. 154.

²² PED, p. 86.

²³ SN. VS. 260

²⁴ Abhidharmakosa Sashtra, Vol. 5, T29, no. 1558, p. 80, C25 - 26.

²⁵ Brahm, A., & Greenslade, F. (2010). *Opening The Door Of Your Heart*. Australia, Bolinda Publishing Pty Ltd, p. 97.

According to Bodhi (1998), when discussing education based on Buddhist principles (Dhamma), educators have to determine the ideals of education (p. 2). She says that the Buddha held up five qualities of a model student, whether monk or layperson, i.e., faith, virtue, generosity, learning, and wisdom.²⁶ Bodhi (1998) believes that education should be aimed at the development of positive virtues such as kindness, honesty, purity, truthfulness, and mental sobriety. The task of education is 'to draw forth from the mind its innate potential for understanding' (p.1). Education informed by Buddhism 'aims at a parallel transformation of human character and intelligence, holding both in balance and ensuring that both are brought to fulfillment'. To this end, 'the practical side of education must be integrated with other requirements designed to bring the potentialities of human nature to maturity in the way envisioned by the Buddha.'²⁷ Such an education must instill values. However, the commercialisation of education and the economic order designed to drive maximum profits are major problems in achieving such a goal.²⁸

The Mahagosinga Sutta shows a dialogue of Abhidhamma between two monks - one to ask questions, one to answer, and together they conclude Dhammasaṅgāni (composition of Dharma) which classifies as Abhidharma.²⁹ Intellectually, kathas are also used in suttas, and in the commentaries on suttas, called Nidesa (explanation), composed of two books, the Maha (major) and the Culla (minor). We could also find catechisms inside these groups of teaching, called patisambhida-magga (way of analyzing), which comprises character, lexicon, glossary, summary, et cetera.³⁰ The Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya-aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*), which is one of the particularities of Buddhist education, is considered as the essential of Buddha's teachings. Thus, the Buddha proclaimed the Noble Eightfold Path as the only path to liberation (*Nibbāna*); it was the criterion by which he judged the teachings of other schools and found them wanting. It is the Holy path consisting of eight branches as: Right View (*Sammā-ditṭhi*), Right Thought (*Sammā-saṅkappa*); Right Speech (*Sammā-vācā*); Right Action (*Sammā-kammanta*); Right Livelihood (*Sammā-ājīva*); Right Effort (*Sammā-vāyāma*); Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*); Right Concentration (*Sammā-samādhi*).³¹ Having himself first tried these two extremes and having found them to be useless, the Buddha discovered, through personal experience, the Middle Path, which gives vision and knowledge and leads to calm, insight, and enlightenment, *Nibbāna*.³²

²⁶ Bodhi (1998), p. 2.

²⁷ Bodhi (1998), p. 1.

²⁸ Gamage, S. (2016). *A Buddhist Approach To Knowledge Construction And Education In Sri Lanka (Ceylon) In The Context Of Colonisation And Southern Theory; Postcolonial Directions In Education*, 5 (1), 83 - 109.

²⁹ Mulyadi, W. & Mircea, E. (1987). *The Encyclopedia Of Religion*, Volume 2, Macmillan Publishing Company, p. 514.

³⁰ Mulyadi, W. & Mircea, E. (1987), p. 531.

³¹ S. V. 422; M. I. 48; Mld. I. 134.

³² Walpola, Sri Rahula. (1974). *What The Buddha Taught*, New York: Grove Press, p. 45.

Vietnamese Zen Teacher Thich Nhat Hanh wrote: “Our happiness and the happiness of those around us depend on our degree of Right View. Touching reality deeply - knowing what is going on inside and outside of ourselves - is the way to liberate ourselves from the suffering that is caused by wrong perceptions. The Right View is not an ideology, a system, or even a path. It is the insight we have into the reality of life, a living insight that fills us with understanding, peace, and love.”³³ There are two factors contributing to the arising of the Right View: Having a spiritual teacher from whom you can learn (Paratoghosa) and having the capacity for and use of systematic, critical reflection (*Yonisomanasikāra*).³⁴ And by such action, it is to be a cause to the arising of Samma-dīṭṭhi. According to the Buddhist texts, the Buddha always teaches monks to have and to be a spiritual friend among them as he is, too. I perceive, monk, no other single condition by which the Ariyan Eightfold Path, if not yet arisen, can arise or by which, if arisen, the Ariyan Eightfold Path can reach perfection of culture, save (the condition of) friendship with the spiritual friend.³⁵ In the process of entering the Buddhist educational way, positive guidance is essential. When analyzing the term Paratoghosa, i.e., listening to the teaching of others, it is important to note the Pāli word Kalyāṇmitta. Venerable Phradhammapīṭaka, a scholar of Buddhism, says that “Kalyāṇamitta refers to a person who is well prepared with the proper qualities to teach, suggest, point out, encourage, assist, and give guidance for getting started on the path of Buddhist training.”³⁶ It has been taught in the six directions that friends are recognized as the north direction, it shows how to act to friends and friends give good action in return.³⁷ For the persons who will act as good spiritual friends, it is imperative to be endowed with the seven following qualities: a) Piyo (endearing), b) Garu (worthy of respect), c) Bhāvanīyo (inspiring), d) Vattā (capable of speaking effectively), e) Vacanakkhammo (patient with words), f) Gambiraṇa katham kattā (capable of expounding on the profound), g) No caṭṭhāne niyojaye (not leading in wrongful ways).³⁸ Therefore, the Paratoghosa is an external factor, which leads to the Samma-dīṭṭhi, have to go hand by hand with an internal factor; systematic thought or reflection (*Yonisomanasikāra*). Paratoghosa endows the right systematic reflection of real nature by understanding the conditional causes and of common events in accordance with social issues by distinguishing particular or social attitude. It has enough ability to search the causes and supporting conditions, and finally, it realizes the events clearly.

³³ Nhat Hanh. (2015). *The Heart Of The Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering Into Peace, Joy, & Liberation: The Four Noble Truths, The Noble Eightfold Path, And Other Basic Buddhist Teachings*. P. 51 [Http://Rbdigital.Oneclickdigital.Com](http://Rbdigital.Oneclickdigital.Com)

³⁴ M. I. 353.

³⁵ S. V. 31.

³⁶ Phradhammapīṭaka, Buddhadhamma, P. 224; Quoted In Phramahā Kaewsufong, (1998) “A Critical Study Of The Ethics Of Early Buddhism”, Ph.D. Thesis, Department Of Philosophy And Religion, Banaras Hindu University, p. 168.

³⁷ D. III. 189 - 192, 173 - 184.

³⁸ *Dhp* 64.

As the Buddha declared, “As an internal factor, I see nothing that leads to such great benefit as systematic reflection (Yonisomanasikāra).³⁹ A crucial problem in the process of Indian education administration outcome nowadays is inadequate quality. This problem involves various sources such as the family system, education pedagogy, educational environments, qualities of teacher, and effective curriculum. If these sources of the problem have been solved, then academic graduates will have been qualified with significant characteristics of ability to analytical, critical thinking as well as to solve one’s problems. A path which a learner to have such a characteristic is to integrate the yonisomanasikāra thinking system into the Indian education system supported by society and family members through gradual formation until those learners have skills sufficient to enhance their quality of life. Systematic reflection is the ability to think clearly, to look at things with critical eyes, breaking them down into their constituent factors and analyzing their causal condition.⁴⁰

Let us now consider Thich Nhat Hanh’s view on systematic reflection: If you are a right viewed Buddhist, when you are concentrating on reading a paper on Dhamma under a big tree, and look at a white cloud floating slowly through the blue sky, you will also see that cloud on your paper. You will think in the dependent way that without clouds, there would be no rain, without rain, there would be no trees, so we could not make paper. The cloud is essential for the tree, and the tree is essential for paper to exist. If the cloud were not here, the tree and the sheet of paper you read could not be here, either. So we can see that the cloud, the tree, and the paper are interdependent. If we look into the sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine were not here, the forest could not grow, so we know that the sunshine is also part of this sheet of paper. If we continue to look further, we can see the logger who cut the tree in the forest and brought it in to the mill to be transformed into paper, and we see the rice field nearby. Without rice as daily food, the logger cannot exist, therefore, rice is also a part of the paper. Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too, because when we look at the sheet of paper, the sheet is part of our perception. So we can say that everything coexists and everything, even our mental processes, are conditioned and interdependent.⁴¹ We also discover how unskillful speech degrades personal relationships and diminishes the possibility of peace in our world. Right Livelihood (*Sammā-ājīva*) is earning one’s living by no wrong means. It refers to avoidance of forms of livelihood and leads one into wrong ways and earning one’s living by righteous means. The definition of Right Livelihood is given as follows: “Bhikkhus, what is the Right Livelihood? Right Livelihood is the noble disciples completely stop all improper means of livelihood and sustain themselves according to the way of

³⁹ A. I. 17.

⁴⁰ Bhikkhu Payutto (P. A.). (1992). *Dictionary Of Buddhism*, Bangkok: Mahā ChulālongkornrājavidyāLaya, Buddhist University, p. 21 - 25.

⁴¹ Suwat Chanchamnong. (2004). *The Buddha’s Core Teachings*, Bangkok: Tathata Publication, p. 187 – 188.

proper livelihood.⁴² Those wrong livelihoods are conditioned by greed, lust, selfishness, and desire for power. To be involved in these wrong ways of life will degrade the quality of our lives day by day and will ultimately drive us away from Nibbāna. Therefore, the Buddha encourages us to earn a living by righteous means. We should live by a profession that is honorable, blameless, and innocent of harm to others.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mindfulness is the catchword these days. Merely it's, indeed, just discharging watchful thoughtfulness to your thoughts, your body, and whatever's around your surroundings. It gives young minds methods and practices for comforting themselves when their emotions feel dejected. Mindfulness is an unpretentious and potent tool to bland mental well-being and make peace with anxiety. Youngsters can deal better, often better than adults. Therefore, the objectives of Buddhist education remained to create full development of not only the adult man, the realisation of his character, etching of social obligation, upgrade of social well-being, increase the drive of national ethnicity and harmonisation of secular and religious rudiments of establishments. Students became judicious, humanist, logical, and free from superstitions. *Therefore*, the ultimate objective of mindfulness is to demonstrate that young minds have cognizance of their emotions and then to acquire how to device them well.. The principal goal of Buddhist Education is to be wide open and accessible to the societies and people of all walks of life by bringing an enormous transformation of an imprudent to wise, beast to pastor. By elucidating in Buddhist structure, the first objective of education is to support persons to realize menace and jeopardy within themselves, accepting them as they genuinely are, and endeavours towards the amputation of these mistakes. If we centre Buddhist education on the Teacher, it is said: "He existed as the guardian of his pupils and was answerable for their health and studies, morals and their spiritual progress. This includes his material, mental, moral and intellectual development."

The primary objective of Buddhist practise is to accomplish self-determination and freedom from suffering by far sighting the outer world and refrain on self from self-gratification as it is by abandoning the one-sided and misinforming projection that is twisted by our considerations. Buddhist Education intends to create an able man, a sage, intellectual, moral, non-violent & secular man. Students must be unrestricted from ravenousness, hankering, and ignorance. A very imperative resource to scope the goal is to abstain from corroding and rancorous activities as this action's basis damage to others. Additionally, according to Buddhist teachings, those who clench the persistence of freedom act in a demonstrative and sympathetic approach towards others, helping these others in turn to be more happy and free. Ethical action is consequently and accordingly both an important part of the Buddhist path and an important aspect of the results said to flow from that path.

⁴² M. I. 62.

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MINDFULNESS OF ART EDUCATION FROM BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES: A PATHWAY TO FOSTERING HOLISTIC YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW ERA

PhD. Le Thi Kieu Van*

Abstract:

Art education has long been recognized for its potential to enhance adolescents' creativity, self-expression, and cultural awareness. In recent years, mindfulness, conceptualized as the intentional, non-judgmental awareness of the present moment, has gained traction as a versatile approach to fostering social-emotional learning and overall well-being. This paper examines how Buddhist-derived mindfulness principles can be incorporated into art education to foster emotional resilience, moral discernment, and creative development among contemporary youth. Drawing upon expanded statistical data, policy frameworks (e.g., UNESCO, WHO), and in-depth case studies from multiple cultural contexts, the paper underscores the pivotal role of mindfulness-based art programs in shaping students' ethical values, identity formation, and empathetic interactions. By weaving Buddhist ethical dimensions such as Right Mindfulness, Non-Attachment, and Compassion into the creative process, young learners not only enhance their artistic skills but also strengthen their sense of belonging and purpose. Furthermore, the paper outlines best practices in curriculum design, teacher training, policy advocacy, and strategies to overcome cultural, resource, and assessment challenges. The discussion culminates in a call for educators, policymakers, and researchers to embody a holistic, human-centered approach to nurturing a generation that is at once imaginative, empathetic, and ethically grounded, capable of navigating the complexities of the 21st century with creativity and compassion.

Keywords: *art education, mindfulness, Buddhist principles, self-expression, educational policy, youth development, social-emotional learning, holistic education, compassion*

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

Calls for holistic development increasingly characterize the contemporary educational landscape. Schools worldwide are expected to cultivate academic competence and emotional intelligence, moral discernment, and a sense of civic responsibility in students.¹ Art education, historically valued for nurturing creativity and self-expression, has taken on a broader role, engaging students with a wide range of cultural, ethical, and interpersonal questions². Parallel to these shifts, mindfulness, often described as a skill for focused, present-moment awareness, has emerged as a crucial strategy to address growing concerns about student stress, anxiety, and disengagement³.

Within these converging trends, Buddhist philosophy offers a unique perspective on mindfulness as a way of being, deeply interwoven with values such as compassion, non-attachment, and interconnectedness⁴. Integrating these principles into art education can transform learning spaces from mere sites of skill acquisition to environments of creative exploration, moral growth, and empathetic community building. This paper, therefore, investigates how Buddhist-inspired mindfulness can enrich art education, thereby contributing to the holistic well-being and ethical development of contemporary youth. Although Buddhist philosophy has a rich legacy in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, structured applications within art education are only beginning to emerge as a formalized practice making this exploration particularly timely.

1.2. Significance and aims

This study contributes to the literature on art education, contemplative pedagogy, and social-emotional learning (SEL) by highlighting how integrative mindfulness-based frameworks can shape educational policies and classroom practices. In doing so, it aims to:

- (i) Articulate Core Buddhist Principles focusing on Right Mindfulness, Non-Attachment, and Compassion and their immediate relevance to art-making and visual expression;
- (ii) Present expanded empirical evidence and policy reviews, demonstrating the growing uptake and impact of mindfulness-based interventions on student well-being, academic engagement, and moral awareness;
- (iii) Provide detailed case studies and implementation strategies that

¹ World Economic Forum (2016): https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_New_Vision_for_Education.pdf.

² Eisner E.W. (2002). *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Yale University Press, ISBN: 0-300-09523-6, 258 pages.

³ Kabat-Zinn, J. Hachette (2013). Full Catastrophe Living, Revised Edition: *How to Cope with Stress, Pain and Illness Using Mindfulness Meditation*; p. xli., UK.

⁴ Kuyken et al., (2013). Effectiveness of the Mindfulness in Schools Programme: non-randomised controlled feasibility study, *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, pp. 126–131. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.113.126649.

map out both theoretical and practical dimensions, reinforcing the feasibility of mindfulness-infused art curricula in diverse contexts including Vietnam;

(iv) Emphasize the humanizing dimension of education, with real-life anecdotes illustrating how contemplative artistic experiences can bolster students' sense of identity, purpose, and cultural belonging.

Ultimately, the paper aims to encourage policymakers, educators, and scholars, especially in places like Vietnam, where Buddhist heritage profoundly shapes cultural values to explore how a Buddhist-informed approach to mindfulness can enhance the creative and ethical horizon of art education worldwide.

1.3. Scope and structure

While this investigation centers on Buddhist moral and philosophical concepts, it does not advocate religious indoctrination. Instead, it posits that the universal aspects of mindfulness, heightened attention, compassion, and ethical reflection, can be adapted to secular contexts, resonating with global educational objectives related to mental health, cultural literacy, and SEL. The paper is arranged into ten sections:

- (i) Section 2 surveys relevant literature on mindfulness, Buddhist perspectives, and art education.
- (ii) Section 3 clarifies the methodology, including research design, data sources, and analytical approaches.
- (iii) Section 4 explores the integration of specific Buddhist concepts into art education, presenting examples and theoretical arguments.
- (iv) Section 5 overviews global policy developments, referencing UNESCO, WHO, and national guidelines.
- (v) Section 6 offers a rich, comparative look at case studies from the USA, Thailand, South Africa, and Vietnam.
- (vi) Section 7 outlines best practices in curriculum development, teacher training, and inclusive approaches.
- (vii) Sections 8 and 9 address challenges (cultural, ethical, and resource-related) and highlight the humanizing potential of mindfulness-infused art education.
- (viii) Section 10 concludes with key findings, policy/practice implications, and recommendations for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptualizing mindfulness in education

The concept of mindfulness dates back over two millennia, finding its roots in Buddhist traditions. However, in the West and in many secular institutions worldwide, it has been reinterpreted primarily as a set of techniques for stress reduction, focus, and emotional regulation⁵. Kabat-Zinn's pioneering

⁵ Kabat-Zinn (1979). What is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction? [Accessed November

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in the late 1970s introduced mindfulness to clinical populations, subsequently influencing educational environments keen on adopting methods to mitigate student stress and burnout (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007)⁶.

Research on mindfulness in education has grown exponentially. A notable meta-analysis (Mindful Education Initiative, 2022) covering 160 studies emphasizes improvements in student well-being, academic motivation, and empathic understanding⁷. Moreover, social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks by organizations like the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) increasingly incorporate mindfulness-based competencies (CASEL, 2021). Yet, most secular models rarely delve into the ethical and spiritual underpinnings found in Buddhism, often focusing on attention-training divorced from moral or philosophical contexts (Analayo, 2003)⁸.

2.2. Buddhist perspectives on mindfulness

In Buddhism, mindfulness (Pali: *sati*) is not simply an attentional skill but a gateway to ethical transformation and wisdom (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2011)⁹. This perspective posits that being fully present allows individuals to observe internal phenomena, thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations with clarity and non-judgment, thus fostering compassion and moral responsibility (Thera, 1962)¹⁰. Key concepts intimately linked to mindfulness include:

- (i) Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) involves objectively observing thoughts and actions, which in an educational context translates to heightened focus and self-awareness.
- (ii) Non-Attachment (*Upekkhā*): Maintains equanimity in the face of pleasure, pain, success, or failure (Gethin, 1998)¹¹.
- (iii) Compassion (*Mettā/Karuṇā*): Cultivates empathy and benevolence toward oneself and others (Salzberg, 1995)¹².

27, 2010]. at <http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com/whatMBSR.php>.

⁶ Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18 (4), 211-237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10478400701598298>.

⁷ Sheinman N. & Russo-Netzer P. (2021). Mindfulness in Education: Insights Towards an Integrative Paradigm, *The Palgrave Handbook of Positive Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 609 - 643.

⁸ Analayo B. (2003). *Satipaṭṭhāna - The Direct Path to Realization*. Windhorse Publications, pp. 117 - 179.

⁹ Bodhi B. (2011). What does mindfulness really mean? A canonical perspective, *Contemporary Buddhism An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Volume 12, 2011 - Issue 1, pp. 19 - 39.

¹⁰ Thera N. (1962). *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness*. Buddhist Publication Society, pp. 19 - 63.

¹¹ Gethin R. (1998). *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford University Press, pp. 133 - 201.

¹² Salzberg, S. (1995). *Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 193 pages.

While these principles derive from Buddhist teachings, they hold universal value and can be embraced by students of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Scholars like Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Zen Master (1975), have long advocated for the application of mindfulness in everyday activities, including education, as a means to foster peace, understanding, and social harmony¹³.

2.3. Art education: Historical and contemporary views

Traditionally, art education has been viewed as a vehicle for aesthetic development and creative skill-building. However, theorists such as John Dewey (1934) highlighted the integrative power of artistic experiences to connect emotion, intellect, and community engagement. Elliot Eisner (2002) further articulated how art education fosters critical thinking, imagination, and cultural awareness, encouraging students to perceive the world in nuanced, multifaceted ways.

Contemporary discourses place art education at the nexus of identity formation, emotional intelligence, and community-building (Huss, 2015). For instance, educators increasingly see the arts as therapeutic outlets for students facing psychological stress, social alienation, or cultural marginalization. Emerging frameworks highlight how art-making, whether through painting, sculpting, dance, or digital media, can serve as a dynamic platform for self-expression and social commentary (Kraehe & Brown, 2019). Yet, many art curricula still lack intentional contemplative strategies that systematically cultivate mindfulness and moral reflection (Eisner, 2002).

2.4. Theoretical and empirical foundations of mindfulness-based art education

Combining mindfulness and art education is rooted in a growing body of empirical research affirming positive outcomes in focus, emotional regulation, and social well-being. Langer (1989) posits that mindful engagement in creative endeavors expands cognitive flexibility, and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) famously documented the phenomenon of “flow,” wherein an intense concentration merges with intrinsic motivation, often during artistic tasks. When framed in a Buddhist ethical context, such mindful “flow” can be directed toward cultivating empathy, appreciating impermanence, and releasing attachment to rigid standards of success or external validation (Analayo, 2003).

In parallel, studies on trauma-informed art therapy and mindfulness-based interventions suggest synergistic effects in promoting healing and resilience (Huss, 2015). This synergy is particularly critical for adolescents who might be grappling with developmental stress, identity conflicts, or academic pressures. Mindful art programs help young learners slow down, observe their emotional landscapes, and express these inner experiences creatively without the fear of judgment (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). In short, the theoretical and empirical underpinnings set the stage for an intentional fusion of mindfulness

¹³ Nhat Hanh T. (1975). *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*, Beacon Press, Massachusetts 02108-2892, pp. 11 - 44.

and art education as a holistic pedagogical practice a fusion also ripe for development in Vietnamese educational settings, where Buddhist traditions can offer invaluable cultural resonance.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This paper employs a mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), integrating:

- (i) Literature analysis: Reviewing canonical Buddhist texts (e.g., Pali Canon, Thich Nhat Hanh's works), contemporary mindfulness literature, and scholarship on art education.
- (ii) Policy analysis: Examining international documents (UNESCO Arts Education Roadmap, WHO guidelines on mental health) and national curricula (USA, Thailand, South Korea, Vietnam) to map evolving policy stances toward mindful art education.
- (iii) Case Study Evaluations: Presenting four in-depth case studies in different socio-cultural contexts California (USA), Bangkok (Thailand), Johannesburg (South Africa), and Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam).
- (iv) Supplementary Quantitative Data: Drawing on large-scale teacher surveys and meta-analyses (Mindful Education Initiative, 2022) to contextualize global adoption rates and perceived benefits.

3.2. Data sources and collection methods

- (i) Peer-Reviewed Journals and Books: Key databases (Scopus, Web of Science) were searched using keywords (e.g., "mindfulness," "Buddhist principles," "art education," "social-emotional learning," "Vietnam");
- (ii) Policy Documents: Publicly accessible reports from UNESCO, WHO, and national ministries on education and adolescent mental health, including emerging Vietnamese educational directives.
- (iii) Case Studies: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with educators, program coordinators, and students from each site. Additionally, program records, curricula, and observational notes provided qualitative insights.

3.3. Analytical framework

A thematic content analysis was used to interpret qualitative data from interviews and textual sources. Themes were coded around pedagogical design, cultural adaptability, moral and ethical outcomes, and student well-being. Statistical data from teacher surveys (N = 2,750) offered descriptive insights into the frequency of mindfulness-based activities in art classrooms, perceived benefits, and barriers.

3.4. Ethical considerations and limitations

Participants' confidentiality and voluntary consent were prioritized. Potential researcher bias, especially regarding Buddhist-informed interpretations, was mitigated through triangulation (i.e., comparing multiple

data sources and perspectives). Nonetheless, the case study method limits generalizability. While the findings illuminate various cultural contexts, further large-scale studies could provide more definitive, comparative data on the long-term impacts of mindfulness-infused art education, particularly in Vietnam, where systematic data is still emerging.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: INTEGRATING BUDDHIST MINDFULNESS WITH ART EDUCATION

This section elucidates how core Buddhist principles of Right Mindfulness, Non-Attachment, and Compassion function within art education, supplemented by additional ideas relevant to Vietnamese contexts, such as impermanence (*vô thường*) and interbeing (Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of mutual existence).

4.1. Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) in artistic practice

Right Mindfulness, in Buddhism, underscores a balanced attentional stance that is both focused and non-judgmental (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2011). This translates to guiding learners to observe their thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations as they engage with artistic media in the art classroom. Consider painting exercise:

- (i) Sensory Awareness: Students might begin by centering on the texture of the paint, the smell of the materials, or the sensation of the brush pressing against the paper.
- (ii) Emotional Check-ins: A short mindful breathing session before painting invites students to notice internal states excitement, frustration, and curiosity without labeling them as "good" or "bad."
- (iii) Open-ended Exploration: Encouraging self-expression free from strict rubrics fosters a climate of creative authenticity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

From an ethical standpoint, Right Mindfulness can cultivate interpersonal awareness: as students become more attuned to their own creative processes, they also become more empathetic and respectful of their peers' artistic journeys. Research suggests that mindful attention in group art projects leads to increased mutual support and reduced classroom conflicts (Langer, 1989).

4.2. Non-attachment (*upekkhā*) and creative autonomy

Art education often confronts learners with perfectionistic tendencies, fear of failure, and the pressure to conform to aesthetic standards. Non-attachment, or *Upekkhā*, encourages students to remain equanimous amid praise or criticism, focusing instead on the intrinsic satisfaction of the creative process (Gethin, 1998). In practical terms:

- (i) Process over product: Teachers might assign open-ended projects where the final piece is less critical than a reflective narrative documenting the student's emotional states, creative decisions, and moments of insight (Eisner, 2002).
- (ii) Failure as growth: When students approach a "mistake" in their artwork with curiosity rather than self-reproach, they unlock fresh

perspectives and innovative solutions (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007).

(iii) Authentic Self-Expression: Detaching from external validation can promote a more genuine voice, as students are less inhibited by peer comparison or societal norms (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In Vietnam, where academic success is often tightly linked to societal expectations, emphasizing non-attachment in the arts can help alleviate some of the stress tied to performance metrics, thereby enhancing students' willingness to experiment and innovate.

4.3 Compassion (*mettā*) and social cohesion in classroom settings

Compassion, comprising loving-kindness (*mettā*) and empathy (*karuṇā*), underscores a deep care for oneself and others (Salzberg, 1995). In art education, compassion-driven activities might include:

- (i) Collaborative Projects: Students create communal murals or group installations, learning to respect each other's contributions and limitations.
- (ii) Peer Support Circles: After completing an artwork, participants gather in circles to constructively share feedback and celebrate each other's efforts.
- (iii) Community Outreach: Mindful art programs may invite students to engage in service, such as painting murals in local hospitals or community centers, reinforcing the altruistic dimension of creativity (Nhat Hanh, 1992).

This communal ethos resonates strongly in Vietnamese culture, which traditionally values collective harmony and social responsibility. By embedding compassion into art curricula, schools can deepen these cultural values while also nurturing creativity and emotional well-being.

4.4. Additional Buddhist tenets relevant to art education

While Right Mindfulness, Non-Attachment, and Compassion form the core triad, other Buddhist concepts also hold pedagogical resonance:

Right Effort (*Sammā vāyāma*): Encouraging persistence and diligence in creative tasks without slipping into over-striving or self-punishment.

Interdependence (*Pratītyasamutpāda*) or Thich Nhat Hanh's Interbeing: Emphasizing how all phenomena are mutually connected can inspire community-based art and ecological awareness especially relevant in Vietnam's ongoing environmental sustainability efforts.

Impermanence (*Anicca*): Recognizing that artistic outcomes and creative moods are ever-changing. Such insight can liberate students from the fear of "finishing" a project imperfectly, fostering ongoing reflection and creative flexibility (Wallace, 2006).

V. POLICY AND GLOBAL TRENDS

5.1. Statistical overview and uptake of mindfulness-based interventions

Recent data from the Mindful Education Initiative (2022) indicates that

approximately 30% of middle and high schools in North America and parts of Europe integrate mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) to address issues such as student anxiety, conflict resolution, and low academic engagement. A global teacher survey (N = 2,750) across 15 countries reveals:

- (i) 62% of educators incorporate mindfulness techniques weekly (breath awareness, guided visualization);
- (ii) 78% notice improvements in creativity, emotional regulation, and classroom cohesion;
- (iii) 45% express interest in weaving mindfulness into art and music programs, spotlighting the potential synergy between contemplative practice and aesthetic learning.

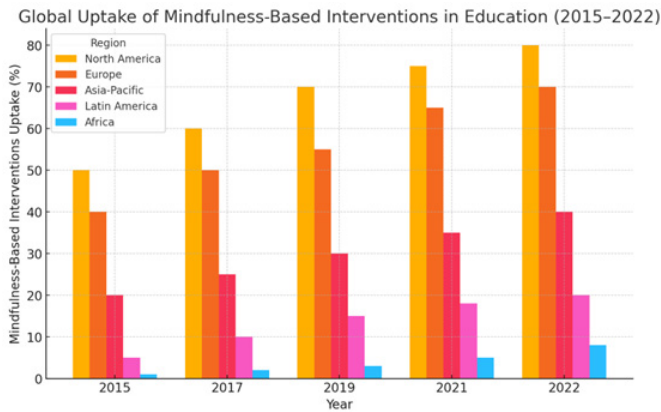


Figure 1: illustrates global uptake of mindfulness-based interventions in education by region (2015-2022)

In Asia, particularly in Thailand, South Korea, and Vietnam, interest in mindful art education has grown, reflecting local Buddhist traditions and an increasing need to address mental health challenges among young people. However, data from Vietnam, while promising, remains less systematized, highlighting the need for more targeted research.

5.2. Policy developments and regulatory frameworks

UNESCO's Arts Education Roadmap (updated 2021) emphasizes holistic well-being and psychosocial support through the arts, identifying mindfulness as a core strategy to heighten empathy and intercultural dialogue. The WHO Guidelines on Adolescent Mental Health (2020) similarly recommend contemplative and arts-based interventions as part of comprehensive mental health promotive strategies.

At the national level, examples include:

- (i) United States: SEL components increasingly integrated at district and state levels, with mindfulness fulfilling stress-reduction and emotional regulation objectives (CASEL, 2021).
- (ii) South Korea: The Ministry of Education (2022) promotes "mindful

arts” within moral education syllabi, emphasizing harmony, compassion, and emotional balance.

(iii) Thailand: Policies encourage Buddhist moral integration with creative arts, aligning with a cultural emphasis on ethical and spiritual dimensions of learning (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2021).

(iv) Vietnam: While no formal policy mandates the integration of mindfulness into art curricula, various educational institutions and NGOs have begun pilot programs to incorporate Buddhist-informed mindfulness, reflecting the legacy of Thich Nhat Hanh and other Vietnamese Zen traditions. Informal discussions within the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) suggest a growing openness to social-emotional learning initiatives.

These policy shifts indicate a growing consensus that mindfulness-based approaches and arts education are interdisciplinary allies, shaping not only cognitive but also moral and social dimensions of youth development.

5.3. Synergy with Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Global Educational Goals

Social-emotional learning frameworks highlight self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2021). Mindful art education, emphasizing emotional expression, ethical reflection, and community engagement, synergizes well with these five core SEL competencies. Students who practice mindful art-making often show heightened:

- (i) Self-awareness: They develop clarity about their emotional states and personal narratives.
- (ii) Social awareness: Collaborative art fosters empathy and intercultural sensitivity.
- (iii) Responsible decision-making: Ethical dialogues surrounding creative content enhance moral discernment.

Such integrative approaches resonate with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which stresses inclusive and equitable education promoting lifelong learning and well-being (United Nations, 2015). By bridging contemplative practice with artistic creativity, policymakers, and educators can contribute to a more empathetic and culturally responsive global citizenry, including Vietnam, where educational transformations increasingly recognize mental well-being and cultural identity as core priorities.

VI. EXPANDED CASE STUDIES

To illustrate the practical implications, this section provides expanded narratives of four mindfulness-infused art programs, each embedded within unique cultural and socio-economic contexts: the United States, Thailand, South Africa, and Vietnam.

6.1. Case study a: “compassionate creativity” in California, USA

6.1.1. Program overview

“Compassionate Creativity” began as a pilot initiative at a public middle school in Los Angeles, aiming to serve a student population from underserved communities experiencing heightened stress and limited access to enrichment programs. This region faces significant socio-economic challenges, including underfunded arts education, making integrating mindfulness practices particularly urgent.

6.1.2. Implementation strategies

Weekly Sessions (45 minutes each)

- Mindful Breathing
- Visualization Exercises
- Free-Form Painting

Reflective Journals to document challenges, breakthroughs, and emotional shifts.

6.1.3. Outcomes and data

- 18% reduction in student-reported anxiety.
- 12% improvement in classroom participation.
- Qualitative interviews indicated increased self-awareness and empathy among peers.

6.1.4. Human stories

Students like DeShawn and Maria found emotional relief and self-expression through mindful art exercises, demonstrating how contemplative approaches to creativity can offer a safe haven in contexts of socio-economic adversity.

6.2. Case Study B: “Lotus Art Circle” in Bangkok, Thailand

6.2.1. Context and rationale

A pilot program in a Buddhist temple school, bridging spiritual mindfulness with artistic expression to cultivate moral and spiritual growth.

6.2.2. Daily Implementation

- Morning Meditation (10 minutes)
- Art Assignments (mandala creation, communal mural painting)
- Integration with Buddhist Ethics (talks by temple monks)

6.2.3. Outcomes and Observations

- Enhanced empathy and peer cooperation.
- Students reported stronger spiritual connection and cultural pride.

6.2.4. Personal Anecdotes

Stories of Ploy’s grief processing and Niran’s deepened respect for Thai heritage highlight how artistic rituals informed by Buddhist values can nurture emotional healing and social cohesion.

6.3. Case Study C: “Ubuntu Mindful Art” in Johannesburg, South Africa

6.3.1. Socio-economic background

An NGO-led project in a township school, addressing issues of limited resources, high unemployment, and community tensions.

6.3.2. Program details

- Weekly Sessions with guided mindfulness and Afrocentric art forms (beadwork, mural creation).
- Reflection Circles to share personal stories and build communal support.
- Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals for traumatized students.

6.3.3. Observed Impact

- 91% of participants felt better equipped to cope with crises.
- Communal art-making fostered social cohesion and local pride.

6.3.4. Illustrative Vignettes

Ayanda and Mandla’s experiences reflect the healing potential of mindful art, reinforcing cultural identity and instilling a sense of collective empowerment.

6.4. Case study D: “Zen Brushstrokes” in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

6.4.1. Vietnamese context and rationale

Vietnam’s educational system is currently undergoing significant reforms to cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and life skills. Although deeply influenced by Confucian and Buddhist traditions, mainstream classrooms often prioritize rote learning over contemplative or expressive practices. “Zen Brushstrokes” originated in Ho Chi Minh City as a collaboration among a local university’s art faculty, a Zen Buddhist organization inspired by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, and a private secondary school interested in innovative pedagogy.

6.4.2. Program structure

Bi-weekly workshops (60 minutes each)

- Seated Mindfulness: A short 5 – 10 minute session of breath-focused meditation or a guided awareness of body posture (in some sessions, reciting a line from Thich Nhat Hanh’s works, such as “Breathing in, I calm my body and mind...”);
- Calligraphy and Ink Painting: Drawing on Vietnamese Zen aesthetics, the teacher introduces single-stroke bamboo brush techniques, emphasizing flow, presence, and impermanence;
- Poetry Reflection: Students reflect on or create short verses (inspired by Vietnamese poetry traditions), connecting emotional states to visual motifs;
- Group Exhibitions: At the end of each quarter, students collectively curate an exhibit open to families and community members, fostering

dialogue on the importance of inner awareness and cultural heritage in the creative process.

6.4.3. Implementation highlights

- **Cultural Authenticity:** Instructors incorporate local proverbs, Vietnamese folk tales, and references to Zen traditions relevant to Vietnam's historical narrative.
- **Community Engagement:** Periodically, the group visits a nearby pagoda, painting traditional ornaments or participating in charitable art auctions, the proceeds of which support disadvantaged children.

6.4.4. Measured and observed outcomes

- **Student Engagement:** Informal surveys showed a marked increase in enthusiasm for art classes, with over 80% reporting they found the sessions “enjoyable and calming.”
- **Emotional Regulation and Self-Confidence:** Teachers noted fewer conflicts among students who practiced mindful calligraphy; they appeared more patient and open to constructive feedback.
- **Cultural Appreciation:** Learners expressed renewed interest in Vietnamese heritage, especially Zen philosophy, and found a sense of pride in combining traditional brush painting with mindful awareness.

6.4.5. Anecdotal reflections

- Lan, a 10th grader who struggled with anxiety around high-stakes exams, shared that focusing on the “rhythm of the brush” helped her calm racing thoughts and regain confidence in other subjects.
- Minh, previously uninterested in art, became fascinated by the interplay between Vietnamese poems and ink painting, feeling that “these lines carry my heart onto paper.” He described the experience as “like practicing meditation without having to sit still,” underlining how creativity can be an active form of mindfulness.

Overall, “Zen Brushstrokes” exemplifies how a Buddhist-informed, mindful art program can thrive in Vietnam, resonating with local customs and cultural heritage while aligning with the country’s evolving educational priorities. The initiative’s success has prompted other schools in Ho Chi Minh City and neighboring provinces to consider piloting similar programs or workshops, reflecting a grassroots momentum for integrating mindfulness and arts in Vietnamese education.

6.5. Additional reflections and comparative insights

Examining these four case studies spanning the USA, Thailand, South Africa, and Vietnam reveals how mindfulness-infused art education adapts to diverse cultural frameworks:

- (i) **Holistic Benefits:** Across contexts, students reported improved emotional regulation, enhanced creativity, and a greater sense of belonging.

(ii) **Buddhist Mindfulness Principles:** Emphasizing compassion, non-attachment, and present-moment awareness resonates widely when introduced with cultural sensitivity.

(iii) **Inclusivity and Equity:** Programs effectively serve students in underserved or marginalized areas by offering a safe and expressive outlet for stress and trauma.

(iv) **Community and Cultural Heritage:** This is especially evident in Thailand and Vietnam, where Buddhist ethics and local art traditions reinforce collective identity and spiritual grounding.

As Vietnam continues modernizing its educational landscape, mindful art programs demonstrate the potential to enrich cultural identity, reduce academic stress, and develop social-emotional competencies relevant to the nation's vision for global integration.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES

7.1. Curriculum design

Short Mindfulness Exercises (3 – 5 minutes) integrated at the start of each art class can shift the classroom atmosphere from hurried to calm. Techniques might include:

(i) **Breath Counting:** Students count each inhalation up to five, then repeat, gradually extending the pause between breaths.

(ii) **Body Scan:** A quick mental check-in, guiding students to notice tension or relaxation in different muscle groups, correlating with expressive lines or shapes in their art.

Process-Focused Assignments: Encourage students to maintain creative journals, capturing not just sketches but also emotional reflections and notes about inspirations, frustrations, and personal growth.

7.2. Teacher training and professional development

Teachers serving as facilitators require foundational skills in mindfulness practices and in adapting Buddhist-informed principles for secular or interfaith classroom environments. Recommended steps include:

(i) **Professional Workshops:** Focused on basic mindfulness practices, Buddhist ethics (i.e., empathy, non-harm), and inclusive pedagogical methods.

(ii) **Peer Collaboration:** Art educators can pair with school psychologists or mindfulness coaches to design integrative lesson plans, ensuring both creative and emotional objectives are met (Davidson & Kaszniak, 2015).

(iii) **Ongoing Mentoring:** Intra-departmental or cross-disciplinary “mindful teaching circles” provide a forum for educators to share strategies, troubleshoot challenges, and reflect on their own journeys with mindfulness.

In Vietnam, partnering with local temples or Zen practitioners familiar

with Thich Nhat Hanh's works can offer culturally anchored guidance and a reservoir of traditional insights.

7.3. Creating inclusive, culturally sensitive frameworks

While Buddhist ethics undergird many mindfulness approaches, teachers should ensure cultural and religious inclusivity by:

- (i) Presenting mindfulness as a universal skill set (e.g., for focus, relaxation, empathy) rather than a strictly religious practice.
- (ii) Adapting exercises or references to local traditions, such as using Vietnamese proverbs or folk imagery in art projects.
- (iii) Emphasizing values such as compassion, tolerance, and interconnectedness recognized by numerous faiths and humanistic traditions to foster respect for diverse backgrounds (Nhat Hanh, 1975).

7.4. Assessment and evaluation approaches

Conventional grading may not fully capture the holistic changes in creativity, emotional growth, and ethical awareness. Alternative assessment includes:

- (i) Portfolios: Collecting sketches, reflective writings, and photo documentation of works-in-progress, measuring growth over time (Eisner, 2002).
- (ii) Self-Assessment and Peer Reviews: Inviting students to articulate personal goals (e.g., overcoming perfectionism) and offer constructive feedback in ways that reflect mindful listening.
- (iii) Observational Rubrics: Tracking behaviors like persistence, collaboration, empathy, or stress management, gleaned from teacher and peer observations.

For Vietnamese schools, pilot studies or "action research" projects can help refine local metrics, capturing subtle shifts in cultural pride, spiritual exploration, and resilience.

VIII. CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. Cultural adaptation and inclusivity

Though many educators endorse mindfulness, certain communities may misinterpret its Buddhist roots as a form of proselytization. In Vietnam, a predominantly Buddhist yet constitutionally secular society, some educators worry about conflating religious instruction with academic learning. To navigate this:

- (i) Frame mindfulness in secular, humanistic terms.
- (ii) Provide opt-out provisions or alternative reflective exercises (e.g., silent reading, journaling) for students or families uncomfortable with the practice.
- (iii) Emphasize alignment with universal ethical principles like kindness, respect, and self-awareness.

8.2. Resource allocation and funding

Art supplies, teacher training, and specialized facilitators can strain budgets. Potential solutions include:

- (i) Community Partnerships: Engage local artists, Buddhist organizations, philanthropic groups, and mental health agencies to co-sponsor or donate materials and expertise (World Economic Forum, 2016).
- (ii) Digital Resources: Free or low-cost mindfulness apps, online tutorials, and virtual art platforms can supplement face-to-face instruction.
- (iii) Grant Applications: Advocate for the integration of mindful art education under SEL, mental health, or innovation grants, highlighting evidence-based outcomes (CASEL, 2021).

In Vietnam, new government initiatives focusing on innovation in education and youth mental health may offer pathways to secure public or private funding.

8.3. Ethical implications and secular vs. religious contexts

Buddhist mindfulness underscores ethical commitments that some schools may find challenging to integrate without crossing boundaries between church and state, particularly in countries with strict secular policies (Analayo, 2003). Best practices include:

- (i) Presenting mindfulness as voluntary and skills-based, focusing on mental health and emotional well-being.
- (ii) Collaborating with interfaith or secular mindfulness experts to create materials that align with local educational guidelines.
- (iii) Maintaining transparency with stakeholders (parents, administrators, community members) about program objectives and expected outcomes.

IX. TOWARD A HUMAN-CENTERED EDUCATION

9.1. Humanizing the learning experience

A “humanized” approach to mindful art education underscores individual student narratives, personal transformations, and empathetic teacher-student relationships. By contextualizing creative tasks within real-life experiences, learners find tangible meaning in both the artistic and mindful dimensions. For example: (i) Storytelling: Incorporate personal testimonies of growth or challenge, allowing students to see how mindfulness fosters resilience in peers or role models; (ii) Listening Circles: Encourage open dialogue about emotional struggles, dreams, and cultural identities, thereby celebrating diversity and affirming shared humanity (Nhat Hanh, 1992).

In Vietnam, where the tradition of collective storytelling and ancestral remembrance is strong, mindful art can offer powerful intergenerational connections, enabling young people to link their creative expression to familial and cultural legacies.

9.2 Fostering a sense of belonging and collective well-being

From a Buddhist viewpoint, interconnection (*Pratītyasamutpāda*) suggests that individual flourishing is inseparable from collective well-being. In mindful art programs, a sense of belonging arises through:

- (i) Cooperative creativity: Students working on a large canvas or sculpture develop group identity, each contribution reinforcing a shared vision.
- (ii) Ethical reflections: Discussing how personal acts even artistic ones impact others fosters moral accountability and civic consciousness.
- (iii) Community engagement: Initiatives like painting public murals in marginalized neighborhoods link students with local social issues, bridging school-based learning and community development.

For Vietnamese schools, bridging mindfulness, art, and communal welfare aligns with cultural values around collective harmony and mutual support, reinforcing students' sense of agency and social responsibility.

X. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Summary of Key Findings

This paper has detailed how Buddhist-informed mindfulness, woven into art education, can simultaneously bolster creative expression, emotional resilience, and ethical awareness among youth:

- (i) Core Buddhist Concepts: Right Mindfulness, Non-Attachment, and Compassion resonate across diverse educational settings, offering students a holistic toolkit for navigating creative and personal challenges;
- (ii) Empirical Evidence and Policy Trends suggest that mindfulness-based interventions in art education substantially improve student engagement, stress reduction, and social harmony;
- (iii) Case Studies from the USA, Thailand, South Africa, and Vietnam illustrate both cultural adaptability and universal relevance. In the Vietnamese context, mindful calligraphy and Zen-inspired projects demonstrate how local traditions can ground contemplative pedagogy in a culturally resonant framework;
- (iv) Best Practices in curriculum design, teacher training, and inclusive assessment underscore the importance of process-oriented creative tasks, professional development, and community partnerships.

Policy and Practical Implications

- (i) Education Policy: Decision-makers – especially within Vietnam's evolving educational landscape – may consider formalizing mindful art education within broader SEL frameworks, providing resources for teacher training and curricular integration.
- (ii) School Administrations: Administrators can pilot mindful art programs and community outreach initiatives, measuring not just academic gains but also emotional well-being and ethical maturity

among students.

(iii) Teacher Capacity Building: Institutions of teacher education can embed mindfulness modules in art pedagogy courses, preparing future educators to navigate culturally sensitive and ethically rich classroom experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

While promising, the field requires deeper investigations:

(i) Longitudinal Studies: Tracking cohorts over multiple years to discern long-term impacts of mindfulness-based art education on social skills, academic success, and moral development;

(ii) Comparative Cross-Cultural Analyses: Exploring how local beliefs, traditions, and art forms modulate the effectiveness of Buddhist-informed mindfulness in different regions, including more sites in Vietnam;

(iii) Neuroscientific Approaches: Employing neuroimaging or psychophysiological methods to understand how mindful creativity shapes cognitive and emotional processes;

(iv) Scalability and Funding Models: Examining ways to sustain programs in low-resource settings, analyzing cost-benefit outcomes, and identifying avenues for philanthropic or governmental support.

In conclusion, a Buddhist-inspired, mindful approach to art education emerges as a vital, human-centered strategy to equip today's youth across diverse cultural landscapes, especially in Vietnam, with the creative, emotional, and ethical resources necessary for thriving in an ever-changing world. As educators and policymakers increasingly recognize the synergy between mindfulness and the arts, the vision of a generation that is both imaginative and morally grounded becomes not merely an aspiration but a tangible reality.

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MINDFULNESS PRACTICE IN BUDDHIST SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract:

This paper explores the role of mindfulness in education in Indonesia and its contribution to fostering compassion and a sustainable future. Grounded in the Buddhist teachings of the *Satipatthana Sutta*, mindfulness practices in schools focus on four foundations: observation of the body, feelings, thoughts, and mental objects. The practice of meditation implemented in schools has various names, including mindfulness, morning meditation, silent sitting, and morning reflection. The research examines how these practices transform student behaviors and promote environmentally and socially responsible actions. Case studies from schools in Indonesia demonstrate how mindfulness encourages sustainability efforts, such as using reusable cutlery, waste separation, and participation in free vaccination programs. Furthermore, mindfulness enhances students' learning outcomes and emotional regulation, fostering a compassionate school environment. The findings suggest that mindfulness practice develops a deep understanding of *interbeing* – the interconnectedness of all life – leading to greater environmental stewardship and social harmony. By integrating mindfulness into education, students gain the awareness and responsibility necessary to contribute to a more compassionate and sustainable future. All the effort from mindful education can hopefully reduce the state-based armed conflict and extreme weather events, which are the two most urgent material threats in 2025.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, education, Indonesia, compassion, sustainability, interbeing, Buddhist teachings.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In this year's World Economic Forum Global Risks Report, based on the annual Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS), the answer is particularly sobering. "Bleak" is the umbrella adjective describing the overall state of things

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in its current, 2-year and 10-year outlook prediction ranges.”¹ State-based armed conflict and extreme weather events are the top 2 of the top 10 risks chosen by respondents as the most urgent material threats in 2025. State-based armed conflict received 23% of the overall geopolitical risk category. Extreme weather events account for 14% of the environmental risk category.² The two highest risks should be minimized so that they do not develop and have a negative impact on the global community. Efforts have been made by the United Nations to reduce the impact of these two risks. The United Nations has launched 17 goals for a sustainable future. The 17 goals include: no poverty, no hunger, healthy and prosperous lives, quality education, gender equality, clean water and proper sanitation, clean and affordable energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and settlements, responsible consumption and production, tackling climate change, marine ecosystems, terrestrial ecosystems, peace, justice and resilient institutions, and strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.³ Some goals, such as quality education, clean water and proper sanitation, clean and affordable energy, sustainable cities and settlements, responsible consumption and production, tackling climate change, peace, justice, and resilient institutions, can prevent and minimize the growth of the two risks above.

State-based armed conflicts can be minimized through international humanitarian law. International humanitarian law is one of the tools and methods that can be used by any peaceful or neutral State to engage in the reduction of the suffering experienced by communities as a result of armed conflicts that occur in various States.⁴ This approach to international humanitarian law tends to be curative, where war conflicts are or have occurred and then resolved. Such curative methods help, but not for long-term benefits and the prevention of war. Buddhism encourages preventive measures through its teachings on love, mindfulness, compassion, and nonviolence so that wars or fights are less likely to occur. The fight begins when someone says something unkind to you, and you may want to retaliate right away.⁵ This attempt to retaliate was the beginning of the war. The habit of retaliating for bad things creates a well-worn pathway in the brain. Habit energy is called *vasana* in

¹ Mark Elsner, “These Are the Biggest Risks We Face Now and in the next 10 Years,” World Economic Forum, 2025, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/global-risks-report-2025-bleak-predictions/#:~:text=In this year's World Economic Forum Global Risks,its current%2C 2-year and 10-year outlook prediction ranges. 1 - 2>.

² World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2025 20th Edition*, 20th ed. (Cologny/Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2025), <https://www.weforum.org/publications/>. 7

³ United Nation, “Sustainable Development Goal,” 2015, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.: 1

⁴ Basafa Asmawati et al., “Tinjauan Hukum Humaniter Mengenai Konflik Bersenjata Antara Negara Dengan Kaum Pemberontak,” *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 2, no. 6 (2022): 539 – 44.

⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh, *How to Fight*, ed. Rachel Neumann (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 2017): 1-125

Sanskrit. Habit energy may have been transmitted to us by many generations of ancestors, and we continue to cultivate it.⁶ Mindfulness gives the capacity to recognize the habit energy every time it manifests. Bad habits can be transformed into good habits through mindfulness so that good character can be formed. The mind and brain are like plastic in nature, whose shape can be changed. Through mindfulness and insight exercises, new neural pathways that lead to understanding, compassion, love, and forgiveness can be created.⁷ Good habits such as mindfulness practice, if done continuously, will become a character that is carried over from childhood to adulthood. Students' character can be grown through educational activities in the classroom and outside the classroom, both with habituation, example, and teaching approaches.⁸ Education in Indonesia leads to character education, one of which is through meditation. Meditation activities can develop students' good character.⁹ The practice of meditation, if done correctly, can be effective in developing healthy habits and increasing adaptive social interaction behaviors.¹⁰ Wars and fights can be prevented through mindfulness exercises in school, from children to adults.

Extreme weather events occur because of human actions that are less grateful for what has been obtained from this universe. Human activities such as forest burning, greenhouse gas emissions, and air pollution can drastically affect the climate and cause extreme weather.¹¹ Humans tend to be interested in using natural products without thinking and trying to preserve them for the future of the next generation. Every individual must have mindfulness to preserve this earth. Efforts to raise mindfulness can be made from an early age through education. Mindfulness exercises can be applied in the world of education. From an early age, students should be taught about mindfulness so that understanding, compassion, love, and forgiveness can be created. Quality education, as proclaimed in the 17 goals of the United Nations, can be achieved by applying mindfulness in schools. The practice of mindfulness in education is an urgent need to achieve world peace because we need compassion to

⁶ Thích Nhất Hạnh, *How to Focus* (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 2022): 1 – 128.

⁷ Hanh, *How to Fight*: 1 - 128.

⁸ Ainul Yaqin, "Pembentukan Karakter Dengan Pendekatan Pembiasaan, Keteladanan, Dan Pengajaran: Sebuah Kajian Literatur," *Indonesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2023): 59–74, <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijhass.v4i1.4070>.

⁹ Rikardus Nasa and Gisela Nuwa, "Penguatan Nilai Karakter Melalui Kegiatan Meditasi Kitab Suci Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama Seminari Maria Bunda Segala Bangsa Maumere Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Jurnal Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 4, no. 2 (2019): 53–61, <https://doi.org/10.24269/jpk.v4.n2.2019>.

¹⁰ Daniel Pinazo, Laura T. García-Prieto, and Rosa García-Castellar, "Implementation of a Program Based on Mindfulness for the Reduction of Aggressiveness in the Classroom," *Revista de Psicodidáctica (English Ed.)* 25, no. 1 (2020): 30–35, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psicoe.2019.08.003>.

¹¹ Husnul Abdi, "Cuaca Ekstrem, Pengertian, Penyebab, Ciri-Ciri, Dan Dampaknya," *Liputan6.Com*, 2024, <https://www.liputan6.com/hot/read/5536481/cuaca-ekstrem-pengertian-penyebab-ciri-ciri-dan-dampaknya?page=6>.

maintain future sustainability.

Compassion in Pali means *karuṇā*. Dalai Lama defines compassion as “An openness to the suffering of others with a commitment to relieve it.”¹² Compassion has the characteristic of developing the quality of eliminating suffering (*Dukkḥāpanayanāṅkārapavattilakkhaṇa*). The function of *karuṇā* is to not bear to see the suffering of other beings (*paradukkhāsahanarasa*). The manifestation of *karuṇā* is the absence of cruelty (*avihiṃsāpaccupaṭṭhāna*), and its proximate cause is seeing the unsheltered state of beings (*anāthabhāvadassanapadaṭṭhāna*).¹³ A sustainable future means moving towards an efficient, resource-consistent circular economy and turning away from a linear economy that produces waste.¹⁴ Based on this explanation, global threats related to armed conflict and extreme weather can be minimized by applying the practice of compassion. Compassion and a sustainable future can be brought about by an educational approach through the practice of mindfulness. There is evidence that mindfulness and other stress management skills can produce positive effects on educators’ sleep and skills such as self-regulation and compassion, as well as on their overall job satisfaction.¹⁵ This

¹² Dalai Lama, *The Power of Compassion* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1995): 1 – 192.

¹³ Kheminda, *Manual Abhidhamma: Ajaran Tentang Realitas-Realitas Hakiki Bab 2 Faktor-Faktor Mental*, 2nd ed., vol. I (Jakarta Barat: Yayasan Dhammavihari, 2019), www.dhammavihari.or.id: 183 – 184. Hanh, *How to Fight*: 1-128

Ainul Yaqin, “Pembentukan Karakter Dengan Pendekatan Pembiasaan, Keteladanan, Dan Pengajaran: Sebuah Kajian Literatur,” *Indonesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2023): 59–74, <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijhass.v4i1.4070>.

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Husnul Abdi, “Cuaca Ekstrem, Pengertian, Penyebab, Ciri-Ciri, Dan Dampaknya,” *Liputan6.Com*, 2024, <https://www.liputan6.com/hot/read/5536481/cuaca-ekstrem-pengertian-penyebab-ciri-ciri-dan-dampaknya?page=6>.

Dalai Lama, *The Power of Compassion* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1995): 1-192

Kheminda, *Manual Abhidhamma: Ajaran Tentang Realitas-Realitas Hakiki Bab 2 Faktor-Faktor Mental*, 2nd ed., vol. I (Jakarta Barat: Yayasan Dhammavihari, 2019), www.dhammavihari.or.id: 183-184

¹⁴ Environment Agency, Ghyll Mount, and Gillan Way, “NFLA New Nuclear Monitor Policy Briefing” 3244, no. 64 (2021): 1 – 6.

¹⁵ S Frank, J. L., Reibel, D., Broderick, P., Cantrell, T., & Metz, “The Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on Educator Stress and Well-Being: Results from a Pilot Study,” *Mindfulness* 6 (2015): 208 – 216, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671->

evidence is one of the bases for writing this paper that mindfulness in the scope of education can give rise to compassion that is beneficial for future sustainability and contributes to world peace.

The Compassionate Education Foundation presents 21 characteristics to describe the characteristics of a compassionate school, one of which is awareness and action in the 20th characteristic.¹⁶ The school strives to build awareness and action among all students and adults to protect the planet. Sustainability is an overt priority through school work routines and in planned curriculum experiences so that students are helped to learn about how to advance humanity while not jeopardizing fragile global ecosystems.¹⁷ Based on these characteristics, schools that implement awareness and action practices to foster compassion and a sustainable future can be identified. The majority of Buddhism-based schools in Indonesia have the characteristics of awareness and action because the schools apply mindfulness and action to protect the environment for students and school residents. The application of mindfulness in the school produces positive activities that can be identified to be able to generate compassion and maintain future sustainability. This paper will describe the practice of mindfulness in schools, especially in Indonesia, which leads to the development of compassion and maintaining future sustainability through activities carried out with mindfulness.

II. MINDFULNESS PRACTICE IN INDONESIAN EDUCATION

In Indonesia, the practice of mindfulness has been widely practiced in the world of education, one of which is in schools. Based on the research, it was found that the practice of meditation implemented in schools has various names, including mindfulness, morning meditation, silent sitting, and morning reflection. Schools that name their meditation practice as mindfulness include Dharma Putra Junior High School, Atisa Dipamkara Junior High School, Ehipassiko Junior High School, Narada Elementary School, and Tri Ratna Elementary School. The word mindfulness is the same as the word *Sati* in Pali and can be found in the Sutta Pitaka section of *Majjhima Nikaya 10: Satipatthana Sutta*. The *Satipatthana Sutta* explains the four foundations of mindfulness, including observation of the body (*kaya nupassana*), feelings (*vedana nupassana*), thoughts (*citta nupassana*), and mental objects (*dhamma nupassana*).¹⁸ In addition, the word mindfulness also appears in *Milinda Panha* 3.1.13 about the characteristics of mindfulness. Nagasena explained to King Milinda the characteristics of mindfulness. Nagasena explained, "The

013-0246-2.

¹⁶ Colin Diamond, "21 Propositions to Describe the Characteristics of a Compassionate School," accessed February 15, 2025, <https://www.coedfoundation.org.uk/pages/21-propositions-compassionate-school.html>: 1

¹⁷ Diamond.

¹⁸ DhammaCitta Press, *Majjhima Nikaya - Khotbah-Khotbah Menengah Sang Buddha*, ed. Fernando Lie & Gina Melissa - Sumedho (Jakarta Barat: DhammaCitta Press, 2013). 1

characteristic mark of mindfulness is repetition and keeping up.”¹⁹ Meaning that the characteristic mark of mindfulness is repetition and keeping up. In this case, the word keeping up refers to good things or keeping attention on good things. This process of keeping up is also done repeatedly and continuously every moment. That is how keeping up is the mark of mindfulness.

The practice of mindfulness at Dharma Putra School is done during Buddhist subjects located in the classroom and cetiya. Meditation practices are done in sitting, standing, and walking positions. Through the practice of mindfulness, students become more attentive in learning, calmer, and able to control themselves. The results of the meditation support the achievement of the goal of a compassionate and sustainable future in the field of quality education. In Atisa Dipamkara School, mindfulness practice is done only at special times and schedules. Meditation is done outdoors or in the hall in a sitting position. Based on the interview results, it was found that students who practice mindfulness well are able to control their emotions better. At Narada School, a mindfulness program has been implemented to help students improve concentration and develop emotion regulation skills. The program usually involves a short meditation session guided by a trained teacher and integrated into the school’s daily schedule before lessons start for approximately 5 minutes. In Tri Ratna’s school, meditation practice is integrated into the mindfulness curriculum, which is usually done in the morning habituation before the children learn to prepare themselves for the lessons at school. At Ehipassiko School, mindfulness is practiced by all school members. It is done at the beginning of learning, during learning every 30 minutes, and at the end of learning before going home. Meditation practice is done throughout the school area in standing, walking, lying, and sitting positions. In addition, Ehipassiko School has its routine meditation program for students and all school members, namely: *Mindful Listening*, *Walking Meditation*, and *Total Relaxation*. As a result, students look disciplined and calm when facing all activities in the school environment.

Jaya Manggala Junior High School, Punna Karya Elementary School, and Ariya Metta Junior High School named their meditation practice silent sitting. Silent sitting here means sitting with a silent/ quiet mind that does not chatter. *Samatha Bhavana* consists of the words *Samatha* and *Bhavana*. *Samatha* in the Pali Text Society (PTS) Pali English Dictionary is calm; quietude of heart and *Bhavana* is dwelling, sphere, world, and realm.²⁰ From this definition, it can be interpreted to be a calm residence, atmosphere, world realm, or tranquility. Silent sitting, in this case, is under the purpose of *samatha bhavana*, which is inner calm and quiet mind.

¹⁹ Sutta Central, “*The Questions of King Milinda Book 2: The Distinguishing Characteristics of Ethical Qualities: Chapter 1: 3.1.13. Mindfulness*,” accessed February 17, 2025, <https://dhammatalks.net/suttacentral/sc2016/sc/en/mil3.1.13.html>. 1

²⁰ The Pali Text Society, *Pali-English Dictionary*, ed. T. W. RHYS DAVIDS and WILLIAM STEDE, 1925.

Silent Sitting, practiced at SMP Jaya Manggala, is done every day at the beginning of learning. Located in the classroom and field in a sitting position. As a result, students are more concentrated, conducive to learning, and able to control their thoughts, speech, and actions. In Punna Karya School, the practice of silent sitting is done at the beginning and end of learning every day. Located in the classroom and *dharmasala* with a sitting position. The result is that students can easily concentrate, and student behavior and the learning atmosphere in the classroom become good. At Ariya Metta School, the practice of silent sitting is done at the beginning of Buddhism class in the classroom in a sitting position.

Perguruan Buddhi Elementary School calls its meditation practice a morning meditation. This name refers to the practice of meditation done in the morning. In the book, *Riwayat Hidup Buddha Gotama* explains that Buddha, in his daily routine, starts meditation in the morning. After waking up at 04.00, then take a shower and start to meditate at 05.00 until 06.00.²¹ In addition, Trungram Gyalwa, a meditation expert, wrote in his blog, "Doing a short meditation practice in the morning has the opportunity to encourage someone to meditate regularly. The positive benefits of meditation in the morning will also stay with the individual throughout the day."²² Looking at the Buddha's daily life and the benefits mentioned above, it is natural that the phrase morning meditation is used to name meditation in schools while emphasizing that meditation in schools is done in the morning. *Morning Meditation* at Perguruan Buddhi Elementary School is practiced every morning after the *Morning Prayer* activity is completed. Located in the field facing the monastery or Bodhi tree with a standing position. As a result, students are more able to focus during teaching and learning activities, and the classroom atmosphere gradually becomes calmer.

Bodhisatta Junior High School named its meditation practice as Morning Meditation. The researcher identified the text of the meditation guide used by the school to understand the meaning of the morning devotional. It was found that the meditation guide contains words that represent loving-kindness meditation or *metta bhavana*. In KBBI, the word devotional means the fruit of thought, so morning devotional means the fruit of thought that is raised in the morning.²³ Similarly, loving-kindness meditation in practice is an effort to generate thoughts or contemplations of loving-kindness. The first object in loving-kindness meditation is yourself, then the object you love, a neutral object, and finally the object/ person you are hostile to.²⁴ This is consistent

²¹ Sumedha Widyadharma, *Riwayat Hidup Buddha Gotama* (Cetiya Vatthu Daya, 1999).

²² Trungram Gyalwa, "Top 10 Best Tips on How to Meditate," accessed February 17, 2025, <https://mindworks.org/blog/>: 1.

²³ Daring Pengembang KBBI, "KBBI Daring," Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa kemendikbudristek RI., 2016.

²⁴ Buddhaghosa Himi, *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga/ Buddhaghosa Himi*; Tr. By Nyanamoli Himi (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010).

with the content of the Bodhisatta Junior High School morning devotional text, although there are no words of loving-kindness meditation for hostile objects.

The practice of Morning Meditation is done at the beginning of each day's learning. Located in the *dharmasala* with a cross-legged sitting position. As a result, students find it easier to concentrate while learning, increase their understanding of how to meditate, recite *paritta*, *namakara*, and chant, help process emotions, and increase their faith in *Tiratana*.

III. MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The various names of meditation refer to the practice of mindfulness. Through the practice of mindfulness implemented in schools, activities that refer to the development of compassion and future sustainability can be carried out better. The real future is made only of one substance, and that is the present.²⁵ The realization of a sustainable future is highly dependent on efforts here and now through mindfulness practices. Based on the interview results, the mindfulness practices implemented at school have direct implications for activities related to maintaining future sustainability and compassion, such as Students using their reusable cutlery, Separating recyclable and non-recyclable waste, The school collaborates with health institutions to hold a mandatory vaccine program at school for students for free; The implementation of mindfulness practices at school helps students to improve their learning outcomes and emotional abilities.

The first activity is for students to use their reusable cutlery. This effort is done with full awareness of its benefits in the future and out of compassion for the next generation. The use of reusable cutlery is very supportive in reducing plastic waste. Studies reveal that there are 24 - 34 million metric tons of plastic pollution entering the marine environment every year. This is about 11% of the total plastic waste in the world.²⁶ The situation is likely to get worse in the next decade. It is estimated that the amount will increase to 53 - 90 million tons by 2030.²⁷ Efforts to reduce the adverse effects of plastic waste need to be done together by the entire school community. Students, since childhood, need to be educated not to produce plastic waste by using their cutlery at school. The world of education is the main place for individuals to learn to be mindful of minimizing plastic waste for the sustainability of the future. This mindfulness practice illustrates the characteristics of a compassionate school according to The Compassionate Education Foundation.²⁸ In the practice of mindfulness, students are invited to realize that life is here and now. Realizing

²⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh, *How to Walk* (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 2014): 1 – 120.

²⁶ Stephanie B. Borrelle, "Predicted Growth in Plastic Waste Exceeds Efforts to Mitigate Plastic Pollution," *Science* 369 (2020): 1515–18, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aba3656>.

²⁷ Tom Hale, "We're Not Doing Nearly Enough To Stop The Planet's Spiraling Plastic Problem," IFLScience, 2020, <https://www.iflscience.com/were-not-doing-nearly-enough-to-stop-the-planets-spiraling-plastic-problem-57260>.

²⁸ Diamond, "21 Propositions to Describe the Characteristics of a Compassionate School."

that we are made up of components that are not us (*interbeing*).²⁹ *Interbeing* is the understanding that nothing exists separately from anything else.³⁰ We are all interconnected in this universe. We exist because of various conditions that arise to manifest as us. Through the understanding of the law of interdependent causality, students can bring compassion to other components that make up themselves, such as the sun, clouds, plants, soil, water, animals, and various other components. Thanks to these components, students can live with compassion today. Mindfulness practice is able to transform hatred into compassion, which is the main cause of war and acts of destruction of the environment.

The next activity carried out at school with regard to future sustainability and the practice of compassion is separating recyclable and non-recyclable waste. This activity requires collective awareness to be done properly. Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh said that to protect the earth, we must have a collective awakening. Individual awareness is not enough, which is why one Buddha is not enough.³¹ All individuals in the school need to be aware of the importance of processing recyclable waste so that waste does not accumulate and become unused dirt that becomes a source of disease. In Indonesia, there are 10,460,140.77 tons/year of unmanaged waste.³² The data shows the importance of collective awareness in waste management efforts. Recycled waste can be beneficially used as plant fertilizer and as valuable products. The school has provided waste bins with several different types of containers for each type of waste, such as organic and inorganic waste. Students and all school members are trained to be aware of sorting waste and disposing of it in the correct place according to the container. The practice of contemplation can be done by reflecting that the waste comes from oneself and should not be an item that can harm others. One benefits from the item, so others should also benefit by recycling the waste.

The school collaborates with health institutions to conduct a mandatory in-school vaccine program for students free of charge. This activity supports students who are economically disadvantaged to reach health facilities. This activity arises from the awareness to help others to be free from the suffering of illness. Compassion has 5 basic elements: recognizing suffering, understanding the universality of human suffering, feeling sympathy for people who suffer, tolerating uncomfortable feelings, and motivation to act to alleviate suffering.³³ In the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, the Buddha said that pain is

²⁹ Thich Nhat Hanh, "Interbeing, the Four Noble Truths, and Right View," *The Mindfulness Bell*, no. 72 (2016), <https://www.parallax.org/mindfulnessbell/article/interbeing-the-four-noble-truths-and-right-view/>.

³⁰ Hanh, *How to Fight*: 1-128

³¹ Thích Nhất Hạnh, *One Buddha Is Not Enough : A Story of Collective Awakening* (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 2010).

³² Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup, "Capaian Kinerja Pengelolaan Sampah," Sistem Informasi Pengelolaan Sampah Nasional (SIPSN), 2024, <https://sipsn.menlhk.go.id/sipsn/>.

³³ Clara Strauss et al., "What Is Compassion and How Can We Measure It ? A

part of the first noble truth of the Buddha's teaching of the four noble truths, as follows: "Now these, monks, are the noble truths of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, and death is suffering."³⁴ The element of recognizing suffering in the five elements of compassion is in line with the Buddha's teaching on the first noble truth of recognizing pain as suffering. Through this understanding, students can practice recognizing pain as suffering in its true meaning, that pain is pain, not pain as me, and there is an entity who is sick so that there is an understanding that pain is the universality of human suffering. The realization of this truth will lead to the emergence of compassion and sympathy for suffering beings. The activity of providing free vaccines to students departs from the 5 elements of compassion. Schools that implement mindfulness are more sensitive to suffering, especially that experienced by their students. Suffering, in this case, is in the form of physical pain caused by diseases that arise due to students' limitations in obtaining vaccines at cost. Mindfulness applied at school provides an understanding of the universality of human suffering. Not all students at school have direct access to health facilities to get vaccines. Certain vaccines are expensive. The school's efforts to collaborate with health institutions greatly help students get free vaccines that are beneficial. The more students who get vaccinated, the stronger the community in the school will be to stop the spread of disease".

The implementation of mindfulness practices in schools helps students to improve their learning outcomes and emotional abilities. Partially, Compassion Meditation has an effect and is significant on student learning outcomes.³⁵ *Anapanasati* meditation, when done daily for 6 months, can show a decrease in verbal aggression for the practitioner.³⁶ The data supports that meditation can improve students' learning outcomes and emotional abilities. Informants from SD Narada said that meditation, especially the practice of mindfulness, trains a person to be more present and aware in every action. When students or individuals practice meditation regularly, they become more sensitive to their surroundings, including the impact of littering. With this increased awareness, they are more careful in sorting waste, understand the ecological consequences of their actions, and act responsibly. In addition, meditation develops an attitude of compassion (*karuṇā*), which strengthens the urge to protect the environment for the good of all beings. Meditation helps improve students'

Review of de Finitons and Measures," *Clinical Psychology Review* 47 (2016): 15–27, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.05.004>.

³⁴ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Khotbah-Khotbah Berkelompok Sang Buddha Buku 5 Mahavagga Samyutta Nikāya*, vol. 5 (Jakarta Barat: DhammaCitta Press, 2010).

³⁵ Joni Pranata, Suherman, and Julia Surya, "PENGARUH MEDITASI CINTA KASIH DAN KEPERCAYAAN DIRI TERHADAP HASIL BELAJAR SISWA PENDIDIKAN AGAMA BUDDHA DI SMK NEGERI 1 TANJUNG KABUPATEN LOMBOK UTARA," *Media Bina Ilmiah* 18, no. 1978 (2024): 1753 – 70.

³⁶ B. Sivaramappa et al., "Effect of Anapanasati Meditation on Verbal Aggression: A Randomized Controlled Trial," *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctcp.2019.06.004>.

focus and concentration so they can learn more effectively. In mindfulness practice, students are taught to bring their full attention to what they are doing, for example, when reading, writing, or listening to the teacher. This reduces distractions and increases the absorption of the subject matter. In addition, meditation helps students manage their emotions. By being aware of thoughts and feelings that arise without reacting impulsively, they can deal with academic pressure, social conflicts, and other challenges more calmly and thoughtfully. This ability to regulate emotions better also contributes to more harmonious social relationships in the school environment. Ehipassiko School applies *Mindful Listening*, *Walking Meditation*, and *Total Relaxation*. Mindful listening will transform into compassionate listening. When compassionate listening is practiced, it is important to remember that listening has only one goal, and that is to alleviate the suffering of others.³⁷ Listening deeply to another is a form of meditation. We can understand their pain and difficulties when we can listen to others with deep compassion. If this practice becomes a habit and character for students, then fights and wars will not occur because students can listen attentively and compassionately. Through compassionate listening, students realize that your suffering is my suffering and your happiness is my happiness; this is the practice of *interbeing*. Walking is an important form of Buddhist meditation.³⁸ Students who practice walking meditation correctly can come into contact with all the amazing things of life that exist within themselves and around them. Walking meditation means stepping with full awareness and being fully present in the here and now. The correct practice of walking meditation will free us from all plans, all worries, and all wishful thinking because we are fully present and fully alive with our minds touching the earth.³⁹ Finally, mindfulness practice at the Ehipassiko School is total relaxation. Total relaxation is a way to help the mind and body rest consciously. This practice will be beneficial if done regularly, helping the mind become clearer and the body becomes fresher, as written in the following total relaxation guide text.

Ehipassiko Junior High Total Relaxation Guide

If you fall asleep, let sleep happen naturally; do not resist it. This type of sleep is very good sleep. This kind of sleep does not produce dreams.

First of all, you lie down comfortably.

If you want to use a pillow, it should not be too high.

Your head, your neck, and your spine are on the same surface.

Put your arms by your side, close your eyes, and let go of all thoughts.

Pay full attention to the in-breath and out-breath

(Clapper)

³⁷ Hanh, *How to Fight*. 1 – 128.

³⁸ Thích Nhất Hạnh, *Buddha Mind, Buddha Body - Walking Toward Enlightenment* (USA: Unified Buddhist Church, Inc., 2007).

³⁹ Nhất Hạnh.

In-breath, I realize this is the in-breath.

Out-breath, I realize this is my out-breath.

In-breath - Out-breath.

On the in-breath, I feel a stream of cold water washing me from head to toe, relieving, soothing, and calming the entire physical body.

The whole body feels relaxed.

In-breath, allow the whole body to rest.

Out-breath, allow the whole body to relax.

Now, I place one hand on my abdomen.

Breathe in gently, breathing out gently.

I try to feel the rise and fall of my abdomen while breathing in and out.

Abdominal wall up, abdominal wall down.

Up and down, up and down. (2x)

Breathing in, I allow all the cells all over my shoulders and both hands to rest.

Breathing out, I allow my entire shoulder and both hands to rest.

Allow all the cells, shoulders, and hands to rest.

Breathing in, I send loving energy to both feet, allowing all the cells throughout my feet up to the fingertips to rest.

When breathing out, the entire foot feels relaxed.

Send loving energy, allowing the feet to relax.

Now, I send loving energy to my heart.

Breathing in, I feel my heart beating.

Breathing out, I allow my heart to rest.

Feel the heartbeat; allow the heart to rest.

My heart works 24 hours a day for my health, but I pay little attention to it.

Every time I get upset, my heart suffers.

When I am angry, afraid, or anxious, my heart suffers greatly.

I am determined to practice less anger, less fear, and less anxiety so that my heart can function properly and be healthy again.

Now, I want to say thank you to my heart.

Breathing in, I smile at my heart with love and gratitude.

Breathing out, I am determined to let go of all worries and anxieties.

Calming my heart, smiling to my heart.

Now, I send loving energy to my liver.

Breathing in, I calm my liver.

Breathing out, I smile at my liver with gratitude.

My liver works day and night for my health, but I don't eat mindfully.

I ate a lot of food, which made it difficult for my liver.

I ate unconsciously, I often didn't follow the doctor's advice.
 Driven by negative thoughts, I often forgot to take care of my liver.
 I am determined to pay attention to and keep my liver healthy.
 I thank my liver.

I promise to take care of you by being mindful when eating and drinking.
 Now, I send loving energy to my intestines.
 Breathing in, I calm and relax my intestines.
 Breathing out, I smile at my intestines with love and care.

I realize that I sometimes get carried away by good taste, and I eat without understanding.

I ate everything that was unhealthy: spicy food, sweet food, all of which made my intestines sore.

I am determined to take care of my intestines, I will eat and drink mindfully.
 Soothing my intestines, smiling to my intestines, with loving kindness.
 Now, I send loving energy to my lungs.
 Breathing in, I calm my lungs.

Breathing out, I smile at my lungs with gratitude.
 My lungs are working very well for my health.
 I have seen many people who have difficulty breathing.

I am one of the lucky ones because my lungs are healthy and functioning well.

I want to say thank you to my lungs.
 I will do my best to give you fresh air.
 Breathing in, I calm all the nerves in my brain.
 Breathing out, I feel very refreshed and relaxed in my brain.
 I am not worried about anything.

I let go of everything.
 I allow my brain to relax.
 My brain is working very hard, I relax all the nerves in my brain.
 And I feel very peaceful right now.

Breathe in. I release all the tension in my facial muscles.
 Breathing out, I feel very relaxed and refreshed in all my facial muscles.
 My eyes are my treasure.

I just need to open my eyes, and I can see a heaven of shapes and colors.
 My ears, which are functioning properly, are also my treasures.
 My nose, which is functioning properly, is also my treasure.
 My kidneys are my treasure.

My two legs, which can still walk well, are my treasures.

My hand, my arm, is a treasure.

Thank you for being there.

The universe is full of treasures.

I want to give you so many treasures

Your eyes are treasures.

Your heart is a treasure.

(Song)

The universe is full of treasures, within us and around us.

We just need to realize it. And all these treasures will be visible to us.

(Song)

The fact that we can still hear the birds singing, the voices of our loved ones.

That is a treasure.

The fact that we can still see the flowers blooming, the beautiful faces of our loved ones.

That is a treasure.

You, the richest person in the world, don't behave like a poor beggar of happiness.

All those treasures are there for you.

(Songs)

(Clapper)

Dear friend, this is the end of total relaxation.

You can lie down on your right side, and after a few minutes, if you feel ready, you can slowly get up to sit.

Overall, meditation practice not only provides individual benefits in the form of inner calm and clarity of mind but also shapes more environmentally responsible behavior and healthier social relationships.

IV. CONCLUSION

Compassion and a sustainable future can be realized with an educational approach through the practice of mindfulness. Schools in Indonesia, especially those based on Buddhism, apply mindfulness to students and all school members. Mindfulness that is applied, conditions the activities at school that lead to the emergence of compassion and a sustainable future, such as Students using their reusable cutlery, Separating recyclable and non-recyclable waste, The school collaborating with health institutions to hold a mandatory free vaccine program at school for students, The implementation of mindfulness practices at school helps students to improve their learning outcomes and emotional abilities. These activities help to sustain the future and generate compassion. All the effort from mindful education hopefully can reduce the State-based armed conflict and extreme weather events, which become the two top most urgent material threats in 2025.

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A CASE FOR CULTURAL CONTEXT OF MINDFULNESS AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

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Abstract:

This paper explores the integration of Buddhist mindfulness into Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as a culturally rooted pedagogical tool. While mindfulness has been widely adopted in modern educational psychology for enhancing emotional regulation, attention, and prosocial behaviour, its Buddhist origins are often overlooked. This study argues that incorporating the philosophical and cultural context of Buddhist mindfulness enriches SEL frameworks, promoting holistic development in learners. Drawing from Buddhist teachings such as *sati* (mindful awareness) and *karuṇā* (compassion), the paper emphasizes the significance of ethical grounding and spiritual introspection for meaningful SEL outcomes. Through practical applications in Indian schools and universities, the study demonstrates how culturally informed mindfulness cultivates self-awareness, empathy, and ethical reasoning. It further highlights the need for cross-cultural adaptations to maximize SEL's global impact and calls for a mindful shift in educational paradigms to foster compassionate, sustainable societies.

Keywords: *mindfulness, SEL, Buddhist pedagogy, compassion, cultural context.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. On mindfulness

“The richness of present-moment experience is the richness of life itself. Too often we let our thinking and our beliefs about what we ‘know’ prevent us from seeing things as they are.”¹

1.2. On compassion

“Like a mother who protects her child, her only child, with her own life, one should cultivate a heart of unlimited love and compassion towards all living beings.”²

1.3. On Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

“SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”³

This paper explores the integration of mindfulness as a pedagogical tool for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in educational settings for facilitating the cultivation of compassion in learners. Drawing on Buddhist traditions of mindful awareness (*sati*) and contemporary psychological research, the study examines how mindfulness fosters self-awareness, emotional regulation, and prosocial behaviour among students. The paper agrees that mindfulness enhances student well-being, reduces stress, and cultivates ethical awareness, making it a crucial component of 21st-century education, but argues that adding the cultural context of Buddhist philosophy is crucial to its efficacy and cross-cultural implementation.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has become an accepted framework for fostering emotional intelligence, empathy, and responsible behaviour in students. Mindfulness, a core practice in Buddhism, has emerged as a powerful pedagogical tool to enhance SEL by cultivating present-moment awareness, emotional regulation, and ethical decision-making. Mindfulness implies that one is widely awake to the present moment and enables an individual to function well. According to *Lohicca Sutta*, *Sarīyutta Nikāya*⁴, mindfulness enhances the ‘breadth’ of one’s mind, even making it boundless. Thus, one is enabled to grasp various elements and facets of situations and events. This research paper explores the integration of mindfulness techniques in SEL frameworks, drawing on both Buddhist teachings and contemporary educational theories. It explores the integration of Buddhist mindfulness through contextual philosophical framing to suggest how mindfulness practices can be more effectively used to promote emotional and social competence, improve student

¹ Kabat-Zinn (2005): 35.

² *Suttanipāta* 1.8.

³ CASEL, 2020, <https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/>

⁴ *Sarīyutta Nikāya*, IV, 119 - 120.

well-being, and build a compassionate, sustainable learning environment.

The concept of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been widely adopted in modern educational systems. It focuses on five key competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making⁵. SEL has been shown to improve academic performance, mental health, and interpersonal skills. However, traditional SEL programs often emphasize cognitive strategies, sometimes overlooking the role of mindfulness in fostering deep emotional and social awareness.

Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist philosophy, refers to the practice of focusing attention on the present moment without judgment. It encourages non-reactivity to thoughts and emotions, promoting self-awareness and compassion. Mindfulness practices such as mindful breathing, examining the body, focusing on postures, and meditation are recommended to be integrated into educational settings as tools to support emotional and social development. "Most of the time our perception is limited by our attention span; fragmented by continuous distractions; distorted by our biases, assumptions, and expectations; and regularly hijacked by our emotional reactivity"⁶ The emotional reactivity is what clouds compassion and thus, creates hostility for the well-being of both the individual and the while hindering the positivity in the environment or the world at large.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines compassion as "sympathetic consciousness of others" or "distress together with a desire to alleviate it." The Buddhist texts define *Karuna* along the same lines as "*par dukkhe sati sadhunam hadayakampanam karotiti karuna*."⁷ Cultivation of compassion shall be crucial in shaping the emotional and cultural roots to create a more harmonious environment. The attempt to create an axis of compassion and mindfulness within the SEL framework has great educational potential. Several Pali verses acknowledge the interdependence of mindfulness with the eightfold path, making it erroneous to assume that mindfulness in isolation can lead to awakening. The potential of mindfulness is aligned with good moral conduct and a philosophy that embraces welfare for all.⁸

II. MINDFULNESS IN BUDDHIST AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRADITIONS

"The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself."
- Henry Miller.

The practice of mindfulness is based upon the method of giving 'close attention' or 'bare attention' to experience mental purity. It may be called undistracted observation of the present moment. Mindful attention to

⁵ CASEL 2020, <https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/>

⁶ Hyland et al. (2015): 578.

⁷ *Majjhima Nikāya Commentary* 1.1.

⁸ *Samyutta Nikāya* vv. 143; 167, 188.

enhancing the experience of beauty is a path of self-compassion. In the wake of challenging vicissitudes of life, one needs the positive reinforcement of beauty. Devoid of joy, any amount of material progress fails to contribute meaningfully to an individual's life. The basic premise on which the entire Buddhist philosophical discourse rests is summed up as "*Sabbe saṃkhārā dukkha*" (The world is full of sorrow). The Buddhist path aims to traverse the worldly life while remaining untrammelled by its sorrows. Thus, it is wise to tap into the well of Buddhist wisdom in pursuit of a joyful existence.

The way of mindfulness is so central to Buddhism that it is called the heart of the doctrine – *dharmā hadaya*. It has not only been recommended by popular Dharma teachers and Buddhist scholars like Pema Chodron⁹ Nayanopika Thera¹⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh¹¹, B. Allan Wallace¹² but has also found favour with scientists like Kabat-Zinn¹³ and Steven A Alper¹⁴.

2.1. Mindfulness (*sati*) in Buddhist philosophy

"Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet." - Thich Nhat Hanh.

The Pali word for mindfulness, *satipaṭṭhāna*, literally translates as "keeping awareness of the present". In Buddhist psychology mindfulness expands the attention to any physical or mental activity to each moment and thus, the attention leads to detachment and acceptance. "Feelings, whether of compassion or irritation, should be welcomed, recognized, and treated on an absolutely equal basis, because both are us. The tangerine I am eating is me. The mustard greens I am planting are me. I plant with all my heart and mind. I clean this teapot with the kind of attention I would have been I giving the baby Buddha or Jesus a bath. Nothing should be treated more carefully than anything else. In mindfulness, compassion, irritation, mustard green plant, and teapot are all sacred."¹⁵

Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra states "Thus it is our own mind that should be established in all the roots of the good; it is our own mind that should be soaked by the rain of truth; it is our own mind that should be purified from all obstructive qualities; it is our own mind that should be made vigorous by energy."¹⁶ Mindfulness meditation is a way to mental purification through 'bare attention' and 'clear comprehension'. It is the "clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception."¹⁷ Mindfulness is a way of exploring and training the mind to get in touch with

⁹ Chodron (2005).

¹⁰ Nayanopika Thera (1965; 1972).

¹¹ Thich Nhat Hanh (1987).

¹² Wallace (2003).

¹³ Kabat-Zinn (1994).

¹⁴ Alper (2016).

¹⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh (1987).

¹⁶ https://www.worldprayers.org/archive/prayers/meditations/thus_it_is_our_own_mind.html

¹⁷ Nyanaponika, T. (1996): 30.

a deeper awareness and tap inner resources of consciousness. Thus, the mind sharpened through mindfulness meditation can bring clarity, richness and beauty in daily routine.

“The Buddha-Message, as a Doctrine of the Mind, teaches three things:

- To know the mind, - that is so near to us, and yet it is so unknown;
- To shape the mind, - that is so unwieldy and obstinate, and yet may turn so pliant;
- To free the mind, - that is in bondage all over, and yet may win freedom here and now.¹⁸”

Buddhist practice of mindfulness meditation describes four applications of contemplating – the body, feelings, mind and phenomena.¹⁹ First and foremost, the practitioner contemplates upon the body and proceeds to mindfully observe the breathing, followed by meditation upon postures and various activities, and moves on to contemplate the body as its anatomical parts to a corpse in decay as final destination. Mindfulness of breathing is the foundation of mental calm which enables the practitioner to achieve inward attention. Breathing is taken for granted and is a continuous process, thus, it is a very stable and easily available anchor for our thoughts and inner peace. The contemplation on death and decay brings about the impermanence of being as an antidote to conceit and avarice.

The second contemplation is concerned with feelings. “Awareness about feelings is enhanced by training oneself to distinguish between their pleasant (*sukkhā*), unpleasant (*dukkhā*), and neutral (*adukkamsukkhā*) affective qualities²⁰.” They are to be further distinguished between worldly (*sāmisa*) feelings arising out of carnal experiences and unworldly (*nirāmisa*) feelings arising out of a deeper spiritual experience. Mindfulness of the mind focuses on identifying its various states, such as desire, anger, confusion, and distraction. These mental states influence the direction of one’s thoughts. By becoming aware of them, a practitioner gains insight into how unwholesome states arise and can progress toward deeper tranquillity. This practice helps eliminate hindrances (*nivāraṇa*) that interfere with the mind’s optimal functioning. The culmination of mindfulness practice is reached with the contemplation of the four noble truths which can be undertaken “by either contemplating *dukkhā* and its arising or be directing mindfulness to the cessation of *dukkhā* and the path leading thereto.²¹”

In the Buddhist tradition, mindfulness and its four contemplations form the direct and only path – *ekayaṇo maggo* – for crossing the flood in past, present and

¹⁸ Nyanaponika (1996): 23.

¹⁹ *Satipaṭṭhānasutta, Majjhima Nikāya* I: 55 – 63.

²⁰ Weeraratne (2007): 13.

²¹ *Dvayatānupassanāsutta, Suttanipāta*, Prose Introduction: 784.

future times²². It is the path of purification of beings²³ and is indeed a necessary requirement for awakening²⁴. To realise the potential of mindfulness, it also must be founded on an understanding of Buddhist notion of impermanence and Buddhist practice of ethical conduct.²⁵ From the Buddhist perspective of the nature of mind compassion and wisdom are the associative attributes of its inner beauty. The resolute turning away from disastrous paths, that have led to the environmental crisis, the bitter political rhetoric, the chaotic social milieu, the stressed-out individuals, must be a turn to introspection, an inward turn to one's mind and its processes.

"Whatsoever there is of evil, connected with evil, belonging to evil – all issues from mind.

Whatsoever there is of good, connected with good – all issues from mind."²⁶

2.2. Psychological perspectives on mindfulness in education

Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence²⁷ are some of the well-known interventions that have aligned Buddhist mindfulness meditation with psychological well-being. On the relationship of scientific inquiry with Buddhism, His Holiness Dalai Lama remarked, "From the methodological perspective, both traditions emphasise the role of empiricism. For example, in the Buddhist investigative tradition; between the three recognised sources of knowledge – experience, reason, and testimony, it is the evidence of experience that takes precedence with reason coming second and testimony last."²⁸ With growing interaction and cross-cultural research, the initial hesitancy and scepticism towards Buddhist mindfulness in clinical psychology has subsided. "Certain changes are currently underway within the basic sciences that presage not only further evolution of the scientific method but also change in the way science is viewed in modern culture."²⁹ This is the time when eastern psychologies, especially Buddhist, inform and illuminate psychotherapy.

A major programme of scientific study of Buddhist mindfulness meditation continues under the supervision of Kabat-Zinn.³⁰ He and his colleagues developed a replicable curriculum in health education and stress reduction called 'Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction' or MBSR, as it is popularly known. MBSR had gained repute and considerable success and gave rise to subsequent works. One of his studies reported that ninety chronic patients showed significant improvement in pain and related symptoms after being

²² *Saṃyutta Nikāya* V. 168, 186.

²³ *Majjhima Nikāya* I. 55.

²⁴ *Āṅguttara Nikāya* V. 195.

²⁵ *Saṃyutta Nikāya* V. 143, 165, 187, 188.

²⁶ *Āṅguttara Nikāya* I.

²⁷ Goleman (1976; 1995).

²⁸ Gyatso (2005).

²⁹ Taylor (1999): 6.

³⁰ Kabat-Zinn (1985;1994).

trained in mindfulness meditation³¹. In the case of pain perception, cultivating detached observation of the pain experience can be achieved by paying careful attention and distinguishing, as separate events, the actual primary sensations as they occur from moment to moment, along with any accompanying thoughts about pain. This technique has been designed as a tool for managing pain, improving sleep quality, reducing stress, and promoting psychological well-being. Research indicates that mindfulness meditation holds significant value in clinical applications. Therefore, regular practice and contemporary psychotherapy should not overlook its connection to traditional knowledge.

With the acceptance by scientists, it becomes easier to acknowledge the role of mindfulness in cognitive, emotional, and ethical development. Mindfulness plays a crucial role in cognitive, emotional, and ethical development, making it a powerful tool in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Cognitively, mindfulness enhances attention, memory, and critical thinking, helping students stay focused, process information effectively, and develop metacognitive awareness. By reducing distractions and stress-related cognitive overload, mindfulness-based practices, such as meditation and reflective learning, improve academic performance and decision-making skills. Traditional Buddhist educational models, like those at Nalanda University, incorporated mindfulness into learning through debates and textual reflection, reinforcing deep understanding and analytical reasoning.

Emotionally, mindfulness fosters self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience by helping students recognize and manage their emotions without impulsivity. Techniques such as mindful breathing and loving-kindness meditation (*Mettā Bhāvanā*) cultivate empathy and stress reduction, leading to better peer relationships and emotional intelligence. Ethically, mindfulness strengthens moral reasoning and compassionate action by promoting non-judgmental awareness and ethical decision-making. By integrating mindfulness-based ethical training—such as Jātaka tales in moral education or Vipassana practices in schools—students develop a strong foundation for prosocial behaviour, empathy, and sustainability ethics, making education a holistic and transformative experience.

2.3. Understanding Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) has introduced the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for fostering a more equitable learning environment. It is a holistic approach that aligns schools, classrooms, communities and families to coordinate for achieving equitable learning practices and environments. “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible

³¹ Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth and Burney (1985).

and caring decisions.³²”

“There is a consensus among educators, parents, and policymakers that education should focus on supporting essential capacities to help children navigate the world successfully.³³” To nurture these capacities, education should not only support equitable pathways but nurture human beings who shall create a just and equitable for others. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical for the development of these capacities. The five core SEL competencies can be defined as follows:

- 1. Self-awareness: To recognize emotions, thoughts, and values
- 2. Self-regulation: To manage emotions, stress, and impulses
- 3. Social awareness: To develop empathy, ethical behaviour
- 4. Relationship skills: To be equipped for communication, cooperation
- 5. Responsible decision-making: To make decisions based on ethical reasoning, mindful action

CASEL’s well-known “wheel” is a framework for helping young people learn and practice these skills. It sorts social and emotional skills into five key areas, or competencies:



Figure 1. CASEL: SEL Wheel

Source: <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>

A study assessing the effectiveness of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) found that programs, typically led by classroom teachers, help develop social and emotional skills. The research also indicated that strengthening these skills encourages prosocial behaviour and fosters positive relationships. Additionally, SEL programs were shown to decrease disruptive behaviours and emotional distress. By emphasizing SEL, student engagement in learning improves, ultimately enhancing cognitive and academic performance³⁴. Many suggestions to improve the effectiveness of SEL have been given based on research. “Research indicates that they are more effective when they are:

³² CASEL 2020, <https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/>

³³ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED630375.pdf>

³⁴ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED630375.pdf>

- Sequenced: They involve a developmentally coordinated set of activities.
- Active: Active learning helps students master new skills.
- Focused: Programs intentionally develop personal and social skills.
- Explicit: The specific skills taught are clearly identified, taught, and practiced.³⁵

Mindfulness in contemporary usage is generally viewed as an isolated technique separated from the larger body of Buddhist ideas. Such isolated utilization to the benefit of people is not exactly in opposition to Buddhism, which may not always demand a sectarian adherence. Recent empirical investigations by trained psychotherapists and individual experiences corroborate its benefits. Yet, the lack of studies integrating both traditional and modern interpretations of mindfulness is a gap that needs to be addressed, if only to enhance its therapeutic potential. The Buddhist tenets of Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, Impermanence, and Compassion etc. are the very foundations of the practice of mindfulness.

“Not so long ago the benefits of meditation techniques were regarded as mere placebo effect in the western medical traditions³⁶” Significant efforts were made to secularize these techniques to present them as more scientific. However, this raises the question of whether stripping Buddhist meditation of its historical and philosophical context has diminished its true impact. More recently, there has been a shift in scientific perspectives – though still limited – with growing support for interdisciplinary, multidimensional, and cross-cultural approaches³⁷. The kind of focus that is required for mastering skill is achievable through mindfulness as a pedagogical tool, while a compassionate attitude is aligned with the goals of the equitable learning environment. Therefore, the aim of sustainable societies is achievable through education that aligns SEL with Buddhist compassion and mindfulness.



Figure 2. A Mindfulness-SEL integrated model of education

³⁵ Durlak et al. (2011).

³⁶ Loizzo (2000).

³⁷ Loizzo (2014).

Aligning SEL with Buddhist ethical principles and Compassion (*Karuṇā*)

In the words of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “The key to a happier and more successful world is the growth of compassion.” Martha Nussbaum, in her philosophical treatise, *Political Emotions*, emphasises the pertinent need “to foster commitment to shared goals and keep at bay forces of disgust and envy.”³⁸ The cultivation of compassion is not only necessary in oppressed societies but all societies. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King are two beacons who sought compassionate action to overcome unacceptable inequalities. Through personal examples³⁹, riveting speeches⁴⁰ and indomitable courage⁴¹, they evoked compassion in their supporters and many adversaries. Cultivating compassion is no longer merely a desirable emotion but a necessity. Regrettably, there is a political tendency to focus on respect as the only critical public emotion necessary for a “good” society. Nussbaum convincingly demonstrates that respect alone is insufficient, because it is cold and too inactive to overcome what she sees as humanity’s tendency towards exploitation⁴².

Karuṇā or compassion has a technical connotation in the Buddhist scriptures. They prescribe it as a prerequisite for training. Although compassion is portrayed as essential nature, yet it remains shrouded. Buddhist teachings recommend certain pathways to attain it. *Karuṇā* is one of the four qualities of character of a human being who has attained enfranchisement of heart (*cetovimutti*). The liberation occurs through perfection in four sentiments, viz. *Mettā*, *Karuṇā*, *Muditā*, and *Upekkhā*. *Cetovimutti* refers to the emancipation of mind, in the highest sense, when it attains perfect freedom. This is elaborated further as freedom from all passions – *āsavehi cittāni vimocimsu*. The passions to be cast off are *kāmāsava* (passions of sense-pleasures), *bhavāsava* (passions for continued existence), *diṭṭhāsava* (passions of views), and *avijjāsava* (passions of ignorance). The rise of such passions leads to lack of compassion, social disharmony and individual unhappiness-kindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*) foster social awareness and empathy, encouraging students to relate to others with compassion.

All religions aim for happiness by fostering harmony through ethics and compassion. Compassion is fundamental to human nature. Human-beings experience motherly compassion right from infancy, but the tendency is defiled by selfishness and lack of understanding. The lack of compassion creates narrowness and fosters sectarian strife. The lofty place of compassion and methods for its cultivation in Buddhism are not inimical to religious

³⁸ Nussbaum (2013).

³⁹ Gandhi’s stay in the *Harijan Basti* or perilous fasting to restrain communal violence are few of such examples.

⁴⁰ Martin Luther King’s famous speech *I Have a Dream* continues to remain iconic for all struggles for equality.

⁴¹ Both of them lost their lives to assassins in the course of their tireless struggle.

⁴² Nussbaum (2013).

diversity. Since each person has the potential to become a Buddha, he or she is worthy of our respect. His Holiness Dalai Lama says “The only true religion is compassion. It is no longer a luxury but a necessity.” Buddhism deals with it in detail and creates a deeper understanding, which has immense potential to serve the cause of religious harmony. In contemporary world, the integration of mindfulness as a pedagogical tool in education models, particularly SEL, seems the right way.

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs are a low-cost educational intervention that can create substantial returns on investment. Evidence from hundreds of studies indicates a consistent, reliable effect of SEL programs on students’ social, emotional, behavioural, and academic outcomes at all grade levels and across gender, ethnicity and race, income, and other demographic variables.⁴³” It is therefore, an important programme which can integrate Buddhist mindfulness and compassion to achieve its goals. “Mindfulness is a state of consciousness that involves the direction of attention that incorporates self-awareness with a core characteristic of being open, receptive, and nonjudgmental. Both SEL and mindfulness-based initiatives in education emphasize the development of positive self, moral, social, and emotional understanding.⁴⁴” While SEL is an effective platform to cultivate compassion and mindfulness in young learners, the pedagogical tools can also be adopted by any educator in a creative and informed manner.

IV. MINDFULNESS AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL: A HOLISTIC VIEW

“Any successful reform effort needs to involve administrators, teachers, and students together in creating a high quality and respectful educational environment in which they feel motivated and supported.⁴⁵” To use mindfulness as a pedagogical tool, the cultural context cannot be ignored. SEL, as framed by CASEL, has been criticised for not taking into account the outcome on different groups⁴⁶. “As SEL arrives at a crossroads of practice, policy, and politics, a flexible, adaptable, responsive, and co-constructed model of culturally sustaining SEL in the classroom offers a path forward that honours and sustains the diversity of our classrooms and deepens our commitment to equity in practice⁴⁷.”

As SEL model is adopted widely in the schools of USA, many studies have emerged from non-Buddhist scholars, who accept this limitation. “As authors of this paper, we, too, acknowledge our own limitations and viewpoints as White scholars working in the United States context, which has contributed to an individualistic worldview of mindfulness in schools. Now, we hope to motivate a shift in the aim of mindfulness training for teachers toward one that recognizes the complex systems teachers are working within and equipping

⁴³ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED630375.pdf>

⁴⁴ Lawlor (2016).

⁴⁵ Schonert-Reichl and Roeser (2016).

⁴⁶ Jones et al. (2025).

⁴⁷ Meland and Brion-Meisels (2024).

and empowering them to collectively build more caring and compassionate school systems.⁴⁸ As is mentioned, significant research has been outpouring from these regions despite the admission of the limitations. The merit of the researchers is that they can observe the implementation of SEL and mindfulness first hand and focus on the problems and their solutions.

“Not so long ago the benefits of meditation techniques were regarded as mere placebo effect in the western medical traditions⁴⁹.” There was an intense effort to secularize the techniques to make them appear more scientific, but the question arises whether the true impact of Buddhist meditation has been shortchanged in the process of robbing it of the historical and philosophical context. In more recent times there has been a paradigm shift in scientific circles, though still inadequate, with the rise of some advocates of interdisciplinary, multidimensional and cross-cultural approach⁵⁰. “Those who are wise, meditative, and strenuous and advancing ever-steadily attain supreme happiness and the freedom from fear.⁵¹” Chaturvedi has suggested “a better interaction with its spiritual roots” to make mindfulness practice effective and enduring⁵².

This paper is not entering into the field where SEL and mindfulness have been integrated into educational models. Instead, it attempts to enhance the current knowledge through Buddhist cultural context to inform and guide further reforms and interventions through a culturally informed lens. With a general introduction to Buddhist mindfulness, it delves into examples and illustrations in ways in which to use mindfulness as a pedagogical tool integrated with the larger philosophical view of Buddhism.

V. BUDDHIST TEACHINGS AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES

Buddhist texts such as the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and *Dhammapada* emphasize mindfulness as a tool for ethical living and emotional balance. These teachings encourage individuals to cultivate qualities like equanimity, compassion, and wisdom – central to SEL competencies. In the journal titled *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy* dedicated to SEL, if we search for Buddhism, it yields zero results mindfulness yields 35 results⁵³. This anomaly highlights that mindfulness is being used and researched in isolation divorced from the general orientation and specific tenor of the Buddhist philosophy from which it originates.

Though it is necessary to erase sectarian affiliations, the cultural and philosophical contexts would make mindfulness a more effective tool.

⁴⁸ Romano, Colaianne, and Baelen (2025).

⁴⁹ Loizzo (2000).

⁵⁰ Loizzo (2014).

⁵¹ *Dhammapada* v. 23.

⁵² Chaturvedi (2016).

⁵³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/social-and-emotional-learning-research-practice-and-policy>

It has been observed that different cultures need modifications in the SEL model to be effective⁵⁴. If one has no idea about Buddhist ideas of causation (*Pratītyasamutpāda*) or no-self (*anatta*), mindfulness meditation (*satipatthana*), the use of mindfulness in pedagogy can have limited impact. Practitioners should have a basic knowledge of how Buddhism envisages mindfulness and how the original formulation aligns with the goals of SEL, and also any form of compassionate education.

“What is right mindfulness?

There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in and of itself — ardent, alert, and mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

He remains focused on feelings in and of themselves... the mind in and of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves — ardent, alert, and mindful — putting aside greed and distress with reference to the world.

This is called right mindfulness...⁵⁵”

Right Mindfulness (*samma sati*) is the seventh component of the eight paths of the Noble Eightfold Path, but it is not seventh in importance. The word ‘*sati*’, in general parlance, means memory, but in philosophical discourse implies a sense of mental awareness. In the Buddhist context, its role has been explained with the similes of a ploughshare and a goad.

“Faith is my seed, and rains the discipline

Wisdom for me is a plough fitted with a yoke

My pole is conscience and thought to strap the yoke

And mindfulness is my ploughshare and goad.⁵⁶”

Mindfulness cultivates a mental state that is conducive to spiritual growth. It achieves this by enabling the mind to guard itself against evil and to propel its focus towards good. Thus, there are two crucial aspects of mindfulness: negating the harmful factors and affirming the spiritually sustaining environment. The Pali term for mindfulness meditation, *satipaṭṭhāna*, means ‘awareness in the present. It can be described as first being in the present moment without reacting and, thus, developing equanimity. The focus of the mind is expanded to include any physical or mental activity from moment to moment with an attitude of detachment and acceptance. Though in classical Buddhist soteriology, the ultimate aim of mindfulness meditation was to attain final liberation (*Nibbāna*), its general application in normal life activities can also be very beneficial. “It has been observed that this ancient way called mindfulness meditation is as practicable today as it was 2500 years ago. It is applicable in the lands of the west as in the east; in the midst of life of turmoil

⁵⁴ Wigelsworth et al. (2016).

⁵⁵ *Dīgha Nikāya*, 22.

⁵⁶ *Suttanipāta* I.4.77.

as well as in the peace of a monk's cell.⁵⁷

The Four Immeasurables (*Brahmavihāras*) – loving-kindness (*Mettā*), compassion (*Karunā*), empathetic joy (*Muditā*), and equanimity (*Upekkhā*) – are deeply aligned with SEL's focus on empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships.

Mindfulness and Self-Awareness: By focusing on the present moment, mindfulness cultivates self-awareness and helps individuals better understand their emotions and thought patterns.

Mindfulness and Emotional Regulation: Mindfulness practices help students manage impulsive reactions, promoting self-regulation.

Mindfulness and Compassion: Buddhist practices like loving kindness

Mindfulness and Ethical Decision-Making: Through mindful reflection, students develop an understanding of their actions and their broader consequences, aiding responsible decision-making.

Buddhist education has historically emphasized mindfulness (*sati*) as a foundational practice to cultivate wisdom, ethical discipline, and mental clarity. At the ancient Nalanda University, one of the world's greatest centres of learning, mindfulness was deeply integrated into monastic education⁵⁸. Students engaged in self-reflection, dialectical debates, and meditative study, which not only reinforced textual knowledge but also sharpened their cognitive and ethical reasoning. The Socratic-style discussions at Nalanda trained students to mindfully examine philosophical and ethical dilemmas, fostering a deep awareness of logic, compassion, and self-discipline. In modern education, these practices find application in critical thinking exercises, dialogical learning, and mindful classroom interactions, encouraging students to approach complex issues with attentiveness and ethical consideration.

Beyond textual study, Buddhist storytelling and visual art also served as tools for mindfulness-based ethical education. The Ajanta cave paintings, which depict scenes from the Jātaka tales, were designed to inspire contemplation on moral virtues such as patience, compassion, and selflessness. These narratives were not just religious stories but pedagogical tools that encouraged students to reflect on real-world ethical choices through visual and narrative engagement. Today, similar methods are applied in visual learning, ethical storytelling, and digital media education, where students analyse narratives to develop emotional intelligence and ethical awareness. Such mindful storytelling can enhance SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) by fostering deeper engagement with moral reasoning and empathetic understanding.

In contemporary education, Vipassana meditation, popularized by S.N. Goenka, has been successfully integrated into Indian schools to improve emotional regulation and academic focus. Vipassana, a technique rooted in mindfulness (*sati*), teaches students to observe their thoughts and emotions

⁵⁷ Nyanaponika (1996).

⁵⁸ Singh (2024).

without reaction, leading to reduced exam anxiety, increased concentration, and improved classroom behaviour. Studies show that students who practice daily mindfulness meditation exhibit lower stress levels and better emotional resilience, making mindfulness an effective intervention for student well-being. The success of Vipassana in schools highlights the practical applications of ancient Buddhist mindfulness techniques in modern pedagogical frameworks, ensuring a holistic and sustainable approach to education.

VI. DIVERSE WAYS OF INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

Mindfulness has been successfully incorporated into education through various approaches, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), university initiatives, and teacher training programs. MBSR, developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, has shown significant benefits in reducing student stress, improving cognitive performance, and enhancing emotional resilience. Research indicates that mindfulness practices help students regulate anxiety, boost concentration, and foster a more positive learning environment. Schools and universities worldwide are increasingly adopting MBSR techniques to create a balanced, mindful approach to education that supports both academic and personal growth.

In India, universities such as Nalanda University,⁵⁹ JNU,⁶⁰ and Delhi University⁶¹ have integrated mindfulness in different ways, using meditative practices to deepen students' understanding of texts and philosophy. The University of Rajasthan takes a unique approach by offering mindfulness as a practical exercise alongside theoretical coursework,⁶² where students practice bare-attention meditation and document their experiences. Additionally, initiatives like heartfulness meditation sessions provide undergraduate and graduate students, especially those whose curriculum does not formally include mindfulness, with an opportunity to engage in mindful practices. At the school level, programs such as named SEEKHO (Social Emotional Ethical Knowledge for Holistic Outlook) can be culturally aligned to use mindfulness to develop emotional intelligence and ethical awareness among students. Seekho is a Hindi word for learn and can be used to merge SEL with mindfulness and the Buddhist philosophy.

Teacher training programs also emphasize mindfulness as a tool for enhancing classroom management, student engagement, and emotional intelligence. Educators trained in mindfulness techniques are better equipped to handle classroom challenges, foster empathetic communication, and create a stress-free learning environment. By integrating mindfulness into teacher

⁵⁹ <https://nalandauniv.edu.in/short-term-courses/international-winter-school/winter-school-program/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.jnu.ac.in/content/epistemology-mindfulness-some-preliminary-reflections>

⁶¹ <https://www.du.ac.in/uploads/pg-courses/MABuddhist.pdf>

⁶² <https://uniraj.ac.in/student/syllabi/Syllabus-2025/MA%20History%20Semester%20I%20to%20IV%202024-25.pdf#page=87>

education, institutions ensure that mindfulness becomes a sustainable and impactful component of modern pedagogy, benefiting both educators and students alike.

VII. CONCLUSION

Mindfulness has emerged as a transformative pedagogical tool within the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) framework, offering a holistic approach to cognitive, emotional, and ethical development. Rooted in Buddhist traditions and reinforced by contemporary educational psychology, mindfulness enhances attention, emotional regulation, and ethical decision-making among students. Historical case studies demonstrate how mindfulness-based education has long been a foundation for deep learning, self-awareness, and compassion. Modern applications, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs, mindfulness in Indian universities, and teacher training initiatives, further establish its effectiveness in reducing stress, fostering resilience, and promoting prosocial behaviour in educational settings.

However, integrating mindfulness into mainstream education faces challenges, such as resistance from traditional education models that emphasize rote learning and a lack of culturally sensitive mindfulness programs tailored to specific educational contexts. To fully realize its potential, mindfulness must be integrated at policy levels, with cross-cultural research and collaboration ensuring its adaptability across diverse learning environments. Given its profound impact on student well-being, ethical consciousness, and sustainable learning, there is a pressing need for greater incorporation of mindfulness-based education in schools and universities. By embracing mindfulness as a core educational philosophy with its cultural and philosophical context, we can cultivate a compassionate attitude toward life in learners. Thus, mindfulness as a pedagogical tool needs to be integrated with its philosophical and cultural context to foster a compassionate society

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BUDDHIST MEDITATION CAN BENEFIT ADOLESCENCE: A MIXED METHODS RESEARCH IN VIETNAMESE CONTEXT

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Abstract:

Buddhist meditation is popular in the world today, and it has been adopted to deal with social issues raised in healthcare, education, business, and even security. Particularly, it has been used widely in education to enhance students' morality. It can also help them to overcome mental health problems. In spite of that, it has still not been widely adopted in Vietnam. As a result, this paper examines what benefits the meditation can offer Vietnamese teenagers by surveying 160 adolescents attending weekly retreats in four Truc Lam Buddhist Zen monasteries with questionnaires, conducting 16 in-depth interviews, and the participant observation of the teens' performance at the retreats. The results revealed that meditation could help them relax and develop moral behavior. This could provide educators empirical evidence to design the school curricula.

Keywords: *Meditation, adolescence, moral education, mental health.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Buddhist meditation, including mindfulness, is highly favored in the world today. It is considered as "a technique which enables us to relax our body and our mind and, besides, to free our mind of unnecessary thoughts and brain activity".¹ It has been practiced not only by Buddhists but also by non-Buddhists.² *The Princeton dictionary of Buddhism* defines it in different languages: Sanskrit (*Dhyāna*), Pali (*Jhāna*), Chinese (*Chan*), Japanese (*Zen*), Korean (*Seon*), English (*Meditation*), and Vietnamese (*Thiền*).³ Thanissaro (2013) explicitly stated that it was secular rather than religious.⁴ This reveals the popularity of meditation all over the world, even in countries where

¹ Pathath, 2017: 162.

² Tuhvsky (2022): 12; Kane (2024): 17.

³ Buswell & Lopez (2014): 174.

⁴ Thanissaro (2013).

Buddhism is not a traditional religion.

In Western countries, although Buddhism appeared much later than in some Eastern ones, the Buddhist meditation has likely been adopted more widely. It has been done for different purposes: to improve school students' mental well-being and moral behavior⁵, to enhance police officers' performance⁶, to improve the effectiveness in educating prisoners⁷, etc.

In Vietnam, *Thiền* (Vietnamese meditation) has a long and rich history. Some historical documents showed its very early appearance, in about the first century.⁸ Until the thirteenth century, it was strongly developed under the Tran Dynasty (1225 – 1400). Practitioners who achieved enormous success were not only Buddhist monks but also lay-people who were very busy in their lives. The enlightenment of kings like Tran Thai Tong, Tran Thanh Tong, Tran Nhan Tong, Tran Anh Tong, and Tran Minh Tong was a typical example.⁹ King Tran Nhan Tong, known as the Buddha-King of Vietnam, had formed a Buddhist Zen sect named Truc Lam (Bamboo Forest), marking the golden age of *Thiền*.

In spite of that, it has still been considered religious so far. It mostly exists in Buddhist temples. Unlike what many Western countries have done, Vietnam has not adopted *Thiền* widely to solve social issues. One of the most burning issues in Vietnam is the moral education of adolescents.¹⁰ A variety of articles revealed the moral decay in a considerable proportion of both school and university students, which has certainly challenged both parents and educators.¹¹

In addition, mental health problems in adolescents have concerned parents and educators greatly. In theory, young people must pass through a stage of 'storm and stress' because of their biological, cognitive, psychological, and social changes.¹² Many studies warned that the rate of school students

⁵ Franco et al. (2016); Thanissaro (2018); Feruglio et al. (2022)

⁶ Booth (2019); Grupe (2021); Trombka (2021); Navarrete (2022)

⁷ Lyons (2016); Morley (2018); Bouw (2019)

⁸ Le Manh That (2003): 330; Nguyen Lang (2012): 56; Nguyen Tai Thu et al. (2020): 63.

⁹ Thích Thanh Tu (1999): 2.

¹⁰ Pham Viet Thang (2017); Hong Minh (2023). *Giáo dục đạo đức, lối sống cho thanh, thiếu niên: Trách nhiệm thuộc về ai?* [Moral and lifestyle education for adolescence: Whose responsibility?]. Accessed on [January 05, 2025], available at: <https://baophapluat.vn/giao-duc-dao-duc-loi-song-cho-thanh-thieu-nien-trach-nhiem-thuoc-ve-ai-post487453.html>

¹¹ Pham Minh Thu (2017); Dinh Thi Hong Van (2017); Pham Van Tu (2018); Do Ngoc Khanh (2019); Thanh Huong (2019). *Thực trạng đạo đức, lối sống của học sinh, sinh viên: Vẫn khó giải pháp tháo gỡ* [The prevalence of morality and lifestyle of school and university students: Still no solutions]. Accessed on [September 05, 2023], available at: <https://daidoanket.vn/thuc-trang-dao-duc-loi-song-cua-hoc-sinh-sinh-vien-van-kho-giai-phap-thao-go-10137974.html>; Tran Hang Ly (2019): 1 - 3; Nguyen Thi Lan Anh (2021); Nguyen Cao Phong et al. (2024); Dong Mao (2024).

¹² (Hashmi, 2013).

facing stress, anxiety, and depression was alarming.¹³ These likely affect their academic performance.

Notably, the findings by Le Thi Thu Ha & Nguyen Thi Tam (2015), Do Thi Le Hang (2015), and Do Ngoc Khanh (2018) demonstrated a positive correlation between mental health problems and risky behavior in adolescents. Many international experts also found this relation. Piko et al. (2017), Heinze et al. (2017), Mestre et al. (2017), Peltzer & Pengpid (2017), Estevez et al. (2018), Martín-Rodríguez et al. (2021), Marthoenis, Dahlia & Nassimbwa (2022) claimed that risky behavior in young people such as aggression, fighting, bullying, using addictive substances, etc. was due to their stress, anxiety or depression. Maybe that is why the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) promulgated the plan for mental health education for children and school students¹⁴ to deal with that.

In terms of the family's roles, a number of Vietnamese parents have tended to send their children to Buddhist temples to learn and practice Buddhism, including *Thiền*, with the hope of developing their moral behavior. The data collected from observing the retreats at some Zen monasteries belonging to the Truc Lam Buddhist Zen sect showed that many school and university students voluntarily went there to learn and practice *Thiền* to improve themselves. To the best of our knowledge, however, the question of to what extent *Thiền* can benefit Vietnamese young people has not been appropriately unanswerable by empirical studies.

Meanwhile, many papers conducted outside the Vietnamese context showed the advantages of meditation to young people. It can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression in adolescents.¹⁵ Besides, it also helps to develop their prosocial behaviors.¹⁶

However, the investigation of those papers showed two huge gaps. Firstly, most of them (except for Carreres-Ponsoda et al., 2017) adopted only quantitative methods, failing to answer the research questions satisfactorily. As Abuhamda et al. (2021) warned, both quantitative and qualitative ones have their flaws. As a result, employing both of them can minimize their weaknesses. The experience of meditative practice is inside people, which needs to be explored by conducting interviews.¹⁷ Secondly, they did not properly examine elements influencing teenagers' practices.

As a result of those, this paper employed both qualitative and quantitative

¹³ Le Thi Thu Ha & Nguyen Thi Tam (2015); Do Thi Le Hang (2015); Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai & Vu Thuong Huyen (2019); Nguyen Danh Lam et al. (2022); Phan Thanh Hai et al. (2022); Tran Van Tuan et al. (2022).

¹⁴ MET, 2022.

¹⁵ Yeung & Chow (2010); Deplus et al. (2016); Bluth & Eisenlohr-Moul (2017); Carreres-Ponsoda et al. (2017); Diaz-Gonzalez et al. (2018); Sharma et al. (2020); Roux & Philippot (2020); Blum et al. (2021); Saarinen et al. (2022); Szeghy & Szeghy (2023).

¹⁶ Wongtongkam et al. (2014); Zare et al. (2016); Ditrich (2017); Rawlett (2017); Wisner & Starzec (2016); Lv et al. (2021).

¹⁷ Rutledge & Hogg (2020).

methods to examine what benefits *Thiền* can bring to Vietnamese adolescents. Hopefully it can provide more reliable evidence for educators to plan the curricula. Additionally, it has been able to be a base for further researches on the applications of meditation in education.

1.1. The research objectives

The study addressed three main questions as follows: (1) Does *Thiền* really benefit adolescents? (2) What are the benefits? (3) What factors can affect young people's *Thiền* practice?

1.2. Methodology

1.2.1. Participants

Adolescence is identified as the phase of 10-19 years of age.¹⁸ Investigating the stages of moral development by Piaget, Crain (1985, 118) informed that children after 11 years were able to be fully conscious. Hence, this paper covered the voluntary participation of 160 adolescents aged 12-19 years participating in every-week retreats at four Truc Lam Buddhist Zen monasteries (mean age = 14.94, SD = 2.15; male = 84 [52.5%] and female = 76 [47.5%]).

1.2.2. Setting

Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu, who revised the spirit of the Truc Lam Buddhist Zen sect established by the Buddha-King Tran Nhan Tong¹⁹, used to teach his disciples to help people to improve their morality in the context that science moves faster than ethics.²⁰ Following his teachings, some monasteries run by his disciples organised retreats for young people. This study was carried out at the time when there were only four of them offering retreats to adolescents every week. During the retreats, adolescents learned moral values from Buddhist sutras, practiced *Thiền*, and took part in other entertaining activities. They were also advised to practice *Thiền* at home regularly.

In terms of *Thiền*, it can be practiced not just by sitting but also by standing, walking and lying and it can be practiced anytime and anywhere. At the retreats, adolescents were taught how to keep mindful while having lunch and do self-reflection. During the lunch, they kept quiet to be grateful to people who made food for them. The self-reflection can help them to manage their emotions. It is considered as the motto of the Vietnamese Buddhist Zen sect, which was taken from what Tue Trung Thuong Sy (1230 - 1291), an enlightened layman, taught his student, King Tran Nhan Tong (1258 - 1308): "Reflect inwardly to see the essence of yourself. Don't follow other ways."²¹

1.2.3. Measurements

Besides investigating the participants' gender and age, this study examined their *Thiền* practice by these items: (1) You can follow the method of sitting

¹⁸ Sacks (2003); United Nations Children's Fund (2011): 2.

¹⁹ Thich Giac Toan (2019): 36; Mac Khai Tuan (2019): 81; Nguyen (2021): 1

²⁰ Thich Thanh Tu (2009): 204

²¹ Thich Thanh Tu (2016): 61

meditation, (2) You feel comfortable during your sitting meditation, (3) You feel relaxed after sitting meditation, and (4) You can learn useful lessons from the mindful lunch. Their responses were recorded using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Furthermore, their practice at home was also surveyed by the question that “How often do you sit meditation at home”. A five point Likert scale also recorded the responses (1: Never; 5: Every day).

1.2.4. Procedure

As described, the study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. First, the retreat programme was examined to get information for designing questionnaires. After that, all adolescents in aged of 12 - 19 were surveyed with anonymous questionnaires on the days they came to the monasteries to attend the retreats. During these days, their meditation sitting sections were observed to record their attitude to the practice.

To examine adolescents' experience of practicing *Thiền*, 16 in-depth interviews were conducted (eight males and eight females). The participants who were informed to have problems with their behaviors before attending the retreats were invited to join the interviews. They were interviewed in person at the monasteries without their teachers' participation.

1.3. Data analysis

The resulting dataset was analyzed using a Student's t-test and Spearman test, using SPSS 20 software.

II. RESULTS

The findings showed that *Thiền* could help the participants relax ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .86$, $Min = 2$, $Max = 5$). Most interviewees stated they liked sitting meditation because it could calm them down. A male adolescent aged 17 explained in detail as follows:

Sometimes, I suffered from stress because of overloading in class. When going home, I had to do a lot of homework and set my time appropriately. Therefore, I got more and more stressful. At that time, only sitting meditation could work well with me. After meditation sections, I felt very comfortable and my head was less heavy. As a result, my studying got better.

A female aged 17 also shared the same point of view:

Thiền, in fact, helps me to calm down and to be more concentrated. Every time I have a headache due to overloading with studying, I meditate. It can remove my stress.

Another female aged 15 clearly reported: “I love sitting meditation because it calms me down and I can stop my negative thoughts”.

I find my legs painful while sitting meditation, but I feel peaceful after finishing it. I find easy to remember difficult poems that need to be memorised because *Thiền*, in my experience, can help me to be out of unnecessary thoughts; as a result, I can be more concentrated. (14-year-old male)

What cited above also showed that the teens suffered from academic stress. Luckily, *Thiền* could help them to release it, improving their school performance.

Significantly, *Thiền* was able to develop the adolescents' moral behaviors. Over a half of respondents said that practicing it helped them to change their negative emotions that could lead to anti-social behavior. A female aged 18 reported:

Previously, I loved living fast. Now I do not do that. I have lived slowly to recognise how this world goes. In addition, I used to be brutal. When someone made me mad, I wanted to revile or fight him immediately. *Thiền* changed my aggressive manner. When I sat meditation, I did self-reflection and I was aware that it was not good.

She not only stated what benefits *Thiền* could bring to her but also explained adequately how it helped to change her anti-social behavior. Her responses also revealed that *Thiền* could help to improve the teens' social relationship. The following responses convincingly demonstrated that.

When my friends teased me, I got angry and I could recognise it. Before that, I could not because my anger "swallowed" me. After learning how to practise *Thiền*, I only kept quiet when teased. Thanks to this, I could see that my mind was fired up, so it went down. (14-year-old male)

Sometimes I remembered being bullied by my classmates when I was in my lower secondary school, and the feeling of deep hatred for them ran high. Meditation sitting helped me let it go. Before coming to *Thiền*, I was nearly autistic. I did not like making friends. Now I have changed a lot. I have communicated more and more with my classmates. (17-year-old male)

Thiền also helped the teens to develop their love for everyone. Thanks to that, they stopped their anti-social behavior.

Being a boy, I used to act up. I usually bullied my friends. When meditating, I did self-reflection and felt regret for that. Hence, I have never done that. (18-year-old male)

I have treated with my teachers better. Previously, when they scolded me, I thought that they wanted to defame me. Then I recognised that they wanted to make me better. I used to play truant to go out with my friends, but now I have also studied harder to please my grandparents [she lives with her grandparents]. (15-year-old female)

Unexpectedly, keeping mindful at lunch could develop the participants' moral behavior. They liked the mindful lunch at the retreats because it taught them useful lessons ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .93$) and one of which is gratitude. A male aged 14 reported:

Before that [before joining the retreats], I only ate without feeling grateful to anyone because I thought that my family had paid for things. Now, when I have meals, I feel grateful to ones who have contributed to producing materials at first. Then I thank food for nourishing me.

Besides, the quantitative and qualitative data analyses demonstrated some factors that likely affected adolescents' *Thiền* practice. While the gender did not have any impacts on the teenagers' *Thiền* practice, their age had a significant influence. The Spearman tests demonstrated that the older teenagers were the better they could follow the method of sitting meditation ($r_s = .20, p < .05$). The data based on the participant observation of 31 teens at one of the four Zen monasteries indicated that older teenagers could meditate longer than their younger peers could. Their face also looked calmer. In terms of meditative practice at home, the older ones sat meditation more often ($r_s = .20, p < .05$).

Expectedly, the adolescents' ability to follow the method of meditating was a fundamental element. The results from the Spearman tests (Figure 1) illustrated that it correlated to the teens' feeling comfortable while sitting meditation and their feeling of relaxation (respectively, $r_s = .34, p < .001$ and $r_s = .23, p < .01$). The more the teenagers felt comfortable while sitting meditation, the more relaxed they were ($r_s = .60, p < .001$).

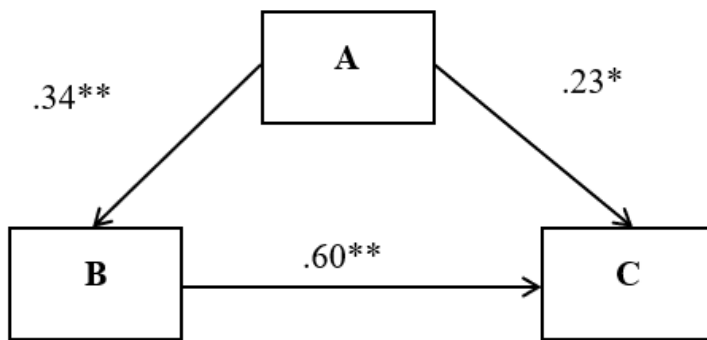


Figure 1. Correlation between the teens' following the method of sitting *Thiền* (A), their feeling comfortable while sitting meditation (B) and their feeling of relaxation (C). Note. * $p < .01$ and ** $p < .001$

Furthermore, learning environment could also affect the teenagers' practice. The quantitative data analysis showed they rarely meditate at home ($M = 2.25, SD = 1.06$). Most respondents claimed that they found difficult to do at home due to their family members' interruption, being busy with their homework or a lack of motivation. They preferred to practise it at the monasteries.

Meditating at the monastery, I feel more comfortable and concentrated. I find difficult to do at home because of being disturbed by my parents, brothers, sisters, and nieces; therefore, I only sit when I feel very tired. (18-year-old female).

I love meditating at the monastery. My older peers could do it for 90 minutes or more, and I tried to do for 60 minutes. My family has a Buddhist shrine, so my mum meditates almost every day (she is a Buddhist). I sometimes meditate with her. I could not follow her fully

because I was sometimes busy with my studying. (14-year-old male).

Another male aged 14 said, "At home, I sit meditation with my dad (he is a Buddhist)".

What reported above also indicated that family likely motivates the teens to meditate.

III. DISCUSSION

This mixed methods research revealed the advantages of *Thiền* to the teenagers. First, it could relax them, so it was able to help them to face with mental health problems. Interestingly, it could develop their moral behavior, improving their social relationship. Moreover, the study also demonstrated some elements affecting the teenagers' *Thiền* practice including their age, their ability to follow the method of meditation and the practice environment.

Thiền was found to be able to relax the participants, helping them to overcome stress. This is consistent with what were explored by Deplus et al. (2016), Bluth & Eisenlohr-Moul (2017), Carreres-Ponsoda et al. (2017), Diaz-Gonzalez et al. (2018), Sharma et al. (2020), Roux & Philippot (2020), Blum et al. (2021), Saarinen et al. (2022), Szeghy & Szeghy (2023) on the one hand. On the other hand, that can also supplement their findings. They mainly focused on examining the associations between meditation including mindfulness and mental health problems in adolescence like stress, anxiety, or depression, but did not properly investigate the factors affecting teenagers' practice. Some of them tried to report the differences in meditative practice outcomes based on demographics, but their results were not unified. For example, Bluth & Eisenlohr-Moul (2017) and Carreres-Ponsoda et al. (2017) concluded that the gender and the age did not have any impacts; meanwhile, Saarinen et al. (2022) found that girls did better. The current study showed the age but not the gender had a considerable influence on the teens' practice.

Additionally, this paper observed two other factors, which were not included in those researches: the participants' ability to follow the method of meditation and the practice environment. In fact, the former likely reveals the essential role of trainers' performance as Malik & Khudai (2022) explored in their paper. The later may shows the impact of family. The responses from the interviews demonstrated that parents' and children's practice likely had a close correlation, which is in line with what was explored by Chamratrithirong et al. (2010), Yeung & Chow (2010) and Thanissaro (2018). Nevertheless, those two factors need studying further. Generally, considering the factors influencing adolescents' meditative practice is useful for educators in designing the curricula.

Remarkably, the finding that *Thiền* was able to remove stress in adolescence can provide solutions for the programme for the mental health education for children and school students planned by MET, aiming to ensuring and promoting school students' mental well-being. However, *Thiền* may not come to all school students because it has been considered religious. To lift that barrier, *Thiền*, as suggested by Thanissaro (2013), needs to be accepted as a secular intervention.

Significantly, the results from the current study also demonstrated that *Thiền* could improve the participants' moral behavior. According to the reports by Wongtongkam et al. (2014), Zare et al. (2016), Ditrich (2017) and Rawlett (2017), meditative practice can reduce the anger, impulsiveness, and aggression in adolescence that can lead to personal conflicts. This is in good agreement with this research outcome. The result also confirms the findings by Wisner & Starzec (2016) and Lv (2021) that teenagers can develop their prosocial behavior under the impact of meditation.

Expectedly, the mixed methods adopted in this report were very useful. The quantitative data mostly helped to answer "what" questions. Whereas, the qualitative data could answer "what", "how" and "why" questions as argued by Abuhamda et al. (2021). Shakyamuni Buddha taught in the *Dharmapada*: "Mind precedes all mental states. Mind in their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox. Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow".²²

What was found in this paper was in line with the teachings above. By the in-depth interviews, *Thiền* was conclusively proved to be able to change the adolescents' "impure mind", enhancing their moral behavior.

Inevitably, some limitations could have influenced the results. Firstly, a control group was not included to make the results more convincing. Secondly, the research scope was narrow. It was limited in Truc Lam Buddhist Zen monasteries. Lastly, the number of samples investigated was small.

IV. CONCLUSION

The evidence from this study indicates that *Thiền* can foster teenagers' mental health and help to develop their moral behavior. These findings provide more evidence for educators in designing the curricula. In the context of Vietnam where the education industry has paid special attention to improving school students' morality and mental well-being, these research outcomes may encourage educational administrators to consider *Thiền* as an intervention and adopt it for the students.

Due to some limitations related to using a control group, the scope research and the number of samples, further work on how *Thiền* work on teenagers should investigate teenagers attending retreats not only in Truc Lam Buddhist Zen monasteries but also in other Buddhist temples to expand the scope and increase sample size. The control group may include school students not attending any retreats organised by Buddhist temples.

In addition, the current paper examined some elements influencing the teens' *Thiền* practice including the demographics of age and gender, the teachers' training and the practice environment. However, those should be investigated further. Moreover, how the factor of family can influence adolescents' practice

²² Translated from the Pali by Acharya Buddharakkhita (1985): 23.

also needs to evaluate.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION ON PATH OF DHAMMA FOR A COMPASSIONATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

Mindfulness, as a component of Buddhist meditation practice, was re-contextualized and popularized in the twentieth century and eventually, through the process of secularization, entered a range of new settings, especially in therapeutic contexts. This abstract aims to discuss the conceptualization and practice of mindfulness from two different perspectives, i.e., Buddhist and secular. Firstly, it situates mindfulness within Buddhist discourse, outlines its definition, main roles, and functions. Mindfulness in education involves integration practices that promote awareness, focus, and emotional regulation among students and educators. When paired with a focus on compassion, mindfulness can help create a supportive and empathetic learning environment. Mindfulness helps students and teachers manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges. Mindfulness encourages present-moment awareness, which can enhance learning. It fosters an understanding of others' emotions and perspectives, reducing conflict and increasing kindness. Mindfulness has been defined as "maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment with openness and curiosity. Mindfulness practices essentially cultivate attention, including self-awareness and self-knowledge of thoughts, feelings, and sensations and how they affect one's actions. Mindfulness is a promising approach to teaching educators and students self-awareness and self-regulation skills associated with success in school and through adulthood.

Keywords: *Meditation, compassion, empathetic, environment, self-awareness, adulthood.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

“The goal of life is living in agreement with nature” Buddha.

“We are destined to share this planet, and as the world grows smaller, we need each other more than in the past. But, whether we are trying to reduce the nuclear threat, defend human rights, or preserve the natural environment, it is difficult to achieve a spirit of genuine cooperation as long as people remain indifferent to the feelings and happiness of others. What is required is a kind heart and a sense of community, which I call universal responsibility.” (His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In an address to ‘Seeking the True Meaning of Peace’, San Jose, Costa Rica. June 25 - 30 1989)

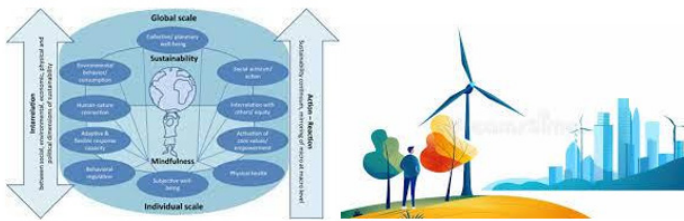
Education for sustainable development is an increasingly relevant area of research as the need to educate individuals who can deal with sustainable development challenges has become more urgent. Socio emotional competencies are those skills required to effectively self-regulate one’s emotions, solve problems effectively, and cultivate interpersonal relations, taking both personal and other’s needs into consideration in particular, this study examines whether mindfulness programs may be effective in nurturing aspects associated with socio emotional competencies, and identifies under which conditions these programs are more effective. Practice trains the mind to “attend to the contents of consciousness, moment by moment” without judging or reacting to such contents.

Decanting has also been found to mediate the relationship between mindfulness as a trait and pro-environmental behavior. Disinterring brings about three components of socio-emotional competencies. First, by disinterring, an individual learns to disengage from deeply wired emotional responses so that he or she is more able to choose how to react to internal or external stimuli. Moreover, the emotional regulation facilitated by mindfulness practice has been found to accrue empathy and compassion, probably because, as the individual is more able to accept her/ his own emotions, she is also more capable of accompanying others in their emotional experiences. The research on mindfulness shows that enhanced emotional regulation leads to reduced aggressive behavior and improved interpersonal relations. Disinteracting also facilitates perspective-taking and value clarification, which, in turn, enhances social connectedness. Finally, awareness and disinterring nurture self-compassion. More self-compassionate individuals are more resilient, meaning that they are better prepared to face situations of social conflict or rejection, show more positive thinking, and recover more easily and rapidly from past negative events. Moreover, a relationship between self-compassion and compassion towards others has been evidenced by Hofmann. In summary, the research on the effects of mindfulness practices suggest that they may be an effective learning strategy for socio-emotional competencies in ESD since they facilitate emotional regulation, cultivate empathy towards others, and make learners more resilient, which are three fundamental aspects of socio-emotional competencies. These outcomes are all grounded in the growing awareness and acceptance nurtured by mindfulness practices. However,

an assessment of the particular effect that mindfulness may have on these socio-emotional competencies is missing. Decisions, and handle challenges effectively”. Being in an environment for the first time, meeting strange people is not easy or simple for everyone. Some people need help in controlling their own emotions or others’ emotions and feelings. This help can come from the parents at home, teachers and classmates at school, or colleagues at working workplace.¹

1.1. The timeless wisdom of Buddha’s Dhamma

In an era marked by chaos, confusion, and conflict, the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known to the world as the Buddha, offer a beacon of hope, guidance, and wisdom. The Buddha’s *Dhamma*, or teachings, provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of reality, the human condition, and the path to liberation from suffering. This article delves into the essence of Buddha’s *Dhamma*, exploring its core principles, practices, and relevance in modern times.



Source: Google

1.2. The historical context

Born in ancient India around 563 BCE, Siddhartha Gautama was a prince from the Shakya kingdom. Sheltered from the outside world, he was confronted with the realities of suffering, disease, and death, which profoundly impacted his perspective. Renouncing his royal life, he embarked on a spiritual quest, seeking answers to the fundamental questions of existence. After years of intense meditation and practice, he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, becoming the Buddha, the Awakened One.² Society at the time of the Buddha showed the same sort of contrasts and discrepancies as in modern days. The rich rode on elephants, horses, and in chariots and lived with lordly ease, whereas the poor struggled to eke out a meagre livelihood from the capricious powers of nature.²

II. THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The Buddha’s teachings are rooted in the Four Noble Truths, which

¹ Shqipe Husaj 2016. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies Jan-Apr 2016 Vol.1 Nr. 3.

² C. A. F. Rhys Davids, Outlines of Buddhism: A Historical Sketch, 1 Indian print, Delhi, 1978: 4. 1.

he delivered in his first sermon after enlightenment. These truths form the foundation of the *Dhamma*:

i. The Truth of Suffering (*Dukkha*): Life is marked by suffering, dissatisfaction, and impermanence. This truth acknowledges the inherent difficulties and challenges we face.

ii. The Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya*): Suffering arises from craving, aversion, and ignorance. These three roots of suffering are the primary causes of our distress.

iii. The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*Nirodha*): Suffering can be overcome by eliminating its causes. This truth offers hope for liberation from suffering.

iv. The Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering (*Magga*): The path to the end of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, a comprehensive guide for developing wisdom, ethics, and mental discipline.

2.1. The Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path is a practical and systematic approach to spiritual growth and self-transformation. It consists of three main sections: wisdom, ethics, and mental discipline.

i. Wisdom (*Prajna*): Developing wisdom through understanding the Four Noble Truths, cultivating mindfulness, and recognizing the impermanent and interconnected nature of reality.

ii. Ethics (*Sila*): Cultivating ethics through right speech, right action, and right livelihood, which involves living a life of compassion, kindness, and respect for all beings.

iii. Mental Discipline (*Samadhi*): Developing mental discipline through concentration, mindfulness, and meditation, which enables the cultivation of a calm, clear, and focused mind.

2.2. Mindfulness and meditation

Mindfulness and meditation are essential components of the Buddha's *Dhamma*. Mindfulness involves cultivating awareness of the present moment, observing thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment or attachment.³⁴ Meditation is a systematic practice for developing concentration, clarity, and insight. Regular mindfulness and meditation practice can lead to numerous benefits, including reduced stress, improved focus, and enhanced emotional well-being.

2.3. Relevance in modern times

"Mindfulness brings wisdom; Lack of meditation leaves ignorance"
(Buddha)

³ G. C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, Allahabad: University of Allahabad, 1957: 314.

The Buddha's Dhamma is timeless and universal, offering wisdom and guidance that is just as relevant today as it was 2,614 years ago. In an era marked by rapid change, uncertainty, and conflict, the Dhamma provides a powerful framework for:

- i. Cultivating resilience and well-being: The *Dhamma* offers practical strategies for managing stress, anxiety, and adversity, promoting emotional well-being and resilience.
- ii. Developing compassion and empathy: The *Dhamma* emphasizes the importance of cultivating compassion, kindness, and understanding towards all beings, fostering a more harmonious and inclusive society.
- iii. Fostering critical thinking and wisdom: The *Dhamma* encourages critical thinking, inquiry, and exploration, helping individuals develop wisdom, discernment, and a deeper understanding of the world.

2.4. Mindfulness

“Whatever precious jewel there is in this heavenly world, there is nothing comparable to one who is awakened” (Buddha)

Mindfulness can be trained and enhanced by practicing mindfulness meditation. It aims to evoke positive emotions more directly, and is used to increase feelings of warmth and caring for self and others. In brief, the technique involves focusing on one self; people both likes and dislikes, and strangers, and dwelling on and cultivating an attitude of care, acceptance, well-wishing, and compassion about them.

2.5. Mindfulness, well-being, values, empathy, and sustainability

This summarizes the main elements of interest in this paper, highlighting the usefulness of seeing them as an interrelated whole when discussing sustainability. Beyond environmental principles, sustainability in education also includes social justice and overall well-being. Sustainability depends on ethical stewardship and an innate connection to nature, both of which are fostered by mindfulness (Wamsler et al., 2019).⁴



It might be an example of what O'Brien (2008: 290)⁵⁶ calls “sustainable

⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh, 2013 <https://www.parallax.org/mindfulnessbell/article/dharma-talk-to-make-reconciliation-possible/>

⁵ Wamsler, C. (2019). Contemplative Sustainable Futures: The Role of Individual Inner Dimensions and Transformation in Sustainability Research and Education. In:

happiness”, “...the pursuit of happiness that does not exploit other people, the environment or future generations”. Interestingly, as prosocial behavior may increase subjective well-being, subjective well-being may, in turn, encourage more prosocial behavior, suggesting the possibility of a positive feedback loop. Sustainable policies are more attractive and engaging. Among different, albeit interrelated, representations and models of the Buddhist teachings, cognitive processes are most comprehensively analyzed and discussed in the *Abhidhamma*, a collection of texts traditionally dated in the third century BCE, in which the main structural foundations of Buddhist discourse are systematically defined and analyzed. This is analyzed at a deeper, non-conceptual level. These basic components, elements, or events, called *dhammas*, surmised to be involved in, or condition the mental and physical phenomena arising moment to moment, are listed, defined, and discussed. The entire structure is presented under four main categories: cognition (*citta*), mental constituents (*cetasika*), materiality (*rūpa*), and *nibbāna*.⁶

III. THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION

“Mindfulness must be engaged. Once there is seeing, there must be acting... We must become aware of the real problems of the world. Then, with mindfulness, we will know what to do, and what not to do, to be of help.” (Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen master, poet, activist and author. *Peace is every Step*, p. 91)

The Education Department handles challenges effectively. Social and emotional learning is a critical aspect in a child’s development, and teaching these skills positively impacts both personal well-being and school performance, enhanced mental health. The Hawn Foundation behind the MindUP™ movement states, “MindUP™ nurtures optimism and happiness in the classroom- showing that students who participated in MindUP™ demonstrated. Such as observation, non-judgment, and the ability to be nonreactive. Teachers whose behaviors are “calm, clear, and kind” might yield more compassionate environments for students. Educators can read educator-focused books by experts, such as *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom*; *The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students*. Meditation as an alternative mind-body therapy. It is a popular intervention to improve mental and physical health.⁷

3.1. Benefits for teachers and students

- increased happiness
- Improvements in math achievement
- gain in executive function and improved planning and organization

Leal Filho, W., Consorte McCrea, A. (eds) *Sustainability and the Humanities*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-31995336-6_20

⁶ Barrett, B., Grabow, M., Middlecamp, C., Mooney, M., Checovich, M. M., Converse, A. K., et al. (2016). Mindful climate action: Health and environmental co-benefits from mindfulness-based behavioral training. *Sustainability* (Switzerland), 8 (10), 1 – 20. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8101040>.

- improved self-control and self-regulation skills
- Strengthened resilience and decision-making
- increased enthusiasm for learning
- increased academic success
- reduced peer-to-peer conflict
- A joyful and optimistic classroom

Quick Wins: What Teachers and Other Adults Can Do Right Now.

Supporting students facing additional challenges Effects on “emotional regulation” Though all students may benefit from school-wide mindfulness efforts, specific mindfulness strategies may be particularly effective for individuals or student groups at higher risk for health and/ or educational challenges.

According to the systematic review and the meta-analysis results, mindfulness moderately enhances the emotional regulation of negative and positive emotions. Concerning positive emotions, mindfulness practice has been shown to facilitate a better expression of individual emotions in tune with the emotions of others in a number of studies. The majority of the studies reported significant improvements from baseline conditions. The only two negative results attribute their findings to high levels of emotional control at the baseline or to the need for more customized programs to achieve further improvements.

3.2. Effects on “empathy and social connectedness”

“He who, seeking his happiness, punishes or kills beings who also long for happiness, will not find happiness after death” (*Dhammapada*)

Mindfulness has been demonstrated to effectively drive prosocial behavior through the enhancement of empathy or social connectedness, even after brief programs of only one hour. However, the effect size is small. These low effect sizes are attributed by authors to misguided programs or the limited length or intensity of the program. Higher effect sizes were reported in programs with the components of affect or programs adapted to the sample compositions and with intense daily meditation practices. This latter study offers a clear connection between daily meditation and value-related behavior since participation in an ongoing mindfulness practice showed significant improvements in value clarification, which is used as a measure to assess a values-oriented life, mediated by the disinterring ability.⁷

3.3. Sustainable behavior

Instead, it is our habits, i.e., automated response dispositions cued by the environment or preceding actions, that constitute much of our everyday lives.

⁷ Jacobs, panel Kathleen Lars Petersen, Jacob Hörisch , Dirk Battenfeld 2018. Green thinking but thoughtless buying? An empirical extension of the value-attitude-behaviour hierarchy in sustainable clothing. *Journal of Cleaner Production*. Volume 203, 1 December 2018, P. 1155 - 1169.

However, mindfulness and increased awareness of one's mental life can reduce emotional and cognitive habits, hence promoting a non-habitual/non-automatic mode of being that is more flexible and objectively informed. According to Bishop et al. role in fostering self-regulation. Some research supports this contention.

That is related to this kind of simpler lifestyle. simultaneously benefit both individual and ecological well-being." Amel et al. would be most relevant to sustainable behavior. They found that acting with awareness was correlated with sustainable behavior (Jacob et al., 2009). Resource-strenuous existence of users has been recognized as the major reason for ecological dilapidation. It is thus essential to involve people in making behavioral shifts that may enable them to lead a sustainable way of life. Specifically, we propose that students should be exposed to various activities to make them understand the concept of sustainability.

"Let him not destroy or cause to be destroyed, any life at all nor sanction the acts of those who do so. Let him refrain from even hurting any creature, both those that are strong and those that tremble in the world" (*Sutta-Nipata*).

The natural balance of the environment is under substantial stress because of the immeasurable use of resources. Demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber, and fuel. This voluminous use of resources has been attributed as the major reason for environmental dilapidation. It is thus essential to involve people in making behavioral shifts that may enable them to lead a sustainable way of life. This can be initiated through an increase in demand for various sustainable goods and, decrease in the reckless behavior of consumption, helping enable people to have more sustainable lifestyles. The motivation and aim of the complex investigations of cognitive processes is to develop a deep understanding (in theory and practice) of the nature of physical and mental phenomena to the extent that is necessary for liberation from suffering; this is the rationale for all Buddhist teachings. Diminishes or even temporarily extinguishes the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), unwholesome mental states rooted in greed (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). These encompass: prompts the development of wholesomeness; for example, it encourages the development of loving kindness, compassion, wisdom, while it discourages or prevents the negative components of cognition, either through understanding their harmfulness or by prompting wholesome states to develop instead. As frequently stated in Buddhist texts, well-established mindfulness

(i) sensory desires (*kāmacchanda*), seeking, craving, and delighting in pleasures derived through the senses

(ii) ill-will (*vyāpāda*), encompassing hatred, annoyance, resentment, hostility, irritation, and anger;

(iii) sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), referring to dullness, rigidity, stolidity, and unwieldiness of the mind and body

(iv) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), explained as agitation, unrest, distraction, remorse, and anxiety; and

(v) doubt (*vicikicchā*), referring to perplexity, hesitation, uncertainty, the lack of trust.

IV. BUDDHA: THE GREAT TEACHER

“May all beings have happy minds” Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama, known to the world as Buddha, was a spiritual teacher from ancient India who founded Buddhism. Born in Lumbini, Nepal, around 563 BCE, Buddha’s teachings have had a profound impact on the world, shaping the lives of millions of people across the globe.

4.1. The early life of Buddha

Buddha was born into a royal family, the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Maya. His early life was one of luxury and comfort, shielded from the outside world. However, as he grew older, Buddha encountered the “Four Sights” – an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and a wandering ascetic – which profoundly impacted his perspective on life. He realized that suffering and impermanence were inherent in life and that he too would face these challenges.⁸

4.2. The quest for enlightenment

“Work out your salvation. Do not depend on others.” Buddha.

At the age of 29, Buddha renounced his royal life and embarked on a spiritual quest to find the answer to suffering. He studied with various teachers, practiced intense meditation, and engaged in extreme asceticism. However, he eventually realized that these practices were not leading him to the truth he sought.⁹

4.3. The enlightenment

“To conquer oneself is a greater task than conquering others.” Buddha.

After six years of intense spiritual practice, Buddha sat under the Bodhi Tree in Bodh Gaya, India, and vowed not to rise until he had attained enlightenment. It was here that he experienced the profound insight that would change the course of his life and the lives of countless others. He realized the Four Noble Truths.

4.4. Buddha’s teachings emphasized the importance of:

- i. Mindfulness: Being present in the moment, observing thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment.
- ii. Compassion: Cultivating kindness, understanding, and patience towards oneself and others.
- iii. Wisdom: Developing a deep understanding of the nature of reality, recognizing the impermanence and interconnectedness of all things.
- iv. Ethics: Living a life of moral integrity, avoiding harm to oneself and others.

⁸ R. H. Robinson, 1976. *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*, 2 edition, California, 1976: 12.

⁹ Rhys Davids T. W. 1903, *Buddhist India*, New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1903: 49ff.

4.5. The legacy of Buddha

Buddha's teachings have had a profound impact on the world. His message of peace, compassion, and wisdom has inspired countless individuals, from ordinary people to philosophers, artists, and leaders. Buddhism has spread across the globe, with various traditions and interpretations emerging over time.

V. MINDFULNESS AND MODERN BUDDHISM

As Buddhism expanded over centuries across Asia, new interpretations, schools of thought, and practices evolved, but as far as the roles and interpretations of mindfulness are concerned, the most significant changes seem to have occurred only in the last hundred years, initiated by the historical events in the late nineteenth century. The main parameters reflected and involved in the formation of modern Buddhism were encounters with Christianity, European science and rationalism, and European Romanticism, which particularly influenced the positioning of meditative experience at the forefront and, more recently, psychology, significantly impacting the interpretation of meditation through a psychological lens. In addition, particular historical developments during the colonial period in Burma (current day Myanmar) greatly contributed to situating mindfulness at the center of Buddhist teachings.

“Teach this triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity” (Buddha)

In this shift, mindfulness came to be the most appropriate element of meditation to be practiced by the laity in everyday life and consequently, the methods had to be simplified; With growing population of mindfulness in Burma, the first meditation center for laity were established, and several noted teachers, among them Mahasi Sayadaw (1904 – 1982) and U Ba Khin (1899 – 1971) and, later on, his disciple Goenka (1924 – 2015),¹⁰ were subsequently instrumental in popularizing mindfulness meditation worldwide; their methods constitute a large part of today's contemporary mindfulness applications in secular contexts. In the twentieth century, revitalized and simplified mindfulness meditation was spreading rapidly among the laity, firstly in Burma, then in other Asian Buddhist countries, and in the postcolonial period, becoming one of the most popular Buddhist meditation training models. Already, early on in the late 1970s, and more so in the 1980s, mindfulness programmers in the West, especially in the US, started to draw from and integrate different meditation methods from other Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions as well as include psychotherapeutic approaches. Subsequently, mindfulness practice started to be increasingly viewed as training in attention, with the aim to improve psychological well-being, and

¹⁰ Sonja M. Geiger, Daniel Fischer Ulf Schrader, and Paul Grossman 2020. Meditating for the Planet: Effects of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention on Sustainable Consumption Behaviors. *Environment and Behavior* 2020, Vol. 52 (9) 1012 – 1042.

thus prepared the grounds for its secularization.¹¹

Modern psychology defines mindfulness as “bringing one’s complete attention to the present experience on a moment-to-moment basis.” The role of mindfulness in education benefits the teachers and students. In the classroom, teachers can use mindfulness-based techniques to increase responsiveness to students’ needs, support stress management, and enhance classroom climate. Introducing mindfulness to the students helps to strengthen attention and concentration and reduces anxiety before testing. Additional benefits for students practicing mindfulness techniques are an improvement in classroom participation and enhancement of social and emotional learning.¹² Implementing mindfulness-based programs that teach social and emotional skills result in better academic performance, significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors, fewer negative behaviors, and enhanced mental health. The question of how to implement mindfulness-based programs more widely in the curriculum needs further study. Initial research data supports that mindfulness-based programs are cost-effective and can be executed by training teachers in the schools. The first potential effect of mindfulness is the reduction of the attitude–behavior gap or the intention–behavior gap. These terms describe the discrepancy between attitudes (or intentions) toward sustainable consumption and the actual consumption behaviors. Although in many surveys, a majority of respondents tend to report favorable attitudes toward the environment and sustainable consumption options. Mindfulness can be summarized as a form of awareness and attention in the present that is characterized by an open-minded and non-judgemental perspective, and meditation as a group of practices that engage many of the same processes and may involve mindfulness. There is evidence that both mindfulness and mindfulness meditation are associated with activity in brain regions relating to, for example, attention, emotion-regulation, and bodily awareness.^{13, 14}

¹¹ Jonathan Bryde 2019 The Effect of Mindfulness Meditation on Affect and Attention An Empirical Study. University of Skode P. 3.

¹² Wheeler, M. S., Arnkoff, D. B., & Glass, C. R. (2017). The neuroscience of mindfulness: How mindfulness alters the brain and facilitates emotion regulation. *Mindfulness*, 8(6), 1471- 1487. doi:10.1007/s12671-017-0742-x

¹³ Sayadaw U. Pandita 2011 Teachings on the Satipatthāna Vipassanā Meditation Practice. Saddhamma Foundation 1685 Suncrest Court Walnut Creek CA 9457 USA p 74.

¹⁴ Bhikkhu Bodhi 1994. The Noble Eightfold Path. The Way to the End of Suffering. Buddhist Publication Society P.O. Box 61 54, Sangharaja Mawatha Kandy, Sri Lanka http://www.beyondthenet.net/bps/bps_main.htm



- i. Increased awareness
- ii. Improved personal health and subjective well-being
- iii. Higher levels of connectedness with nature
- iv. Stronger intrinsic values and ethical decision-making

Nowadays, people’s economies have been significantly growing, resulting in our needs and wants becoming unlimited. Therefore, beauty salons and the food industries have mushroomed. Due to this reason, a series of severe health problems have occurred. Here, we are going to discuss the issue of eating disorders that are harmful to our health and lives. When a person has an idea of the need to live for beauty, one is going to get a diet to have a slim body such as eating fewer calories.

The Greeks took moderation into consideration as a method that led to balanced physical health and a good life, and one needs to moderate and stabilize everything in every situation regarding moderation and self-awareness. In the *Donapākasutta*, the primary objective is to emphasize the significance of being mindful and practicing moderation in all aspects of actions. The *sutta* teaches that by cultivating mindfulness in six areas- eating, drinking, speaking, seeing, hearing, and thinking- one can achieve a state of equilibrium and avoid falling into extremes in life. It highlights the potential dangers of overindulgence and the negative consequences that arise from mindless behavior.



By adopting an attitude of mindfulness and moderation, individuals can lead lives that are more tranquil, purposeful, and free from the suffering and burdens associated with excess. Ultimately, the *sutta* serves as a gentle reminder for individuals to continuously cultivate awareness in every facet of their daily lives, enabling them to consciously make choices that promote

well-being and harmony. It could be understood that the Buddha cautioned the Pasenadi king that he should be mindful and considerate when consuming food, knowing when he has eaten enough and when he needs to stop. One needs to take a diet with an awareness of the danger of falling into obesity and other diseases. Besides, it also helps one's mind to be more peaceful and less afflicted, as well as protecting one's health and life. Balance in the Four Great Elements - The Buddha said that a human body is formed by the four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* says, "There are in this body the earth-element, the water-element, the fire-element, the air-element." Thus, the Buddhist teaching proposes four types of food, which are essential requirements for the growth and the maintenance of humans, viz., edible foods (*kabalimkārahāra*), sense impressions (*phassāhāra*), volition (*manosañcetanāhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇāhāra*). The teachings of the Buddha emphasize the interconnectedness of the body and mind, highlighting the importance of nurturing both aspects. In terms of physical health, Buddhism encourages practitioners to cultivate body awareness and mindfulness. This involves maintaining moderation in food consumption, understanding the environmental impact on the body, engaging in regular exercise, and practicing relaxation techniques.

VI. BUDDHA'S DHAMMA RELATED TO MINDFULNESS AND EDUCATION

"Give only if you have little." Buddha

The teachings of Buddha, known as Dhamma, offer a profound framework for cultivating mindfulness and integrating it into educational practices. At its core, Dhamma emphasizes the development of wisdom, ethics, and mental discipline to attain a state of enlightenment, or Nirvana.

Mindfulness, a key aspect of Dhamma, involves being present in the moment, observing thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment or attachment. This practice enables individuals to develop awareness, clarity, and insight into their experiences. In the context of education, mindfulness can be applied in various ways:

- i. Improved focus and concentration: Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep breathing, can help students develop attention and reduce distractions, leading to better academic performance.
- ii. Enhanced emotional regulation: By cultivating mindfulness, students can better manage stress, anxiety, and emotions, creating a more conducive learning environment.
- iii. Increased self-awareness: Mindfulness helps students develop a greater understanding of themselves, including their strengths, weaknesses, and values, leading to more informed decision-making and personal growth.

6.1. In terms of education, Buddha's Dhamma offers valuable insights into the learning process:

- i. Experiential learning: Dhamma encourages direct experience and personal exploration rather than mere intellectual understanding. This

approach can be applied in educational settings through hands-on activities, experiments, and project-based learning.

ii. Critical thinking and inquiry: Buddha's teachings emphasize the importance of critical thinking, questioning assumptions, and seeking wisdom. These skills are essential in education, where students should be encouraged to think critically, analyze information, and evaluate evidence.

iii. Holistic development: Dhamma recognizes the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. Education should similarly aim to foster holistic development, addressing the diverse needs and aspects of students' lives.

6.2. To integrate Buddha's Dhamma into educational practices, teachers and educators can:

i. Incorporate mindfulness practices: Regular mindfulness exercises, such as meditation or yoga, can help students develop greater awareness and calmness.

ii. Encourage critical thinking and inquiry: Educators should create opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking, questioning, and exploration, helping them develop essential skills for lifelong learning.

iii. Foster a supportive and inclusive environment: Teachers should strive to create a safe, empathetic, and inclusive classroom environment, reflecting the principles of compassion, kindness, and understanding embodied in Buddha's Dhamma.

In conclusion, Buddha's Dhamma offers a rich and relevant framework for cultivating mindfulness and informing educational practices. By integrating these principles, educators can help students develop greater awareness, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence, ultimately leading to a more compassionate, wise, and enlightened society.

6.3. Finding peace: The timeless wisdom of Buddha's dhamma²³

"Those who are free of resentful thoughts surely find peace." Buddha

In today's fast-paced, often chaotic world, finding peace and tranquility can seem like an elusive dream. We're constantly bombarded with stressors, from the demands of work and family to the relentless stream of news and social media. It's easy to feel overwhelmed, anxious, and disconnected from ourselves and others.

But what if there was a way to find peace, no matter what challenges you're facing? A way to cultivate a sense of calm, clarity, and inner strength that would allow you to navigate even the most turbulent of times?

Enter Buddha's Dhamma, the timeless teachings of the Buddha that offer a profound and practical path to peace. For over 2,614 years, the Dhamma has been guiding individuals on a journey of self-discovery, transformation, and liberation from suffering.

6.4. The root of suffering

So, where does suffering come from? According to the Buddha, it arises from our minds. We create suffering when we cling to things that are

impermanent, unreliable, and ultimately, unsatisfying. We suffer when we're trapped in cycles of craving, aversion, and ignorance.

But the good news is that we have the power to break free from these cycles. We can learn to recognize and release the patterns of thought and behavior that lead to suffering. We can cultivate a mind that is clear, calm, and compassionate.

6.5. The path to peace

The Buddha's Dhamma offers a clear and practical path to peace. This path is rooted in the Four Noble Truths:

- i. The Truth of Suffering: Recognize that suffering is an inherent part of life.
- ii. The Truth of the Origin of Suffering: Understand that suffering arises from our minds.
- iii. The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: Know that suffering can be overcome.
- iv. The Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering: Follow the Noble Eightfold Path to cultivate wisdom, ethics, and mental discipline.

6.6. Practical steps to peace

So, how can you start cultivating peace in your life? Here are some practical steps:

- i. Practice Mindfulness: Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the present moment. Recognize when your mind is wandering and gently bring it back.
- ii. Cultivate Compassion: Treat yourself and others with kindness, understanding, and patience. Recognize that we're all in this together.
- iii. Let Go of Cravings: Recognize when you're clinging to things that are impermanent and unreliable. Let go of cravings and cultivate a sense of contentment.
- iv. Develop Wisdom: Cultivate a deep understanding of the nature of reality. Recognize that everything is impermanent, unreliable, and ultimately, empty of inherent meaning.

VII. CONCLUSION

The integration of mindfulness in education has the potential to revolutionize the way we learn and interact with the world around us. By cultivating mindfulness in students, we can foster a compassionate and sustainable future. Mindfulness education helps students develop emotional regulation, empathy, and self-awareness, leading to improved academic performance, mental well-being, and social relationships.

The Buddha's Dhamma is a profound and timeless teachings that offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the human condition, the nature of reality, and the path to liberation from suffering. Through its emphasis on mindfulness, meditation, wisdom, ethics, and mental discipline, the Dhamma provides a powerful guide for personal growth, transformation, and self-realization. As we navigate the complexities and challenges of modern life, the

Buddha's Dhamma offers a beacon of hope, wisdom, and guidance, inspiring us to cultivate compassion, wisdom, and peace in our lives and the world.

Finding peace in a chaotic world is not an impossible dream. The Buddha's Dhamma offers a timeless and practical path to peace, one that's rooted in wisdom, compassion, and mindfulness. By following this path, you can cultivate a sense of calm, clarity, and inner strength that will allow you to navigate even the most turbulent of times.

Remember, peace is not something that's found outside of ourselves. It's a state of mind that can be cultivated through practice, patience, and persistence. So, take the first step today. Start cultivating peace in your life, and discover the profound sense of freedom and happiness that awaits.

Moreover, mindfulness education encourages students to adopt a growth mindset, become more resilient, and develop a sense of responsibility towards themselves, others, and the environment. By incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum, we can empower students to become active contributors to creating a more compassionate and sustainable world.

As we move forward, we must prioritize mindfulness in education, recognizing its transformative potential. By doing so, we can shape a future where individuals are equipped to navigate life's challenges with clarity, kindness, and wisdom. Ultimately, mindfulness education holds the key to unlocking a brighter, more compassionate, and sustainable future for all.

Therefore, Buddha, the great teacher, has left an indelible mark on human history. His teachings continue to inspire and guide people from all walks of life, offering a profound and timeless wisdom that transcends cultures, borders, and generations. As we navigate the complexities of our modern world, Buddha's message of peace, compassion, and wisdom remains a beacon of hope, illuminating the path to a more harmonious and enlightened world.

Modern society can learn numerous valuable lessons from the teachings of Lord Buddha, which remain relevant and timeless. Here are some key takeaways:

i. Mindfulness and presence: Lord Buddha emphasized the importance of living in the present moment, letting go of distractions, and cultivating mindfulness. This practice can help individuals reduce stress, increase focus, and enhance overall well-being.

ii. Compassion and empathy: Buddha's teachings stress the value of treating all beings with kindness, understanding, and compassion. This principle can foster a more harmonious and inclusive society.

iii. Interconnectedness and interdependence: Buddhism highlights the interconnectedness of all phenomena, encouraging individuals to recognize their place within the larger web of life. This understanding can promote environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and global cooperation.

iv. Impermanence and adaptability: Lord Buddha taught that everything is impermanent, including ourselves, our relationships, and our surroundings.

This insight can help individuals cultivate adaptability, resilience, and a willingness to evolve and grow.

v. The dangers of craving and attachment: Buddha's teachings warn against the dangers of excessive craving and attachment, which can lead to suffering, conflict, and environmental degradation. By recognizing and managing these tendencies, individuals can develop greater contentment, peace, and sustainability.

vi. The power of self-reflection and personal growth: Buddhism encourages individuals to engage in introspection, self-reflection, and personal growth. This process can help individuals develop greater self-awareness, wisdom, and emotional intelligence.

vii. The importance of ethics and morality: Lord Buddha emphasized the significance of living a morally upright life, adhering to principles such as non-harming, honesty, and fairness. These ethics can foster a more just, compassionate, and harmonious society.

viii. The value of simplicity and contentment: Buddha's teachings promote the value of living simply, being content with what one has, and cultivating a sense of gratitude. This approach can help individuals develop greater happiness, peace, and fulfillment.

ix. The need for critical thinking and discernment: Buddhism encourages individuals to question assumptions, challenge prevailing views, and cultivate critical thinking. This approach can foster greater wisdom, creativity, and innovation.

x. The importance of community and cooperation: Lord Buddha emphasized the value of building strong, supportive communities and working together for the greater good. This principle can promote greater social cohesion, cooperation, and collective well-being.

By embracing these timeless teachings, modern society can cultivate greater wisdom, compassion, and peace, ultimately creating a more harmonious and enlightened world.

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CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF MYANMAR, HONG KONG (CHINA), AND THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract:

This paper examines the impact of Buddhist values on education through three case studies in Myanmar, Hong Kong, and the United States, highlighting diverse applications of Buddhist principles in contemporary learning contexts. In Myanmar, Theravāda monastic schools preserve traditional values and address educational gaps by promoting social responsibility and moral development among disadvantaged students. In Hong Kong, within a multicultural and Mahāyāna-influenced society, Buddhist ethics are integrated into moral and value education via curated teaching materials for primary and secondary schools, aiming to cultivate compassion and ethical awareness. In the United States, mindfulness is introduced as a secular practice to counteract digital-age distractions and enhance attention, emotional regulation, and holistic thinking in students. Across all cases, the study reveals how Buddhist teachings – whether through structured ethical curricula or contemplative practices – contribute to educational transformation, promoting not only academic development but also personal and societal well-being. This exploration underscores the potential of Buddhist-inspired education to meet 21st-century challenges by fostering wisdom, compassion, and resilience in diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords: *Buddhist education, mindfulness, values, ethics, reform.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by increasing globalization and diverse educational systems, the intersection of Buddhist values and modern educational quality has emerged as a topic of profound significance. This paper, titled “Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Educational Improvements: A Comparative Case Study of Myanmar, Hong Kong (China), and the United States,” seeks to contribute valuable insights to the theme of the conference on “Unity and Inclusivity for Human Dignity: Buddhist Insights for World Peace and Sustainable Development.” It explores the dynamic landscape of education by delving into three key areas. First, we investigate the preservation and enhancement of traditional values in monastic schools in Myanmar, shedding light on their unique approaches to aligning global educational standards with the ethos of Buddhism. Next, we delve into integrating Buddhism into Moral and Value Education in Hong Kong, examining the ideas and practices involved in developing Buddhist teaching materials for primary and secondary students. Finally, we explore the introduction of mindfulness in education in America, bridging theory and research to demonstrate how mindfulness practices can be seamlessly integrated into the educational fabric. Through this comprehensive analysis, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the harmonious coexistence of Buddhist values and contemporary education on a global scale.

II. MONASTIC SCHOOLS IN MYANMAR: A COMMITMENT TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE TRADITIONAL VALUES.

Monastic education has been integral to Myanmar’s cultural and educational heritage since the 11th century, long before establishing a formal state education system.^{1, 2} Rooted in Buddhist traditions, monastic schools have played a pivotal role in shaping the moral and intellectual development of the country’s people by teaching pupils, as explained in *Āmagandha Sutta* (*Snp* 2. 2): “One should go about guarded with regard to those things, one’s faculties understood, standing firm in the Dhamma.”³ Despite facing various challenges, including constrained resources,⁴ financial sustainability concerns,⁵ and irregular quality assurance processes,⁶ monastic schools have historical significance and continue contributing to Myanmar’s present-day, highlighting their role in promoting social responsibility, fostering community engagement, and pioneering educational reforms. These schools provide invaluable educational opportunities, especially for children from underprivileged backgrounds and those in remote areas with limited access

¹ Aung and Yi (2016): 25.

² Pun (2018): 2.

³ Thānissaro (2016): 91.

⁴ Veale and Aung (2014): 12.

⁵ Khaing (2020): 2.

⁶ Tin and Stenning (2016): 41.

to government schools.^{7,8} By offering free and inclusive education, monastic schools address critical gaps in the state education system and serve as vital community institutions. Ultimately, monastic schools remain a cornerstone of Myanmar's education landscape, with the potential to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable education system.

2.1. Filling the gaps in the state education system

Monastic schools play a vital role in Myanmar's education system, especially for disadvantaged children who might otherwise be left without access to learning opportunities.^{9, 10} By offering free education,^{11, 12} these schools help bridge gaps in the government's education system¹³ and serve as a lifeline for children from poor families, orphans, and those in remote areas.^{14, 15} Monastic schools are often more accessible than government schools, particularly in rural regions where distance and travel costs can make attending school challenging.^{16, 17} Their flexible enrollment policies also allow them to welcome pupils from all religions,¹⁸ pupils without official documents, or those who have missed traditional schooling timelines,¹⁹ making them a valuable option for migrant families.

2.1.1. Promoting Buddhist values and social responsibility

Monastic schools in Myanmar are vital in promoting Buddhist values and social responsibility, reflecting the deep-rooted connection between Buddhism and education.²⁰ In Myanmar, "school" and "monastery" are synonymous, symbolizing this long-standing relationship. Historically, monasteries have been key centers for educating most Buddhist males, guided by community service principles.²¹ These schools teach Buddhist doctrine to instill moral values,²² foster discipline and respect for traditions,²³ and encourage generosity through the practice of *parahita* (giving for the benefit

⁷ Pun (2018): 2.

⁸ Wai (2011): 2.

⁹ Pun (2018): 1.

¹⁰ Wai (2011): 1.

¹¹ Global New Light of Myanmar (2021): 1.

¹² Khaing (2020): 1.

¹³ Wai (2011): 3.

¹⁴ Shuyin (2015): 1.

¹⁵ Veale and Aung (2014): 12.

¹⁶ Lall (2020): 106.

¹⁷ Tin and Stenning (2016): 13.

¹⁸ Insight Myanmar (2022): 1.

¹⁹ Tin and Stenning (2016): 24.

²⁰ Cheesman (2003a): 42.

²¹ Lall (2020): 23.

²² Bennett (2017): 4.

²³ Cheesman (2003b): 59.

of others),²⁴ as the major teaching of the Buddha in *Serī Sutta* (SN 2:23 (3)): “having removed stinginess, The conqueror of the stain should give a gift. Deeds of merit are the support for living beings.”²⁵ Monastic schools also strengthen social cohesion^{26,27} by uniting pupils from diverse backgrounds and providing essential social services,²⁸ particularly in times of need.²⁹ By teaching life skills such as simplicity, self-sufficiency, and mutual respect, they help shape responsible and compassionate individuals.³⁰ Despite challenges like limited resources and untrained staff, monastic schools continue to make a meaningful impact by offering education and nurturing essential values, especially for vulnerable children in Myanmar.³¹

2.1.2. Pioneering educational reforms

Monastic schools in Myanmar have a rich history and continue to play a vital role in the country’s education system by adapting to changing times. For centuries, monastic schools were the primary providers of education, forming the foundation of Myanmar’s educational traditions.^{32,33} However, their influence diminished during British colonization when a new education system was introduced.³⁴ Despite efforts by the British to reform them, monastic schools retained their importance due to their deep cultural and religious roots.³⁵ After Myanmar gained independence, monastic schools experienced a revival. The government encouraged them to incorporate modern and worldly education to complement traditional teachings.^{36,37} In 1952, the Pyidawthar Conference led to a plan to further develop monastic education, with the Public Education Council overseeing its implementation.³⁸ However, monastic schools faced a setback when they were officially banned from 1962 to 1988 under General Ne Win’s regime.³⁹ Fortunately, they were allowed to reopen in 1992, and since then, registered monastic schools have followed the national curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education.⁴⁰

²⁴ Shuyin (2015): 3.

²⁵ Bodhi (2003): 152

²⁶ Cheesman (2003a): 25.

²⁷ Cheesman (2003b): 59.

²⁸ Cheesman (2003a): 24.

²⁹ Matelski (2015): 6.

³⁰ Insight Myanmar (2022): 1.

³¹ Mon (2014): 11.

³² Khaing (2020): 23.

³³ Aung and Yi (2016): 25.

³⁴ Pun (2018): 2.

³⁵ Cheesman (2003b): 59.

³⁶ Aung and Yi (2016): 28.

³⁷ Khaing (2020): 27.

³⁸ Aung and Yi (2016): 28.

³⁹ Khaing (2020): 1.

⁴⁰ Pun (2018): 2.

In recent decades, monastic schools have embraced educational reforms, particularly child-centered teaching approaches (CCA) introduced by international organizations in the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁴¹ Notably, Phaung Daw Oo, the country's largest monastic school, adopted these methods even before government schools implemented them.⁴² Today, monastic schools are recognized as a complementary part of Myanmar's education system and are officially included in the National Education Law.⁴³ The government now supports monastic schools, including funding for teacher salaries and textbooks.^{44,45,46} While they may not have been the first to implement all reforms, monastic schools have shown remarkable adaptability and continue to provide quality education to children, particularly those from vulnerable communities. Their enduring presence highlights their significant contribution to Myanmar's modern education landscape.

2.2. Overcome challenges and limitations of monastic schools for a better future

Addressing key challenges and limitations will help ensure a brighter future for monastic schools in Myanmar, allowing them to continue providing essential education to disadvantaged children. One important focus is improving the quality of education and ensuring greater accountability⁴⁷ following the teaching of *Ratana Sutta* (Khp 6): "Whatever bad deed one may do – in body, speech, or in mind – one cannot hide it: an incapability ascribed to one who has seen the Way."⁴⁸ Teacher training remains a critical need, as many teachers in monastic schools lack the necessary qualifications and ongoing support to adapt to curriculum reforms,^{49,50} such as child-centered approaches (CCA).⁵¹ Developing minimum standards for teacher recruitment, qualifications, and training can enhance teaching quality.⁵² Additionally, establishing a quality assurance body to monitor teaching practices, administration, and school management would promote transparency and accountability within the monastic school system.⁵³

Financial sustainability is another crucial area. Monastic schools often rely heavily on community donations and government support, which

⁴¹ Lall (2020): 111.

⁴² Lall (2020): 101, 126.

⁴³ Khaing (2020): 32-3.

⁴⁴ Aung and Yi (2016): 31.

⁴⁵ Cheesman (2003a): 100.

⁴⁶ Global New Light of Myanmar (2021): 1.

⁴⁷ Tin and Stenning (2016): 10.

⁴⁸ Thānissaro (2017): 15

⁴⁹ Veale and Aung (2014): 68.

⁵⁰ Tin and Stenning (2016): 25.

⁵¹ Veale and Aung (2014): 4.

⁵² Tin and Stenning (2016): 41.

⁵³ Tin and Stenning (2016): 46.

can be inconsistent.⁵⁴ To address this, schools should explore sustainable income-generating activities, such as developing products or services to fund school operations.⁵⁵ They can also seek partnerships with non-governmental organizations, international donors, and corporate sponsors to diversify their funding sources.^{56,57} Effective financial management practices will help ensure these funds are used efficiently.

Infrastructure and resource constraints also pose significant challenges. Many monastic schools lack proper classrooms, reliable electricity, and sufficient teaching materials.^{58, 59} Addressing these issues will require investment in infrastructure, which could be supported through partnerships with organizations specializing in education and development.⁶⁰ Even with improved funding, schools need efficient resource allocation strategies to ensure transparency and accountability in managing their resources.⁶¹

Strengthening collaboration and partnerships is essential for the long-term sustainability of monastic schools. Government support is crucial, particularly in financial assistance, teacher training, and infrastructure development.^{62, 63} Partnerships with NGOs, international organizations, and other educational institutions can bring additional resources, expertise, and innovative teaching practices to monastic schools.⁶⁴

Finally, promoting the value of monastic education is key to attracting further support. Public awareness campaigns can highlight these schools' critical role in educating vulnerable children.⁶⁵ Advocating for greater policy recognition will help ensure monastic education is included in national education planning and reforms, reinforcing its legitimacy within the broader education system.⁶⁶ By addressing these challenges, monastic schools can continue to provide quality education, foster positive values, and contribute to a more equitable future for Myanmar's children.

III. INCORPORATION OF BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES IN MORAL AND VALUE EDUCATION FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS IN HONG KONG

3.1. Hong Kong education system and its development strategy

⁵⁴ Tin and Stenning (2016): 44.

⁵⁵ Lall (2020): 127.

⁵⁶ Khaing (2020): 55.

⁵⁷ Lall (2020): 127.

⁵⁸ Veale and Aung (2014): 5.

⁵⁹ Tin and Stenning (2016): 30.

⁶⁰ Tin and Stenning (2016): 30.

⁶¹ Khaing (2020): 68.

⁶² Aung and Yi (2016): 28.

⁶³ Global New Light of Myanmar (2021): 1.

⁶⁴ Khaing (2020): 55, 68.

⁶⁵ Khaing (2020): 68.

⁶⁶ Tin and Stenning (2016): 46.

Hong Kong stands out as a special and valuable hub for religious education, with the government actively supporting diverse cultural education services offered by religious communities. These include institutions representing Protestant Christianity, Roman Catholicism, Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and Confucianism. The rich tapestry of these religious communities contributes significantly to the educational landscape, with a notable presence of Christian and Catholic schools, surpassing the number of Buddhist, Daoist, Islamic, and Confucian schools in the region.⁶⁷

The Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council has established a comprehensive framework of qualities crucial for holistic development, equipping students to navigate the challenges of the 21st century. This framework aims to foster positive values, attitudes, and a lifelong commitment to learning, while also honing generic skills necessary for knowledge acquisition and construction.⁶⁸ Emphasizing key learning goals, students are encouraged to recognize their roles and responsibilities within the family, society, and the nation. The curriculum places importance on their well-being, understanding of national identity, and dedication to contributing meaningfully to both the nation and society. Additionally, it encourages independent reading habits, active and confident participation in discussions in both English and Chinese (Cantonese or Putonghua), the cultivation of creative thinking, and mastery of independent learning skills such as critical thinking, information technology, numeracy, and self-management. Students are also guided to build a solid foundation of knowledge across the eight Key Learning Areas (KLA) and to lead a healthy lifestyle, fostering an appreciation for aesthetic and physical activities.⁶⁹

3.2. Integrate Buddhist moral education and values into the curriculum of Hong Kong's schools

One of the vibrant components within the Eight Key Learning Areas,⁷⁰ according to the school's curriculum guide, "Personal, Social and Humanities Education" (PSHE) encompasses religious studies. In this inclusive educational environment, Buddhist education, broadly defined as religious and moral education, falls under the umbrella of PSHE. A noteworthy initiative within this realm involves the creation of teaching materials that delve into "Buddhist moral education and values" for schools, showcasing a distinctive facet of PSHE. Educators and curriculum developers aspire to cultivate students' essential skills, values, and attitudes by incorporating education on Buddhist moral principles and values within the PSHE framework.⁷¹ This proactive approach underscores the contemporary focus of religious education, leveraging the power of belief to enhance the effectiveness of moral and life

⁶⁷ Committee on Home-School Co-operation (2016).

⁶⁸ Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council (2002).

⁶⁹ Hong Kong Yearbook (2004).

⁷⁰ Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council (2001): Appendix II.

⁷¹ Hung (2017): 63.

education. Essentially, the aim is to expand the role of religious education beyond imparting religious content, guiding students to reflect on the profound significance of religious philosophy in shaping one's personality and morality,⁷² following the Buddha's teachings in *Titthāyatana Sutta* (AN 3.61): "...this, *bhikkhus*, is the Dhamma taught by me that is unrefuted, undefiled, irreproachable, and uncensored by wise ascetics and brahmins."⁷³

In alignment with the guidelines and overall goals of the secondary school religious education curriculum set forth by the CDC and the Education Department Bureau (EDB) of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association (HKBA) which runs 13 secondary schools and 7 primary schools⁷⁴ has tailored its curriculum to suit these standards, with religious community schools offering corresponding courses. The curriculum encompasses a range of enriching topics, including defining religion, understanding the language of the religion, exploring the founder, delving into the beliefs and practices of believers, examining religious communities, exploring worship, delving into beliefs, addressing social action, and considering morals.⁷⁵ Although initially crafted in 1999, some aspects, such as the aim of religious education, curriculum content, teaching strategies, and student exercises, may benefit from updates to better align with the current needs of religious education. The curriculum predominantly emphasizes fundamental Buddhist doctrines and philosophy, with a comparatively smaller focus on social action and morals. To enhance Buddhist education, there is room for development in integrating Buddhist teachings into modern moral and value education. This harmonious fusion of Buddhism with contemporary values aims to equip students with the tools to overcome life's challenges, all within the overarching framework of curriculum reform.⁷⁶

3.3. Introduction of new Buddhism curriculum syllabus and its outcomes

Between 2008 and 2015, the Center of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong wholeheartedly embraced the Life Education Based on the Concept of Dependent Origination (LEDO) curriculum project in 2010. It enthusiastically embarked on the "Buddhist Moral Education and Values" for primary and secondary schools (BMEV) curriculum initiative in 2015. The dedicated team worked diligently to create a comprehensive set of electronic teaching materials for upper primary and lower secondary forms, including a user-friendly electronic teacher's manual and an engaging electronic student handbook. They are not only teaching materials for teachers but also self-directed learning materials. The overarching goals of this inspiring initiative were to elevate the quality of learning and teaching in the Buddhist curriculum, empowering students to integrate Buddhist teachings into their daily lives seamlessly. The project also aimed to foster personal growth among students,

⁷² Ng (2004): 129.

⁷³ Bodhi (2012): 270.

⁷⁴ Hong Kong Buddhist Association (2000).

⁷⁵ Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council (1999).

⁷⁶ Hung (2017): 67.

instilling positive attitudes and values and fostering a deeper and more accurate understanding of the Buddhist faith,⁷⁷ employing the progress learning of the Dhamma follower in *Kiṭṭāgiri Sutta* (MN 70): “he pays respect to him (the Buddha); when he pays respect to him, he gives ear; one who gives ear hears the Dhamma; having heard the Dhamma, he memorizes it; he examines the meaning of the teachings he has memorized; when he examines their meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings.”⁷⁸

The project’s primary objective is to underscore the significance of incorporating Buddhist teachings into everyday life, fostering positive and commendable attitudes and values. Notably, the aim of “understanding the Buddhist faith” is considered the final and least prioritized goal. This deliberate choice suggests a shift in focus within the teaching materials, moving from the Buddhist faith to a greater emphasis on moral education. Consequently, the revised curriculum highlights the potential enhancement and development of an individual’s wisdom and intelligence through extensive learning, frequent reflection, and diligent mindfulness practice – reflecting the essence of Buddha’s teachings on “three kinds of knowing.”^{79, 80} In 2015, a comprehensive set of teaching materials for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary students was successfully developed. These materials aim to augment students’ capacity to comprehend and understand life and self, effectively manage daily challenges, cope with life stressors, and cultivate positive attitudes and values through the teachings of Buddhism,⁸¹ well-versed in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16): “Morality, samadhi, wisdom, and final release, these glorious things Gotama came to know.”⁸²

The new curriculum stands out for its positive features, emphasizing the profound relevance of Buddhist teachings in our day-to-day existence. Firstly, the educational materials illustrate religious education’s seamless integration into a contemporary curriculum framework, particularly Buddhism. Secondly, the curriculum vividly showcases the practical application of Buddhist principles in everyday life. Thirdly, by incorporating stories from modern times, the curriculum ensures that its content remains pertinent to real-life experiences in today’s society. Notably, as a pioneering initiative in applying Buddhist teachings, the curriculum introduces new elements, such as “the environment and I,” aligning with contemporary guidelines for the interconnectedness of one’s life with the broader society and environment.⁸³

In conclusion, this study highlights the successful integration of traditional Buddhist ethics into the moral and value education of a modern school system

⁷⁷ Hung (2005).

⁷⁸ Bodhi & Ñāṇamoli (1995): 583.

⁷⁹ Cleary (2014): 55.

⁸⁰ Sik and Wu (2015): 257 - 9.

⁸¹ Bing (2017): 77.

⁸² Walshe (1995): 254.

⁸³ Sik, Wu, and Chen (2012): 82.

within the open, diverse, and multicultural setting of Hong Kong. Crafting teaching and reading materials and adopting a pedagogical methodology emerges as a highly effective strategy in harmonizing conventional Buddhist ethics with contemporary educational practices. This pioneering approach bridges the gap between tradition and modernity and contributes to developing morality and essential skills among primary and secondary school students. It is celebrated as a groundbreaking effort to make Buddhist teachings pertinent and practical in today's daily life.⁸⁴

IV. PROMOTING MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION: BRIDGING THEORY AND RESEARCH WITH PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION IN AMERICA

4.1. Exploring the aims and potential of incorporating mindfulness into education

The growing enthusiasm for mindfulness in education is evident through the increasing number of studies on mindfulness in teacher education, teacher professional development, educational leadership development, organizational change,^{85,86} and mindfulness training for students in early childhood and elementary and secondary school settings.^{87, 88} "Mindfulness in Education" primarily aims to achieve the following objectives: (1) comprehend the definitions of mindfulness and the potential positive impacts it can have on education from diverse perspectives; (2) present evolving theories on mindfulness in education and their implications for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering positive human relationships in school settings; (3) bring attention to emerging methods, measures, and robust research designs employed in this field; (4) highlight developing programs and research involving children, adolescents, and emerging adults; (5) emphasize developing programs and research involving educators and educational leaders; and (6) chart out future directions for the advancement of theory, research, and program development in this exciting area.⁸⁹

4.2. Cultivating mindfulness in education: exploring the science and practical applications with educators

Numerous studies are currently delving into the positive outcomes associated with incorporating mindfulness training into the daily routines of educators.⁹⁰ These investigations suggest that the advantages are broad and impactful, as mindfulness training fosters three interconnected pathways of enrichment in teachers' lives: (1) cultivating mindfulness as a valuable self-care resource, which is usually presented in *Dhammapada*, for example, *Citta*

⁸⁴ Bing (2017): 192.

⁸⁵ Tobin (2018): 5.

⁸⁶ Schonert-Reichl and Roeser (2016b): 4.

⁸⁷ Coss (2012): 2.

⁸⁸ Erwin et al., (2015): 74.

⁸⁹ Schonert-Reichl and Roeser (2016b): 5.

⁹⁰ Tobin (2018): 6.

Vagga (*Dph* ver. 37): “They who will restrain the mind, Far-ranging, roaming alone, Incorporeal, lying ahiding - They are released from Māra’s bonds,”⁹¹ (2) embracing mindfulness as a tool for developing reflective teaching practices as described in *Avakujja Sutta* (*AN* 3.30 (10)): “This person of the best intentions, his mind undivided, retains [what he hears]. Practicing in accordance with the Dhamma,”⁹² and (3) utilizing mindfulness as a catalyst for enhancing the learning experience for students in the classroom,⁹³ because it’s all good according to the Path of Purification, *Visuddhimagga* (*Vism* VII.70) “is good in the beginning with virtue as one’s own well-being. It is good in the middle with serenity and insight and with path and fruition. It is good in the end with Nibbāna.”⁹⁴

Self-Care. Teachers today face growing demands, which, unfortunately, can lead to increased stress and burnout.⁹⁵ This can notably impact their mental and physical well-being, ultimately affecting the quality of care they provide to students.⁹⁶ To address this, integrating mindfulness into teacher training can prove beneficial, with a particular emphasis on self-care. By prioritizing their own well-being, teachers can ensure they are better equipped to offer competent, empathetic care to their students based on the teaching described in *Kassapasamyutta Sutta* (*SN* 16.3): “Thus he teaches the Dhamma to others because of the intrinsic excellence of the Dhamma; he teaches the Dhamma to others from compassion and sympathy, out of tender concern.”⁹⁷ Managing stress is crucial for sustaining professional effectiveness, as it directly influences teachers’ attention and concentration.⁹⁸ Through cultivating self-awareness, teachers can better navigate their own physical and psychological experiences, allowing them to respond more effectively to the needs of their students.⁹⁹

Becoming a More Mindful Teacher. Engaging in mindfulness practice is linked to valuable qualities that greatly contribute to effective teaching. These include heightened attention, increased empathy, improved emotion regulation, and enhanced affect tolerance. Numerous studies indicate that mindfulness training plays a pivotal role in developing specific professional skills crucial for teaching success.¹⁰⁰ The mindful teacher embodies qualities that positively impact student outcomes, fostering sustained attention, the ability to regulate attention effectively, attunement, and self-regulation¹⁰¹ under the teaching of

⁹¹ Carter & Palihawadana (2000): 8.

⁹² Bodhi (2012): 227.

⁹³ Shapiro, Rechtschaffen, and de Sousa (2016): 83.

⁹⁴ Buddhaghosa & Ñāṇamoli (2010): 210.

⁹⁵ Jennings and Greenberg (2019).

⁹⁶ Jennings, Roeser, and Lantieri (2012): 380.

⁹⁷ Bodhi (2003): 655.

⁹⁸ Braunstein-Berkowitz (2003).

⁹⁹ Valente and Marotta (2005).

¹⁰⁰ Shapiro, Carlson, and Kabat-Zinn (2017): 25.

¹⁰¹ Germer, Siegel, and Fulton (2005): 14.

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10): “(He) ... ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.”¹⁰² Furthermore, mindfulness elevates compassion, a fundamental aspect of effective teaching.¹⁰³ A teacher’s focused attention not only strengthens the connection between the teacher and the student but also establishes a nurturing learning environment, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience.¹⁰⁴

Providing Mindfulness in the Classroom. Numerous schools and organizations embrace the integration of mindfulness into their physical environments, recognizing the substantial impact that the setting can have on student engagement and learning.¹⁰⁵ Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering mindfulness within schools, primarily through the practice of mindful communication. By doing so, educators create an atmosphere where they can connect with students in more tuned-in and empathetic ways, thereby serving as models for emotional intelligence. Some innovative schools have adopted practices such as a brief moment of silent breathing broadcasted over the loudspeaker each morning, while certain teachers choose to commence and conclude their classes with the soothing sound of a bell, incorporating mindful movements, or engaging in mindful sharing.¹⁰⁶ These thoughtful initiatives contribute to a positive and harmonious educational experience for both teachers and students alike.

4.3. Promoting mindfulness in education: bridging science and training for student well-being

An expanding body of research suggests that even brief mindfulness training can positively influence brain functioning and neuroanatomy.¹⁰⁷ This includes enhancing the functional connectivity between different brain regions, ultimately boosting the brain’s efficiency in processing information.¹⁰⁸ Mindfulness training has proven effective in refining the ability to focus attention, which is particularly beneficial for students selectively, as the Buddha stated in the *Uruvelā Sutta* (AN 4.22): “that (concentration) constitute the higher mind and are pleasant dwellings in this very life.”¹⁰⁹ The promising outcomes from studies conducted primarily with adults have generated a growing interest in introducing mindfulness training into school environments to enhance academic achievement.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, there is a focus on exploring the impact of mindfulness training on children and adolescents from a cognitive neuroscience perspective. Engaging in mindfulness practices may empower

¹⁰² Bodhi & Ñāṇamoli (1995): 145.

¹⁰³ Condon et al. (2013).

¹⁰⁴ Geller and Greenberg (2012): 47.

¹⁰⁵ Roeser and Eccles (2014).

¹⁰⁶ Shapiro, Rechtschaffen, and de Sousa (2016): 90.

¹⁰⁷ Napoli, Krech, and Holley (2005).

¹⁰⁸ Kilpatrick et al. (2011).

¹⁰⁹ Bodhi (2012): 409.

¹¹⁰ Zelazo and Lyons (2012).

students to enhance (1) Self-care and Compassion, and (2) Self-regulation, thereby augmenting their capacity to learn and excel academically.¹¹¹

Self-care and Compassion. In the realm of education, it is imperative to foster the growth of students' abilities for self-care and compassion through meditation. This not only contributes to their overall well-being but also cultivates ethical sensibilities and encourages civic engagement.¹¹² Extensive research indicates that the capacity for self-care and compassion emerges early in development¹¹³ and can be nurtured throughout adolescence and adulthood.¹¹⁴ Dedicated teams of educators and researchers are actively collaborating to design and implement contemplative-based programs tailored for both teachers and students. Recent studies highlight the potential benefits of specific forms of meditation training, indicating that it has the power to positively impact health, well-being, and prosocial behavior. This encompasses qualities such as kindness, cooperation,¹¹⁵ and altruistic action¹¹⁶ benefiting both educators and learners alike.

Self-regulation. Enhancing self-regulation is a significant opportunity to address key public health concerns, as it plays a crucial role in mitigating issues related to addiction, as well as physical and mental well-being.¹¹⁷ Mindfulness training emerges as a valuable strategy to foster self-regulation, which is exerted in the *Soṇavaggo Sutta (Ud 5)*: "Who is confident, inspiring confidence, with (sense) faculties at peace, mind at peace, having attained supreme self-control and calm, controlled, guarded, with restrained faculties, a (true) *nāga* (dragon),"¹¹⁸ especially when longitudinal studies indicate that children with stronger self-regulation exhibit enhanced readiness for kindergarten,¹¹⁹ achieve higher grades throughout their educational journey,¹²⁰ have an increased likelihood of high school graduation,¹²¹ and are more likely to earn a college degree by age 25.¹²² Furthermore, children adept at regulating their attention, emotions, and behavior not only experience improved social functioning¹²³ and physical health¹²⁴ but also encounter fewer mental health challenges.¹²⁵

¹¹¹ Lyons and DeLange (2016).

¹¹² Lavelle (2016): 285.

¹¹³ Warneken (2013).

¹¹⁴ Lutz et al. (2008).

¹¹⁵ Grossman et al. (2004).

¹¹⁶ Pace et al. (2010).

¹¹⁷ Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice (1994).

¹¹⁸ Ānandajoti (2008): 117 - 8.

¹¹⁹ Blair and Razza (2007).

¹²⁰ Duckworth and Carlson (2013): 208 – 30.

¹²¹ Galla et al. (2011).

¹²² McClelland et al. (2013).

¹²³ Spinrad et al. (2006).

¹²⁴ Tsukayama et al. (2010).

¹²⁵ Eisenberg, Hofer, and Vaughan (2007).

The positive outcomes extend into adulthood, where individuals with higher self-regulation tend to earn higher incomes, save more for retirement, and are less likely to have a history of incarceration during their early adult years.¹²⁶ Emphasizing and nurturing self-regulation in children thus holds promise for fostering overall well-being and future success.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this empirical investigation into the intersection of Buddhist values and modern educational quality across Myanmar, Hong Kong (China), and America illuminates promising avenues for positive transformations in global education. Monastic schools in Myanmar showcase the potential for holistic development, emphasizing academic ability and ethical and moral grounding. Hong Kong's incorporation of Buddhist principles in moral and value education for primary and secondary students reflects a commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals with a strong ethical foundation. The introduction of mindfulness in American education exemplifies the bridging of theory and research with practical implementation. These comparative studies encourage a nuanced understanding of how diverse educational systems can integrate the Buddhist timeless values to foster comprehensive and quality learning experiences. Embracing these insights could pave the way for a more harmonious, compassionate, and effective global education landscape.

Abbreviation

AN:	Āṅguttara Nikāya (The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha)
DN:	Dīgha Nikāya (The Long Discourses of the Buddha)
Dpd:	Dhammapada (The Sayings of the Buddha)
Khp:	Khuddakapāṭha: Collection of Short Discourses
MN:	Majjhima Nikāya (The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha)
SN:	Saṃyutta Nikāya (The Connected Discourses of the Buddha)
Snp:	Sutta Nipāta (The Discourse Group)
Ud:	Udāna (Exalted Utterances)
Vism:	Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification)

¹²⁶ Moffitt et al. (20).

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR COMPASSION AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

Mindfulness in education has gained increasing attention as a powerful for improving students' well-being, focus, and academic performance. This abstract explores the benefits of incorporating mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep breathing exercises, into educational settings. By incorporating mindfulness practices into curriculum, schools can nurture self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation, which are the foundational for cultivating compassion. Practices such as meditation, mindful breathing, and mindfulness meditation can increase concentration, reduce stress, and create a supportive learning environment. Research highlights that mindfulness not only improves academic outcomes but also promotes prosocial behavior and resilience, addressing challenges like bullying and emotional distress. Mindfulness educators exhibit compassionate behaviors that create impact throughout the school. These points highlight the importance of integrating mindfulness into education to create greater understanding and compassion.

Keywords: *mindfulness, well-being, positive psychology, practices, happiness, awareness, compassion.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, students in higher education are experiencing stress and anxiety, such that it impedes their academic success and personal well-being. Mindfulness in education equips students to manage stress, focus on learning, and grow emotionally. Teachers, too, are struggling to keep up with demands, often burning out under the weight of their responsibilities. What if there were a way to create calmer classrooms, reduce stress, and foster a deeper connection to learning for both students and educators? Mindfulness

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may be the answer. The idea of teaching mindfulness to students might seem counterintuitive, but it is well suited to many educational settings. The environments where mindfulness is hardest to implement are often the ones that stand to benefit from it the most.

By integrating mindfulness into our curriculum, we nurture emotionally intelligent and compassionate individuals while fostering a cohesive community built on empathy, gratitude, and social responsibility. Together, let's embrace the path of mindfulness in education and create a brighter, more compassionate future for all.

II. THE CURRENT SITUATION

All students experience learning pressure at various stages. The pressures of academic performance, social dynamics, and personal circumstances can significantly impact students' mental health and overall well-being.

By prioritizing these non-academic aspects of education, institutions can create a more holistic approach to learning that not only enhances academic outcomes but also nurtures the mental and emotional well-being of students. This comprehensive approach can lead to a more positive school culture, reducing instances of bullying and violence while promoting a sense of belonging and engagement among all students. Some programs focus on teaching students how to practice mindfulness, while others aim to equip teachers with the skills to guide their students in mindfulness practices. There are also initiatives directed at administrators, parents, or the general public. Despite the diverse audiences, the ultimate goal remains the same: to achieve positive outcomes.

Educators must focus on academic outcomes and classroom material but can also promote new non-academic curricula to create a better learning environment. Mindfulness training can be valuable for helping students be more successful learners and more connected members of an educational community. Given the challenges students face, mindfulness instruction should be integrated into all levels of formal education to enhance academic success and well-being.

Mindfulness training not only fosters a positive learning environment but also equips students with essential tools for coping with challenges outside the classroom. As students face increasing pressures, embedding mindfulness in the educational curriculum could serve as a proactive approach to support mental health and enhance the overall learning experience. Therefore, implementing mindfulness instruction across all educational levels is a promising strategy that can help students navigate their academic pursuits and cultivate a more connected and balanced educational community.

III. MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION FOR COMPASSION AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

3.1. Understanding of mindfulness

Mindfulness in Pali is referred to as "*Samāsati*" (P) or "*Samyaksmr̥ti*" (Skt), which translates to right awareness, similar to the English terms "Correct

Thinking,” “Right Mindfulness,” or “Right Awareness.” In Buddhism, the term “*Sati*” encompasses various meanings and interpretations that can vary based on its usage in Vietnamese. For instance, it can refer to thinking about something mentally, contemplating, paying attention, or focusing on a specific object. It also involves remembering positive aspects or dismissing negative ones. Essentially, mindfulness signifies a state of being “Aware” at all times.

Mindfulness, a concept rooted in Buddhist philosophy, is gaining recognition as a powerful tool in education. By fostering focus, emotional regulation, and self-awareness, mindfulness helps students grow both intellectually and spiritually, promoting their holistic development.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the renowned Vietnamese Buddhist teacher and advocate for world peace and justice, describes mindfulness as being at the heart of the Buddha’s teachings. He defines it as ‘attention to the present moment’ that is ‘inclusive and loving’ and ‘accepts everything without judging or reacting’ (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999, p. 64). Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990; 1994) and his colleagues have played a key role in transforming this spiritual concept into a widely used therapeutic tool, integrating meditation and mindful practices into modern psychology.” Mindfulness simply means ‘paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality’ (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4 – 5). Such practice whether this involves breathing or walking meditation or giving full non-judgmental attention to everyday activities can offer a ‘*powerful route for getting ourselves unstuck, back in touch with our wisdom and vitality.*’ (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4 – 5).

Mindfulness can be defined in various ways. It involves intentionally focusing on the present moment with a non-judgmental, compassionate awareness. It is a way of being and relating to our inner and outer experiences, as well as a reconnection with our senses, both literal and metaphorical. Mindfulness is also a rediscovery, a recognition of our innate ability to be fully present in our lives, engaging directly with the world without the influence of preconceived notions, past events, or personal biases.

Mindfulness as a word has been around for centuries. In short, mindfulness is to be present in the moment with all our senses, non-judgmentally, and not worrying about the past or the future. Presence comes when we are attentive when we are aware of our experience. Mindfulness is about “attention and awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 4).

By cultivating mindfulness, the Dalai Lama (2005) reminds us, ‘we learn first to become aware of this process of dissipation so that we can gently fine-tune the mind to follow a more directed path towards the objects on which we wish to focus’ (Dalai Lama, 2005, p.160).¹ It is important to note that such attention has ‘a deliberate intention that helps us select a specific aspect or a

¹ Dalai Lama, 2005, p. 160.

characteristic of an object. The continued, voluntary application of attention is what helps us maintain a sustained focus on the chosen object. Attention training is intricately linked with learning how to control our mental processes (p. 161). This control, which is fundamental to therapeutic mindfulness practices, is associated with the Buddhist objective of eliminating erroneous self-conceptions.

No matter the challenges or hardships we face, we must embrace them and strive to rise above. Rising above these challenges allows us to live a fulfilling life, where we find happiness, health, wisdom, and make positive contributions to ourselves and our community. To achieve this kind of life, we need to take control of our own path. Taking control of our own path is essential to achieving this kind of life. When our lives are organized, stable, healthy, and joyful, we are better able to fulfill our responsibilities to our families and society. If we aim to cultivate a naturally peaceful and orderly existence, it is crucial to break the habit of chasing trends and shift that restless mindset into adopting a more tranquil one through exploring mindfulness practices.

3.2. What is mindfulness education?

The term “mindfulness” is often associated with relaxation and mental clarity. However, mindfulness is much more than that. As Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) explains, it is “being aware of things in a specific, intentional, moment-to-moment, nonjudgmental way.” This means bringing full attention to what is happening right now – not clinging to thoughts of the past or rushing ahead to future worries.

Mindfulness can serve various roles in both education and clinical practice. Clinical practice functions range from implicit to explicit (Germer, 2005). At the more implicit end of the continuum are the potential benefits for the practitioner, such as enhancing one’s humanity, sensitivity, kindness, and presence. Subsequently, mindfulness-informed therapy is implemented, incorporating diverse mindfulness-based perspectives, dialogues, inquiries, and practices into the therapeutic sessions. At the specialized end of the spectrum, principles and practices are tailored to the individual patient, with personalized guidance on their application in daily life (Germer, 2005). Context is always important, and so too is the contingency that contributes to students’ feelings of being unsafe in their learning environments (Jones, 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2017). Understanding and identifying feelings can help students behave in a helpful, socially responsible, friendly, cooperative, and academically successful manner. Research suggests that students with higher levels of empathy tend to exhibit less aggressive behavior, possess better social skills, are more well-liked by peers, and achieve greater academic success (Arsenio, Cooperman, & Lover, 2000; Denham, 2006; Izard, 2002).

3.3. The benefits of mindfulness in the classroom

The concept of mindfulness which religious and philosophical groups have employed for centuries has become increasingly popular in recent years particularly within Western culture thanks to Buddhist and Hindu teachings.

Mindfulness represents a universal state of awareness that people from all walks of life can experience without religious associations. Educators can develop lessons that use mindfulness exercises to help students build self-awareness while learning to care for their bodies and handle their emotions. Mindfulness transforms into an everyday student routine through proper curriculum integration instead of becoming a mere supplemental activity.

Mindfulness practices are intentional activities that cultivate a state of mindfulness in the moment. When practiced regularly over time, mindfulness has measurable positive effects on attention, concentration, creativity, and compassion, as well as overall health in the form of reduced stress, reduced depression, lower blood pressure, and increased emotional self-regulation (Didonna, 2009).

The practice of mindfulness originates from age-old contemplative traditions and involves observing thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the environment without judgment while remaining fully present in the moment. Through its practice, individuals develop self-awareness which leads to improved emotional control and strengthened resilience. Teachers use mindfulness in classrooms through activities like breathing exercises and guided meditations which along with mindful movements including yoga enable students to improve their focus and self-awareness.

Mindfulness is expected to benefit teaching and student learning. Initially, as described by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2013), mindfulness emphasizes bringing attention to the present moment, encouraging individuals to engage fully with their immediate experiences. Over time, researchers have expanded this definition to view mindfulness as a metacognitive skill. Bishop et al. (2004) further elaborate on this concept by indicating that mindfulness involves a state of alertness and awareness, facilitating the inhibition of elaborative processing. This allows individuals to orient themselves to their present experience, thereby enhancing their ability to focus or concentrate on specific tasks or sensations. Whether we are teaching in an elementary school, middle school, high school, or even at a higher education institution, teaching mindfulness can help to advance students' emotional learning and overall well-being.

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn's work on mindfulness highlights its profound impact on students' overall well-being and development. By incorporating mindfulness practices into educational settings, students can cultivate an inner sense of balance that enhances their ability to manage stress and navigate challenges. This inner strength not only bolsters academic performance but also fosters personal growth. He cites.

"Mindfulness isn't about silencing the mind; it's about becoming the observer of its noise, finding peace amidst the chaos."

However, the integration of mindfulness practices in schools not only benefits students but also plays a crucial role in enhancing educators' well-being. When teachers engage in mindfulness, they develop skills that help them manage stress, enhance focus, and cultivate a positive classroom atmosphere.

i. Improved emotional regulation: Mindfulness helps teachers recognize and manage their emotions more effectively. This leads to better responses to classroom challenges, reducing instances of frustration or burnout.

ii. Enhanced focus and attention: Practicing mindfulness can improve concentration, allowing teachers to be more present in their teaching and interactions with students. This heightened awareness can enhance lesson delivery and engagement.

iii. Reduced stress and anxiety: Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and deep breathing, can significantly lower stress levels. Teachers who manage their stress effectively are more likely to maintain a positive outlook and promote a supportive learning environment.

iv. Better relationships with students: Mindfulness encourages empathetic listening and improves communication skills. As teachers become more attuned to their students' needs and emotions, they can foster stronger relationships, creating a more inclusive classroom.

v. Increased job satisfaction: By experiencing reduced stress and improved classroom dynamics, teachers may find greater fulfillment in their roles, leading to longer retention rates and a more stable teaching workforce.

vi. Role modeling for students: When teachers practice mindfulness, they set an example for their students. This can encourage students to adopt similar practices, promoting a culture of mindfulness and emotional intelligence throughout the school.

Supportive professional environment: Schools that prioritize mindfulness create a culture of well-being and support among staff, fostering collaboration and reducing feelings of isolation.

Mindfulness, which involves being present and aware of the current moment, has numerous benefits for students of all ages. When incorporated into the classroom, it can significantly enhance students' academic performance, social-emotional skills, and overall well-being. Here are some of the key benefits:

* Improved academic performance:

Enhanced focus and attention: Mindfulness techniques help students develop greater focus and concentration, allowing them to stay on task and absorb information more effectively.

Boosted memory and cognitive function: Regular mindfulness practice can improve memory, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking abilities.

Increased creativity: Mindfulness can stimulate creativity and innovative thinking by encouraging open-mindedness and divergent thinking.

* Enhanced social-emotional skills:

Improved emotional regulation: Mindfulness helps students identify and manage their emotions, reducing stress, anxiety, and impulsive behavior.

Enhanced empathy and compassion: By practicing mindfulness, students

develop a deeper understanding of their own emotions and the emotions of others, fostering empathy and compassion.

Improved social skills: Mindfulness can help students develop better communication skills, conflict resolution abilities, and social relationships.

* Enhanced Well-being:

Reduced stress and anxiety: Mindfulness techniques can help students reduce stress and anxiety, leading to a calmer and more focused learning environment.

Improved self-awareness: Mindfulness encourages students to pay attention to their thoughts and feelings, leading to greater self-understanding and self-acceptance.

Increased resilience: By developing mindfulness skills, students can build resilience and better cope with challenges and setbacks.

By incorporating mindfulness practices into the classroom, educators can create a more positive, supportive, and effective learning environment for all students.

- Enhanced focus and concentration: Guiding students to stay present can boost their concentration, leading to improved academic performance and comprehension.

- Stress reduction: Techniques such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation help students manage stress and anxiety, promoting their emotional well-being.

- Improved self-regulation: Mindfulness fosters better self-awareness and emotional control, helping students maintain calm and balance in challenging situations.

- Enhanced social and emotional learning: Mindfulness supports the development of key social and emotional skills, such as empathy, compassion, and conflict resolution, contributing to a positive classroom environment.

- Increased mind-body awareness: Activities like yoga help students develop a deeper connection between their mind and body, promoting overall physical health and well-being.

3.4. Benefits of mindfulness practice for teachers

Over the past few years, teachers in the challenging and fast-paced field of education have faced many challenges and obstacles due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the evolution of educational technology, changing societal expectations, mental health issues, workload and burnout, social and emotional learning, changes and gaps in curriculum, classroom management, parental involvement, policy adjustments and accountability, professional development, advocacy and funding, and the diverse needs of students in today's diverse classrooms. Goddard et al. (2000) pointed out that this combination of teacher turnover and stress affects the quality of education students receive because there are fewer experienced teachers in the classroom and those who

do remain feel less certain about their effectiveness, which in turn impacts student achievement. These challenges underscore the importance of systemic support, comprehensive training, and adequate resources to enable teachers to meet the challenges of their essential role in educating the next generation. Therefore, mindfulness is a great tool for personal and professional well-being. Mindfulness is generally believed to improve teaching and student learning. It explores and shares examples of how stress and the occupational hazards of teaching can be reduced through mindfulness, and it provides a compelling picture of how one can employ mindfulness to transform their teaching and the learning environment of their classroom.

By integrating mindfulness practices into their daily lives, teachers can experience transformative benefits that ripple out to their classrooms and beyond. These benefits fall into three areas: mental health, professional effectiveness, and classroom dynamics.

** Better mental health and resilience*

Teaching is an emotionally taxing profession, and many educators face elevated levels of stress, burnout, and fatigue. Mindfulness equips teachers with strategies to manage these challenges.

- *Stress Reduction:* Practicing mindfulness reduces stress by helping teachers become aware of their thoughts and emotions without judgment. Techniques like mindful breathing or body scans lower cortisol levels and promote a sense of calm.

- *Increased Resilience:* Mindfulness fosters emotional resilience, enabling teachers to navigate inconvenient situations, such as managing conflict or adapting to changes, with greater ease.

** Better Work-Life Balance:* Mindfulness encourages teachers to live in the present, helping them draw boundaries between their professional responsibilities and personal lives.

3.4.1. Enhanced professional effectiveness

Mindfulness sharpens focus and creativity, two essential qualities for educators seeking to inspire and engage students.

- *Improved attention and focus:* Regular mindfulness practice trains the brain to concentrate on the task at hand, reducing the effects of multitasking and improving productivity. This translates to better lesson planning and more meaningful interactions with students.

- *Creative problem-solving:* By fostering a nonjudgmental attitude, mindfulness encourages innovative thinking and helps teachers approach challenges with fresh perspectives.

- *Time management:* Mindful awareness allows teachers to prioritize tasks and manage their workload effectively, thereby minimizing stress.

3.4.2. Positive classroom dynamics

Teachers who practice mindfulness set the tone for a more peaceful and focused learning environment. Their calm presence can inspire the same

qualities in their students.

* *Emotional regulation*: Mindfulness helps teachers model self-control and emotional regulation, showing students how to manage challenges with poise.

* *Improved relationships with students*: Teachers who practice mindfulness tend to develop greater empathy and patience, which strengthens their rapport with students and helps them address individual needs effectively.

* *A calmer, focused classroom*: Mindful teachers bring a sense of calm to their classrooms, creating a learning space where students feel safe, supported, and ready to engage.

3.4.3. Broader impact on the school community

When teachers embody mindfulness, their positive energy often influences colleagues, parents, and the school culture.

* *Peer support and collaboration*: Mindful teachers are more present and empathetic in interactions with colleagues, fostering teamwork and support within the faculty.

* *Role-modeling for students and families*: By practicing and teaching mindfulness, educators can inspire students and their families to incorporate these practices into their own lives, promoting a culture of wellness beyond the classroom.

Mindfulness is a crucial tool for educators, not just a passing trend. By promoting inner calm, improving focus, and enhancing relationships, mindfulness helps teachers thrive personally and professionally. Prioritizing mindfulness in their routine can boost teachers' resilience and positively impact their students' learning experiences.

3.5. Benefits of mindfulness practice for students

The increasing popularity of mindfulness interventions among college students over the past decade can be attributed to a growing recognition of the mental health challenges faced by this demographic. Research has shown that mindfulness practices can effectively reduce psychological distress, enhance emotional regulation, and improve overall (Burrows, 2016; Duarte & Pinto-Gouveia, 2015; Koszycki et al., 2016; Schwind et al., 2017; Van Gordon et al., 2014).

In today's fast-paced and often stressful academic environment, students face increasing challenges that can affect their mental health, focus, and overall well-being. Mindfulness practice has emerged as a powerful tool to help students navigate these pressures effectively. In higher education, mindfulness practices have been demonstrated to assist students with their mental health (Gray et al., 2018; Lynch et al., 2018) and with their learning. Research indicates that meditation and mindfulness practices can significantly enhance students' connection to their internal processes, fostering self-compassion and facilitating better interpersonal relationships within the classroom environment (Martin, 2018). For instance, a semester-long mindfulness course allowed students to engage in mindfulness techniques both in and out

of the classroom, leading to reported reductions in stress and anxiety levels. Specifically, Gray (2021) found that undergraduate students who participated in this course experienced a significant decrease in perceived stress and procrastination, alongside improvements in self-compassion and sleep quality.

Although studies show mindfulness can benefit classrooms, there is limited research on its effects on learning and memory in college students. Mindfulness can improve students' academic, emotional, and social well-being.

** Improved focus and concentration*

Mindfulness helps students train their minds to stay in the present moment. This increased awareness can enhance focus and reduce distractions during study sessions or lectures, leading to better academic performance.

** Stress and anxiety reduction*

With exams, deadlines, and peer pressure, students often experience prominent levels of stress and anxiety. Mindfulness practices such as meditation and breathing exercises activate the body's relaxation response, helping to calm the mind and regulate emotions.

** Enhanced emotional regulation.*

Mindfulness teaches students to observe their thoughts and feelings without judgment. This self-awareness helps them respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively, leading to healthier ways of coping with challenges.

** Better sleep quality*

Academic and social pressures can disrupt sleep patterns. Mindfulness promotes relaxation and reduces racing thoughts, helping students fall asleep faster and enjoy more restful sleep.

** Increased resilience*

By fostering a sense of inner calm and self-compassion, mindfulness strengthens students' ability to manage setbacks, manage frustration, and bounce back from failures with a positive outlook.

** Improved interpersonal relationships.*

Mindfulness enhances empathy and active listening skills, which can improve communication and foster deeper connections with peers, teachers, and family members.

** Boosted creativity and critical thinking skills.*

A calm, focused mind is better equipped to think freely. Mindfulness encourages open-mindedness and flexibility, allowing students to approach academic and personal challenges with innovative solutions.

** Support for mental health*

Mindfulness involves being present in the moment, cultivating awareness of thoughts and feelings without judgment, and developing a greater sense of self-compassion. Sustained attention is essential for learning and academic achievement (Spira & Fischel, 2005) and this could lead to a positive impact on academic achievement.

The connection to academic achievement is well-documented:

Sustained attention: As you mentioned, sustained attention is essential for learning and academic achievement. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and focused attention exercises, can help improve working memory, attentional control, and cognitive flexibility (Mrazek et al., 2013).

Reducing stress and anxiety: Mindfulness has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, which are common obstacles to academic achievement (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). By managing stress and anxiety, individuals can better focus on their studies and perform at their best.

Improving emotional regulation: Mindfulness helps individuals develop better emotional regulation skills, which enables them to manage emotions in a more adaptive way. This can lead to improved relationships with peers and educators, as well as better academic outcomes (Grossman et al., 2013).

In summary, mindfulness has the potential to positively impact academic achievement by improving sustained attention, reducing stress and anxiety, and developing self-compassion and emotional regulation skills.

IV. MINDFULNESS IN GENERAL SUSTAINABILITY TEACHING

Understanding mindfulness in education is the first step toward creating a nurturing and supportive educational environment. By recognizing its benefits and relevance, educators can begin to implement practices that foster a culture of awareness, empathy, and resilience among young learners. Integrating mindfulness into higher education can cultivate well-rounded individuals who navigate the world with grace and compassion.

Mindfulness is increasingly recognized and integrated into pedagogical practices, gaining mainstream acceptance as a valuable tool for enhancing the well-being of both students and educators. Research has demonstrated the positive effects of mindfulness on a variety of cognitive and emotional processes, including memory retention, learning efficiency, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. Moreover, mindfulness plays a crucial role in fostering interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence within the classroom, which are essential components of effective teaching and learning. Educators can create a more supportive and empathetic learning environment by promoting a mindful approach. As mindfulness continues to be embraced in educational contexts, institutions need to provide training and resources for teachers to effectively implement these practices, ensuring that both students and educators can reap the full benefits of mindfulness in their academic journeys.

First, we need to understand sustainability. Understanding sustainability involves considering the long-term impact of our actions on the environment, society, and economy. The fundamental goal of sustainability is to make sure that we can satisfy our demands today without endangering the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs.

Sustainability is urgently needed today. The Earth's resources are finite, and human overconsumption and pollution are increasingly impacting the planet's

natural systems. Sustainability should guide us to ensure a habitable earth for future generations. Sustainability involves social and environmental aspects. In addition to being crucial for the long-term survival of human civilization, sustainability has impacts on global security, health, and economic stability.

Sustainability in education is a wide-ranging concept encompassing all the practices and principles that aim to engage learners at different levels of the education system to promote environmentally friendly practices. This approach encourages learners to think critically about the world by incorporating environmental, social, and economic issues into the teaching-learning process. Further, sustainability education enables learners to consider and evaluate contemporary issues from the perspective of sustainability. Gaining an appreciation for the linkages between society and the environment enables learners to devise novel remedies to the problems of climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality.

Sustainability teaching aims to educate individuals about the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental systems and to inspire them to make informed decisions that contribute to a more sustainable future.

By incorporating mindfulness into the instructional techniques related to sustainability, students will have a more developed mastery of intricacies associated with sustainability issues. Mindfulness practices, which involve being fully present and aware of one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings, can help students develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world and a greater sense of interconnectedness with all living beings.

By incorporating mindfulness exercises into sustainability education, educators can create a learning environment that encourages reflection, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making. Mindfulness can help students cultivate a sense of empathy and compassion towards the environment, motivating them to take positive action to protect and preserve the planet.

Future trends in mindfulness and sustainability education are increasingly intertwined as educators and researchers recognize the potential of mindfulness practices to foster sustainable behaviors and enhance environmental awareness.

Here are key emerging trends in mindfulness and sustainability education:

Mindfulness integration:

- Incorporation of mindfulness practices into the standard curriculum
- Focus on emotional intelligence and stress management skills.
- Use of technology-assisted meditation and breathing exercises
- Growing emphasis on mindful learning environments

Sustainability education:

- Learning through projects that target critical problems in the environment.
- Interdisciplinary teaching of climate science
- Initiatives undertaken by pupils for campus sustainability and green programs

- Focus on systems thinking and relationships to ecology.

Emerging approaches:

- Outdoor and nature-based learning experiences
- Digital tools for tracking individual environmental impact.
- Cross-cultural environmental justice perspectives
- Community partnerships for local sustainability projects

Mental health, sustainability, and mindfulness are interrelated concepts that affect each other in distinct ways. Various research has shown that practicing mindfulness can benefit mental health by decreasing stress, anxiety, and depression. Before long, this high mental health can promote greater engagement in environmentally friendly behaviors; for example, recycling, conserving energy, and minimizing waste. The more baseline healthy and grounded we can be the more connected we can be to our health and sense of purpose, and the more we act in ways that ultimately benefit the world.

Individuals can undertake various initiatives to promote sustainability and raise awareness. This could involve engaging in sustainable practices like energy conservation and mindfulness meditation, as well as supporting laws that support sustainability and mental health. It also necessitates a dedication to creating strong, resilient communities that place a high value on the health and happiness of all their residents as well as the health of the environment.

The future of mindfulness and sustainability education is promising, with a focus on integrating mindfulness practices into educational frameworks, fostering environmental mindfulness among students, and supporting research that links these concepts. As schools continue to evolve their curricula and infrastructure, they play a crucial role in shaping environmentally conscious future generations.

V. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING MINDFULNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

Indeed, the study of mindful teaching and the creation of theoretical frameworks have become increasingly popular in educational research. Scholars are now acknowledging the wide-ranging advantages of mindfulness for both students and teachers. Here, I have highlighted some important aspects of theoretical models of mindful teaching and how they can impact teaching practices.

- *Creating a mindful classroom:* Educators can implement mindfulness practices such as meditation, breathing exercises, or mindful pauses to enhance focus and emotional regulation among students. Establishing a culture of mindfulness in the classroom helps create a safe environment where students feel valued and understood.

- *Integrating mindfulness into the curriculum:* Mindful teaching encourages the integration of mindfulness practices into the existing curriculum, incorporating activities that promote reflection, empathy, and self-awareness across subjects. Lessons can include discussions on emotional experiences,

fostering a culture where students learn to articulate their feelings and reactions.

- *Professional development for educators:* Training programs focusing on mindfulness can support teachers in developing their practice. Such training may cover stress management, emotional resilience, and effective communication, contributing to their overall well-being and effectiveness in the classroom.

- *Assessment and evaluation:* Evaluation methods can be designed to assess the impact of mindfulness practices on both student outcomes and teacher well-being, providing a metric for refining and reshaping teaching strategies.

- *Fostering relationships:* Mindfulness encourages strong teacher-student relationships characterized by empathy and support, which can significantly affect student motivation and engagement.

Mindfulness is increasingly becoming more prominent in education, but it has not been widely explored in the realm of sustainability education. Recently, there has been a push to incorporate contemplative teaching practices to tackle socio-ecological issues and foster a more equitable, empathetic, thoughtful, and sustainable community. This is seen in the recent increase in organizations and institutions that offer workshops, seminars, professional networks, and training on the subject.

Implementing mindfulness and sustainability education in schools faces several challenges that can hinder its effectiveness. Institutional barriers often create obstacles, such as rigid curricula that prioritize standardized testing over holistic learning. This lack of flexibility can limit opportunities for incorporating mindfulness practices and sustainability topics into daily lessons.

5.1. Classroom distractions: External distractions can hinder mindfulness practices. Teachers must create a conducive environment by minimizing noise and interruptions, which may involve turning off electronic devices and establishing a quiet space for mindfulness activities.

- *Lack of awareness:* Many people do not fully understand mindfulness and sustainability, making it hard to involve them in educational programs.

- *Resistance to change:* Introducing new educational initiatives can face opposition from those who prefer established habits and routines.

5.2. Limited resources: Schools and organizations may face constraints in terms of time, funding, and expertise needed to develop and implement effective mindfulness and sustainability programs.

5.3. Curriculum integration: Integrating mindfulness and sustainability education into existing curricula can be challenging, as educators may struggle to find the time and space to incorporate these new topics. In addition, educators often face the challenge of integrating sustainability education into an already packed curriculum. This can lead to resistance from teachers who feel they lack the time or resources to add updated content.

5.4. Community engagement: Successful sustainability education often requires involvement from the broader community, including parents and

local organizations. Building these partnerships can be challenging, especially in areas where community interest or support is lacking.

5.5. Finding qualified instructors: Teaching mindfulness and sustainability effectively requires knowledgeable and skilled instructors who may be in short supply. Professional development opportunities are essential to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach sustainability.

Meiklejohn et al. (2012), in their summary of the field of mindfulness in education, cite many advances gained in schools that were significantly beneficial for both teachers and students. This is a great illustration demonstrating that the integration of mindfulness in education can be rewarding for teachers, students, school authorities, and parents. Schools design student engagement programs to provide and support transformative student experiences, enabling practical opportunities for students to explore, experiment, create, lead, and reflect, inside or outside their set classrooms. Integrating mindfulness into activities in school programs offers numerous benefits.

VI. UNDERSTANDING COMPASSION IN BUDDHISM

Compassion, derived from the Latin words ‘co’ meaning together and ‘passion’ meaning strong emotion, goes beyond understanding someone’s suffering to feel their pain as our own. This shared empathy motivates us to alleviate their suffering, embodying qualities like empathy, kindness, generosity, and genuine concern for others’ well-being. Compassion drives the act of sharing, comforting, and caring, reflecting the best of human nature.

Compassion in Buddhism, known as “*Karuṇā*” in Pali and Sanskrit, is a fundamental aspect of the Buddhist path. It is the desire for all beings to be freed from suffering. This concept surpasses sympathy or empathy; it involves a profound desire to alleviate others’ suffering. In Buddhist teachings, it is one of the four divine abodes (*brahma viharas*), along with loving-kindness (*Metta*), empathetic joy (*Mudita*), and equanimity (*Upekkha*).

Karuṇā is important in all schools of Buddhism. For Theravada Buddhists, dwelling in *karuṇā* is a means for attaining a happy present life and heavenly rebirth. For Mahāyāna Buddhists, *karuṇā* is a co-requisite for becoming a Bodhisattva.

Compassion, as understood across the three main Buddhist traditions – *Theravada*, *Mahayana*, and *Vajrayana* – offers rich insights that can enhance contemporary psychological practices and therapeutic approaches. Each tradition emphasizes different aspects of compassion, thus providing a multifaceted understanding that can aid in both clinical settings and personal development.

6.1. Theravada tradition

Theravada Buddhism, often referred to as the “Teaching of the Elders,” places a strong emphasis on individual attainment of enlightenment (*Nirvana*) through ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom. Compassion, or “*Karuṇā*” is a fundamental aspect of the *Theravada* path and is closely associated with:

Metta: This tradition emphasizes the development of loving-kindness (*metta*) and compassion as foundational practices. Practitioners engage in loving-kindness meditation (*metta bhavana*), which is designed to cultivate unconditional love towards oneself and others.

Interconnectedness: Theravada teachings also emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings, leading to a compassionate response to suffering. Central to the teaching is the understanding of suffering (*dukkha*) and its causes, encouraging practitioners to recognize this universal experience.

6.2. Mahayana tradition

Mahayana Buddhism, the “Great Vehicle,” expands the concept of compassion to a more communal and inclusive perspective, focusing on the well-being of all sentient beings. Key aspects include:

Bodhisattva Ideal: In this tradition, the Bodhisattva – a being committed to attaining enlightenment not just for themselves but for all beings – embodies compassion. Practitioners aspire to cultivate bodhicitta, the mind of compassion, which motivates them to help others achieve liberation from suffering.

The principles, virtues, and commitments of a Bodhisattva, along with the practice of the Bodhisattva path, are clearly outlined in the Mahayana sutras and various literary works. A Bodhisattva is usually seen as a role model for good character, and the Bodhisattva precepts provide important guidelines for living ethically and making the world a better place. Ultimately, this guidance leads practitioners toward liberation. It becomes clear that by following the standards and vows they have embraced, Bodhisattvas serve as a source of inspiration in life. They interact with the world, nurturing and refining themselves while working to improve life for everyone. Even though the ideals might seem high, they can definitely be reached with regular practice and dedication. The Avatamsaka Sūtra states that the Bodhisattva acts as a lamp, illuminating the world.

Emphasis on relative and ultimate truth: Mahayana philosophy distinguishes between the ultimate nature of reality and the conventional understanding of existence. This dual perspective fosters a compassionate engagement with the world while acknowledging the deeper interconnectedness and emptiness of all phenomena.

6.3. Vajrayana tradition

Vajrayana Buddhism, commonly known as Tibetan Buddhism, combines elements from earlier traditions while introducing its distinct rituals and symbols. Its interpretation of compassion encompasses:

Deity Yoga and Visualization: Practitioners often engage in complex visualizations of compassion deities, such as Avalokiteshvara (the embodiment of compassion). This practice is believed to help cultivate a deep, experiential understanding of compassion.

Transformative practices: Vajrayana emphasizes the transformative power of compassion through specific practices that involve ritual, mantra recitation,

and meditation, aiming to integrate compassion into every aspect of life.

In Buddhist meditation, the cultivation of compassion (*karuna*) is integral to the development of a wholesome mind and heart. It is one of the “four immeasurables” or “divine abodes,” which also include loving-kindness (*metta*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*). Together, these qualities foster a balanced and compassionate approach to life.

The life of the Buddha is a revelation in wisdom and compassion, one that can be appreciated from every angle. Wisdom is the horizon from which compassion can pour. It is hard for us to see the entire heavens of the wisdom of the Buddha, yet everyone easily sees his compassion. To think of the Buddha is to think of the compassion that he embodied in his life.

Whether to know the light of wisdom possible only by liberation or the darkness of suffering in ignorance, Buddha’s knowledge cannot be completely understood, much like the great expanse of the sky. The insight enables one to see through to the nature of reality and to act benevolently, which flows spontaneously when we understand what it is to suffer and rejoice, as all sentient beings do.

Compassion, on the other hand, is more tangible and readily accessible. Through the stories of the Buddha’s life, his refusal to turn away from suffering, his teachings on loving-kindness (*metta*), and his encouragement for others to cultivate compassion, we see a powerful model for how wisdom can manifest in everyday actions. Whether it is the moment he offered solace to the suffering or shared his insights with those seeking enlightenment, his life exemplifies how wisdom and compassion can guide us in alleviating the suffering of others.

Reflecting on the Buddha encourages us to embody these qualities in our own lives. It inspires us to cultivate compassion, not only for ourselves but for others, recognizing that everyone grapples with their challenges. As we strive to emulate the Buddha’s compassionate heart, we begin to weave together wisdom and action, creating a more harmonious existence for ourselves and those around us. By doing so, we honor the essence of the Buddha’s teachings and contribute to a world in need of kindness and understanding.

G. C. Pande asserts that the greatness of the Buddha’s personality is evident in the unparalleled impact he left on India’s cultural history. According to him, Wisdom (Bodhi) and Compassion (*Karunā*) are the very essence of the Buddha’s being. (G. C. Pande, *Origins of Buddhism*, p. 393.)

In Buddhism, compassion is seen in two phases: the ordinary and the higher spiritual.

Compassion can be observed in leaders and individuals in positions of authority; for instance, King Asoka experienced it. He experienced profound compassion after becoming aware of the devastation caused by the Kalinga War. According to Buddha’s teachings, if a ruler treats their subjects cruelly and against Buddhist ethics, the state will decline. The Cakkavatti sāhanāda sutta illustrates the idea of a righteous monarch in vivid detail. This kind of mundane aspect of compassion is a common thing. We are driven by compassion to

assist those in need. It may be either material assistance or any other form of help. In contrast, Buddhas and Arahants embody a higher form of compassion, fully realizing it independently before extending it to others. They have no more attachment to world life. This is why the Buddha begins his teachings on compassion with its more accessible, worldly expressions to the higher-level compassion which is known as *Mahā Karuṇā*.

This thinking has triggered an arms race a cache of ever-deadly weapons, nuclear arms included. Had our hearts not turned to stone, we would have said “NO” to such ideas, which want to kill and if we will, kill with pleasure, not only human beings but the environment they spend time on. That greed has produced the curse of global warming, cyclones destructive floods, and drought.

Compassion affects a lot of different domains in today’s society, for example, social structures, the economy, the environment, politics, and international relations. In the social realm, compassion helps give rise to a well-functioning family unit, abnormal sexual practices (e.g. domestic violence), etc. Compassionate societies are less likely to experience serious crimes like drug abuse, rape, murder, and theft. It will create a society with guaranteed basic rights. It will be a step closer to a society that respects basic rights. Great social evils – violence, drug abuse, family fragmentation, predatory lending, and the killing of female children – stem from ignorance and greed. Compassion aims to address the root causes of these issues, paving the way for a society free of crime. Halifax (2012) defines compassion as ‘the emotion of concern for another’s suffering, coupled with the desire to enhance their welfare’ (p. 1751), and compassion often creates a balance between connection and distance. It allows us to help others while also stepping back to assess situations and determine the best way to address challenges (MacBeth & Gumley, 2012).

A more compassionate world is possible when every person – man, woman, and child – treats others with the same dignity, fairness, and respect they wish for themselves. Every human being is born with the capacity for compassion, but it must be nurtured for people to truly flourish. Research suggests that compassion not only makes us happier but also creates a greater sense of security. Acknowledging others’ pain and making an effort to help them can strengthen our inner resolve and boost self-confidence. When we actively cultivate compassion, it becomes a powerful source of well-being that enriches both our lives and those around us. The 14th Dalai Lama explains how the Buddhist teachings of mindfulness and com-ardors lead unavoidably to emotions of self-belief and kindness. “Love and comfort are necessities, no longer luxuries. Without them, humanity can’t survive.”

Active engagement: Compassion is not just about feeling for others; it is about taking action to help alleviate their suffering. This initiative-taking stance distinguishes compassion from empathy, which can sometimes lead to emotional burnout if not coupled with action.

Interconnectedness: Practicing compassion helps individuals recognize the interconnectedness of all beings. This understanding fosters a sense of community and shared experience, which is essential for developing genuine compassion.

Self-compassion: Buddhism emphasizes the importance of extending compassion to oneself. Self-compassion allows individuals to acknowledge their suffering and treat themselves with kindness, which in turn enhances their ability to be compassionate towards others.

Meditative practices: Various meditation techniques, such as loving-kindness meditation (*Metta Bhavana*) and tonglen (sending and taking), are used to cultivate compassion. These practices help individuals develop a compassionate mindset and expand their capacity for empathy toward all sentient beings.

Compassion is an endless well of strength that breathes life into every living being. It's the heart of what makes life truly meaningful. Without compassion, even the most beautifully decorated home can feel cold and lifeless. Without compassion, a company may struggle to retain employees even with high salaries. And without compassion, even the closest family members may feel distant and disconnected. In families, compassion forms the bedrock of strong, loving relationships, encouraging open communication, empathy, and mutual support. Without it, those ties can fray, and a sense of separation can take root. Compassion enriches our lives by fostering connection, understanding, and support, constantly reminding us of our shared humanity. When we nurture compassion in both our thoughts and actions, we have the power to build a world that's not only more harmonious but also more fulfilling for everyone.

6.4. Cultivate daily compassion

Today, violence and cruelty, are prevalent issues that need to be addressed with compassion. A Buddhist saying highlights the suffering caused by weapons by comparing it to the sounds of abattoirs at night. This cruelty stems from human nature and can overshadow our inherent compassion. When society becomes desensitized to acts of killing, such as in the case of animal slaughter, it can lead to a normalization of violence, even in the context of war.

The twenty-first century is an era of technological and cultural advancement, but perhaps its most transformative force is communication. How can we ensure meaningful and effective communication? One of the most essential foundations of strong personal relationships is compassion.

Cultivating everyday compassion involves deliberately practicing kindness, empathy, and understanding toward ourselves and others. Every situation we encounter presents an opportunity to practice compassion. We begin with the people around us – our family, friends, colleagues, and classmates, as well as strangers in the grocery store and on the street – gradually extending our care and concern to all. We can learn to extend the love we feel for our family and friends to others. We want our children and loved ones to be happy. Others may not be our family, but they are someone's parents and children. They, too, deserve love and compassion.

o *Practicing mindfulness:* Mindfulness helps us live fully in each moment. When we focus on what is happening around us, we will easily notice the pain and difficulties that others are experiencing. Take the time to

observe and feel, thereby nurturing empathy for those around us.

- o *Listening and understanding:* Listening is an art. When communicating, I truly listen to what others say, not just with our ears but also with our hearts. When we understand their feelings, compassion naturally arises. Take time for friends, family, and those in need of support and encouragement.

- o *Practicing love through actions:* Compassion is more than just a sentiment; it is also demonstrated through deeds. Engaging in small yet significant acts such as assisting the elderly, supporting children's education, or offering a smile to strangers, these actions will promote possibility and foster compassion within the community.

- o *Self-Reflection:* At times, it is important to show compassion towards ourselves. Reflect on our actions and grant ourselves forgiveness for any past errors. By being gentle with us, we can extend that kindness to others more easily. Practicing self-care is another way to demonstrate love and compassion.

- o *Reading books and learning about compassion:* There are numerous resources, books, and courses available on the topics of compassion and empathy. Engaging in research and study can assist us in acquiring the knowledge and abilities necessary to cultivate compassion. We also consider exploring the writings of renowned authors like Thich Nhat Hanh or The Dalai Lama.

- o *Expressing gratitude:* Gratitude plays a crucial role in developing compassion. We should appreciate the positive aspects of our lives, no matter how small they are. By embracing gratitude, we become more attuned to the struggles of others and foster the growth of compassion.

We aim to cultivate compassion in the same way that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do. Compassion should be added to our hands, eyes, voice, facial expressions, smiles, words, and thoughts, becoming an intrinsic part of our being. We should also strive to spread compassion throughout the world. Just as clouds provide relief from the intense sunlight and nature's beauty surrounds us with blooming flowers and thriving trees, we can discover compassion in everything around us. Even inanimate objects like roads, bridges, mountains, and water can offer their form of compassion. This serves as a beautiful reminder of our interconnectedness and the lessons we can learn from the presence and actions of the world.

Compassion, as taught in Buddhist philosophy, can be expressed through acts of generosity, praise, good behavior, and fellowship. It is a practice that benefits both others and one. True compassion involves treating everyone equally, regardless of their relationship with us. Cultivating qualities like joy, gentleness, kindness, and generosity help us embody the pinnacle of compassion, as shown by the Buddha. By practicing these virtues, we can contribute to a more compassionate world, where love and empathy prevail. Mindful compassion, as emphasized by the Buddha, offers profound insights

into our minds and serves as a guiding principle for thoughts and actions.

According to S. Radhakrishnan, “The Buddha embodied boundless tolerance. He saw life as darker than sin, consumed by desire even more than by violence. He met adversity with unshakable calm and confidence. His conduct perfectly embodied gentleness and compassion, tempered with quiet strength” (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada*, p. 12 - 13.)

Ariyacariya is the term used to describe the compassionate mind of the Buddha. It is the result of long-term cultivation by a Bodhisattva across multiple lifetimes, dedicated to achieving enlightenment for themselves and others. This concept emphasizes a selfless way of living based on empathy, kindness, and altruism. Ariyacariya embodies a state where compassion flows naturally, free from selfish intentions, and is characterized by unconditional love and a sincere commitment to alleviating the suffering of others.

Indeed, we will also find that a person with compassion, concern and love for others arises from concern and love for oneself. We can really understand others when we really understand ourselves. We will know what is good for others when we know what is good for ourselves. We can feel for others when we feel for ourselves. So in Buddhism, one’s spiritual growth happens naturally when one is concerned for others. The life of the Buddha is a good example of this. He struggled for six years for himself and then was able to benefit all humanity.

Cultivating daily compassion for students

Training people in compassion can have a wide range of physiological and psychological benefits (Desbordes et al., 2013; Jazaieri et al., 2013; Weng et al., 2013) and many therapeutic benefits (Hoffmann, Grossman, & Hinton, 2011), including people with severe mental health difficulties (e.g., Buehler et al., 2013).

By ‘cultivating mindfulness’, the Dalai Lama reminds us, “We learn first to become aware of this process of dissipation so that we can gently fine-tune the mind to follow a more directed path towards the objects on which we wish to focus” (Dalai Lama, 2005, p. 160). It is important to note that such attention has ‘a deliberate intention that helps us select a specific aspect or a characteristic of an object. The continued, voluntary application of attention is what helps us maintain a sustained focus on the chosen object. Attention training is closely linked with learning how to control our mental processes’ (p. 161). This control, which can be an end in itself in the therapeutic uses of mindfulness, is linked to the central Buddhist enterprise in the process of eliminating unhelpful and misleading conceptions of the self.

Cultivating daily compassion for students is a powerful way to create a positive and supportive learning environment. There are some practical steps to help teachers create a compassionate classroom culture:

- *Build relationships:* Teachers need to take the time to get to know our students as individuals and show how genuine interest in their lives, experiences, and perspectives. Building strong relationships based on trust and

mutual respect is key to creating a compassionate classroom.

- *Listen actively:* they should listen to our students when they speak. They need to validate their feelings and opinions without judgment, and tell them their views matter.

- *Be kind:* They need to create opportunities for kindness and generosity in the classroom, and celebrate kindness and empathy between students, and encourage a culture of support and encouragement

- *Encourage compassionate action:* They also create spaces where students feel safe expressing their thoughts and worries without fear of judgment. They should organize service projects that benefit the community.

By implementing these strategies, we can create a classroom where students feel valued, respected, and supported. We clearly remember that compassion is a skill that can be learned and practiced. We can help students become kind, empathetic, and compassionate by modeling compassion and giving them opportunities to practice it.

- *Demonstrate empathy:* The teachers should help students learn to recognize and empathize with the emotions and experiences of others. They also encourage them to step into different perspectives and to show kindness and understanding toward their peers. By fostering this awareness, they can guide them to develop deeper connections and a sense of shared humanity.

- *Positive language:* The teachers should use positive, encouraging words and kind gestures when interacting with students, even during difficult situations.

- *Teach conflict resolution:* They provide students with the tools and skills needed to resolve conflicts peacefully and respectfully and encourage open communication, active listening, and empathy in handling disagreements.

- *Practice mindfulness:* Teachers can weave mindfulness practices into the classroom routine to help students build awareness, self-regulation, and emotional well-being. These practices can also encourage students to develop empathy and compassion, not only towards others but also towards themselves. By incorporating moments of mindfulness, they create an environment where students can better manage their emotions and connect more deeply with those around them.

- *Address bullying and harassment:* They can create a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and harassment in the classroom and establish clear expectations for respectful behavior and intervene promptly when conflicts arise.

We learn to practice compassion like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Not only should compassion be radiated through our hands, eyes, voice, facial expressions, smiles, words, and minds, so that compassion is a part of us, but we should also take one step further and make this world full of compassion. If we further consider the benefits brought by non-sentient beings, every road, bridge, mountain, and water can be compassionate to us. There are four ways to practice compassion: generosity, praise and encouragement, good behavior, and fellowship. Furthermore, it is a practice carried out with the hope of benefiting both oneself and others. Compassion is exhibited by treating others

with equality and regarding friends and foes with impartiality. To attain the highest state of Buddhahood, one of boundless compassion we must commit to cultivating a mind filled with joy, gentleness, and resilience. True peace is found in kindness, compassion, joy, and generosity. Let us strive to embody compassion in our daily lives, spreading it within our families, communities, and nations. If compassion becomes the foundation of human interactions, the world will be filled with love, and the universe will radiate with harmony. Lama Yeshe advised “It is important to understand that true practice is something we do from moment to moment, from day to day. We do whatever we can, with whatever wisdom we have, and dedicate it all to the benefit of others. We just live our lives simply, to the best of our ability. This in itself will be of enormous benefit to others; we don’t need to wait until we become Buddhas before we can begin to act.”

Developing compassion every day may be challenging, but it is achievable with dedication and hard work. Through these valuable lessons, we can introduce kindness and affection into their own lives and those around them so that they can begin now to contribute to a more positive world.

VII. CONCLUSION

Mindfulness interventions can be used in general classrooms and may benefit behavior, social skills, and attention. Mindfulness practices can transform people’s lives. Students can further get themselves engaged in multiple mindfulness strategies and can investigate the results. Teaching mindfulness is particularly important. Many people lead busy lives and often spend a significant amount of time thinking about the future. Mindfulness helps us to live in the present moment without worrying about the past or the future.

Providing mindfulness training to interested teachers is a method for teachers to develop their practices and learn ways to prepare students for learning while being mindful. Schools and institutions should consider mindfulness. To underpin its imp mindfulness with research, it is advisable to establish a mindfulness community or governing body. This community must agree to key features that are essential to mindfulness practice, and researchers should be clear about how their measures and practices include these features. Furthermore, mental health policies should include mindfulness for students’ educational benefits and mental health.

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THE ROLE OF BUDDHIST LIBRARIES IN INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS INTO EDUCATION FOR AN EMPATHETIC AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract:

Buddhist libraries have played a crucial role in promoting world peace and harmony, from ancient kingdoms to the modern digital age. These institutions have served as hubs for learning, cultural exchange, and spiritual growth, disseminating values of compassion, tolerance, and non-violence. By preserving sacred texts and fostering intercultural understanding, Buddhist libraries have significantly shaped a peaceful global community. This research discovers how ancient Buddhist texts, preserved in libraries, emphasize mindfulness and ethical values essential for sustainable living. It also examines specific Buddhist libraries and their influence on integrating teachings of compassion and non-violence into global educational curricula. Furthermore, it highlights the transformative potential of digital Buddhist libraries in making mindfulness resources accessible for contemporary educational efforts worldwide.

Keywords: *Buddhist libraries, education, mindfulness, sustainable future.*

I. INTRODUCTION TO WORLD LIBRARIES AND UN GOALS ON EDUCATION

Throughout history, libraries have been essential for the distribution and preservation of knowledge, promoting cross-cultural intellectual development. Libraries have been crucial in empowering people and communities throughout history, from the ancient Alexandrian and Nalanda libraries to the contemporary digital repositories. They are hubs for innovation, social engagement, and lifelong learning in addition to being bookstores. Libraries give everyone access to information, closing educational disparities,

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encouraging critical thinking, and strengthening underserved communities. Libraries became a force for equality, personal growth, economic progress, and social change by facilitating access to education, which helped people and communities expand their capacity. These components are necessary for harmony and peace. Buddhism can solve many social conflicts¹ and Buddhist libraries can help for this reformation.

Not just the government, but every person on the planet, values national peace and security. The protection of each citizen's life and property is crucial to the development of any nation or community. Libraries have played a crucial role in providing the government and civic society with news, information, and feedback to help them map out meaningful life paths and improve decision-making. Information that can foster harmony, peace, progress, peaceful cohabitation, and unity among all communities must be made available in libraries. Librarians should play a key role in fostering peace and interfaith harmony by making such material accessible. Reading rooms also offer the public and individuals a range of printed and digital information on topics that are significant to society. Among other things, communities, citizens, and leaders can gather and obtain helpful information for a peaceful resolution during periods of political violence, religious extremism, community violence, and transnational crime.²

Notably, libraries and a peaceful world are deeply interconnected. Libraries thrive in peaceful societies. They originated in settled, harmonious communities, but when peace is disrupted, libraries face threats. In recent years, this has been sadly evident. On the other hand, librarians have historically been linked to peace movements and organizations dedicated to fostering peace. This raises an important question: can librarians play a role in preserving and promoting peace?³

The United Nations understands these preconditions, these aspirations, which are set out in the UN Charter. According to the UN, libraries – whether they are public libraries libraries in schools and universities, or libraries in corporations and institutions – can contribute to all of these aspirations. The United Nations, through its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on Quality Education, underscores the importance of inclusive and equitable education for all. This goal seeks to ensure lifelong learning opportunities, emphasizing universal literacy and numeracy while addressing educational inequalities. Libraries are pivotal in achieving these objectives, serving as enablers of SDG 4 by offering resources, technologies,

¹ Damien Kewon (2022) *Buddhism and Contemporary Society*, Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong, p. 1 - 31.

² Abid Hussain (2018) "Role of libraries in peace, security", <https://pakobserver.net/role-libraries-peace-security/>

³ Peter Johan Lor (2016) "Librarians and Peace, in Focus on International Library and Information Work Vol. 47, No. 1, p. 1 - 2.

and programs that support education at all levels.⁴

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), founded with the primary motive of promoting peace, embraced libraries as a means to this end. The belief that libraries can contribute significantly to peace underlies the intensive involvement in libraries by UNESCO in its first decade. In UNESCO's first major statement on libraries, the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto iii the role of libraries in constructing "the defenses of peace" emphasized UNESCO's aims to promote peace and social and spiritual welfare by working through the minds of men.⁵ The creative power of UNESCO is the force of knowledge and international understanding. This manifesto, by describing the potentialities of the public library, proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for popular education and the growth of international understanding, and thereby for the promotion of peace.⁶

Moreover, libraries embody values central to the UN's broader vision for peace, equality, and sustainability. By providing free access to information and fostering intellectual freedom, they promote social inclusion, bridge digital divides, and empower communities to address global challenges. Public, school, university, and digital libraries contribute to the UN's goals by fostering understanding, promoting cross-cultural dialogue, and enabling informed participation in civic life.

In the context of a rapidly evolving digital age, libraries continue to adapt, harnessing technology to make knowledge more accessible and inclusive. Through initiatives such as digital literacy programs, open educational resources, and partnerships with global organizations, libraries play a critical role in building a more informed, equitable, and harmonious world, aligning with the UN's vision of education as a cornerstone for sustainable development and global peace. In the modern world, the individuals who are in the librarianship profession are working to promote the role of libraries in seeking to create a more inclusive society. That society addresses the problems that cause people to feel excluded and alienated. Problems like the lack of access to good educational opportunities and lack of access to meaningful employment; problems like poverty, illiteracy, poor health, and poor standards of living will be in focus when the development of education and libraries.

In the ancient Buddhist world, spanning regions such as China, the Silk Road, India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia, libraries played a pivotal role in fostering understanding and unity among diverse cultures, traditions, and philosophies. These repositories of knowledge became hubs for cross-cultural exchange, offering not just access to sacred Buddhist texts but also a space for dialogue and intellectual growth. The interconnectedness of these regions,

⁴ UN-Sustainable development goals, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals/quality-education>

⁵ UNESCO *Public library manifesto* iii (1949), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000112122>

⁶ Lor, *Op.cit.*, p. 2.

facilitated by trade routes like the Silk Road, allowed for the transmission of Buddhist scriptures, ideas, and art.⁷ Libraries, stored in monasteries and scholarly centers, served as protectors of this shared heritage. They were instrumental in translating and preserving texts, enabling scholars to access diverse perspectives and fostering a sense of unity among people of different origins and beliefs. Whether in the monasteries of Nalanda in India, the sacred caves of Dunhuang along the Silk Road, or the repositories in Southeast Asian temple complexes, libraries served as symbols of intellectual freedom and correlation.

II. MINDFUL EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES IN THE THERAVADA BUDDHIST TRADITION

In the *Theravāda* Buddhist tradition, education and libraries are very important because they encourage the focus on self-cultivation, knowledge, and mindfulness. Buddhist teachings emphasize the value of knowledge, learning, and preserving repositories of wisdom for both individual and collective growth, especially in the *Pāli* Canon. References to pertinent suttas and their ideas on mindful teaching and knowledge preservation that are comparable to libraries are provided below.

To understand how the Gautam Buddha explains the importance of Education and learning *Tevijja Sutta* (DN 13) can be useful. The *Tevijja Sutta* discusses three types of knowledge (*tevijja*), which include: (1) Knowledge of past lives. (2) Knowledge of the workings of *karma*. (3) The direct knowledge leading to liberation.⁸

In line with the *Theravāda* tradition's emphasis on mindful education, this sutta highlights the pursuit of knowledge and higher learning as a path to emancipation. Another important sutta is *Cūla-vyūha Sutta* (SN 35.245) which emphasizes mindful education and the role of right understanding. It discusses the importance of investigating and understanding phenomena with wisdom. It encourages mindfulness as a foundation for true knowledge, making education an inward, reflective process. Mindfulness-based education thus becomes a means to develop wisdom and overcome ignorance.⁹

The Buddha gave the highest value on mindful listening in *Kalama Sutta* (AN 3.65) as a form of education. This sutta encourages inquiry and personal understanding rather than blind faith. The *Kalama Sutta* underscores mindful engagement with teachings and careful reflection, akin to how libraries serve as spaces for exploration and critical thinking. To understand the education and cultivation of wisdom, *Sīgālovāda Sutta* (DN 31) is significant. This sutta, often called the "householder's code of discipline," advocates for education and the cultivation of wisdom as a fundamental duty of laypersons. It emphasizes

⁷ UNESCO- Silk Road Programmes Dunhuang (2024) <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/dunhuang>

⁸ *Tevijja Sutta* (DN 13).

⁹ *Cūla-Vyūha Sutta* (SN 35.245).

learning, respect for teachers, and the diligent practice of wisdom.¹⁰

The *Tiṭṭaka* was carried out orally during the Buddha's lifetime rather than being written down, yet the Buddha valued the preservation of knowledge in this regard. The preservation of the *Dhamma* could be highlighted as the key event in Buddhism that the teaching can remain for thousands of years. The *Sanḅīti Sutta* (DN 33) is one example of this discourse. In Sri Lanka, the tradition of preserving the *Dhamma* orally developed into written records in the second century B. C. Thus, the *Sanḅīti Sutta's* emphasis is a wise observation. The *Sanḅīti Sutta* highlights the need for collective recitation and preservation of the Buddha's teachings. Although libraries in the modern sense are not explicitly mentioned, this sutta points to the oral tradition's significance in safeguarding knowledge – paralleling the modern role of libraries in preserving texts and learning resources.

There are teachings grouped by one that have been rightly explained by the Blessed One, who knows and sees, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha. You should all recite these in concert, without disputing, so that this spiritual path may last for a long time. That would be for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of sympathy for the world, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans.¹¹

In *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16), the Buddha emphasizes the importance of preserving the *Dhamma* after his passing. The *sutta* discusses how the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* (discipline) will serve as the teacher in his absence, underscoring the need to maintain and protect these teachings – conceptually similar to the function of libraries.¹² While the *Pāli* Canon does not mention libraries explicitly, the monastic tradition of meticulously copying and preserving texts aligns with the concept of libraries. As an example, monastic rules in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* outline the care of books and manuscripts as part of monastic discipline. Commentaries (e.g., *Visuddhimagga*) and later chronicles (e.g., *Mahāvamsa*) discuss the establishment of repositories for sacred texts, mirroring the function of libraries in preserving knowledge.¹³

In summary, *Theravāda* Buddhism values education and mindfulness as integral to personal growth and liberation, with *suttas* emphasizing wisdom, inquiry, and preservation of knowledge. The cultural practices of manuscript preservation and recitation echo the function of libraries as centers of learning and mindfulness.

¹⁰ *Sīgālovāda Sutta* (DN 31).

¹¹ *Sanḅīti Sutta* (DN 33).

¹² *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16).

¹³ Buddhaghosa, Henry Clarke Warren, Dharmananda Kosambi (1989) *Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosācariya*, Delhi: Motilal; Wilhelm Geiger, *Mahāvamsa*, Pali text Society, London, 1912, p. 32 - 44.

III. SOME FAMOUS BUDDHIST LIBRARIES IN THE ANCIENT BUDDHIST WORLD

3.1. In India and Sri Lanka

Ancient India, the birthplace of Buddhism, had several notable libraries that were essential to the preservation and spread of Buddhist doctrines and materials. These libraries, which were frequently found in monasteries, developed into hubs of knowledge and research that drew academics and students from all across Asia. Nalanda University (present-day Bihar), a significant Buddhist monastic university from the fifth to the twelfth centuries CE, had one of the most famous libraries. Ratnasagara (Ocean of Jewels), Ratnadadhi (Sea of Jewels), and Ratnaranjaka (Jewel-Adorned) were the three divisions of Nalanda's library, Dharmaganja. It had an extensive library of Buddhist treatises, sutras, and commentaries in Sanskrit, Pāli, and Prakrit, among other languages.¹⁴

Vikramashila University, founded under the Pala Dynasty and renowned for its emphasis on Vajrayana Buddhism, was another important resource center. Texts on philosophy, tantra, and esoteric practices were kept in its collection. Buddhist manuscripts on philosophy, logic, and medicine were found at one of the first educational institutions the Taxila University (present-day Pakistan). Buddhist texts were also kept alive in monastic libraries in places like Valabhi, Sarnath, and Ajanta. The *Tiṭṭaka*, Mahayana scriptures, and other Buddhist writings were preserved in large amounts thanks to these ancient libraries. These books were then distributed to places like China, Tibet, and Southeast Asia, influencing Buddhist traditions all over the world.¹⁵

Buddhist libraries in Sri Lanka, including those in *Mahāvihāra* and *Abhayagiri* monasteries, were essential to the preservation of Buddhist sacred teachings during the Anuradhapura period. The *Pāli* Canon, which upholds the values of non-violence, compassion, and peace, was preserved in these repositories. Scholars and monks from all across Asia were drawn to monastic libraries, which promoted peaceful cooperation via common spiritual and ethical principles and enabled the interchange of knowledge. Additionally, the libraries served as cultural centers, fostering diplomatic relations between Buddhist countries and creating the framework for respectful international cooperation.

Buddhist libraries in Sri Lanka and other South Asian nations carried on their goal of conserving and sharing texts that prioritized compassion, mindfulness, and non-violence during the ancient and Middle Ages. The accessibility of Buddhist teachings was increased through the translation of *Pāli* and Sanskrit scriptures into local languages. These libraries produced new interpretations and commentary that aided the intellectual and spiritual

¹⁴ Rakesh Kumar Bhatt (1995) *History and Development of Libraries in India*, Delhi: Mittal Publications, p. 22.

¹⁵ *ibid.* P. 65.

development of the Buddhist communities. Through cultural and religious interactions, the libraries became essential for preserving ties between Buddhist countries and advancing peace and understanding.

3.2. In the Silk Road and China

One of the fascinating examples of ancient libraries on the Silk Road is the Dunhuang caves. These manuscripts are a huge collection of both religious and secular papers that were mostly found between 1906 and 1909 by explorers Paul Pelliot and Aurel Stein in the Mogao Caves of Dunhuang, Gansu, China. The bulk of these manuscripts, which were written in Tibetan, Chinese, and other languages, came from the “Library Cave” (Cave 17), which was sealed in the early 11th century. They were created between the late 4th and early 11th centuries. In the eighth and ninth centuries, the location functioned as Tibet’s imperial printing house and a historic printing center.¹⁶ A Daoist monk named Wang Yuanlu made the initial discovery of the Library Cave in 1900. Wang began selling the manuscripts to Western explorers. Stein got 7,000 full manuscripts and 6,000 pieces and Pelliot got 10,000 texts as a more diverse collection. Pelliot was a qualified sinologist and included administrative, financial, and repurposed Pālimpsests. Additional caverns yielded manuscripts, particularly caverns 464 and 465, which included Yuan period (1271 – 1368) records in Tibetan, Old Uyghur, and Tangut languages.¹⁷

A sizable amount of the Dunhuang manuscripts are Buddhist texts, which demonstrate the importance of Buddhism in the area from the late 4th to the early 11th century. Among these are important sutras such as the Lotus Sutra, which is among the earliest known printed texts, and the Diamond Sutra. Academic analyses of Buddhist teachings and sutras shed light on doctrinal interpretations and the ritual world. Buddhist monasteries’ administrative and spiritual traditions are demonstrated by their ritual books, meditation aids, and monastic rules. The devotional life of Buddhist communities is shown through liturgical materials like hymns, prayers, and ceremonial instructions. The Buddhist cosmology, gods, and events from the life of the Buddha are depicted in certain illustrated texts.

The collection also includes tantric and esoteric books related to Vajrayana Buddhism, which provide symbolic diagrams, rituals, and mantras. Buddhism expanded throughout the Silk Road, as evidenced by the translations of Buddhist writings into languages including Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit. Moral and spiritual lessons were also imparted through the use of Jataka stories, which recounted the Buddha’s past incarnations. When taken as a whole, these records provide a thorough picture of Buddhist doctrine, practice, and cultural fusion, which makes them indispensable for comprehending the evolution of

¹⁶ UNESCO - *Silk Road Programmes Dunhuang* (2024) <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/dunhuang>

¹⁷ Phra Kiattisak Ponampon (2019). *Dunhuang Manuscript S.2585: a Textual and Interdisciplinary Study on Early Medieval Chinese Buddhist Meditative Techniques and Visionary Experiences*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, p. 14.

Buddhism and its impact throughout Asia.

Chinese Monks and scholars have translated texts into various languages, making them accessible to a broader audience. For instance, the Chinese *Tipiṭaka*, or *Taishō Tripitaka*, is a comprehensive collection of Mahayana texts that has been instrumental in spreading Mahayana teachings. Mahayana texts, such as the Lotus Sutra and the Heart Sutra, have been translated into various languages and are studied across countries like China, Japan, and Vietnam. The Mahayana *Tipiṭaka*, or *Taishō Tripitaka*, is a comprehensive collection of Mahayana texts that has been instrumental in spreading Mahayana teachings. Monks have undertaken pilgrimages to sacred sites and centers of learning to study and collect texts. Xuanzang, a Chinese monk, traveled to India in the 7th century to obtain original Sanskrit texts, which he later translated into Chinese.¹⁸

Buddhist books were preserved in a number of famous libraries and archives in ancient China, underscoring the religious and cultural importance of Buddhism. The Tang Dynasty's Imperial Library in Chang'an (present-day Xi'an) was a significant repository for Buddhist teachings, enhanced by the translation of Sanskrit texts into Chinese by translators such as Xuanzang and Yijing.¹⁹ The Chinese Buddhist canon (Dazangjing), was extensively reproduced in monastery libraries throughout China and kept at the Dazangjing Pavilion, which was built during the Tang and Song Dynasties. Copies of the Chinese *Tipiṭaka* were among the significant texts saved by Beijing's Fayuan Temple Library, one of the oldest Buddhist temples.

3.3. In South East Asia and Japan

In order to preserve and spread Buddhist teachings, many Buddhist libraries were established inside monasteries and temple complexes throughout ancient Southeast Asia. As Buddhism expanded through trade and cross-cultural interactions, these libraries, which were influenced by Indian Buddhist centers such as Nalanda, protected texts. In Bagan (Myanmar), during the Pagan Kingdom (9th – 13th centuries), monasteries housed Pāli scriptures of the *Theravāda* Buddhist canon (Tipitaka), often inscribed on palm leaves, copper plates, and stone inscriptions.²⁰ Similarly, Angkor Wat and Preah Khan (Cambodia), under the Khmer Empire (9th – 15th centuries), served as repositories for Buddhist texts, particularly Mahayana and Vajrayana works, reflecting the empire's syncretic religious traditions. In Thailand, during the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods, monasteries maintained libraries with palm-leaf manuscripts of Pāli Buddhist texts.²¹ Monks played a central role in copying and preserving these scriptures. Meanwhile, in Java (Indonesia),

¹⁸ Benjamin Brose (2021) *Xuanzang: China's Legendary Pilgrim and Translator*, Boulder: Shambhala, p. 48 - 53.

¹⁹ Min Xie (2023) *Concise Reader of Chinese Literature History*, Singapore: Springer Nature, p. 194.

²⁰ Priyanka Joshi (2024) *Heritage Studies - A Compendium*, Delhi: Nyra Publishers, p. 98 - 99.

²¹ Ian Nathaniel Lowman (2011) *The Descendants of Kambu: The Political Imagination of Angkorian Cambodia*, UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations.

during the Srivijaya and Sailendra periods (7th – 11th centuries), Mahayana Buddhist texts were stored in monasteries near Borobudur, including sutras and esoteric teachings. These libraries ensured the survival of *Theravāda* and Mahayana traditions in Southeast Asia.

Buddhist libraries played a crucial role in the preservation and spread of religious knowledge and writings in ancient Japan, demonstrating the deep cultural impact of Buddhism in that country. Many of these Japanese libraries also served as centers for academic and religious pursuits and were located inside temples and monastic complexes. One of Japan's earliest Buddhist temples, Hōryū-ji Temple was founded in the seventh century and has significant sutras that were imported from China and Korea. Tōdai-ji Temple in Nara developed as a center of Buddhist scholarship in the eighth century. The Daizōkyō (Japanese Buddhist canon) and other important materials were kept in its library to aid in the study of various Buddhist schools. As part of Tōdai-ji, the Shōsō-in Repository protected priceless Buddhist manuscripts, antiquities, and imported texts including Chinese sutras in Vajrayana Buddhist traditions.²² They also fostered a vibrant scholarly tradition, preserving and transmitting Buddhist philosophy and practices to future generations, shaping the region's religious and cultural identity.

During the Heian period, the Enryaku-ji Temple on top of Mount Hiei served as the center of the Tendai school, which produced a large number of sutras and other esoteric writings that influenced Japanese Buddhism. Kōyasan, or Mount Kōya, was established in the ninth century by Kūkai and developed into a hub for Shingon Buddhism by conserving Chinese-imported tantric texts and esoteric teachings. The Japanese Buddhist practices like the Tendai, Shingon, and Zen traditions and the establishment of Japanese heritage benefited greatly from these libraries.²³

Those Buddhist libraries in different regions served two purposes throughout the colonial era. They revived Buddhist history and resisted cultural persecution. By preserving indigenous knowledge and values, these organizations established a basis for cultural resistance to colonial intrusions. Buddhist libraries also made it easier for Buddhist teachings to spread throughout the world, with texts being transferred to Japan, Sri Lanka, Burma, and other countries. Despite the difficulties posed by colonial control, these initiatives contributed to the globalization of Buddhism and its peace-promoting ideals.

From ancient India to the digital age, Buddhist libraries have been integral to promoting world peace. By preserving and disseminating teachings that encourage compassion, tolerance, and understanding, these institutions have served as inspirations of hope and harmony. They continue to inspire individuals and nations to work together for a peaceful and inclusive world, making their

²² Miyeko Murase et.al (1993) *Jewel Rivers Japanese Art from the Burke Collection*, Virginia: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, p. 150 - 159.

²³ M. Brindhamani, K. Marisamy (2016) *Comparative Education*, NC: Lulu, p. 89 - 92.

contributions invaluable across centuries and into the future. Buddhist scholars and monks from countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam have historically engaged in the exchange of knowledge and texts by visiting Buddhist libraries across various nations. This cross-cultural interaction has facilitated the sharing of the Buddhist *Tipiṭaka* and Mahayana texts, enriching the global Buddhist tradition.

3.4. Libraries in the modern world and intellectual exchange between Buddhist Nations

In the modern era, the globalization of Buddhism has been supported significantly by Buddhist libraries. Modern institutions like the Buddhist Library in Singapore and the *Dhammakaya* Foundation in Thailand have expanded access to sacred texts, spreading teachings of mindfulness and peace to a global audience. Buddhist libraries now support academic research, interfaith dialogues, and initiatives addressing global challenges such as conflict resolution, environmental sustainability, and mental health.

The advent of digital technology has revolutionized Buddhist libraries, allowing the creation of online archives and databases that make ancient teachings widely accessible. For instance, digital repositories have enabled researchers and practitioners worldwide to engage with Buddhist texts that advocate non-violence and compassionate action. UNESCO's recognition of Buddhist monastic libraries and sites as cultural heritage underscores their enduring importance in fostering peace through education and preservation.

Buddhism has been studied and preserved in many Buddhist nations, with Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar being important hubs for its spread. The teachings ascribed to the Buddha and recorded in Pāli Canon, which is essential to Theravada practice. For centuries, the Pāli Canon has been painstakingly maintained in Sri Lankan libraries and monasteries. The Sri Lanka *Tipiṭaka* Foundation, based on the island, is in charge of conserving, digitizing, and disseminating Theravada Pāli manuscripts. Scholars from all over the world come to study the Pāli Canon in its original form at the University of Peradeniya and other academic institutions in Sri Lanka, which also have sizable holdings of the text. A sizable collection of Buddhist writings and artifacts can be seen at the National Museum in Colombo. Furthermore, the University of Peradeniya attracts researchers from all over the world with its large library of Buddhist resources. The *Tipiṭaka* was declared a national heritage in Sri Lanka in 2019.²⁴

Studying and conserving the Pāli Canon has a long history in Myanmar, another important Theravada Buddhist center. Pāli manuscripts are kept in substantial collections by the nation's modern monastic establishments, including Yangon's Maha *Dhamma* Kitti Vihara. Monks from Burma have made substantial contributions to the Canon's translation and textual transmission. Additionally, Myanmar hosted the Sixth Buddhist Council (1954 – 1956),

²⁴ *The Sunday Times*, 06 Jan 2019, "*Tipiṭaka* declared a national heritage; history is made again at Aluvihare Temple".

which printed and read an authorized edition of the Pāli Canon. This *Sanagayana* became a large event among the international Buddhist community that preserved the Buddha's word for another 2500 years.²⁵

The *Tipiṭaka* is a key component of Buddhist education in modern Thailand, where monks study and instruct students using the writings in both Thai and Pāli. Large libraries of the Pāli Canon are kept up to date by the Wat Phra Dhammakaya and other sizable monasteries. Thai monks have helped to preserve and interpret these scriptures through their study and meditation. A complete version of the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* was also donated to the British Library in 2000 by Thailand's World *Tipiṭaka* Foundation, which made a significant contribution. In addition to aiding with the Canon's preservation, this action made it easier for scholars and spiritual seekers to access it worldwide.²⁶ The Pāli Canon is among the many Buddhist materials that are kept in Bangkok's National Library of Thailand. Thai academics frequently travel to Sri Lanka to examine the original Pāli Canon.

Through intellectual interactions, digitization, and pilgrimages, the Pāli Canon has been shared around nations, guaranteeing that the writings will continue to be available to future generations. Many academics have worked on translation initiatives to make the Canon available in many languages, and monks from nations like Thailand and Sri Lanka frequently travel to India to study more Buddhist literature. This international endeavor to conserve and disseminate the Pāli Canon emphasizes how crucial these writings are for comprehending the Buddha's teachings and their applicability to modern society. A significant collection of Buddhist texts, including Mahayana sutras, can be found at the Vietnam National Library in Hanoi. In the past, Vietnamese monks have studied and gathered Buddhist texts in China and India.

In conclusion, a key factor in the preservation and spread of Buddhist teachings has been the sharing of Buddhist literature among academics and monks from other nations. The rich tapestry of Buddhist literature is still flourishing around the world thanks to library visits, translation projects, and scholarly partnerships. Conferences, collaborative research projects, and the sharing of digital resources are some of the ways that contemporary academic institutions promote knowledge exchange. The Buddhist exhibition in the British Library, for instance, demonstrates the widespread interest in Buddhist texts.

3.5. The transformative potential of digital Buddhist libraries

The potential for digital Buddhist libraries to preserve, spread, and enhance Buddhist information is enormous. Sacred texts, commentaries, historical documents, and cultural items that are otherwise dispersed throughout the world or restricted to physical archives are made accessible through these

²⁵ Khammai Dhammasami (2018) *Buddhism, Education and Politics in Burma and Thailand from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 158 - 59.

²⁶ "World Tipitaka at British library", <https://www.worldtipitaka.net/world-tip-i%E1%B9%ADaka-at-british-library/>

repositories. The accessibility of digital libraries is one of its main benefits. For instance, scholars, practitioners, and the general public across the world can access thousands of Tibetan, Chinese, and *Pāli* manuscripts through the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). It mostly contains numerous Mahayana Sutras and is intended for anyone who is interested in Tibetan Buddhism.²⁷ It is a sizable digital library of Tibetan ancient manuscripts and literature. Similar to this, the Chinese Buddhist canon is being digitized by Japan's SAT Daizōkyō Text Database, which gives users access to advanced tools for text analysis, cross-referencing, and search.²⁸

Digital libraries are essential for preservation as well. The palm-leaf manuscripts of Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka are among the many old manuscripts that are prone to deterioration. Their survival for upcoming generations is guaranteed by digitization. For example, the *Tipiṭaka* Project in Thailand, run by the *Dhammakaya* Foundation, has digitized *Pāli* canonical texts and offered translation resources to promote a deeper understanding. Its motto is world peace through inner peace.²⁹ Scholars and practitioners throughout the world can more easily study Buddhist teachings thanks to a number of different online resources that provide access to the Buddhist *Tipiṭaka* and other significant Buddhist texts. An important resource for anyone interested in Theravada Buddhism is Access to Insight, which offers a large selection of texts from the *Pāli* Canon, including translations of *suttas* and commentaries.

With translations available in several languages, SuttaCentral is another useful website that provides access to the *Pāli* Canon, Chinese Agama, and Mahayana Sutras.³⁰ As such, it is perfect for scholars of all skill levels. It promotes cross-cultural comparative research. *Tipiṭaka.net* offers translations and commentary for in-depth study with a particular concentration on the Chinese *Tipiṭaka* and the *Pāli* Canon.³¹ Last but not least, the Kangyur and Tengyur collections are available in digital form via the Digital Library of Tibetan Studies (DLTS), which focuses on Tibetan Buddhist literature. These internet resources are essential to the study and global distribution of Buddhist literature, helping to preserve and comprehend the foundational writings of Buddhism.

Moreover, digital Buddhist libraries promote inclusivity by offering resources for free or at low cost. Mobile apps and websites make teachings accessible to individuals in remote regions or those with disabilities, enhancing global engagement with Buddhist philosophy and practice. These platforms enable collaborative research and dialogue. Researchers can annotate, compare, and share insights on texts in real time, fostering interdisciplinary and

²⁷ Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC), <https://www.bdrc.io/>

²⁸ SAT Daizōkyō Text Database, https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html

²⁹ *Dhammakaya* Foundation, <https://en.Dhammakaya.net/>

³⁰ SuttaCentral, <https://suttacentral.net/?lang=en>

³¹ *Tipiṭaka.net*, <http://Tipiṭaka.net/>

cross-cultural studies. In essence, digital Buddhist libraries are revolutionizing how Buddhist teachings and history are preserved, studied, and shared. They bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, ensuring that the wisdom of Buddhism continues to thrive in a digital era.

3.6. The value of libraries as catalysts for social cohesion

Buddhism places a strong emphasis on empathy, comprehension, and harmony. In the Buddhist world, libraries exemplified these ideals by encouraging discourse and the free exchange of knowledge. They provided access to knowledge that might spur societal advancement and personal development, bridging gaps between the privileged and the underprivileged. As an illustration of the cooperative nature of these institutions, Nalanda University's extensive translation efforts featured works by Chinese, Tibetan, and Central Asian intellectuals. The problems of poverty, ignorance, and social isolation can also be addressed by contemporary libraries, whether they are institutional, public, or virtual. They build the foundation for equity and social change by providing resources for empowerment and promoting respect and understanding between people.

The Buddhist ideals of compassion and truth-seeking resonate deeply with the ethical standards of librarianship like independence, impartiality, and honesty. Similar to what the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) do today,³² the distribution of complete and impartial knowledge was a top priority for ancient Buddhist libraries. Free information access and the promotion of intellectual freedom are still essential tactics for overcoming desperation, poverty, and inequality as obstacles to world peace and understanding.

Libraries can be recognized as shared spaces of interdependence. In the Buddhist world, libraries were much more than mere repositories of texts. They functioned as communal spaces that embodied the principles of interdependence and collective wisdom. These libraries served as centers of learning where monks, travelers, and scholars came together to study, exchange ideas, and engage in dialogue, fostering intellectual and spiritual growth. The sharing of texts, whether Buddhist scriptures, commentaries, or philosophical treatises, transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, promoting a sense of unity across diverse communities. This spirit of collaboration allowed for the transmission of knowledge and wisdom, making it possible for Buddhism to spread far and wide. Scholars and monks not only engaged with the texts but also contributed their insights, creating a dynamic and inclusive environment of mutual learning.³³

In the modern context, libraries continue to reflect these same principles of mutuality and equality. They are communal spaces where resources, such as books, digital materials, and educational programs, are shared for the

³² Dag Hammarskjöld Library, https://www.un.org/zh/library/IFLA_informed_societies

³³ Kewon, *Op.cit*, p. 1 - 31.

benefit of all members of society. Libraries today foster an environment where individuals from all walks of life can access information, engage in dialogue, and contribute to collective knowledge. By serving as inclusive spaces for intellectual exchange, libraries maintain their role as pillars of interconnectedness and mutual support in the modern world, just as they did in ancient Buddhist communities.

IV. PROMOTING PEACE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

By conserving teachings that foster intercultural tolerance and understanding, Buddhist libraries have significantly contributed to global peace. In order to promote peaceful societies, they first highlight the significance of non-violence through concepts like metta (loving-kindness) and ahimsa (non-harm). By encouraging people to treat others with understanding, respect, and compassion, these lessons lessen conflict and foster collaboration. These libraries also work as cultural bridges, facilitating cross-cultural interactions that promote harmony and respect across various populations. They help people comprehend Buddhism's worldwide message of peace and coexistence on a deeper level by giving them access to sacred writings. Furthermore, by making these writings available to the general public, Buddhist libraries contribute significantly to universal education by encouraging moral growth and ethical education that leads people to live in harmony. Last but not least, Buddhist teachings kept in these libraries have played a significant role in efforts at reconciliation in post-conflict environments, providing knowledge that aids in community healing, trust restoration, and societal peace. These donations enable Buddhist libraries to act as potent instruments for fostering peace and understanding around the globe in addition to conserving significant literature.

In this analysis of libraries, we also need to distinguish between “negative” and “positive” peace. Negative peace is the absence of war and direct physical violence. Positive peace refers to a situation where conditions conducive to lasting peace, such as social justice and harmony, are cultivated.³⁴ A further useful distinction is that between a static concept of peace as a state (a condition) and a dynamic concept of peace as a process, or processes. Here we think of the processes of cultivating peace (preventing the emergence of destructive conflicts), making peace (de-escalating and resolving conflicts), and keeping and restoring peace (after conflict has ended). If we want to work for positive and sustainable peace, we need to see peace as a work in progress. Peace is not limited to the absence of war but concerns itself with such matters as justice, human dignity and well-being, environmental justice, and sustainability. These transcend the boundaries of the nation-state. In a time of globalisation peace-building cannot be confined to national boundaries. There can be no lasting international peace if peace is absent from individual states or regions and localities within states. Local to global conditions form a continuum; perturbations at the local level can and do ripple across national

³⁴ L. Kriesberg, (2006) “Peace”. in *Encyclopedia of sociology*, New York: Macmillan Reference, 2nd ed., Vol. 3, p. 2044 – 2051.

boundaries, with global repercussions.

All this leads to the realization that peace-building is not simply about preventing and ending the conflict, but about creating conditions that are conducive to peace. This has important implications for the role of librarians. It can be suggested that there are seven roles for librarians: informing, promoting, educating, creating resources, empowering, healing and advocating. One important fact is the selection of library materials calls for cultural sensitivity and efforts are made to find materials that emphasize our shared humanity rather than our differences. The topic of multicultural librarianship is too vast to broach here, but it is highly relevant at this time when large numbers of dispossessed and traumatized people are on the move.³⁵

Healing may be an unusual word to use in the context of library services, although bibliotherapy is by no means unknown in our profession. Many victims of war and violence have experienced horrific suffering, deprivation, and loss. Many children spend years in refugee camps. Others, after a long and dangerous journey, find themselves in a strange country where everything is different, including their home, school, the weather, and the languages they hear spoken around them. There is great scope for libraries in affected areas to go beyond the conventional provision of books and media, for example by hosting or offering programs of storytelling and group activities, with opportunities for self-expression through drawing, music, dance, and acting. This is not limited to services to people coming from somewhere else, as illustrated by the work of the Lubuto Library Partnership with street children in Zambia.³⁶

The lessons from ancient Buddhist libraries highlight the importance of investing in knowledge and understanding to promote peace. In the aftermath of global challenges – whether ancient conflicts or modern crises like terrorism – libraries stand as symbols of resilience and hope. They remind us that building bridges of understanding through the free flow of information is far more effective in fostering peace than erecting barriers of power and domination. As we honor the enduring values of ancient Buddhist institutions, we are reminded of the critical role libraries play in creating a more inclusive, just, and harmonious world. By committing to intellectual freedom, mutual respect, and the dissemination of knowledge, libraries continue to make a significant contribution to the preconditions for peace in our interconnected global society.

³⁵ Lor, Op.cit., p. 6 - 7.

³⁶ Stacy Langner et.al (2011), "Lubuto Library Project: Bringing Knowledge to Zambian Children", *IFLABook*, Lubuto Library.

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EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH BUDDHIST DHAMMA EDUCATION: CULTIVATING UNITY, PEACE, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY

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Abstract:

This research paper aims to describe the natural potential of Buddhist *Dhamma* education propagation in peaceful societies for coexistence, peace, and sustainable development. As such, this research demonstrates how *Dhamma* education can reconcile the inherent gaps between the different objectives of intellectual achievements in formal education systems by bringing to the fore the ethical and moral dimensions enshrined in Buddhist *Dhamma*. Empirical studies show that *Dhamma* education is the most important way of developing empathy, loving-kindness, and moral awareness in youths and children - values that are deemed necessary for the construction of peaceful and harmonious societies. A comparative survey of students from normal schools and schools where moral education is a part of the curriculum shows fundamental differences in behavior and attitude. Students who had received moral education were more compassionate, had better moral reasoning, and had stronger interpersonal relationships. Testimony from parents, teachers, and community leaders also stands as evidence of the pivotal role that *Dhamma* education plays in character formation and in shaping the worldview of the young. The research also highlights the need to incorporate moral education into general education systems to address the rising social crises caused by the decline of human values. The future generations of leaders in society, namely the youth, need to be empowered with both intellectual and moral strength to attain sustainable development and universal harmony. The study establishes that Buddhist *Dhamma* education is an effective agent in developing amicability-based minds and fostering a culture of friendship. By

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placing moral development on an equal footing with academic success, nations can cultivate populations that are not only educated but also morally capable of responding to societal challenges. Finally, the study reiterates that a calm mind is the foundation of a peaceful society - something that can be attained through the principles and practice of *Dhamma* teaching.

Keywords: *Dhamma education, sustainable development, harmonious society, peace.*

I. INTRODUCTION

"Eating, sleeping, sex, and defense - these four principles are common to both human beings and animals. The distinction between human life and animal life is that a man can understand what is good and what is bad, but an animal cannot. That is the difference. Therefore, a man without that *Dhamma* is equal to an animal."¹ In today's modern era, education is among the greatest tools for addressing complex psychological, environmental, and social issues. Among all forms of education, *Buddhist Dhamma* education is a system that represents an ideal integration of intellectual, ethical, and spirit-based learning. *Buddhist Dhamma* education shapes human beings in a way that nurtures their moral character, psychological resilience, and intellectual growth, making them capable of facing all aspects of life. Studies have shown that students in *Buddhist Dhamma* schools possess a greater sense of morality, self-control, and psychological well-being compared to students in conventional schools. This is due to the unique emphasis on integrating intellectual learning with ethics and spirituality, a practice seldom followed in standard education systems. The modern era presents new dilemmas for young people, such as mental distress, environmental degradation, financial instability, and societal fragmentation. These are issues for which a conventional book-based education system alone is insufficient. *Buddhist Dhamma* education, when combined with mindfulness, becomes a transformative approach. Through compassion, unity, and an understanding of interdependence, this system, when integrated with mindfulness, can empower young people to address both personal and collective challenges effectively. This research paper seeks to explore the potential for harmonizing *Buddhist Dhamma* studies and mindfulness practices in fostering personal growth among young people. It investigates how such integration can contribute to the development of a more compassionate, cohesive, and sustainable community. Drawing on past studies, interviews, and assessments, the paper identifies primary barriers to achieving a harmonized society and examines how mindfulness-enabled *Buddhist Dhamma* education can offer concrete solutions. Ultimately, this paper aims to provide actionable steps toward cultivating a generation of young individuals who can make a meaningful impact on the world by bridging traditional and modern learning paradigms.

¹ Wilkins, Charles. *The Bhagavat-Geeta or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon*. London: N. Briggs, 1785, "Āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaṃ ca sāmānyaṃ etat paśubhir narāṇāṃ, dharmo hi teṣāṃ adhiko viśeṣaḥ, dharmeṇa hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ."

II. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This research aims to explore the integration of mindfulness practices and Buddhist *Dhamma* education. It is a transformative approach that helps in youth development intending to foster compassion, unity, and sustainable futures. This research seeks to develop a moral and spiritual education framework that can address contemporary challenges such as social fragmentation, environmental degradation, and mental breakdowns by integrating Buddhist ideals and ethical principles. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the creation of a harmonious society where youths are empowered to become ethical, compassionate, and proactive individuals.

2.1. Research objectives

To achieve the above-mentioned aims, this research mainly focused on the following main objectives: (1) To study and evaluate the importance and foundational principles of Buddhist *Dhamma* education in Buddhist-specific countries, highlighting its major role in shaping moral and ethical development. (2) To analyze the significance and relevance of integrating Buddhist *Dhamma* education and mindfulness practices into contemporary education systems, particularly to address social, mental, and environmental issues faced by youths. (3) To explore canonical teachings from Buddhist scriptures that promote moral development, with a focus on *Dhamma* education to cultivate virtues through compassion, non-violence (*ahimsa*), and mindfulness (*sati*).

2.2. Research methods

This research paper employs a mixed-method approach. It combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods, which ensures a comprehensive and balanced analysis of mindfulness and Buddhist *Dhamma* education in youth development. This combines methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis to assist in a deeper understanding of the research topic. It captures both the subjective experiences of participants and measurable data trends.

2.3. Qualitative method

This method of research focuses on investigating the philosophical, ethical, and practical dimensions of mindfulness and Buddhist *Dhamma* education. The following aspects were undertaken: (1) Primary resources: It primarily investigates related Theravāda Buddhist *Suttas* and commentaries on moral development, mindfulness, and youth education systems. The major texts include the *Mangala Sutta*, the *Sigalovada Sutta*, and *Dhammapada*, which provide foundational teachings on ethical conduct and mental training. (2) Secondary resources: The role of *Dhamma* education in modern societies is contextualized through a review of relevant books, academic articles, magazines, newspapers, social media content, historical records, and online resources. (3) Data Collection: The implementation of mindfulness and *Dhamma* education in education systems was analyzed using existing research documents, and case studies were also carried out.

2.4. Quantitative method

The quantitative aspect of the research focuses on gathering and analyzing

empirical data to identify trends and measurable patterns related to the outcomes of mindfulness and *Dhamma* education on youth development. The following steps were undertaken: (1) Data Collection Tools: Questionnaires: Distributed for surveys to students (from government, private, religious, and non-religious schools), teachers, parents, and members of organizations such as the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA). Interviews: Conducted with government officers from the Department of Buddhist Affairs and teachers of *Dhamma* education programs. Case Studies: Examined specific examples of successful integration of mindfulness and *Dhamma* education in youth life. (2) Data Analysis: Non-participant direct observation Statistical Analysis: Quantitative data from questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using mathematical calculations and demonstrated. (3) Data Handling: Gathered data through questionnaires, interviews, and case studies. All collected materials were recorded by photocopying and digitization. Data was entered into computer systems for future reference, systematic arrangement, and analysis. This research method description provides a clear and detailed explanation of how the research was conducted. It also ensures transparency and provides rigor in the research process. It highlights the complementary nature of qualitative and quantitative methods in addressing the research’s aims and objectives.

2.5. Results

This result includes the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data drawn from one hundred and fifty (150) participants. The results of the study are presented in tabular form and interpreted. The questionnaire consisted of several statements based on the findings of the previous discussion group, and respondents were asked to agree or disagree with each given statement, providing their reasons. A random sample of 50 participants from each group was generated through the questionnaire. They were in the age range of 20-60 years. The participants responded to the question, “Is the current education system a proper way of developing the moral characteristics of students?” as follows.

Table 01: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Participants	Agree	Disagree
Teachers	21	29
Parents	26	24
Students	33	17

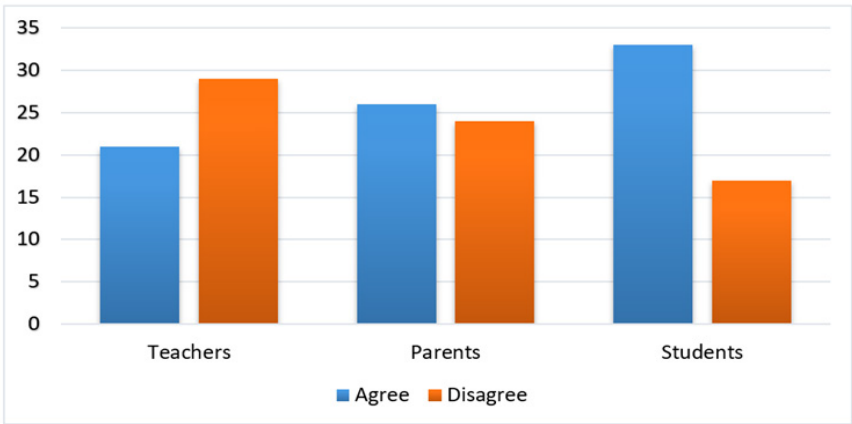


Figure 01: Demographic Profile of Respondents

The above-mentioned Table No. 01 and Figure No. 01 indicate that parents and students believe that the current education system provides an opportunity to develop moral conduct, while teachers do not fully agree with the concept. When considering the overall response of the participants about the necessity of moral development in education, Table No. 01 shows the results in the following manner.

Table 02: Necessity of Moral Development in Education

Response	Teachers	Parents	Students	Total	% of Responses
Strongly Agree	35	38	26	99	66%
Agree	15	12	21	48	32%
Neutral	0	0	03	03	02%
Disagree	0	0	0	0	0
Total	50	50	50	150	100%

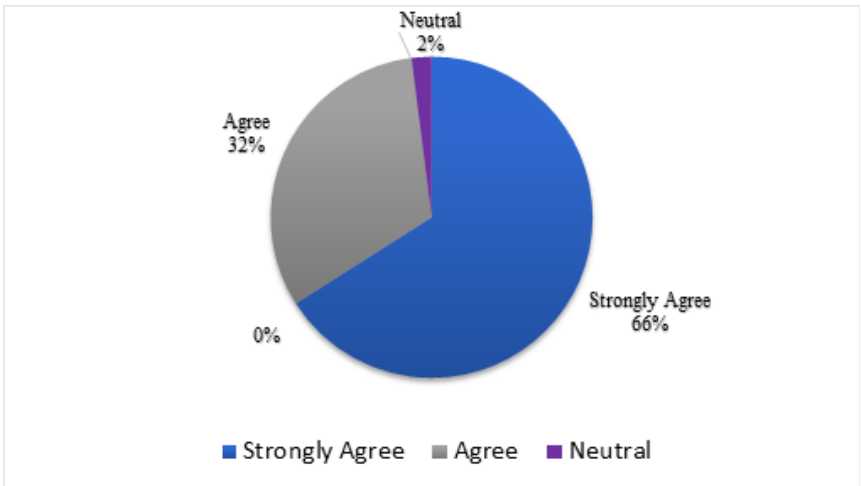


Figure 02: Necessity of Moral Development in Education

With reference to Table No. 02 and Figure No. 02, 98% (66% + 32%) of the participants confirmed the necessity of moral development in the current education system. In tracing the recent development of moral education, we begin to see that in the past, it had been an integral part of education at all times and in all cultures. Every culture regards moral development as a noble ideal to attain. However, with the advent of Western secularism at the beginning of the 20th century, through the guise of a positivist scientific outlook on education, moral and human values, including peace, were slowly removed from school curricula. Another important question raised in the questionnaire was whether the participants had to suggest a subject between *Dhamma* Education and Information Technology, which one would they prefer? The findings below show the tendency of participants’ suggestions.

Table 03: Suggestions on *Dhamma* education and Information technology

PARTICIPANTS	Students	Parents	Teachers	Total
Dhamma Education	23	19	28	70
Information Tech- nology	27	12	22	61
Not Responded	-	19	-	19

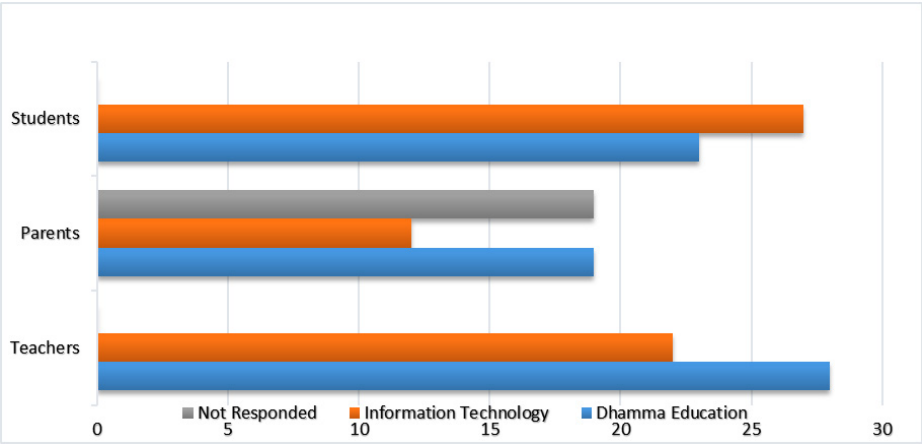


Figure 03: Suggestions on *Dhamma* Education and Information Technology

Almost half of the respondents to the questionnaire cited the role of moral development in society or the workplace as the main reason for supporting a new subject: ‘No matter whether you are a student, professional, housewife or other, everybody should have a basic understanding of moral values. Many participants in this study considered *Dhamma* education as an essential part of general education and believed this issue should be dealt with as a matter of urgency: *Dhamma* education is a must, an absolute. According to figure no. 03 and column 1 of table no. 03, students’ priority is shown for the subject Information Technology, but overall tendency is to select the subject *Dhamma* Education.

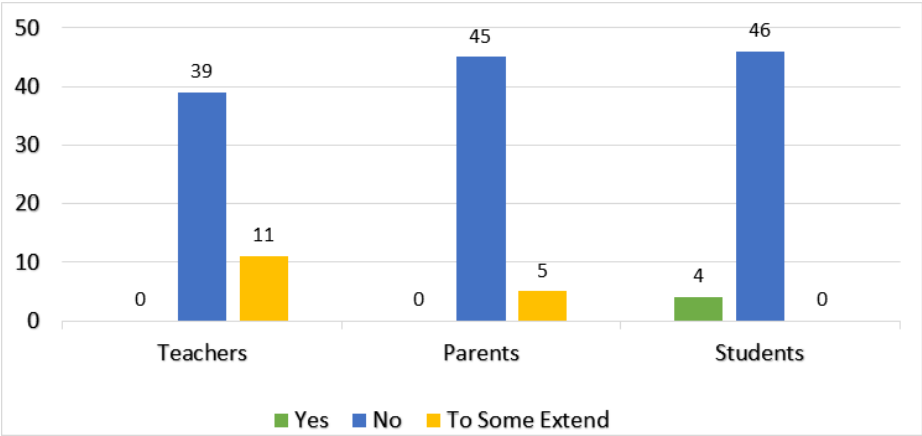


Figure 04: The good effects of extra (tuition) classes for Moral Development

Table 04: The good effect of extra (tuition) classes for moral development

	Response of Teach- ers	Response of Parents	Response of Students	Total	%
Yes	0	0	04	04	3%
No	39	45	46	130	87%
To some extent	11	05	0	16	10%
Total	50	50	50	150	100%

87% of the participants stated that extra classes do not affect developing moral values. 10% responded, saying that there is some tendency, to some extent, in developing moral values in extra classes. Only 3% of participants mentioned that extra classes are concerned with moral development during class times. Unlike academic subjects, moral development is as dependent on individuals as it is on parents, teachers, and other social groups. Children learn moral behavior more from the ways teachers and parents speak, respond to challenges, and view issues than from what they teach. A morally poor parent or teacher cannot teach moral values because their behavior contradicts what they teach. Young people must receive age-appropriate sexual health information to maintain good health. Educators can help families by providing culturally meaningful learning opportunities in safe and nonjudgmental environments so that young people can learn about sexuality in a healthy and positive context. To explore the participants’ views in this regard, the questionnaire consisted of one question: “Do you think sex education is a requirement in the secondary level education system? Give reasons.” The responses were collected from a total of 100 participants (50 parents and 50 teachers). 92% of the respondents recognized that the introduction of such a subject would have an impact on moral development.

2.6. Research findings

Some parents commented on their future ambitions for their children, as education is seen only as a means to obtain a higher-demand occupation, but not much concern is given to the development of moral qualities. One parent suggested punishment as a method to develop moral education, which she uses in her domestic life. 52% of parents do not identify a formal way or organization that helps develop their children’s morality. 8% of parents disagree with including sex education in the curriculum in order to reduce crimes. 78% of teachers, 90% of parents, and 92% of students are disappointed with the current trend of tuition classes, which do not encourage students to develop morality. Friends can help build a person’s good qualities, but they can

also lead to the destruction of those qualities. In this regard, 18% of students commented that friends do not help develop their soft skills. 22% of teachers and 48% of parents expect no more than one hour in the school timetable to teach moral education. The current media system is spoiling students' minds in various ways, such as encouraging the watching of pornography and using inappropriate language. However, we can still see the positive side of media, which helpfully maintains its responsibility by developing knowledge and critical thinking among people. The research findings emphasize the need for active involvement from teachers and parents to develop moral qualities in students. At the same time, the necessity of the next two chapters, which focus on the importance of social relationships in promoting moral education and the Buddhist approach to moral development in education in light of early Buddhist doctrine, will be discussed.

III. DISCUSSION

In today's highly competitive environment, the role of *Dhamma* education within the broader education system has been overshadowed. The rapid growth of the economy has led to an increase in business studies, which in turn draws students away from learning about *Dhamma*. This shift in priorities has been a key factor contributing to the rising levels of crime, as students prioritize earning material wealth over cultivating human virtues and ethics. In this context, students need to focus not only on material success but also on ethics and virtues. Buddhist *Dhamma* education serves as an effective tool in fostering a change in attitude among young minds. By integrating *Dhamma* education into school syllabi, it is possible to nurture a generation of individuals who value both material success and ethical principles, thereby contributing to the creation of a harmonious community and a peaceful nation. Buddhist countries have *Dhamma* schools, though they use different terms, all with the same objective. In Sri Lanka, they are called *Daham Pasala* or *Dharma School*; in Uganda, they are referred to as "Peace School"; in Burma, they are known as *Yin Kye Hmu/Thin tan*; and in Nepal, they are called *Pariyatti Śikṣā*. Though the terminology varies, the common aim is to impart *Dhamma* knowledge and produce ethically developed individuals for society. Due to the overwhelming focus on economic development, *Dhamma* education often takes a backseat compared to other forms of formal education. Most parents wish for their children to become doctors, engineers, or lecturers, rather than individuals with spiritual qualities. Consequently, people in contemporary society often view *Dhamma* education as an insignificant subject for their children.

3.1. Brief historical background of Buddhist *Dhamma* schools

Buddhist *Dhamma* schools, traditionally known as Sunday schools or *Dhamma* classes, are educational institutions aimed at teaching both younger and lay practitioners the basics, practices, and principles of Buddhism. These schools play an essential role in preserving and propagating Buddhism among younger and lay practitioners. The historical development of these Buddhist schools is inextricably linked with the spread of Buddhism, which parallels the socio-cultural and religious processes of the regions it reached.

This section provides a critical study of the historical evolution of *Dhamma* schools, examining their origins, growth, and roles across different Buddhist philosophical traditions. The origins of Buddhist education date back to the time of the Buddha. During his 45 years of teaching following his enlightenment, the Buddha shared his teachings with a diverse group of listeners, including monks, nuns, and both male and female lay practitioners. His teachings were initially spread verbally. The Buddha's discourses (*suttas*) and monastic codes of conduct (*Vinaya*) were memorized by his students and later became part of the *Pāli Canon*, now recognized as the earliest Buddhist scriptures. In its early centuries, the monastic community, known as the *Sangha*, served as the primary institution for Buddhist learning. In this system, both nunneries and monasteries were focal points for the study of sutras, meditation, and philosophical debates. Laypeople also participated, often attending lectures during religious festivals or when monks visited towns for alms-giving. As Buddhism spread beyond India to regions like Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, China, and Tibet, the demand for education tailored to laypeople became more evident. These regions presented unique cultural and linguistic contexts, which required adaptations in Buddhist pedagogy to meet local needs. Laypeople, often bound by familial and community obligations, sought ways to integrate the Dhamma into their daily lives. Similarly, the spread of Theravada Buddhism throughout Southeast Asia during the first millennium of the Common Era led to the establishment of monastic schools that served both lay practitioners and monastics. In Myanmar and Thailand, Buddhist monasteries became centers for literacy, scriptural interpretation, and general Buddhist education. In particular, these educational programs build a foundation in Buddhist ethics and morals. The modern concept of *Dhamma* schools as distinct institutions for lay education emerged during the colonial period in Asia. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw significant social and political changes, including the impact of Western colonialism, the rise of nationalist movements, and the revival of Buddhism in response to external challenges. During this period, Buddhist leaders and reformers recognized the need to preserve and promote Buddhist teachings in the face of Western secular education and Christian missionary activities. In Sri Lanka, the Buddhist revival movement of the late 19th century, led by figures like Anagarika Dharmapala and Henry Steel Olcott, played a pivotal role in the establishment of Buddhist schools. Olcott, an American theosophist, collaborated with local Buddhist leaders to create a network of Buddhist schools that offered modern education while emphasizing Buddhist values. These schools, known as Buddhist English Schools, integrated secular subjects with *Dhamma* classes, ensuring that students maintained a connection to their religious heritage. Other regions of Asia also made similar efforts to establish schools dedicated to the Buddhist doctrine. In Thailand, for example, government approval allowed Buddhist studies to be included in national school curricula, ensuring that students received education in Buddhist ethics and meditation. In Myanmar, Buddhist monasteries have continued to serve as important learning centers, educating both monastics and laypeople. The global spread

of Buddhism in the 20th and 21st centuries, particularly to Western countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and Western European states, has been substantial. Immigrants from countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, and Tibet established *Dhamma* schools to teach children about their cultural practices, languages, and Buddhist heritage. These schools have also attracted non-Asian practitioners of Buddhism, providing instruction in Buddhist thought, meditation, and ethics to a diverse array of learners. In Western societies, *Dhamma* schools often cater to a broad audience. They provide teachings on meditation, Buddhist philosophy, and ethics, with the curricula reflecting various Buddhist traditions such as Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. These schools typically incorporate experiential learning practices such as meditation, chanting, and rituals, in addition to more formal theoretical study of key Buddhist texts like the *Dhammapada*, the *Jataka Tales*, and the *Pāli Canon*. Pedagogical approaches have varied based on the learners' cultural backgrounds and developmental stages. In traditional schools, teaching methods were centered on memorization and verbal repetition, reflecting the oral transmission of teachings. Modern *Dhamma* schools, however, emphasize participatory and experiential learning, focusing on face-to-face interactions and relating the material to learners' personal experiences. Curricula often include group discussions, storytelling, creative arts, and community service projects. Despite their prominence, *Dhamma* schools face several challenges in modern settings. In many countries, science and technology education takes precedence, leaving little room for the study of religion and ethics. As a result, *Dhamma* schools experience lower enrollment numbers. Additionally, the influences of globalization and modern media have altered the interests of younger generations, making it difficult for *Dhamma* schools to retain students. Nevertheless, there are significant opportunities for growth and creativity. The increasing interest in mindfulness and meditation in Western cultures has led to a growing demand for Buddhist practices and teachings. *Dhamma* societies can capitalize on this trend by offering programs that focus on applying Buddhist principles in daily life, such as stress reduction, psychological resilience, and moral reasoning. Furthermore, digital technologies, including online learning platforms and mobile apps, offer new ways to reach a global audience. The historical development of *Dhamma* schools illustrates Buddhism's adaptability and its resilience as it spread across different cultures and eras. From their origins in Indian monastic communities, these schools have evolved in both traditional settings and Western contexts, continuing to play a vital role in preserving and transmitting the teachings of the Buddha. As Buddhism continues to adapt to modern circumstances, *Dhamma* schools are well-positioned to remain essential institutions for the intellectual and spiritual growth of practitioners. By embracing new methods of instruction and being open to modern learners, *Dhamma* schools can continue to fulfill their primary mission of promoting wisdom, compassion, and peace throughout society.

3.2. The requirement of providing *dhamma* education to youngsters

In various countries, weekend *Dhamma* schools, often organized within

Buddhist temples, play a crucial role in instilling ethics and spirituality in the younger generation. The primary goal of these schools is to teach children how to perform righteous deeds, avoid unrighteous actions, and cultivate spiritual growth. As children transition into adolescence, they experience significant physical and psychological changes, which can lead to rebellious behavior and nonconformity. While these changes are a normal part of growing up, they can present challenges for parents, especially if adolescents lack a strong ethical foundation. *Dhamma* education serves as an effective tool in addressing these challenges, offering moral guidance, and fostering self-control as adolescents face life's difficulties. Parents often hope their children will grow up disciplined, obedient, and on the righteous path. Participation in weekend *Dhamma* schools is seen as a means to develop a solid ethical system, just as a structure is built on a firm foundation.² Educators in *Dhamma* schools, many of whom volunteer their time, are motivated by a deep sense of duty and responsibility toward the Dhamma. They play a critical role in guiding young learners, teaching not only doctrinal aspects of Buddhism but also its application in everyday life. Many temples have dedicated spaces for *Dhamma* studies, with organized class sessions that focus on instilling virtues such as effort, compassion, balance, purity, wisdom, and compassion. The five major virtues, often referred to as the "flowers of Buddhism," form an integral part of the curriculum and help shape students into well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to society.³ The aim of *Dhamma* education is also to cultivate respect for relationships within the family, particularly a deep respect for elders. This education teaches children to love and care for not just their elders but also their younger siblings and other members of the community. It instills a sense of obligation, especially in caring for the elderly. The ethical teachings in *Dhamma* education positively impact individual families and contribute to society as a whole, fostering a culture based on compassion and respect. The Buddha's statement, "*Dhamma* protects those who live by the *Dhamma*", emphasizes the significance of *Dhamma* education in maintaining well-being and moral integrity and preventing the breakdown of ethical values.⁴ In Sri Lanka, *Dhamma* schools play an essential role in instilling virtues and cultivating spiritual awareness in young minds. Through teachings on compassion, honesty, and wisdom, these schools help create a generation of Buddhists who not only identify as Buddhists but live according to Buddhist principles. The unwavering dedication of educators, supported by temple authorities, is a collective effort to preserve and propagate the Buddha's teachings. In a society marked by constant change, *Dhamma* education remains vital as it continues to nurture virtues like kindness, respect, and discipline. Ultimately, this education contributes to creating a harmonious and virtuous society.

² Dharmasena & Obeyesekere (1990), p. 45.

³ Wijayaratna (1990), p. 78.

⁴ "*Dhammo has Rakkhati Dhammacāri*".

3.3. Canonical teachings on moral development through *dhamma* education

This discussion mainly focuses on early Buddhist teachings regarding the profile of a good student, the practical way of reducing defilements that act as obstacles to cultivating moral qualities, and emphasizes the Buddhist approach to inculcating moral qualities while learning about the Noble Eightfold Path. It finally concludes the discussion by highlighting the outcome of Buddhist *Dhamma* education. The *Caṅkīsutta* mentions a specific path to gaining knowledge through investigation of the truth, which includes the responsibility of a teacher to cultivate trust in his students regarding his teachings by refraining from unwholesome behavior.⁵ The sutta describes twelve steps to acquiring knowledge as follows: Find a teacher and investigate him with states based on greed, hatred, and delusion; Place conviction; Visit and grow close; Hear the *Dhamma*; Remembers it; Penetrates the meaning; Agree to ponder; Desire Arises; Becomes willing; Contemplates; Makes an exertion; Realizes the ultimate meaning of the truth with his body.⁶ Finally, to arrive at the truth, one goes on to develop and pursue all those same qualities. For all these attainments, the trust that the teacher cultivates in the student's mind regarding his teachings and character becomes the foundation or first step. Once a student is comfortable with his/her teacher, it is not a difficult task for the teacher to teach him/ her to cultivate what is good and remove what is bad. On the other hand, students also need to cultivate the ten methods mentioned in the *Caṅkīsutta* for mutual understanding to build confidence, faith, and the discovery of truth. Thus, maintaining a good profile of a student is not a solo responsibility but a teamwork effort of both the teacher and the student.

In Buddhism, the middle path is the “Noble Eightfold Path,” which develops morality (*Sīla*), concentration (*Samādhi*), and wisdom (*Paññā*). It is one of the major principles of Buddhism. Wisdom is required to overcome greed, hatred, and delusion. *Sīla* leads to moral conduct, *Samādhi* leads to the quietude of the mind, and *Paññā* leads to the dispelling of ignorance or the attainment of true knowledge.⁷ It explains a significant structure for understanding the value of practicing Buddhist ethics. According to Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula, the Noble Eightfold Path is interconnected, with one noble path helping to cultivate another noble path. In the text *What the Buddha Taught*, he mentioned, “The Noble Eightfold Path is to be developed more or less simultaneously, as far as possible according to the capacity of each individual. They are all linked together, and each helps the cultivation

⁵ M. II. 164.

⁶ MN. II. 164. “*Saddhaṃ niveseti, saddhājāto upasaṅkamati, upasaṅkamanto payirupāsati, payirupāsanto sotaṃ odahati, ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti, sutvā dhammaṃ dhāreti, dhatānaṃ [dhāritānaṃ (ka.)] dhammānaṃ atthaṃ upaparikkhati, atthaṃ upaparikkhato dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamanti, dhammanijjhānakkhantiyā sati chando jāyati, chandajāto ussahati, ussahitvā tuletī, tulayitvā padahati, pahitatto samāno kāyena ceva paramasaccaṃ sacchikaroti paññāya ca naṃ ativijjha passati.*”

⁷ MN. I. 299.

of the others.”⁸ According to the *Saccavibhaṅgasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*, the Noble Eightfold Path is elaborated as “Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.”⁹ It not only helps to achieve a super-mundane life but also develops the mundane life by fostering the right attitude, the right knowledge, and developing soft skills. Before analyzing the applicability of the Noble Eightfold Path to moral development in education, it is essential to understand its significance as a Buddhist teaching on the path of *Sekhapatipadā*¹⁰ and *Asekhapatipadā*,¹¹ which are practiced with the Eightfold Path leading to *Sekhapatipadā* and to an Arahant. It includes ten factors known as *Asekhapatipadā*.

Table 05: The Two Practices of Sekha and Asekha: Noble Eight-Fold Path

Sekha practice, which includes the Eight Paths	Primary wisdom (<i>Prārambha paññā</i>)	Right view
		Right thoughts
	Morality (<i>Sīla</i>)	Right Speech
		Right actions
		Right livelihood
	Concentration (<i>Samādhi</i>)	Right efforts
		Right conscious-ness
		Right concentra-tion
For the Arahant, which includes ten Factors	Perfect wisdom (<i>Paripunna paññā</i>)	Right knowledge
		Right liberation

(One is Higher Training and the Second is Without Training)

In the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, the Buddha has introduced ten aspects, which include the Noble Eightfold Path and two other aspects related to stress manage-

⁸ Rahula, W (1959), p. 46.

⁹ “*Katamañcāvuso, dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccam? Ayameva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo, seyyathidaṃ sammādiṭṭhi, sammāsaṅkappo, sammāvācā, sammākammanto, sammāājīvo, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsaṭi, sammāsamādhi.*”

¹⁰ Buddhist followers who practice higher training are known as *sekho* (practitioners).

¹¹ *Asekha*: in other words refers to an Arahant who is known as an *asekha puggala* - one who has completed the higher trainings.

ment. as well as it is not only related to overcoming educational crises but also most of the burning crises in the current world.

Table 06: The systematic way of the Noble Eight-Fold Path from morality to wisdom

First Step as Morality (<i>Sīla</i>)	Secound Step as Concentration (<i>Samādhi</i>)	Final step as Wisdom (<i>Paññā</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right speech (<i>Sammā Vācā</i>) • Right actions (<i>Sammā Kammanta</i>) • Right livelihood (<i>Sammā Ajīva</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right efforts (<i>Sammā Vāyāma</i>) • Right consciousness (<i>Sammā Sati</i>) • Right concentration (<i>Sammā Samādhi</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right view (<i>Sammā dīṭṭhi</i>) • Right thoughts (<i>Sammā Saṅkappa</i>)

The Buddha introduced a gradual system of training and a gradual system of practices called the middle path, “*Majjimā Paṭipadā*,” to achieve peace of mind that directly helps moral development in education. *Nibbāna* is the final goal in Buddhism, which can endow with permanent calm and tranquillity of mind and body.

3.3.1. Wisdom (*Paññā*)

The Noble Eightfold Path starts with the Right View, or in other words, the first element according to conventional enumeration is *Sammā dīṭṭhi* (Right View), also referred to as Right Vision or Right Knowledge. In his text *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, Woodward quoted the right views in Buddhist teachings as follows: “And what, monks, is right view? It is the knowledge of the ill; the knowledge of the arising of the ill; the knowledge of the cessation of the ill; and the knowledge of the practice leading to the cessation of the ill. This is called *Sammā dīṭṭhi* or right view.”¹² Between the two categories of Right Views, the first one is Views with taints, and the second is Views without taints. According to Paul Fuller, “Right-view is a way of seeing which transcends all views. It is a detached way of seeing, different from the attitudes of holding to any view, wrong or right.”¹³ There are many wrong views in this society, which are the opposite of *Sammā dīṭṭhi* (Right View). Due to wrong interpretations of religious teachings, stress can arise, as mentioned earlier in the *Kālāmasutta*. The Buddha emphasized that views should not be accepted until you realize them. Prof. Daya Edirisinghe, in his book *Manovidya Vimarsana*, quoted and mentioned this as follows:

Kālāmas do not go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scriptures, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreements through

¹² Woodward (1930), p. 7 - 8.

¹³ Fuller (2005), p. 146 - 147.

pondering views, by probability, or by thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘this quality is unskilful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are cited by the wise; these qualities, when adopted and carried out, lead to harm and suffering,’ then you should abandon them.¹⁴

The Buddha further explains what kinds of things pertain to long-term suffering and harm for oneself and others. A person who is greedy harms living beings, steals, has more and more desires, cheats others, and takes alcohol - all these actions are causes of long-term harm as well as suffering. In contrast, if someone is free of greed and observes the five precepts, this will be the cause of welfare and happiness and help to be free from trouble and impurity. These psychological attitudes pertain to ensuring assurance and acquiring inner peace. Likewise, the Buddha always demonstrated his attitude as a great teacher to guide students toward discovering the correct knowledge through free will. Therefore, the *Kālāmasutta* is very significant for having clear ideas, and it helps in selecting the right view. Developing the right views in the educational field that are related to acquiring tranquillity in the mind directly affects moral development in education. In the *Ambalatthikārāhulovādasutta* and the *Bāhitikasutta*, the Buddha taught how to identify right and wrong. If the action or views do not harm oneself (*Attabyābādha*), do not harm others (*Parabyābādha*), or harm both (*Ubhayabyābādha*), then that action or view must be understood as right. If the actions, words, and thoughts are harmful to oneself or others, those actions are wrong.¹⁵ Secondly, *Sammā Saṅkappa* (Right Thought) is essential to practice for moral development. It is the right thought or right aspiration. In his text, *The Dialogue of the Buddha*, T.W. Rhys Davids quoted the Buddhist teachings on right thoughts as follows: “And what, Bhikkhus, is right aspiration? The aspiration towards renunciation, the aspiration towards benevolence, the right aspiration towards kindness. This is what is called right aspiration.”¹⁶ There are three kinds of Right intentions, such as renunciation, loving-kindness, and non-violence: (1) *Avihiṃsā Saṅkappa*: The thought not to harm all. (2) *Avyāpāda Saṅkappa*: The thought of Loving-kindness or eradicating the anger. (3) *Nekkhamma Saṅkappa*: The thoughts of Renunciation. Mostly, people suffer from stress because of their uncontrollable desires. The intention of renunciation is about refraining from luxury possessions and only expecting the necessities of life. Many people fill their minds with strong stress by expecting a luxurious life, which is sometimes hard to achieve. In education, students develop big dreams and plans from the beginning of their lives for better achievements in the future. Unfortunately, if they fail to achieve those dreams, some students destroy their lives by committing suicide. In this situation, if they could develop the right thoughts and understand the reality of life as well as their moral qualities,

¹⁴ AN 3. 65.

¹⁵ Ibid. 3. 99.

¹⁶ Davids, T. W. Rhys. *The Dialogue of the Buddha*, Part I, p. 343 - 344.

rather than dreaming about an uncertain future and worrying about it, it would be beneficial. The wise person knows that the greed of a person never ceases. Therefore, the right determination helps to understand the reality of nature and assists in living in the moment rather than dreaming about an uncertain future and worrying about it. *Dosa* (anger) is another obstacle to the achievement of moral development in education, and it is also a cause of growing stress in the human mind. When anger enters the human mind, a person cannot distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, or what ought and ought not to be done. Therefore, the intention of loving-kindness and non-violence is very significant in eliminating stress and the arising of right thoughts. Often, students and teachers try to find solutions through their angry minds, which results in harming others and forcing others to kill and torture. Therefore, to overcome these situations, cultivating the right thoughts is essential for moral development in education. These two aspects of *Sammā Ditt̥hi* (Right View) and *Sammā Saṅkappa* (Right Thought) are considered primary wisdom, or *Prārambha Paññā*. To gain the right knowledge, it is essential to have the right views on what you are examining, as well as to cultivate the right thoughts and realize your desires.

3.3.2. Morality (*Sīla*)

Thirdly, *Sammā Vācā* (Right Speech) is essential to demonstrate the honesty of both teachers and students. By becoming exemplary members of society, both teachers and students can develop their morality. Right speech consists of four aspects, which are: *Musāvādā*: Restrain from telling lies; *Pisunāvacā*: Restrain from backbiting; *Pharusā Vācā*: Restrain from harsh words; *Samphappalāpā*: Restrain from vain or idle talk. Therefore, Ms. I.B. Horner, in her text *The Collections of the Middle Length Sayings*, quoted and mentioned the facts of right speech in Buddhist teachings as follows:

Whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be not facts, not true, not connected with the goal, and what is not liked by others, disagreeable to them, that speech the Tathāgata does not utter. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be facts, true, but not connected with the goal, and not liked by others, disagreeable to them, neither does the Tathāgata utter that speech. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be facts, true, connected with the goal, but not liked by others, disagreeable to them, the Tathāgata is aware of the right time to explain that speech. Whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be not facts, not true, not connected with the goal, but is liked by others, agreeable to them, that speech, the Tathāgata does not utter. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be facts, true, but not connected with the goal, yet liked by others, agreeable to them, neither does the Tathāgata utter that speech. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be facts, true, connected with the goal, and liked by them, agreeable to them, the Tathāgata is aware of the right time for explaining that speech.¹⁷

¹⁷ Horner. I. B (1948), p. 62 - 63.

Mostly, problems arise due to people's speech. If someone talks with harsh words, it can cause anger and stress. To avoid these situations, the right speech is one of the most significant qualities that need to be developed by both teachers and students. Therefore, the *Dhammapada* mentions, "Restrain from five faculties as well as restraint in body, speech, and mind, and good is restraint in all the senses."¹⁸ The fourth aspect of the Eightfold Path is Right Action. Horner, in *The Collections of the Middle Length Sayings*, quoted and mentioned the facts of right action in Buddhist teachings as follows: "And what, your reverences, is right action? Refraining from onslaught on creatures; refraining from taking what is not given; refraining from going wrongly among the sense pleasures. This, your reverences, is called right action."¹⁹

It consists of three kinds of action. (1) *Pāṇātipātā veramanī*: Restrain from killing, (2) *Adinnādānā Veramanī*: Restrain from stealing, (3) *Kāmesumicchācārā Veramanī*: Restrain from sexual misconduct. Moral development through the practice of right speech and right action is significant to live peacefully in society. Through practicing moral practices, people can eradicate their stress and overcome most of the social problems. People must be aware of what they are saying and doing because if someone is performing bad actions, the results will be painful, making them unhappy, stressed, and suffering. The *Dhammapada* says: "If someone is doing bad actions here, he grieves; hereafter he grieves, and the evil-doer grieves in both existences. He grieves and suffers anguish when he sees the depravity of his deeds."²⁰ Moral development through practicing right speech and right action is significant to living peacefully in society. By practicing these moral qualities, people can eradicate their stress and overcome most social problems.

The fifth aspect of the Eightfold Path is the Right Livelihood. It is an honest livelihood that does not cause harm or injustice to anyone. After receiving an education, students often seek occupations to continue their lives independently. At this stage, they search for the most profitable business. Unfortunately, many people engage in illegal businesses that harm human beings as well as nature. Therefore, a person's occupation must be righteous. In the *Vaṇijjāsutta*, five types of trades are rejected, such as selling weapons, selling living beings for meat or slavery, selling meat, selling liquor, and selling poison: "Monks, a lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in human beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison. These are the five types of business that a lay follower should not engage in."²¹ When a person's life is clean from unethical

¹⁸ *Dhp* 101: "Cakkhunā saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu sotena saṃvaro; Ghānena saṃvaro sādhu, sadhu jivhāya saṃvaro. Kāyena saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu vācāya saṃvaro; Manasā saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu sabbattha saṃvaro; Sabbattha saṃvuto bhikkhu, sabbadukkhā pamuccati."

¹⁹ Horner. *LB* (1948), p. 298.

²⁰ *Dhp* 4: "Idha socati pecca socati; pāpakārī ubhayattha socati; So socati so vihaṇṇati; disvā kammakiliṭṭhamattano."

²¹ *AN* 3.25: "Pañcimā, bhikkhave, vaṇijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyā. Katamā pañca?"

professions, they can live happily, knowing their profession is pure. Illegal and guilty professions always create stress and worry in the mind. Likewise, if a person is well-educated and develops moral values, it is an outcome of moral education in their life. These three aspects (right speech, action, and livelihood) of the Noble Eightfold Path are considered morality or *Sīla*. By practicing the right speech, both students and teachers build trust with each other, and through the right action and livelihood, they reduce most social crises. Further details on morality or *Sīla* are discussed in the *Brahmajālasutta*. According to this sutta, it is elaborated through the Ten Precepts (*Cūlasīla*), the Middle Precepts (*Majjhimasīla*), and the Great Precepts (*Mahāsīla*). Furthermore, in Buddhism, *Sīla* is explained as five precepts as well.

3.3.3. Concentration (*Samādhi*)

The sixth aspect of the Eightfold Path is *Sammā Vāyāma* (Right Effort), which is used to cultivate righteousness and decrease the evil characteristics of individuals. There is no controversy about the evil characteristics of the mind as they directly pertain to suffering. Therefore, every person should strive to eradicate evil actions that have already been done, as well as prevent evil from arising in the future. According to the *Saccavibhaṅgasutta*, it is illuminated that one should make an effort to prevent bad thoughts from arising, as well as put effort into developing good thoughts. The text states:

“Herein, a monk puts forth will, strives, stirs up energy, strengthens his mind, exerts himself to prevent the arising of evil, unwholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen; puts forth will... (as before) to banish the evil, unwholesome thoughts that have already arisen; puts forth will... to develop wholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen; and puts forth will, strives, stirs up energy, strengthens his mind, exerts himself to maintain, preserve, increase, bring them to maturity, development, and to complete the wholesome thoughts that have arisen.”²²

In the *Ālavakasutta*, the Buddha also says, “By having effort, suffering should be eradicated.” Problems in daily life arise due to people’s attachments and desires, which should be eradicated through the right effort. The seventh aspect of the Eightfold Path is *Sammā Samādhi* (Right Mindfulness). There are two kinds of mindfulness mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga*: Access Concentration (*Upacāra Samādhi*) and Absorption Concentration (*Appanā*

Satthavaṇṇijjā, sattavaṇṇijjā, maṃsavaṇṇijjā, majjavaṇṇijjā, visavaṇṇijjā – imā kho, bhikkhave, pañca vaṇṇijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyā”ti. *Sattamaṃ.*”

²² MN 141: “*Katamo cāvuso, sammāvāyāmo? Idhāvuso, bhikkhu anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati vīriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati, uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati vīriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati, anuppannānaṃ kusālānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati vīriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati, uppannānaṃ kusālānaṃ dhammānaṃ tṭhiyā asammosaṃ bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya pāripūriyā chandaṃ janeti vāyamati vīriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati, ayaṃ vuccatāvuso ‘sammāvāyāmo.’*”

Samādhi).²³

In access concentration, the mind is drawing close to absorption. It enters the 'neighborhood' (a possible meaning of *upacāra*) of absorption, but more work is still needed for it to become fully immersed in the object, which is the defining mark of absorption. With further practice, the factors of concentration gain strength and bring the mind to absorption (*Appanā Samādhi*). Like access concentration, absorption takes the counterpart sign as its object. The two stages of concentration are differentiated neither by the absence of the hindrances nor by the counterpart sign as an object; these are common to both.²⁴

To develop the right mindfulness, three kinds of values are required: Knowing the mind, shaping the mind, and liberating the mind. Living with clear attention in every moment and every thought (bare attention) is the basic foundation of knowing the mind. Clear attention (bare attention) is like a clear mirror, reflecting things as they truly are. Shaping the mind means focusing our attention only on the present, living with full awareness in the here and now. Therefore, to develop mindfulness, meditation should be practiced, as I have explained in detail under the topic of "Mindfulness and Moral Education." In the *Visuddhimagga*, Ven. Buddhaghosa has introduced forty kinds of meditation. Right mindfulness is extremely useful for overcoming stress and controlling desires in the mind.

IV. MINDFULNESS AND MORAL EDUCATION

Cultivating mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation has a significant effect on how we behave in our day-to-day lives. Mindfulness helps prevent unpleasant thoughts from arising in the mind, and it also aids in dealing with stress and anger. In the *Cittavagga* of the *Dhammapada*, it is said: "The mind is excitable and unsteady, and it is difficult to control and restrain. The wise one trains his mind to be upright as a fletcher straightens an arrow."²⁵ This highlights the nature of the mind, which is difficult to control because it is swift, restless, and moves wherever it pleases. Therefore, controlling the mind is essential for happiness. By cultivating mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation, one can tame the mind. In daily life, everyone can practice a few minutes of meditation, from morning to night. In the morning, taking a few minutes to close your eyes and think good thoughts about others and yourself with a pleasant mind helps to cultivate loving-kindness toward all beings. According to the *Mettāsutta*, the unique nature of cultivating loving-kindness meditation is as follows:

²³ *Vism* 85.

²⁴ Vipassana Research Institute. (2016) *The 8-Fold Path*. Vipassana, www.vipassana.com/resources/8fp7.php.

²⁵ *Dhp* 33: "Phandanaṃ capalaṃ cittaṃ, dūrakkhaṃ [durakkhaṃ (sabbattha)] dunnivārayaṃ; Ujūṃ karoti medhāvī, usukārova tejanaṃ. Vārijova thale khitto, okamokataubbhato; Pariphandatidaṃ cittaṃ, mārادهyyaṃ pahātave."

By cultivating mindfulness on loving-kindness, one can develop an unlimited heart of friendliness for the entire universe, sending *Mettā* above, below, and all around, beyond all narrowness, all rivalry, all hatred. Whether you are staying in one place or traveling, sitting down or in bed, in all your waking hours, rest in this mindfulness.²⁶

In the context of education, teachers can apply this by spending five minutes in meditation before starting their lessons. This practice helps students focus on the lesson and also nurtures their moral development. Unpleasant thoughts often arise in both teachers' and students' minds, and in such situations, mindfulness meditation can help overcome them. Loving-kindness meditation, or the development of loving-kindness, is one of the four sublime states that promote moral growth because they are emotionally fulfilling states that bring beneficial effects to our lives. As discussed earlier, the practice of these qualities contributes to moral development.

4.1. The outcome of moral education

The outcome of modern education, filled with knowledge, attitude change, and skills, needs to be upgraded to include appropriate knowledge, right attitude change, and soft skills. This is because knowledge without the right understanding can be a threat to the future of mankind. Today, people live in the Nuclear Age with fear and worry because of misused knowledge, such as in the innovation of nuclear weapons. Therefore, appropriate knowledge with the right attitude changes, and the development of soft skills need to be upgraded as the outcome of education. According to the Native American saying, "When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten, and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money."²⁷ The misuse of knowledge is criticized. In this situation, moral education plays an extraordinary role in the educational scheme to bring out the following outcomes: (1) Appropriate knowledge, (2) Right attitude change, and (3) Soft skills.

4.2. Appropriate knowledge

The theoretical or practical understanding of a subject can be referred to as knowledge, or in other words, the understanding of something and the grasping of certain facts can be defined as knowledge. Knowledge is a collection of thoughts and experiences from ancient people. People gain knowledge through reading books and newspapers, having experiences, etc. Grasping knowledge is never tiring, as human beings never get tired of acquiring knowledge. Grasping knowledge is never satisfying because it is considered a power or a weapon for humankind. The power of knowledge should not be misused to destroy mankind. Unfortunately, the power of knowledge has been used for destructive purposes. Therefore, the application of moral education in the educational scheme can bring about the outcome of appropriate knowledge for the safeguarding of mankind.

²⁶ *Snp* 1.8.

²⁷ In the United States, Native Americans are considered to be people whose pre-Columbian ancestors were indigenous to the lands within the nation's modern boundaries.

4.3. Right attitude change

Attitude change refers to the way we think and behave in day-to-day life. There are different levels and categories of attitudes. A positive attitude helps one face all difficult moments in social life. All successful people in the world have a positive attitude in their behavior and thinking patterns; in other words, successful people see all problematic matters in a positive light. Therefore, positive attitude change is one key to leading a successful life. By giving a proper example, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam has said, "All birds find shelter during a rain. But the eagle avoids rain by flying above the clouds. Problems are common, but attitude makes the difference."²⁸ Therefore, to face problems, the right or positive attitudes are essential to be developed in the educational scheme. In summary, Buddhist teachings are also completely optimistic and practical for making an attitude change for the better. They encourage maintaining moral behavior as the first step in pursuing the ultimate goal of Buddhism. As discussed in detail above, the mind needs to be cultivated with wholesomeness by analyzing the experiences and knowledge we gain throughout life as education, ultimately establishing a harmonious lifestyle that benefits both individuals and society as a whole.

4.4. Necessary skills

Skills are the ability to do something well. People have different skills for doing both good and bad things, but as an outcome of moral education, good skills need to be improved. There are a few categories of skills, such as labor, life, social, soft, and hard skills. Labor skills help to work with material things, such as carpenters, electricians, masons, etc. Life skills help to develop the ability to solve problems. Social skills refer to the ability to have proper communication in society with everyone. Soft skills are a sociological term relating to a person's EQ (Emotional Intelligence Quotient). Dr. Daniel Goleman and many psychologists have mentioned five basic components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills in recent times in the Western world. Skills relating to specific tasks or situations are known as hard skills.²⁹ In summary, attention to the right knowledge, changing attitudes, and developing soft skills are more appropriate than the outcome of misused knowledge from education. Therefore, providing moral education by focusing on three areas - right knowledge, attitude, and skills - is useful for achieving a better outcome from moral education.

4.5. Techniques to give *dhamma* education to youngsters

Due to swift economic development, *Dhamma* education is less attractive in the current world. Therefore, youngsters are not paying attention to grasping *Dhamma* knowledge. Not only that, but Buddhist lessons are taught by teachers in *Dhamma* schools in the same manner, using traditional methods.

²⁸ Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen "A. P. J." Abdul Kalam, an Indian aerospace scientist and politician, served as the 11th President of India from 2002 to 2007, and he was born in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu.

²⁹ Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Bantam, 1995.

What is taught must be framed so that they can understand the spiritual side of the lessons, especially to practice good manners and avoid evil. A syllabus should be adopted that is practical and not entirely theoretical. Considering these weaknesses in providing Dhamma education for youngsters, we need new techniques with strategic management to capture the students' attention. These may include: (1) Dhamma schools must be restructured as institutions different from formal schools. (2) The knowledge of Dhamma must be applied to ethical development. (3) The lessons must be related to solving current social problems with practical knowledge and experiences. (4) The teacher should be a rationalist, not a traditionalist, drawing on the premises taught by the Buddha. Using these techniques and strategic management together can achieve the best results through *Dhamma* education. Furthermore, this is not a target that can be fulfilled in one day; it is a gradual process of development.

V. CONCLUSION

This study is centered on the immense potential of Buddhist *Dhamma* learning in helping youth build peace, harmony, and sustainable development, which in turn can lead to an evolving harmonious society. *Dhamma* learning, by maintaining the ethical and moral aspects of learning ahead of its other aspects, contributes a holistic approach that fills the gaps existing in conventional, academically dominant schooling paradigms. The research identifies that *Dhamma* learning is central to the development of empathy, loving-kindness, and moral consciousness in children, which are the major elements needed to construct peaceful and harmonious societies. A comparison of students in normal schools and those in schools incorporating moral development within their curriculum shows stark differences in behavior and attitudes. The children who learned moral values were more empathetic, had better moral reasoning, and exhibited better interpersonal relationships. These observations were also corroborated by parents, teachers, and community leaders, who testified to the character-forming and world-view-forming influence of *Dhamma* education on children. Apart from this, the study emphasizes incorporating moral education into global education systems in a bid to counteract the emerging social crises brought about by the erosion of human values. As the future leaders of society, young minds must be intellectually and morally empowered to lead sustainable development as well as global peace. Buddhist *Dhamma* education plays a strong motivating force in this regard, building up loving minds and cultivating a culture of friendship. In short, intellectual capacity and moral development must go hand in hand in the creation of a wisdom-and-virtue-based citizenry. Emphasizing education in *Dhamma* can assist countries in preparing their young people to combat the evils of society with wisdom, tolerance, and compassion for peace. The research categorically declares that the pillar of a peaceful world is a peaceful mind, attainable through the ethics and methods of *Dhamma* learning. Enabling the youth to do so through Buddhist *Dhamma* education, therefore, is less an issue of educational need than one of conversion towards a peaceful world and sustainability.

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MINDFULNESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CULTIVATING COMPASSIONATE GENERATIONS FOR A BETTER WORLD

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Abstract:

Higher education has traditionally concentrated on academic knowledge and technical skills. Lately, given the demands of modern society, it also significantly shapes students' values and character. People, especially young individuals, are becoming increasingly disconnected from fundamental human values like empathy and compassion in today's fast-changing environment. This paper investigates how mindfulness techniques can help students overcome these challenges through self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy. By reviewing current research and case studies, the paper emphasizes how mindfulness enhances student well-being, including improvements in emotional intelligence and stress reduction. It demonstrates how mindfulness can cultivate more globally conscious, compassionate, and socially responsible individuals. Aiming to create a learning environment that supports both academic excellence and well-being, the paper also suggests practical models and processes to integrate mindfulness into university curricula, faculty training, and campus-wide activities.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, higher education, student well-being, emotional intelligence, compassionate learning.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of higher education, universities are increasingly seen as institutions that must go beyond imparting academic knowledge and technical skills. They are now recognized as having a significant impact on students' values, character, and emotional intelligence.¹ Cultivating empathetic, compassionate, and socially responsible individuals is critical

* Baker & Karadjova-Kozhuharova (2023): 5285; Barker et al. (2021): 626.

¹ Baker & Karadjova-Kozhuharova (2023): 5285; Barker et al. (2021): 626.

for addressing the 21st century's complex social, environmental, and ethical challenges. However, in today's world of rapid technological advancements, social media addiction, and shifting values, younger generations risk losing touch with essential human values such as empathy, compassion, and a deep connection to nature.² From this perspective, higher education plays a crucial role in fostering student well-being.³ It provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate societal challenges and live more harmoniously. This, in turn, directly contributes to the development of individuals who prioritize love and altruism, ultimately promoting social stability and global peace. As a result, higher education must embrace a new responsibility: beyond imparting knowledge and skills, it must foster an education that is both compassionate and sustainable for the future. Mindfulness is a concept that originates from religious traditions and is well-known in Buddhism. In recent years, due to various factors, mindfulness has gained increasing popularity.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic and the growing need for individuals to find ways to address psychological issues have further accelerated this trend. Mindfulness practice allows individuals to return to the present moment, preventing them from being overwhelmed by worries and fears about the past or future. As a result, individuals become more aware of the beauty around them and experience genuine happiness. Practicing mindfulness fosters greater mental clarity, reduces stress from negative thoughts, and cultivates a more optimistic outlook.⁵ Initially regarded as a psychological therapy, mindfulness is now being considered an essential component of education for well-being. However, despite its growing presence in certain educational institutions, its implementation remains limited due to concerns about its religious associations. This paper examines the role of mindfulness practices in higher education in shaping a generation of students who are not only academically competent but also emotionally intelligent, compassionate, and socially responsible. By reviewing existing literature, analyzing case studies of successful implementations, and discussing the current state of mindfulness in education, this study aims to highlight mindfulness as a critical tool for fostering more empathetic and globally aware individuals. Furthermore, the paper proposes practical approaches for integrating mindfulness into university curricula, faculty training, and campus-wide initiatives, ultimately promoting a more compassionate and peaceful future. Additionally, this study provides a new perspective by exploring the integration of mindfulness practices in higher education in Vietnam and offering recommendations for their application in this context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of research on mindfulness practices in higher education is highly

² Kinsella et al. (2024): 02.

³ Tzelepi et al. (2023): 209.

⁴ Aktan & Demirbağ Kaplan (2023): 66.

⁵ Bright & Pokorny (2013): 10.

diverse. However, this study focuses on several common topics, which are reviewed to provide a theoretical foundation for the research.

2.1. Mindfulness practices

Mindfulness, though often associated with Buddhist traditions, is not exclusive to one religion. Some believe the practice can be found in various spiritual teachings and may even have roots that stretch back beyond Buddhism.⁶ In its essence, mindfulness is about being fully engaged in the present moment, free from the distractions of past regrets or future anxieties.⁷ It's the ability to see things as they truly are, without the filter of judgment or preconceived notions. The original practice of mindfulness is rooted in Buddhism. In the Satipatthana Sutta, the Buddha introduced a method to help individuals live fully in the present moment, free from worries and mental afflictions, ultimately achieving clarity and freedom from suffering.⁸ The Sutta outlines four foundations of mindfulness: contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and dharma.⁹ These practices guide individuals to reconnect with their mind, align it with the body, and avoid being consumed by regrets about the past or anxieties about the future.¹⁰ The ultimate aim is to cultivate peace, liberation, and joy in each moment, making mindfulness a way of life. A mindful person doesn't just go through the motions of life; they experience each moment with clarity and awareness.¹¹ This might mean noticing the warmth of the sun on your skin, the sound of birds in the distance, or the texture of a cup in your hand. It's about being attuned to the richness of the world around you, recognizing the beauty in the ordinary, and finding peace in the simplicity of life. The power of mindfulness lies in its ability to quiet the mind and remove the weight of worry. When you are truly mindful, you're not consumed by stress or fear, because you're not constantly looking backward or ahead. This brings a sense of calm and stability, allowing you to navigate the ups and downs of life with a sense of ease.¹² Mindfulness also has a profound effect on how we relate to others. By being fully present, we are able to listen more deeply, respond more thoughtfully, and connect more meaningfully with those around us. It encourages compassion, as we become more aware of our own emotions and the feelings of others. As a result, mindfulness isn't just an individual practice; it can transform the way we interact with the world and those we share it with. Ultimately, mindfulness is a way of living that brings us back to ourselves and the present moment. It invites us to appreciate the wonder of everyday life, to be grateful for what we have, and to find joy in the here and now. It's a practice that encourages us to slow down, to breathe, and to truly be.

⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh (2011): 32.

⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh (2011): 32.

⁸ Wang et al (2021): 02.

⁹ Wang et al (2021): 02.

¹⁰ Ling (2022): 335.

¹¹ Thich Nhat Hanh (2011): 51.

¹² Thich Nhat Hanh (2011): 52.

2.1.1. Mindfulness and student well-being

Mindfulness and student well-being have become important areas of focus in recent research, highlighting the value of mindfulness not only for monks or individuals with psychological challenges but also for students.¹³ Mindfulness practices can significantly contribute to both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being in students, helping them cultivate a deeper sense of joy, happiness, and meaning in life. For students, university life should be a period of joy and growth, allowing them to develop true happiness. This, in turn, can lead to their personal development as compassionate individuals, equipped to build a better society.¹⁴ In the current fast-paced and demanding academic environment, many students face challenges such as value crises, existential doubts, academic stress, gender identity issues, behavioral concerns, and instances of school violence. These pressures can leave students feeling disconnected or overwhelmed. Mindfulness practices offer a much-needed solution to these issues. By fostering self-awareness and present-moment focus, mindfulness helps students reconnect with themselves, understand their emotions, and gain clarity on their values and life purpose.¹⁵ This sense of inner peace and understanding can lead to improved emotional regulation, greater resilience, and a more balanced approach to life, helping students navigate challenges with a sense of calm and focus. Ultimately, mindfulness supports students in living happier, more fulfilling lives. By embracing mindfulness, students not only enhance their well-being but also contribute to creating a more compassionate, peaceful society. The practice encourages emotional intelligence, empathy, and mindfulness in interactions, which are essential qualities for building a better, more harmonious world. In recent years, universities have increasingly recognized the value of incorporating mindfulness practices to support student well-being.¹⁶ Initially introduced as part of mental health education for medical students, mindfulness techniques have since expanded to benefit a wider range of students, helping them manage stress and approach their studies with greater focus and enjoyment. As awareness of the importance of mental health continues to grow, the movement to create happier, more supportive educational environments has gained momentum. Universities are now prioritizing initiatives that foster emotional resilience, reduce anxiety, and promote a balanced approach to academic and personal life. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation, breathing exercises, and mindful reflection, have become key tools in these efforts. By integrating mindfulness into the university experience, institutions aim to not only alleviate the pressures of academic life but also equip students with lifelong skills for managing challenges and enhancing their overall well-being. This holistic approach reflects a broader shift towards viewing education not just as a means of intellectual development

¹³ Baker & Karadjova-Kozhuharova (2023): 5285.

¹⁴ Barker et al (2021): 641.

¹⁵ Demarzo et al (2015): 167.

¹⁶ Barker et al (2021): 632.

but as a foundation for a healthy, fulfilling life.

2.1.2. Mindfulness practices in higher education

Because of the problems that have arisen in recent years, particularly in light of the COVID-19 epidemic, higher education institutions are being forced to give mindfulness techniques a higher priority. These problems include conflict, economic crises, and rising student stress. The development of a variety of mindfulness models in higher education has increased the amount of research conducted on the subject.¹⁷ The effectiveness of mindfulness techniques in assisting students in managing stress has been demonstrated more than once in the first studies. It has been demonstrated that these techniques can improve one's ability to control their emotions, sharpen their attention, and advance their mental health in general. Additionally, the practice of mindfulness helps students become more creative and increases their capacity to find solutions to problems that arise in their everyday lives as well as in their academic lives.¹⁸ In a society that is both technologically advanced and economically advanced, the ability is truly required of a student in addition to knowledge and skills. Higher education's common mindfulness practices include methods such as mindful listening, compassionate interactions, seated silence, journaling, creative expression via sketching, strolling consciously, and interacting with healing music.¹⁹ Outdoor activities and seminars have also grown in popularity since they give students chances to practice mindfulness in many environments. Crucially, religious aspects of these activities are either minimized or eliminated, therefore increasing their inclusiveness and accessibility to every student, irrespective of their religious background. Higher education's mindfulness practices are becoming more and more understood as spiritual support tools used to improve student well-being rather than as religious pursuits. These initiatives seek to equip students with methods for stress management and self-care, therefore promoting a more harmonic and healthy campus atmosphere.²⁰ Rather than advancing any one theological or spiritual philosophy, the emphasis is on providing useful and efficient techniques for emotional resilience and personal development. Even though mindfulness has been shown to have positive effects on the well-being of students, studies have also demonstrated that students may not always be mature enough to participate in mindfulness activities effectively.²¹ Furthermore, in certain situations, if it is not treated appropriately, it may potentially make their problems even worse. Additionally, it is of utmost importance to address concerns that have been raised by a number of parents, teachers, and students regarding the potential religious connotations associated with mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness is a practice that originated in Buddhist traditions;

¹⁷ Baker & Karadjova-Kozhuharova (2023): 5286.

¹⁸ Barker et al (2021): 634.

¹⁹ Galla et al (2016): 297; Gates & Gilbert (2016): 253.

²⁰ de Bruin et al (2015): 1139.

²¹ Kelly (2023): 492.

however, its application in modern contexts is typically secular and focuses more on mental health than it does on religious dogma. It is possible that schools could present mindfulness as a skill-building technique that aims to improve focus, emotional control, and general mental health rather than as a religious practice in order to alleviate these concerns. Another issue is that universities need to have appropriate types of mindfulness practices, not like those found in religion, but rather techniques that are applicable to students, such as the mindset of thinking, communication, and problem-solving that are not limited to meditation exclusively.

2.3. Method

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology, utilizing two key approaches: a literature review and a case study analysis. These methods were carefully selected for their ability to provide both theoretical understanding and practical insights into mindfulness practices in higher education. The literature review focuses on examining trends and essential aspects of mindfulness practices within higher education. This serves as a foundation for developing appropriate models for Vietnam. To ensure a high standard of academic rigor, the study relies on reputable international sources, including scientific articles indexed in Scopus and Google Scholar. However, it is noteworthy that domestic studies in this field are virtually non-existent, highlighting a significant research gap in Vietnam. In addition to the literature review, the study conducts case study research to analyze specific mindfulness practices implemented in higher education settings. These case studies are framed using the theoretical perspective on mindfulness practices in higher education introduced by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. His approach provides a strong basis for proposing models tailored to the unique cultural and educational context of Vietnam. By combining these methods, the study aims to create a comprehensive and practical framework for integrating mindfulness practices into Vietnam's higher education system.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

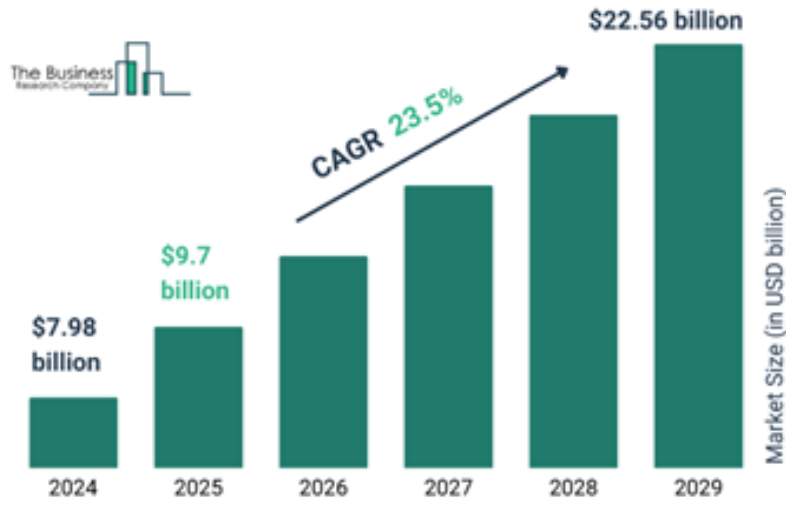
3.1. The trend of mindfulness practices

The rising popularity of mindfulness practices in higher education is evident through several key characteristics. Firstly, the frequent appearance of the keyword "Mindfulness" in various media platforms underscores its widespread recognition and relevance.²² Additionally, there is a growing interest among young people in courses focused on mindfulness, healing, and the concept of slow living, reflecting a shift in priorities toward mental well-being and balanced lifestyles. Moreover, the increasing volume of scientific research on mindfulness practices within higher education highlights the academic community's focus on understanding and promoting its benefits. These trends collectively demonstrate the integration of mindfulness into educational and societal frameworks.

First, the meditation market is expected to experience significant growth in

²² Baker & Karadjova-Kozhuharova (2023): 5286.

the coming years. According to data from The Business Research Company, the market size is projected to reach \$9.7 billion in 2025, demonstrating substantial expansion from \$7.98 billion in 2024. This growth is driven by an impressive compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 23.5%, reflecting the increasing global demand for meditation practices and related services. This trend highlights the growing recognition of meditation’s benefits for mental health, stress management, and overall well-being. By 2029, the market is forecasted to reach a remarkable \$22.56 billion, underscoring its robust growth trajectory.



Picture 1: Meditation market size in 2025 and growth rate
Source: The Business Research Company

Specifically, mindfulness practices in higher education have gained popularity as an effective strategy for addressing students growing mental health concerns.²³ This trend is visible not only in Western educational systems but also worldwide, as universities recognize the critical role mental health and emotional intelligence play in academic success. While universities provide opportunities for academic growth, they also present significant mental and emotional challenges for students. Among the most common are depression, anxiety, and stress. The World Health Organization reported a significant increase in mental health disorders among young people, with university students being especially vulnerable due to academic pressures, financial stress, and the transition to adulthood. Furthermore, students today face what has been described as a crisis of meaning and a distorted sense of purpose.²⁴ The overwhelming influx of information from digital and social media has resulted in a generation struggling with an unstable sense of identity. Gen Z students experience higher levels of existential uncertainty, frequently struggling

²³ Barker et al (2021): 632; Dobkin & Hutchinson (2013): 769.

²⁴ Galla et al (2016): 297; Kinsella et al (2024): 03.

to find meaning in both their academic and personal lives. This problem is exacerbated by the emergence of the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world, a term used to describe the unpredictable nature of modern global challenges. Mindfulness practices can alleviate these existential concerns by increasing present-moment awareness and decreasing rumination. Mindfulness can help students cope with stress, reduce anxiety, and improve self-awareness, thereby mitigating some of the negative effects of an uncertain world. Mindfulness can help people manage emotional turbulence by instilling a stronger sense of purpose and meaning, which is critical in combating the disconnection and uncertainty that many students face today.

3.2. Mindfulness practices models in higher education

A variety of mindfulness practice models are emerging in higher education, both formally and informally, reflecting a growing recognition of their value in academic settings.²⁵ For instance, universities can establish dedicated mindfulness centers, providing faculty and students with a supportive space to explore and cultivate mindfulness through workshops, meditation sessions, and guided practices. Additionally, promoting mindfulness-related research within academic institutions is a vital way to deepen understanding and foster innovation in this field. By encouraging interdisciplinary studies, universities can explore the impact of mindfulness on learning outcomes, mental health, and overall well-being, creating a strong foundation for evidence-based practices. The first case is The Thich Nhat Hanh Center for Mindfulness in Public Health at Harvard's T. H. Chan School of Public Health. The Center's primary goal is to promote mindfulness as a tool for improving global well-being, with a particular emphasis on evidence-based approaches to improving health outcomes through mindfulness practices. The Center's primary goal is to investigate mindfulness as a means of cultivating purpose, equanimity, and joy in people all over the world. In addition, the Center is dedicated to furthering scientific research into the effects of mindfulness on health, particularly in nutrition and environmental health. The Center's goal with this research is to generate insights that will help develop effective, scalable public health interventions. The Center is named after Thich Nhat Hanh (1926 - 2022), a global spiritual leader, Zen master, and peace activist whose groundbreaking work on mindfulness, compassion, and peace has had a worldwide impact. Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness teachings, which emphasize being fully present in the moment and cultivating nonjudgmental awareness, serve as the philosophical foundation for the Center's work. The Center strives to honor its legacy by carrying on its mission of promoting mindfulness as a means of fostering individual and collective well-being. The Center's research initiatives will include projects that integrate mindfulness practices into daily life, such as mindful eating and public space design. Furthermore, the Center will investigate the role of mindfulness in aging, with a focus on developing evidence-based programs to help people live healthier lives as they age. These initiatives are

²⁵ Tzelepi et al (2023): 209.

consistent with a growing body of research indicating that mindfulness can help improve both physical and mental health. Inspired by the progress made in cardiovascular health, the University of Oxford Mindfulness Research Centre envisions a similar trajectory for mental health. Over the next fifty years, they aim for a future free from the burden of depression - one in which everyone has the chance to thrive, supported by effective tools and resources. Their vision extends beyond treatment and into prevention, ensuring people can develop resilience and manage challenges before they escalate. Through a combination of research, teaching, training, and public engagement, the Centre is working toward a world where mental health is nurtured at every stage of life. Building on the success of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) for individuals prone to depression, the team has expanded its focus to diverse groups and settings, including those affected by health anxiety, people with cardiovascular disease, adolescents, new parents, teachers, and even prisoners. Their goal is to make MBCT more widely accessible, delivering measurable benefits and fostering well-being across populations. With support from grants and foundations, the Centre's research explores fundamental questions: how does mindfulness ease distress, encourage resilience, and allow individuals not just to cope but to truly flourish? By addressing these areas and testing MBCT's effectiveness in real-world contexts, they aim to refine and scale up interventions that can have a transformative impact on mental health worldwide. The Mindfulness Center at Brown pursues a core goal: to advance scientific understanding of how mindfulness influences health and then translate those findings into accessible, high-quality education. Its primary activities revolve around research and teaching. On the research side, the Center conducts rigorous, evidence-based studies that examine the impact of mindfulness on physical, mental, and social well-being. These findings guide its educational endeavors, which include developing and delivering mindfulness courses for Brown students, as well as creating programs and resources for broader communities. In addition, the Center focuses on implementation science to ensure mindfulness programs reach diverse populations, particularly those historically underrepresented or facing barriers to access. Through partnerships, grants, and philanthropic support, the Mindfulness Center works to make mindfulness training more affordable, thus reflecting its commitment to equity and inclusion. By interweaving robust research with hands-on education, the Center aims to nurture individual flourishing and contribute to healthier communities overall. Since its founding in 2017, the Center has secured \$39.3 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), with an additional \$3.7 million contributed by foundations and philanthropists. During this same period, its faculty produced 106 peer-reviewed publications and authored four mindfulness-related books. The Center was established by leading researchers and educators who recognized a critical need for rigorous, methodologically sound mindfulness research and comprehensive education in the field. Today, it continues to bridge knowledge gaps, expand access to mindfulness practices, and empower individuals and communities worldwide, upholding its commitment to a healthier, more equitable future.

3.3. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh and mindfulness practices

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh has been instrumental in popularizing mindfulness practices as a method for spiritual healing and happy living, presenting it as an accessible and practical tool rather than a strictly religious concept.²⁶ Through his impactful talks, internship programs at universities and businesses, and the establishment of Plum Villages, he has simplified and modernized mindfulness, making it relatable and suitable for young people, particularly students. His approach has resonated globally, encouraging the integration of mindfulness into everyday life and fostering a deeper connection to well-being and inner peace. Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy revolves around the concept of "interbeing" - the interconnectedness of all things.²⁷ This principle emphasizes the idea that everything, including humans, is fundamentally interconnected. Mindfulness allows people to develop a deeper awareness of their interconnectedness, which promotes compassion and empathy. Thich Nhat Hanh also emphasizes mindfulness of breathing as a fundamental practice, encouraging people to concentrate on their breath to anchor their minds and cultivate present-moment awareness.²⁸ His teachings argue that mindfulness should not be limited to meditation or formal practice but should pervade all aspects of life, including how we interact with others, manage stress, and approach learning. In higher education, mindfulness practices based on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings can have a significant impact. The academic environment frequently causes significant stress, anxiety, and mental health issues among students, particularly in the face of deadlines, exams, and social pressures. Thich Nhat Hanh's practices, such as mindful breathing and walking, provide students with simple but effective stress-management techniques and emotional resilience training. Even brief mindfulness practices have been shown in studies to significantly reduce anxiety and stress, making them an important tool for students dealing with academic and personal pressures. Mindfulness programs inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings can be implemented in universities in a variety of ways. Many universities in the United States and Europe have already implemented mindfulness-based courses and programs, particularly in psychology, health, and wellness departments. Brown University, for example, provides mindfulness courses and workshops for students and faculty alike, with the goal of incorporating mindfulness into daily life. At Oxford University, mindfulness-based programs are available to assist students and faculty in developing emotional resilience and improving their academic and personal outcomes.

3.4. Mindfulness practices model for higher education in Vietnam

There is a growing need for a mindfulness practice model for universities in Vietnam to address the increasing mental health challenges faced by students. Drawing from international research and the teachings of Zen Master Thich

²⁶ Ling (2022): 336.

²⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh (2011): 52.

²⁸ Thich Nhat Hanh (2022): 18.

Nhat Hanh, this article proposes a mindfulness model tailored to the unique cultural and academic context of Vietnamese universities.

Table 1: A model of mindfulness practices for Vietnamese higher education

Activities	Objective	Activities	Benefits
Mindful breathing workshops	Help students manage stress, improve focus, and promote emotional well-being.	Teach mindful breathing techniques; practice breathing exercises in sessions.	Reduces stress, enhances focus, and promotes emotional well-being.
Mindfulness-based Counseling Services	Provide students with support for mental health challenges.	Offer mindfulness counseling using meditation, mindful listening, and self-reflection.	Reduces anxiety, improves emotional health, and offers support.
Mindful learning and study groups	Improve academic performance and concentration.	Integrate mindful breathing and focus exercises before study sessions.	Enhances focus, and improves academic performance.
Mindful walking and meditation breaks	Promote physical activity and mental clarity.	Conduct mindful walking sessions around campus, focusing on the present moment.	Reduces stress, improves focus, and fosters relaxation.
Compassionate listening and communication workshops	Develop empathy and enhance communication skills.	Train students in mindful listening, non-judgmental speech, and fostering understanding in conversations.	Fosters empathy, improves communication and creates a supportive environment.

Mindful- ness in leadership and pro- fessional develop- ment	Integrate mindful- ness into leader- ship training and emotional intelli- gence.	Teach mind- fulness for decision-mak- ing, emotional regulation, and compassionate leadership.	Enhances leadership skills, promotes emotional intelligence, and improves deci- sion-making.
Mindful- ness re- treats and immersion programs	Deepen mindful- ness practices and provide students with time to disconnect from academic stress.	Organize medi- tation sessions, nature walks, and group discussions on mindfulness and interbeing.	Reduces stress, deepens mind- fulness practice, and strengthens community.
Mindful art and creativity sessions	Provide a creative outlet for emotion- al expression and mindfulness.	Engage in mind- ful drawing, painting, or craft- ing while focus- ing on the present moment.	Encourages emotional expression, and fosters relaxation and mindfulness.
Faculty mind- fulness training	Equip faculty with mindfulness tools to manage stress and create a mindful classroom environment.	Offer workshops on mindful teach- ing, emotional regulation, and reducing stress through mindful- ness practices.	Reduces stress, enhances teaching, and improves class- room atmo- sphere.
Collabora- tive mind- fulness initiatives	Extend mindful- ness practices to the local commu- nity, fostering so- cial responsibility.	Partner with local organizations to offer mindfulness workshops and events.	It Strengthens community bonds and promotes social well-being.

First, it is critical to introduce mindful breathing workshops. These workshops aim to help students manage stress, improve focus, and promote emotional well-being. Universities can implement this by hosting regular workshops on mindful breathing techniques inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings. These workshops could be scheduled during midterms and finals, giving students tools to stay grounded during times of high stress. The sessions can be short (20 - 30 minutes) and held during lunch or before class.

Second, universities can set up mindfulness-based counseling and support

services. The goal of this initiative is to give students a safe space to discuss mental health issues like stress, anxiety, and depression. Implementing this would entail developing mindfulness counseling programs that include meditation, mindful listening, and self-reflection to help students' emotional health. Trained counselors would incorporate mindfulness techniques into their sessions. These services can be provided in one-on-one or small group settings throughout the semester.

Third, universities could implement mindful learning and study groups to help students focus more on their studies and improve their academic performance. The goal is to increase concentration and engagement with the study material. To put this into action, practice mindfulness before studying or taking exams. Sessions may include exercises in mindful breathing and listening. Students could also participate in study groups that include brief mindfulness exercises before beginning their studies. These sessions could last 15 minutes and occur before group study sessions or lectures. Next, mindful walking and meditation breaks can be introduced. The goal is to promote both physical activity and mindfulness while also improving mental clarity. This initiative could include encouraging students to take slow, mindful walks around campus while focusing on their breathing and walking sensations. These sessions could be conducted individually or in groups. Each session would last approximately 10 - 15 minutes, preferably between classes or during breaks.

About compassionate listening and communication skills, workshops can be organized to promote empathy and effective communication among students, faculty, and staff. These workshops would be based on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings about compassionate listening and mindful speech. The goal is to help students develop the ability to listen to others without passing judgment, resulting in a supportive learning environment. These workshops could be held regularly or as one-time events, particularly in conflict resolution and peer support contexts. Following this, mindfulness in leadership and professional development programs can be added to the university's offerings. The goal is to help students, particularly those in positions of leadership, incorporate mindfulness into their leadership training. This may include emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and deliberate decision-making. Students would learn to approach leadership with compassion and mindfulness, thereby developing their leadership and interpersonal skills. Monthly workshops or sessions could be incorporated into leadership development plans.

As a result, universities can organize mindfulness retreats and immersion programs. The goal is to deepen mindfulness practices and allow students to disconnect from academic pressures. These retreats could be weekend excursions or daylong immersion programs. Meditation, nature walks, and group discussions could be included as activities based on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings of "interbeing" and mindful living. Retreats could be scheduled during semester breaks to provide students with a refreshing and transformative experience. Next, mindful art and creativity sessions can be offered to students

as a creative outlet for mindful expression. The goal is to allow students to participate in art therapy sessions, such as drawing, painting, or crafting, while focusing on the present moment and their inner thoughts. These sessions allow students to express their emotions and thoughts without being judged. They could be held weekly or biweekly and last 1 - 2 hours. Another significant initiative is faculty mindfulness training. The goal is to provide professors and academic staff with tools to manage stress and incorporate mindfulness into their teaching practices. Training sessions would concentrate on incorporating mindfulness into the classroom, such as mindful teaching techniques, stress reduction practices, and creating a mindful environment for students. These training sessions may be one-time or ongoing professional development workshops.

Finally, collaborative mindfulness initiatives with local communities can help spread mindfulness beyond the university and into the community. The goal is to provide mindfulness workshops or events for community members, promoting social well-being and connecting the university to the larger community. These community-based mindfulness programs could take place all year, with events open to both students and locals.

3.5. Process for mindfulness practices in Vietnamese higher education

To successfully integrate mindfulness practices into Vietnamese universities, a suitable approach is required. The process begins with identifying the needs of students, faculty, and staff in order to understand the specific challenges they face.²⁹ Based on these requirements, a curriculum tailored to mindfulness practices is developed. The next step is to train facilitators who will lead the programs, followed by a pilot program to test and improve the curriculum. Once the program has been tested, a full-scale launch can take place, with ongoing evaluation to determine its impact. Community engagement ensures that the benefits of mindfulness extend beyond the university, while the final stage focuses on the program’s sustainability and expansion for long-term success.

Table 2: A process for mindfulness practices in Vietnamese higher education

Step	Action	Description	Outcome
1. Needs assessment	Conduct surveys and focus groups with students, faculty, and staff.	Identify the mental health challenges, stress levels, and interest in mindfulness practices among students and faculty.	Gather data on the need for mindfulness practices and the areas where support is most needed.

²⁹ Gates & Gilbert (2016): 298; Sheinman & Russo-Netzer (2021): 613.

2. Develop a mindfulness curriculum	Design a mindfulness curriculum based on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings.	Create modules on mindful breathing, compassionate listening, emotional regulation, and stress reduction. Define the length and format of each session (workshops, retreats, etc.).	A structured curriculum that aligns with Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings and meets the needs of the university.
3. Train facilitators	Select and train faculty and experienced mindfulness practitioners.	Provide training for staff, counselors, and faculty who will lead mindfulness sessions. Training includes understanding mindfulness, communication skills, and leading practices.	Empowered facilitators who can effectively lead and guide mindfulness sessions.
4. Pilot program	Run a pilot mindfulness program for a selected group.	Introduce mindfulness workshops and activities to a smaller group of students, faculty, or staff. Gather feedback to assess effectiveness and make adjustments.	Feedback from the pilot program to refine the curriculum and practices for broader implementation.
5. Full-scale implementation	Launch university-wide mindfulness programs.	Implement the mindfulness curriculum across various departments and for different groups (students, faculty, and administrative staff). Include workshops, study groups, and retreats.	A university-wide mindfulness program accessible to all students and staff.

6. Ongoing evaluation	Continuously assess the impact of mindfulness practices.	Use surveys, focus groups, and academic performance metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Assess changes in stress levels, emotional regulation, and academic performance.	Data-driven evaluation to measure the success of mindfulness programs and refine practices where necessary.
7. Community engagement	Extend mindfulness programs beyond the campus.	Partner with local organizations, offer public mindfulness events and engage students in community-based mindfulness initiatives.	Strengthened community engagement and extended mindfulness practice to the broader society.
8. Sustainability & Expansion	Ensure the long-term sustainability of mindfulness programs.	Secure funding, integrate mindfulness into the university's culture and expand mindfulness offerings (e.g., online resources, and faculty workshops).	A sustainable mindfulness program that continues to grow and evolve within the university system.

The challenges of implementing mindfulness practices in higher education have significant implications for how these programs are designed and integrated into university life. First, the perception of mindfulness as a religious practice may limit its acceptance among students, faculty, and administrators who do not see it as relevant to their academic or personal lives. This cultural and religious association may cause resistance, so mindfulness programs must emphasize the secular, mental health benefits of these practices. Reframing mindfulness as a tool for emotional regulation, stress management, and cognitive enhancement may help broaden its appeal and increase participation. The lack of physical space and tools for mindfulness activities creates practical challenges. Universities may need to invest in creating dedicated quiet spaces for mindfulness practices or find ways to incorporate mindfulness into existing spaces. This could include simple solutions like providing portable resources like guided meditation apps or online workshops, which would increase mindfulness accessibility without requiring a significant investment in physical infrastructure. The lack of knowledgeable and inspiring facilitators also reduces the effectiveness of mindfulness programs. To address this, universities may need to work with outside mindfulness experts or invest in training faculty,

staff, and students to become certified mindfulness instructors. This would ensure that the programs are led by experts who can guide students through their practice and support their growth in a meaningful way. Cultural barriers to mindfulness practice include a reluctance to open up emotionally or share personal experiences. To address this, mindfulness programs could be designed to be more culturally sensitive, with approaches that respect the student population's values and norms. Involving peer leaders or student ambassadors who are familiar with the culture can help bridge the gap and create a more welcoming environment for mindfulness practices. Finally, the fact that mindfulness is not yet regarded as important as academic knowledge and skill development suggests that mindfulness initiatives will require strong advocacy and support from university leadership. Raising awareness of the relationship between mental health and academic success is critical. By emphasizing the long-term benefits of mindfulness for student well-being and performance, universities can make a compelling case for incorporating mindfulness into their educational framework.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper investigates the use of mindfulness practices in higher education, with a focus on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings for developing compassionate, emotionally resilient, and well-rounded students. Today's university students face a variety of challenges, including academic pressure, mental health concerns, and a fragmented sense of purpose. Mindfulness, which focuses on present-moment awareness, compassion, and interconnectedness, provides a solution to these issues. According to research, mindfulness practices significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and depression while also increasing emotional intelligence and empathy. Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings, which include mindful breathing, compassionate listening, and the concept of interbeing, provide a strong foundation for students' personal development and academic success. Mindfulness training in universities has been shown to improve focus, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships. Mindfulness interventions are becoming more important in Vietnamese higher education, where students are under increasing academic pressure. By incorporating mindfulness into curricula, student services, and faculty training, universities can assist students in developing emotional resilience, stress management skills, and a stronger sense of purpose and interconnectedness. Furthermore, mindfulness can foster a culture of compassion and understanding, resulting in a supportive and inclusive campus environment. However, challenges to implementing mindfulness in higher education include its association with religion, limited resources, and a scarcity of trained facilitators. Furthermore, students' cultural resistance and the belief that mindfulness is secondary to academic skills may impede its adoption. Despite these limitations, viewing mindfulness as a secular practice for emotional well-being and academic success, as well as addressing cultural barriers, can help overcome these challenges.

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BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS OVERCOMING STRESS AND IMPROVING CONCENTRATION

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Abstract:

Academic stress is a major challenge faced by students due to high task loads, environmental expectations, and limited academic resources. If not managed properly, this stress can have a negative impact on mental health, decreased motivation to learn, and decreased academic performance. One approach that has been proven effective in coping with academic stress is mindfulness. Mindfulness helps students increase mindful awareness of their mental and emotional states, reduce anxiety, and improve concentration in learning. This concept also has a basis in the teachings of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta which emphasises awareness of the body (*kayanupassana*), feelings (*vedanupassana*), thoughts (*cittanupassana*), and mental phenomena (*dhammanupassana*). By applying mindfulness in learning, students can better manage academic stress adaptively, improve mental well-being, and create a healthier and more productive academic environment.

Keywords: *academic, stress, mindfulness, students, mental.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation of the nation's development, this makes education a central thing for a country. According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the education system, the purpose of national education is to develop the potential of students to become human beings who have faith and devotion to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become democratic citizens who are also responsible according to (Desi Pristiwanti, 2022). (Aminudin, 2024).

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Education is an effort to eradicate ignorance and fight poverty in the nation's life, improve the standard of living of all levels of citizens, and the nation, therefore the government is trying to pay serious attention to overcoming various problems in the field of improving education ranging from primary, secondary, to tertiary levels. Although education plays an important role in building the quality of human resources, high academic pressure in the education system often has a negative impact on students' well-being. Heavy academic loads, curriculum demands, and high expectations from the surrounding environment can lead to prolonged academic stress.¹

Based on the explanation above, education has an important role in shaping character and preparing students for their role in the future. However, academic pressure often makes students experience academic stress and there are even many suicides committed by students caused by stress. Academic stress is a condition of mental tension experienced by students when they are faced with difficulties in academics. There are several factors that cause academic stress, such as high academic expectations, difficulty in studying, limited resources, and lack of time management skills (Lampe, Luisa Charlotte & Müller-Hilke, Brigitte, 2021). In Indonesia, academic stress found especially among students is often caused by the expectations set by parents, teachers, and society. Academic stress is often normalised as a pathway to success and future career opportunities (Firth AM, Cavallini I, Sütterlin S, Lugo RG, 2019). Academic stress is often considered a normal part of the educational process. However, if left without proper coping mechanisms, it can develop into serious academic stress. Many students experience mental strain due to task load, parental expectations, and intense academic competition.

Based on data taken from the Asean Professor Journal in WHO (2019). The percentage of students who experience stress due to academic load globally reaches 38 - 71%, while the data on the percentage of academic stress in Southeast Asia is 39.6 - 61.3%. According to (Kemenkes RI, 2019) the academic stress rate in Jakarta reached an achievement of 89.6%. With the data above, academic load has a high percentage of causing student academic stress.

Prolonged academic stress can cause students to experience anxiety, depression, and even burnout which may have an impact on students' mental health. In addition to impacting mental health, academic stress also has consequences for students' physical health. Students who experience severe stress often experience sleep disturbances and headaches. In addition, prolonged academic stress can reduce motivation to learn, making students lose interest in their studies and have difficulty in understanding the material. Another important impact is how academic stress affects social relationships. Students who are overly stressed with academic tasks tend to withdraw from their social environment, reduce interaction with peers, and even experience interpersonal conflicts due to the pressure they experience.

¹ Desi Pristiwanti, 2022; Aminudin, 2024.

Prolonged academic stress has a great negative impact. Depression due to academic burden is likely to make someone attempt suicide. Currently, there are several suicide cases committed by students due to depression, such as the suicide case committed by a student from one of the universities in Malang. The student with the initials MAS (24) who was desperate to throw himself into the Brantas River due to depression. It is known that this was done because the thesis was not over (Aminudin, 2024).² A similar case also occurred by a 5th semester student of the Industrial Engineering faculty at one of the private campuses in Yogyakarta with the initials KAM (20). The victim was desperate to commit suicide by drinking poison that he ordered online, this is strongly suspected to be caused by the victim experiencing stress due to coursework, this is supported because before the incident the victim had told his family and admitted that he was experiencing pressure due to coursework (Kusuma, 2021). This case proves that academic pressure can cause stress and depression which allows a person to attempt suicide.

In addition, the stress experienced by students due to academic pressure also leads to a decrease in student academic achievement. This is supported by data described by (Rosanti, 2022) Based on research conducted, 69.7% of students experienced academic stress in the high category, which can be seen from four main aspects, namely physical, emotions, thoughts, and behaviour. Physical symptoms such as trembling, cold sweat, headache, and palpitations (68.9%) showed obstacles in the learning process. In addition, 60.3% of learners had difficulty managing their emotions, which impacted on concentration and social interactions, while 68% had difficulty concentrating while learning, leading to decreased understanding of material and academic performance. Negative behaviours such as teasing friends (80.5%) contribute to an uncomfortable school atmosphere. All of this shows that high academic loads can trigger stress, which ultimately leads to a decline in students' academic performance. To overcome the negative impact of academic stress, strategies are needed that can help students manage pressure better. One approach that has proven effective in reducing academic stress is mindfulness. By applying mindfulness, students can focus more on facing academic challenges without being burdened by excessive pressure.³

The impacts caused by this academic burden can be overcome by implementing mindfulness or mindfulness in learning. This is supported by research conducted by (Oki Hidayat, 2018) the results of this study show that mindfulness plays a role in reducing academic stress, especially in the dimension of academic stressors. Mindfulness can predict 13.9% of the dimensions of academic stressors ($r^2 = 0.139$, $f = 12.936$, $p = 0.001$). Mindfulness is an approach that can help students deal with academic stress more effectively. By applying mindfulness, students can train themselves to stay focused on academic tasks without being distracted by external pressures.

² Aminudin, 2024.

³ Rosanti, 2022.

mindfulness also helps students manage negative emotions and thoughts that arise due to heavy academic loads.

In religious teachings mindfulness is a practice of focussing attention on what one is doing, feeling or thinking. In Buddhism mindfulness itself is closely related to attention or in Pali it is called 'sati'. Usually when practising mindfulness one will focus on four contemplations, namely; contemplation of the body (*kayanupassana*), contemplation of feelings (*vedananupassana*), contemplation of consciousness (*cittanupassana*), and contemplation of thought forms (*dhammanupassana*).

'Uṭṭhānavato satimato, sucikammassa nisammakārino. Saññatassa ca dhammajīvino, appamattassa yaso'bhivaḍḍhati'ti'.

'One who is energetic, always aware, pure in action, possesses self-control, lives in accordance with the Dhamma and is always vigilant, happiness will increase'.⁴

The above quote from the Dhammapada also teaches that the application of mindfulness can lead one to happiness. Therefore, mindfulness can be a useful practice for students in coping with academic stress. In addition, the application of mindfulness can also improve students' concentration in learning, which in turn can support the improvement of academic performance. This article will discuss how mindfulness can help students manage academic stress and improve concentration in learning. By understanding the benefits of mindfulness, students are expected to deal with academic stress in a healthier and more productive way. Therefore, with the adverse effects that will arise when experiencing academic stress, the author created an article entitled 'The Benefits of Mindfulness for College Students: Overcoming Stress and Improving Concentration' to elaborate on the role of Mindfulness in overcoming academic stress and improving concentration in university students.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method which is an approach that uses narratives or words to. According to (Waruwu, 2023) Qualitative research is descriptive and analytical research. Descriptive in qualitative research means describing and describing the events, phenomena and social situations studied. Analysis means interpreting and interpreting and comparing the research data.⁵

The method used in writing this article is the library research method. This literature review method is a method of collecting data by finding information from various sources such as; books, journals, articles, news, and others.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Academic stress in students

Stress is what a person often experiences when he feels depressed and experiences tension. Academic stress is a feeling of pressure commonly

⁴ Dhammapada, Chapter II: Appamada Vagga, 24.

⁵ Waruwu, 2023.

experienced by students either physically or emotionally, which is usually due to academic demands given by lecturers or parents who want good learning outcomes. Completing assignments on time, no direction in doing homework assignments and an uncondusive classroom atmosphere (Mulya, Hantoro Adhi & Indrawati, Endang Sri, 2016). Academic stress is pressure that arises due to various triggering factors in the educational environment (academic stressors). These factors include various aspects of the teaching-learning process, such as pressure to improve grades, study duration, cheating habits, the number of assignments, test scores, bureaucratic systems, competition for scholarships, decision making regarding majors and careers, anxiety during exams, and challenges in time management (Nur Rulifatur Rohmah & M. Mahrus, 2024).⁶

According to research conducted by Ambarwati, Putri Dewi, Pinilih, Sambodo Sriadi & Astuti, Retna Tri (2017) that final-year students experience academic stress with varying degrees, namely 35.6% in the mild category, 57.4% in the moderate category, and 6.9% in the severe category. The emergence of academic stress is caused by increasing responsibility in completing more and more academic tasks. Academic stress is also caused by several factors, including internal and external factors. The following are the factors that cause academic stress according to the data above;

3.2. Internal factors

Internal factors are factors that arise from within the individual, academic stress can also be caused by several internal factors in a person, here are some internal factors that may cause academic stress;

3.2.1. Lack of skills in time management

Students who have difficulty managing time between lectures, assignments, organisations, and personal life often experience pressure due to accumulated work. The habit of procrastination further worsens the situation because they have to complete many tasks in a limited time, which ultimately increases the mental burden

3.2.2. Students' ability to manage academic pressure

Students who do not have good coping strategies often feel overwhelmed in facing the challenges of lectures, so they easily experience stress. They may experience feelings of helplessness, lack of confidence, or even give up before trying. If there is no support or effective strategies to deal with pressure, academic stress can develop into more serious anxiety.

3.2.3. Students' physical and mental condition

Students who experience sleep deprivation due to staying up late to complete assignments or studying for exams tend to experience fatigue, which can reduce their concentration and productivity. Poor diet and lack of physical activity can also contribute to increased stress. In addition to physical factors,

⁶ Nur Rulifatur Rohmah & M. Mahrus, 2024.

mental health such as anxiety, depression, or low self-confidence can also exacerbate academic stress experienced by students.

3.3. External factors

External factors are also one of the causes of someone experiencing academic stress. Factors that include; high academic demands, high expectations from the surrounding environment, and limited resources can cause someone to experience stress.

3.3.1. High academic demands

Students are required to face many assignments, projects, and exams that must be completed within a limited time. This academic burden gets heavier when students have to do a thesis or final project that requires a lot of research and intensive guidance. Unfortunately, not all students get enough academic support from their lecturers or educational institutions, so they have to struggle alone in completing these tasks. This academic pressure often causes students to feel overwhelmed and lose their enthusiasm for learning.

3.3.2. High expectations from parents, lecturers, and society

Many students feel burdened by the expectations of their parents who want them to get high grades or complete their studies according to predetermined targets. In addition, lecturers also often have high expectations of student learning outcomes, which can make them feel that they must always give their best without mistakes. Not only that, but society often uses academic success as a measure of one's success, which further increases the pressure on students. They feel they have to meet the standards set by their environment, which, if not achieved, can lead to a deep sense of failure and stress.

3.3.3. Limited academic resources are also a cause of stress for students

Some students experience difficulties in accessing books, journals, or academic references needed to support their learning. Lack of lecturer guidance in completing assignments or research is also a big obstacle in students' academic process. Not only that, inadequate campus facilities, such as the lack of comfortable study rooms or well-equipped laboratories, can worsen students' learning experiences and add to their academic burden,

The academic stress experienced by students is the result of an interaction between internal factors, such as lack of time management skills and inability to manage academic pressure, and external factors, such as high academic demands and expectations from the social environment. This condition not only impacts students' mental well-being, but also has the potential to significantly reduce their motivation to learn and academic performance. Therefore, the application of mindfulness in learning is a relevant and effective approach in helping students manage academic stress, improve concentration, and strengthen their mental resilience in facing various academic challenges.

3.4. The role of mindfulness in coping with academic stress

Mindfulness is a strategy to deal with academic stress by being aware,

focusing, and remembering to stay focused without getting caught up in anxiety, thus helping students to be calmer and concentrate on learning. According to a statement from Saraswati (2022). Mindfulness mediates the relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being. More mindful students have the ability to manage stress by reducing negative perceptions of stressors. (Setianingrum Prima Intan, Prima Intan Ratna Sari, Risma Ayu Sulityowati, Noer Aini Eldi & Muhammad Ilham Wakita, 2025). Mindfulness acts as a partial mediation which is an important foundation for creating more effective strategies in helping students manage stress.⁷

Mindfulness can be applied in various aspects of students' academic life. One example is by applying mindful breathing techniques before an exam or presentation. By taking a few slow deep breaths and focusing on the flow of the breath, students can calm themselves down and reduce excessive anxiety. In addition, mindfulness can also be applied to study habits, for example by applying mindful studying techniques, where students are completely focused on one task without being distracted by social media or other thoughts. This technique not only improves concentration, but also makes the learning process more efficient. Even in everyday activities such as eating and walking, mindfulness can be applied to help students be more aware of their bodies and reduce unnecessary stress.

The effectiveness of implementing mindfulness in overcoming stress can be seen from research conducted by (Oki Hidayat, 2018). The study was conducted on 82 students consisting of female (72%) and male (28%) respondents and showed that mindfulness has a significant role in reducing academic stress, especially in terms of how students perceive academic pressure. Statistically, mindfulness was able to predict 13.9% of academic stressors ($R^2 = 0.139$, $F = 12.936$, $p = 0.001$). Each one-point increase in mindfulness score contributed to a -0.308 decrease in academic stressor score. The data can be interpreted that mindfulness helps students to regulate emotions and improve concentration in dealing with academic pressure. Students who are more mindful tend to be more aware of their own emotional state, so they can manage stress better. For example, mindful students are more likely to use breathing techniques or meditation to calm themselves down before a stressful situation, such as a presentation or exam. They are also likely to be more reflective and less likely to react impulsively to stress, so they can deal with it more adaptively and less easily overwhelmed.⁸

In Buddhism, it is explained that everything that appears is spearheaded by the mind, this is found in the *Dhammapada* chapter Yamaka Vagga, which reads; 'the pioneer mind, the shaping mind, the mind is the leader.'⁹ The quote explains that everything that happens is spearheaded by the mind. For

⁷ Setianingrum Prima Intan, Prima Intan Ratna Sari, Risma Ayu Sulityowati, Noer Aini Eldi & Muhammad Ilham Wakita, 2025.

⁸ Oki Hidayat, 2018.

⁹ *Dhp I*, Yamaka Vagga, 1.

example; when a student experiences academic depression and stress because he thinks that he is unable to complete his academic assignments. Buddhism also teaches that by having attention and vigilance a person can control their mind, this can be written in the Dhammapada chapter Apamada Vagga which reads; 'With vigilance and fortitude, with patience and self-control, the wise man makes himself like an island that cannot be drowned by floods'.¹⁰ The Dhammapada quote teaches that by developing mindfulness and alertness one can control their thoughts, especially negative thoughts that might cause stress and depression.

In Buddhism, more precisely in the *Satipatṭhāna Sutta* found in the Majjhima Nikaya group; 10. In the *sutta*, mindfulness is referred to as *sati*, which means full awareness of present experience, without being attached to or rejecting anything that arises in the mind and body. This practice allows one to see things as they really are, without being influenced by illusions or excessive emotional reactions. The *Satipatṭhāna Sutta* explains that mindfulness can be developed through four main foundations, namely the body (*kaya*), sensations or feelings (*vedana*), thoughts (*citta*), and mental phenomena (*dhamma*).

3.4.1. *Kayanupassana*

Academic stress has an impact on the body, causing muscle tension, headaches, poor sleep, or even indigestion. With mindfulness of the body, one is taught to be aware of the physical feelings that arise due to stress.

For example, when a student experiences tension before starting an exam, it can start with being aware of his or her breathing (*Anapanasati*). By focusing on the in and out of breath, the body naturally becomes more relaxed, the heart rate slows down, and tension is reduced. In addition, being aware of posture and movement also helps to reduce unconscious stress, such as clenching your fists when anxious or slouching too long when studying.

Through conscious practice of body contemplation, students can be more sensitive in recognising early signs of stress before they develop into more serious health problems. Awareness of the body allows them to identify physical or emotional changes that indicate psychological distress. In addition, students can also utilise breathing and stretching techniques as a strategy to relieve tension arising from hectic academic activities. By breathing regularly and doing light stretching movements, the body becomes more relaxed, so that muscle tension and mental stress can be reduced. Not only that, this exercise also helps students maintain full awareness while undergoing various activities, such as writing or reading. Thus, they can be more focused and calm in completing academic tasks without being distracted by wandering thoughts or excessive pressure.

3.4.2. *Vedanupassana*

In the academic world, one often experiences various emotions such as frustration due to difficulty in understanding the material, anxiety before

¹⁰ *Dhp* II, Apamada Vagga, 25.

exams, or even joy when getting high grades. Mindfulness of feelings teaches one to realise and accept those feelings without overreacting.

When facing academic stress, one can apply *Vedanupassana*, which is feeling awareness, as a way to manage emotions more wisely. The first step is to recognise the emotions that arise during the learning process or when facing an exam. Feelings such as fear, anxiety or frustration often arise in demanding academic situations, so it is important to be aware of their existence without reacting to them immediately.

Furthermore, one needs to understand that negative feelings are temporary and need not be clung to. For example, anxiety before an exam may arise momentarily, persist for some time, and then slowly dissipate. By realising that emotions come and go like waves, one can avoid getting caught up in them and maintain clarity of mind.

As a final step, it is important to neutralise feelings by accepting them without suppressing or venting them to others. One way is to talk to yourself mindfully, for example by saying to yourself, 'Right now I am feeling anxious, and that is normal. I am just observing this feeling without being dragged down by it.' This approach helps one to stay calm and better manage academic stress with a more balanced and mindful attitude.

3.4.3. *Cittanupassana*

The main cause of academic stress is uncontrollable thoughts. For example, a college student facing a large assignment may think, 'I won't be able to finish it,' or 'I'm bound to fail.' These thoughts are often more distracting than the task itself.

Cittanupassana teaches one to observe their state of mind more clearly and objectively, without getting caught up in worries or negative thought patterns. In the academic world, this practice can be applied by raising awareness of the thought patterns that arise during the learning process or when facing academic pressure. One needs to be aware of how one's mind reacts to challenges, whether it is filled with confidence or anxiety and doubt.

In addition, it is important to distance oneself from the negative thoughts that arise so as not to get lost in the disturbing emotions. One way to do this is by reminding yourself that thoughts are just thoughts, not a reality that should always be believed or responded to excessively. By saying to yourself, 'This is just a thought. I don't have to believe them or react to them,' one can develop a calmer demeanour and not be easily carried away by unsupportive thoughts.

To further balance the mental state, focusing on the task at hand is an important step in maintaining peace of mind. Instead of allowing oneself to be distracted by unnecessary worries, one can practice mindfulness of the learning process or academic work being done. In this way, the mind becomes more purposeful, resulting in increased productivity and better management of academic pressure.

3.4.4. *Dhammanupassana*

Dhammanupassana teaches one to observe the law of cause and effect

in one's mental life. In the academic context, one can realise that stress is not something that happens randomly but is the result of mental habits and reactions to situations.

For example, a student who constantly procrastinates his assignments may realise that this stems from the habit of avoiding discomfort. By understanding this mechanism, he can begin to develop new, healthier habits, such as managing his time better and working gradually without feeling overwhelmed.

Dhammanupassana also includes an understanding of the five mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), which often become obstacles to learning and academic achievement. One such hindrance is laziness and sluggishness (*thīna-middha*), which is often the main cause of procrastination and lack of motivation in completing tasks. When one experiences this condition, studying becomes a chore and it is difficult to get started, resulting in decreased productivity.

Doubt (*vicikicchā*) is also a challenge in academia. Thoughts filled with questions such as, 'Am I smart enough?' or 'Can I complete this task?' can inhibit one's action and actually reinforce a sense of insecurity. This uncertainty can make individuals hesitant to take action, hindering progress in learning.

Another obstacle that often arises is restlessness (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), which is a condition in which one constantly feels anxious about their academic results. Excessive worry about grades, exams or high expectations can disrupt concentration and make it difficult to focus on the task at hand. As a result, instead of improving academic performance, this anxiety can potentially reduce learning effectiveness.

By understanding and being aware of these mental barriers, one can more easily recognise them and develop strategies to overcome them. Through the practice of mindfulness, individuals can learn to deal with each obstacle more wisely, resulting in a smoother and more effective learning process.

3.5. Challenges in implementing mindfulness in learning

Mindfulness is a practice that can be implemented in learning. The application of mindfulness has a good impact on both educators and students, especially in this day and age where many are stressed due to heavy academic demands. However, the application of mindfulness in learning still has its challenges. According to Saputro et al. (2023), the implementation of mindfulness also faces various challenges. Many teachers and principals still do not fully understand the benefits of mindfulness, both for themselves and for students. Generally, teachers who understand the concept of mindfulness are those who have undergone specialised training.¹¹ The limited number of professional trainers or teachers trained in mindfulness is one of the barriers to implementation in schools. In addition, the large amount of work that teachers have to do leaves them with no time to train, prepare, and implement mindfulness into learning.

In addition to structural challenges, mindfulness implementation also

¹¹ Saputro et al., 2023.

faces barriers from individual and social aspects. One of the main challenges is the lack of consistency in practice. Many students try mindfulness for a short period of time, but struggle to make it a habit. This is due to the lack of understanding of the importance of continuous practice in mindfulness. In addition, the lack of support from the surrounding environment is also a hindering factor. In many cultures, including in Indonesia, academic success often takes precedence over mental well-being. As a result, students who try to practice mindfulness may not get support from family or friends, as it is considered a waste of time or irrelevant to academic success.

In the opinion of Yani (2024), there are challenges in implementing mindfulness in learning this includes:¹²

3.5.1. Time constraints and academic pressures

Mindful and mindful learning takes somewhat longer than traditional teaching methods. Teachers often feel more pressure to complete all the material according to a tighter curriculum, making it harder for them to make time for more mindfulness-focused activities or more meaningful projects.

3.5.2. Limitations of curriculum and educational structure

More rigid standardised curricula often do not provide enough space to practise more flexible approaches such as mindful and meaningful learning. Curricula that focus more on achieving academic competency standards often give less priority to mental wellbeing or life skills development, which are at the core of mindfulness learning.

3.5.3. Resistance from teachers and students

As teachers often feel unsure or uncomfortable with the concepts of mindfulness and meaningful learning, especially if they have never been trained in these methods, some students also often find it difficult to follow mindfulness techniques or do not see the relevance of meaningful learning if they are not used to more structured traditional methods.

3.5.4. Lack of resources and training

More effective implementation requires training for teachers as well as more supportive resources, such as teaching materials and tools for mindfulness. Without this support, it is often difficult to optimally implement these methods in the classroom.

3.5.5. Evaluation and measurement of learning outcomes

To evaluate mindfulness learning can be challenging as its success cannot be seen in academic scores. Its impact often encompasses aspects that are difficult to measure such as improved mental wellbeing, student engagement, or social skills.

The application of mindfulness in education does face various challenges that require strategic solutions in order to be effectively implemented in learning. One of the main obstacles is the lack of understanding and skills in

¹² Yani, 2024.

implementing mindfulness in the classroom. Many teachers and principals do not have sufficient insight into the benefits and techniques of mindfulness in learning. mindfulness techniques in learning. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve teachers' competencies through specially designed training programmes and seminars, training programmes and specially designed seminars. In addition, building a learning community for educators can be an effective strategy in sharing experiences and best practices, so that mindfulness can be applied more optimally in learning. In addition to limited understanding, time constraints time is also a factor that hinders the implementation of mindfulness in the learning process. The heavy curriculum load often makes it difficult for teachers to incorporate mindfulness practices in learning activities. One of the approach is to integrate mindfulness into the classroom routine without reducing learning time. Into the classroom routine without reducing learning time. For example, before start the lesson, students can be invited to do breathing exercises or a short reflection to improve their focus and readiness to receive the material. In this way, mindfulness can become a part of learning that can improve concentration

The rigid curriculum structure is also an obstacle in implementing mindfulness practices in learning. Learning systems that are more orientated towards academic achievement often do not provide space for activities that focus on students' mental well-being. To overcome this problem, a more flexible policy is needed, where mindfulness can be incorporated in various subjects. For example, in physical education, students can be encouraged to be more aware of their body movements, while in art subjects, they can be trained to be more focused and enjoy the process of creating with mindfulness. With this approach, mindfulness can become part of a more holistic learning process without having to drastically change the curriculum.

Resistance from teachers and students is also a challenge in implementing mindfulness. Many educators feel less confident in teaching mindfulness techniques because they have never received training before. Similarly, students who are used to conventional learning methods may feel that mindfulness is irrelevant to their learning activities. To overcome this resistance, mindfulness can be introduced gradually with more engaging and interactive methods. For example, teachers can start with mindfulness-based games or simple breathing exercises in a fun atmosphere. This way, both teachers and students will be more open to the benefits of mindfulness.

Another factor to consider is the availability of adequate resources and support. Effective implementation of mindfulness requires teaching materials, tools, and training that meet the needs of teachers and students. To fulfil these needs, an educational institution can collaborate with professional institutions or mindfulness experts to provide more comprehensive resources. In addition, the use of technology, such as mindfulness apps or digital modules, can also be an alternative to assist teachers in implementing these strategies in the classroom more efficiently.

Another important challenge is the method of evaluating the success of

mindfulness in learning. Unlike academic subjects that can be measured through test scores, the impact of mindfulness is more subjective and relates to students' mental well-being and engagement in the learning process. Therefore, the evaluation methods used need to be more flexible and holistic, for example through reflection journals, behavioural observations, or interviews with students and teachers.

With this approach, the benefits of mindfulness in improving students' psychological and social well-being can be better measured and recognised as an integral part of education.

With these strategic steps, mindfulness can be applied more effectively in education. Improved teacher understanding, curriculum flexibility, and adequate resource support will contribute to learning that focuses not only on academic achievement, but also on students' mental and emotional well-being. As such, mindfulness can be a supportive approach to learning that may lead to improved student academic achievement.

IV. CONCLUSION

Academic stress is a major challenge for university students due to heavy workload, high expectations, and lack of stress management skills. If not managed properly, academic stress can negatively impact students' mental health, academic performance, and social well-being. One method that has proven effective in coping with academic stress is mindfulness. This practice helps students increase awareness of their mental and emotional states, reduce anxiety, and increase focus in learning. Various studies have shown that mindfulness can significantly reduce academic stress and help students deal with academic pressure more adaptively.

The concept of mindfulness also has a basis in the teachings of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which teaches mindfulness of the body (*kayanupassana*), feelings (*vedanupassana*), thoughts (*cittanupassana*), and mental phenomena (*dhammanupassana*). By understanding this concept, students can better manage negative emotions and thought patterns that arise due to academic pressure. However, the application of mindfulness still faces challenges such as lack of understanding, curriculum limitations, and resistance from students and educators. Therefore, educational institutions need to play an active role in promoting mindfulness through training, policies, and integration in the learning system. Mindfulness is not just a theory, but a skill that can be practised. By getting used to applying it in academic life, students can deal with academic pressure more calmly, improve concentration, and create a healthier and more productive learning environment.

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THE EFFECT OF MINDFULNESS ON STRESS REDUCTION STUDENTS IN SEKOLAH TINGGI AGAMA BUDDHA NEGERI RADEN WIJAYA WONOGIRI INDONESIA

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Abstract:

The university period is an adaptation stage for students facing academic, social, and personal challenges. Academic pressures, social demands, and parental expectations can trigger academic stress, negatively affecting students' mental health, productivity, and life balance. One method that can be used to cope with stress is mindfulness, which is a mindfulness practice that focuses on awareness of thoughts and emotions without judgment. STABN (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri) Raden Wijaya Wonogiri, as a faith-based educational institution, has a unique academic environment where students are expected to excel academically and apply spiritual principles in their daily lives. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how mindfulness can help reduce academic stress among students. Mindfulness is efficacious in improving mental well-being, reducing anxiety, and improving focus and concentration. In addition to the psychological benefits, mindfulness also impacts the physiological aspects by lowering the levels of stress hormones such as cortisol. This study aims to review the literature on the impact of mindfulness on reducing student academic stress, especially at STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri. This literature analysis is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of mindfulness in dealing with academic stress and become a reference for educational institutions in designing mindfulness-based programs to help students manage stress better. In addition, this study can also be the basis for further research related to the application of mindfulness in various aspects of students' lives to improve their overall quality of life.

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Keywords: *Mindfulness, students, stress, reduce.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The lecture period is the beginning of students' adaptation to changes in academic, social, and personal activities. During this period, students must face various challenges, such as developing academic abilities, managing time wisely, and balancing personal and social life. These demands cause students to experience academic stress.

Academic stress is something students at STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri often experience. Academic pressure, social demands, and parental expectations influence the stress level in the college environment. Students are usually faced with various educational and non-academic assignments, deadlines, and busy lecture schedules, and perform well academically and socially; changing the environment from home to the lecture environment can be a significant source of pressure. If left unchecked, this stress can harm students' academic performance, mental health, productivity, and physical well-being. Not infrequently, this poorly managed stress can cause various health problems, such as fatigue, sleep disorders, anxiety, laziness in activities, and depression. Therefore, multiple strategies to reduce stress are needed to maintain students' mental and physical health.

One of the methods commonly used to cope with stress is mindfulness. Mindfulness is also referred to as the practice of mindfulness practice and the process of observing the in-breath and out-breath¹. In practice, mindfulness involves focusing on thoughts and emotions. One of the goals of mindfulness practice is to improve students' ability to focus on their attention to stay calm and awake in any situation. Familiarising oneself with what it feels like to be more aware and improving the ability to maintain focus fully and control is this technique's most important part.

STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri is a religious-based higher education institution with a different academic environment. Students on campus are expected to excel academically and apply spiritual principles in their daily lives. However, it is important to understand how mindfulness can help STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri students reduce stress, as they face many challenges that can cause stress, both academically and socially.

Mindfulness has been widely researched in various populations, but research explicitly addresses its impact on college students' academic stress. Most studies have focused on the general or working population. However, those that specifically address its impact on university students have specific characteristics, such as facing increasing academic pressure and having different levels of responsibility to others. Consequently, a thorough analysis is required to understand how mindfulness can be best applied in these situations.

Various perspectives have shown that mindfulness positively impacts

¹ Sugata et al., 2022.

university students' mental and psychological health. Mindfulness helps reduce stress and enhances the ability to manage emotions, improve focus and concentration, and increase a sense of calm and comfort². In the academic context, mindfulness can help students cope well with academic pressure, improve their ability to manage emotions, and reduce excessive anxiety levels about assignment targets; thus, mindfulness can be an effective strategy for students to deal with various challenges they face during lectures.

In addition to its benefits to mental health and stress management, mindfulness has also been shown to impact a person's physiological aspects. Mindfulness can reduce the intensity of stress hormones such as 'cortisol,' reduce emotional tension, and increase responsiveness in the body³. Therefore, mindfulness is a very relevant method to be applied in the lives of university students to help them manage stress and maintain a balance of mental and physical health.

This study aims to gather literature on how mindfulness reduces academic stress in university students. To achieve this goal, it will analyze several relevant studies to find the mechanisms responsible for mindfulness's ability to reduce stress. This study's primary focus is mindfulness's effect on stress reduction in Stabn Raden Wijaya Wonogiri students. Students at this institute, like students in general, face various academic and social pressures that can impact stress levels.

Hopefully, this literature review will provide a deeper understanding of mindfulness's benefits for university students. It aims to emphasize how effective mindfulness is in reducing academic stress and provide guidance on how to do so. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to be an important reference for policies in building a healthier and more supportive learning environment for students.

In addition, it also has the potential to provide insights for lecturers, educators, and others within the institution in designing mindfulness-based programs that can help students cope effectively with academic stress. With a deeper understanding of the benefits of mindfulness, educational institutions can coordinate this practice with students' habits so that students can develop better stress management during the recovery period.

Furthermore, it can serve as a basis for research that focuses on applying mindfulness in various aspects of student life, not only in academic contexts but also in social and emotional life. With the increasing challenges students face in this modern era, a holistic and evidence-based approach such as mindfulness is becoming increasingly relevant in helping students achieve a better quality of life.

Thus, this research is expected to have a real impact on efforts to improve the quality of life of students, both mentally, emotionally, and academically.

² Dika & Widyana, 2024.

³ Robinson, 2024.

The conclusions obtained can later be used as a basis for designing educational policies that focus more on reducing stress in students and mental health so as to create a learning environment that is more supportive, inclusive, and able to support optimal student development.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

According to Creswell John, this research uses a literature study method to analyze the effect of mindfulness on reducing academic stress in STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri students. W.⁴, a literature review is a collection of articles from journals, books, and other documents that explain current theories and information and organize the literature into the necessary topics and documents.⁵ literature review is a search and research by reading various books, journals, and other publications related to the research topic to produce writing regarding a particular topic or issue.⁶ defines literature review as a description or description of the literature relevant to a particular field or topic, which provides a review of what has been discussed by other researchers or authors, including theories, hypotheses, research problems, and methodologies used.

This study's approach is descriptive qualitative, which aims to provide an in-depth understanding of mindfulness's effectiveness in reducing academic stress. Through this approach, the research focuses on extracting information from various sources to understand the relationship between mindfulness and academic stress and how this practice can be applied to students in faith-based universities.

The data used in this study were obtained from secondary sources, such as scientific journals, academic articles, books, and previous research reports that discuss mindfulness and academic stress management. Data collection was conducted by document analysis, which is tracing and reviewing relevant academic references. This process included a literature search, selection of references based on credibility and relevance, and identification of the main variables, namely academic stress and the effectiveness of mindfulness in managing stress.

Data analysis was conducted using meta-analysis and content analysis methods. Meta-analysis was used to compare results from previous studies to find patterns or trends that demonstrate the effectiveness of mindfulness in reducing academic stress. Meanwhile, content analysis aims to identify, classify, and interpret the main themes in the literature analyzed.

To ensure the accuracy of the research results, data validity was guaranteed through source triangulation, which is comparing information from various credible and academically tested references. In addition, the consistency of findings was considered by ensuring that the reviewed studies showed similar patterns regarding the benefits of mindfulness on academic stress reduction.

⁴ Hasby Pembimbing & Hendriani dan Sri Indarti, 2017.

⁵ Marzali, 2017.

⁶ Amarullah & Pendahuluan, 2023.

With this approach, the research is expected to provide in-depth insight into the benefits of mindfulness in helping students manage academic stress more effectively and provide a basis for educational institutions to design mindfulness-based programs. In conclusion, this research uses the literature study method to understand how mindfulness can reduce academic stress in STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri students. Several experts define literature review as collecting, analyzing, and organizing various relevant written sources.

III. DISCUSSION

Students

According to Sarwono, students are officially registered to participate in higher education, aged around 18-30 years, and are part of a community group with ties to higher education institutions⁷ Students undergoing higher education aim to develop academic and professional competencies, leadership character, and social responsibility⁸ Students are prospective scholars who, through their involvement with higher education, are educated and expected to become intellectuals who benefit the wider community.⁹ Students are prospective scholars who, through their involvement with universities¹⁰ Students are the status carried by a person because of his relationship with higher education with the status of seeking knowledge, which is expected to become intellectual candidates. It can also be defined as students who study or study in higher education, be it universities, institutes, or academics.

It can be concluded that students are individuals who are officially enrolled in higher education, usually aged between 18 and 30, and have an attachment to higher education institutions. They undergo higher education to develop academic, professional, leadership, and social responsibility competencies.

Students can come from public, private, or other equivalent institutions. They are prospective scholars active in academic activities and expected to be part of the future intellectual generation. As knowledge seekers, students play an important role in developing insights and contributing to society.

Stress

According to experts, there are several definitions of stress, one of which is¹¹ stress is a state of physical and psychological distress. Stress is an internal or external response or process that reaches the level of physical and psychological tension to the limit of the subject's ability. Stress is defined as the deterioration of emotional and physical conditions in life; it can be considered the body's response to life. In an increasingly complex modern life, humans will tend to experience stress if students are less able to adapt their desires to reality, both the reality that is inside and outside themselves; in simple terms, stress is a

⁷ Murai, Shinji; Sonota, 1978.

⁸ Fitriana & Kurniasih, 2021.

⁹ Li et al., 2018.

¹⁰ L. Sihombing, 2020.

¹¹ Sudirman, 2019.

form of a person's response, both physically and mentally, to a change in their environment that is felt to interfere and cause them to be threatened¹².

Stress is a situation that humans may experience in general, especially in students in organizations or universities. Stress is an important issue because this situation can affect student productivity and academic ability. Stress does not always have a negative impact; stress also has a positive impact, primarily if the stress can provide an input that has potential, such as personal motivation, stimulation to work harder, and increased inspiration for a better life.

Stress is a feeling of distress and mental strain. Low stress levels may be desirable, beneficial, and healthy¹³. Physical symptoms usually appear in faster breathing, dry mouth and throat, sweaty hands, hot body, and tense muscles. In addition, stress can also cause digestive disorders such as diarrhea or constipation, body fatigue, headaches, and muscle twitching or spasms, especially in the eyelid area. People who experience stress also tend to feel restless for no apparent reason.

On the other hand, stress also affects a person's behavior, especially in social and family relationships. Harmony in the household, for example, is highly dependent on good communication between family members.¹⁴ Emphasizes that effective communication between husband and wife is vital to creating a harmonious family life. Without good communication, misunderstandings and disputes are more likely to occur. The results show that poor communication in the family can lead to stress and depression in older family members. Poorly managed stress can worsen the quality of communication, creating a negative cycle that affects the well-being of all family¹⁵.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the capacity or skill of paying full attention¹⁶. Mindfulness is the awareness arising from deliberate attention to present experiences without judgment¹⁷ Mindfulness involves being aware of moment-to-moment experiences in a clear and balanced way. It means being open to the present moment's reality, allowing all thoughts, emotions, and sensations to enter consciousness without resistance or avoidance¹⁸.

Mindfulness is a simple technique that can be done quickly. First, find a comfortable position so that the body is more relaxed. After that, inhale slowly, hold it to a count of six, then let it out slowly. Let the thoughts and emotions that arise just come without the need to fight or avoid them. Feel and accept them. Then, breathe in again, observing every breath of air that comes in and

¹² Sudirman, 2019.

¹³ L. Nur & Mugi, 2021.

¹⁴ Juanda & Sjanette Eveline, 2018.

¹⁵ Barmawi et al., 2009.

¹⁶ Brajadenta & Fachruddin, 2022.

¹⁷ Dika & Widyana, 2024.

¹⁸ Waney et al., 2020.

out, then release it slowly. By doing this, we can be more aware of ourselves, feel calmer, and better prepared to deal with various situations in daily life.

The practice of applying Mindfulness in the daily lives of students can help us in our efforts to reduce stress, help us to be more relaxed in the present moment, help us believe in ourselves more, and make our minds more focused. In another perspective, mindfulness can be defined as softening the heart by remembering Him (God) and being thoroughly grateful for being His student. An important part of the inner development taught by the Buddha is mindfulness (*sati*). This development aims to achieve happiness and relief from suffering (*dukkha*). According to the Dīgha Nikāya, mindfulness meditation (*sati*) plays a key role in developing concentration and mental stability. This is relevant in the modern context, where distractions from digital technology and academic demands often hamper students' ability to concentrate. Besides its practical benefits, mindfulness meditation has a strong Buddhist philosophical foundation. In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, mindfulness meditation is taught as the practice of paying attention to the body, feelings, thoughts, and phenomena with full awareness. This teaching reflects the relevance of mindfulness in building deep concentration and courage to face mental challenges. By integrating this approach into modern education, students gain academic benefits and the emotional balance needed to deal with the stresses of¹⁹.

IV. MINDFULNESS IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

College students, as a population group facing high academic pressure, often experience stress that negatively impacts students' mental health. Various factors, including task load and performance pressure, trigger this stress. Stress in university students not only reduces academic productivity but also triggers various mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression.

Being a student is challenging, and academic demands often become a pressure. Many students feel overwhelmed by heavy course loads, piling assignments, and high expectations from family and society. In addition, competition in the academic environment increases the pressure to achieve and maintain good grades. Factors such as busy class schedules, assignments, and exams that require deep understanding and having to participate in groups or other activities can be sources of this academic pressure. For some students, this pressure is further increased when they have to work while studying or face family demands to graduate with high grades and get a good job.

Students' mental and physical health can be affected by academic pressure if not managed properly. As a result of the ever-increasing burden, many people experience stress, anxiety, sleep deprivation, and even fatigue. Some students also lose interest in studying and doubt their abilities. To cope with academic pressure, students must have skills in managing time, setting priorities, and understanding their limits. Seeking support and motivation from friends, lecturers, and significant others can also help. Students must balance personal

¹⁹ Adhinugroho et al., 2025.

and academic life to stay physically and mentally healthy during lectures.

According to Lusiane and Garvin (2019), education is the primary key to success. Parents often have high expectations of their children, wanting high academic achievement and pursuing fields that are considered promising. These expectations can be motivating, but if they are too high and do not consider the child's abilities, they can cause tremendous pressure. Many children feel burdened by family expectations, especially compared to siblings, cousins, or peers who are perceived to be more successful²⁰.

The fear of disappointing parents or not being able to meet the standards set can lead to stress, excessive anxiety, and even loss of motivation. In some situations, meeting family expectations can also take its toll on students, causing them to become burnt out, lose confidence, or even drift away from the family due to parental demands. Therefore, it is imperative to have free and open communication with the family when facing these difficult situations. Parents can understand that valuing their child's potential and happiness is just as important as fulfilling other people's expectations. Stress and relationships can be reduced with better understanding between family members.

4.1. Time management

Time management (life management) involves achieving life's main goals by setting aside meaningless activities that often take up a lot of time (Kusnul Ika).

^{21, 22} He wrote that time management is an effort made by everyone to use time as much as possible to achieve planned goals so that the efforts made by a person can be successful and provide benefits for himself. Research shows that effective time management can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of individuals in carrying out daily tasks. Working in a systematic and scheduled manner helps avoid wasting time and increases productivity²³. Time management is optimizing optimal time through organized and mature planning of activities²⁴.

With a busy class schedule, piles of assignments, and organizational activities or side jobs, students need to manage their time well so as not to be overwhelmed. Lack of effective time management often leads to stress, anxiety, and even burnout.

Students often face challenges in managing their time, such as procrastination, lack of planning, and difficulty prioritizing. Many are accustomed to working at the last minute before deadlines, which increases mental stress and decreases the quality of their work. In addition, involvement in organizations or social activities can take up much time if not managed well.

To overcome this problem, students can apply various effective time

²⁰ Lusiane & Garvin, 2019.

²¹ Kusnul Ika Sandra & M. As'ad Djalali, 2023.

²² Carolus Borromeus Mulyatno, 2022.

²³ Efektif, 2021.

²⁴ Carolus Borromeus Mulyatno, 2022.

management strategies. Creating a structured schedule by recording daily and weekly activities can help us as students allocate our time more efficiently. Techniques such as Pomodoro can improve focus and avoid boredom while studying. Prioritizing based on urgency and importance is also important in ensuring that the most pressing tasks are done first²⁵.

In addition, maintaining a balance between academic and personal life should not be ignored. Students need to take time to rest, socialize, and maintain physical and mental health. With discipline and good planning, students can manage their time effectively, increase productivity, and live a balanced and comfortable college life.

4.2. Social environment

²⁶Based on the literature, stress in college students not only reduces academic productivity but also triggers various mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. Mindfulness comes as a psychological intervention that helps students manage stress better.

Targeted research shows that mindfulness exercises, such as breathing meditation and body scans, help students increase awareness of feelings and thoughts without pressure²⁷. Thus, mindfulness provides emotional distance between students and the stress they feel so that they can better deal with it rationally and effectively. This result aligns with the findings of²⁸ who mentioned that mindfulness helps individuals deal with stressful situations more consciously and without reacting automatically. Mindfulness is a psychological method that helps students in managing academic stress better. The pressure of university life often has an impact on mental health, such as anxiety and depression, which in turn can reduce academic productivity. Through breathing meditation and body scan exercises, students can increase awareness of their thoughts and feelings without being overwhelmed by pressure. Thus, they can face academic challenges more rationally and calmly. In addition, mindfulness also helps to create emotional distance from stress so that students do not react impulsively in the face of academic and personal life pressures.

In addition to mindfulness, the social environment also plays an important role in students' psychological well-being. The social environment includes interactions with family and friends; the academic environment can provide emotional support or be a pressure source. The influence of this environment is very significant and is characterized by the motivation, expectations, and level of social support students receive. A supportive environment can strengthen the effectiveness of mindfulness in managing stress, while a stressful environment can worsen one's psychological state.

²⁵ Akbar & Margaretha, 2024.

²⁶ Kamaluddin & Junaidin, 2024.

²⁷ Hidayat & Fourianalistyawati, 2017.

²⁸ M. Sihombing et al., 2024.

By understanding the role of mindfulness and the social environment, students can more easily adjust to academic pressure. Mindfulness helps reduce stress and encourages individuals to be more mindful in facing challenges without overreacting. With consistent practice and positive social support, students can achieve a balance between their academic and personal lives and take better care of their mental health.

V. EFFECTIVENESS OF MINDFULNESS TO REDUCE ACADEMIC STRESS

Various studies document the benefits of mindfulness in the context of higher education. A study²⁹ showed that university students who practiced mindfulness for several weeks significantly reduced academic and non-academic stress levels compared to controls who did not undergo mindfulness interventions. In this study, students reported an increased ability to cope with task and deadline stress, feel calm, and concentrate on academic pressures.

Furthermore³⁰ also showed similar results in students who participated in an 8-week mindfulness training program, which noted reduced stress, fear, and fatigue. In his research, Creswell explained that mindfulness helps students deal with stress more consciously and not react impulsively to better cope with academic pressure with more adaptive³¹ - challenges in its application among university students. One of the main challenges is consistent practice.³²

Mindfulness has significantly benefited university students in managing academic and non-academic stress. Based on various studies, students who regularly practice mindfulness show a greater stress reduction than those who do not undergo this intervention. A study revealed that mindfulness helps students deal with deadlines and academic pressure more calmly and improves concentration. Another study³³ supported these findings, showing that an eight-week mindfulness training program effectively reduced stress, fear, and fatigue.

Furthermore, Creswell, in a study cited by³⁴ explained that mindfulness allows students to deal with stress more consciously and not react impulsively. This makes them better able to manage academic pressure with more adaptive strategies. However, despite its clear benefits, the biggest challenge in implementing mindfulness is consistency in practice. As mentioned by³⁵, many college students struggle to maintain a practice routine due to busy academics and lack of motivation.

So, how effective is mindfulness for university students? If applied consistently, mindfulness can be a very effective tool in improving students'

²⁹ Candrawati et al., 2020.

³⁰ Romadlon, 2020.

³¹ Salwa Tadzkirotul Aula et al., 2024.

³² Zuo et al., 2023.

³³ Romadlon, 2020.

³⁴ Salwa Tadzkirotul Aula et al., 2024.

³⁵ Zuo et al., 2023.

mental resilience and psychological well-being. However, without continuous practice, the benefits may diminish. Therefore, support from educational institutions, such as structured training or integration of mindfulness in the curriculum, can help students more easily adopt this habit in their daily lives.

VI. MINDFULNESS AND STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Mindfulness habits reduce stress and improve psychological well-being.³⁶ The reviewed study found that college students who practiced mindfulness experienced lower levels of anxiety and depression compared to students who did not practice mindfulness. This is due to the ability to help college students let go of negative thought patterns, which often exacerbate stress, by becoming self-aware. Mindfulness helps college students be more present in the moment, reduce rumination, and become better equipped to deal with difficult situations.

In addition, this research has shown that students who regularly practice mindfulness tend to have greater self-compassion³⁷. Self-compassion, also known as self-compassion, is essential to helping students accept academic failures or difficulties well without feeling too much pressure. A study showed that students who practice mindfulness can handle academic challenges more emotionally and reduce stress levels.

According to,³⁸ student psychology studies individuals' psychological changes and development during their lives as students, including how they manage stress, emotions, and academic demands. Students are in the early adult stage of development, where they experience various challenges in adjusting to the academic and social environment.

Explained that university students are at an advanced stage of cognitive development, where they begin to think more abstractly, critically, and reflectively. In addition, the college experience helps them form their self-identity and determine their life goals.

Challenges in Mindfulness Implementation among College Students

Although many studies have shown the benefits of mindfulness, some studies have also highlighted challenges in its implementation among university students. One of the main challenges is consistent practice.³⁹ Most students who participated in mindfulness programs reported difficulties maintaining the practice amidst their busy academic schedules. Other studies also highlighted that the duration of the mindfulness program affects the results achieved. Mindfulness at STAB Negeri Raden Wijaya: Building Awareness, Calmness, and Balance in Academic Life

Mindfulness, or mindfulness, is a practice that aims to train the mind to focus on the present moment by accepting all experiences without judgment.

³⁶ Muzzamil et al., 2024.

³⁷ Istiqomah & Salma, 2020.

³⁸ Komaruddin et al., 2023.

³⁹ M. Sihombing et al., 2024.

In a stressful and demanding academic world, STAB Negeri Raden Wijaya is taking innovative steps by implementing various mindfulness methods to help students and academicians achieve emotional balance, improve focus, and reduce stress levels that often arise from academic routines. One of the main approaches implemented on campus is the Mindfulness Bell, a simple practice that profoundly impacts mindfulness and mental health.

VII. BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS BELL FOR STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

The Mindfulness Bell is implemented regularly every Monday to Friday at 08.00 WIB, 12.00 WIB, and 15.30 WIB. Students, lecturers, and academic staff are encouraged to stop their activities momentarily and become mindful when the bell rings.

Several steps must be followed in this practice. Stopping Activities While either in a sitting or standing position, individuals are asked to stop all forms of activity, be it reading, writing, talking, or using electronic devices. This cessation of activity aims to free the mind from constant academic pressure.

Listening to the Bell with Mindfulness. The sound of the bell is a tool to trigger awareness. Students and academicians are expected to hear and realize the sound of the bell without letting their minds drift into the past or the future. After stopping the activity and listening to the sound of the bell, individuals are directed to focus on their natural breathing. Awareness of each inhalation and exhalation can calm the mind, reduce tension, and improve emotional balance.

Participants may close their eyes entirely or lower their gaze about 45° downwards to aid concentration. This aims to reduce external distractions and increase self-awareness. After the bell rings for the third time, individuals can resume activities with a fresher, calmer, and more attentive mental state. This practice helps to increase productivity and reduce stress that may arise during work or study. The Mindfulness Bell is a daily ritual and a strategy that has various benefits for academicians' mental and emotional well-being. By taking a moment to stop and breathe mindfully, students can reduce the anxiety that often comes with academic pressures, assignments, and exams. This practice helps train the brain to focus more on one thing at a time, improving the quality of learning and understanding of course material.

By increasing awareness of thoughts and feelings, students can develop more mindful ways of responding to challenging situations or stressors in everyday life. A clearer and calmer mind allows individuals to work more effectively without being distracted by unnecessary anxiety or pressure. By being more aware of their own feelings, students can also improve the quality of their communication and relationships with others, including fellow students, lecturers, and academic staff.

According to⁴⁰, students who practice mindfulness can better face academic challenges with a healthier emotional approach, thus reducing excessive stress.

⁴⁰ Neff & Dahm, 2015.

Mindfulness also plays a role in increasing students' mental toughness. With mindfulness practice, individuals can develop the ability to remain calm and focused in the face of academic and social pressures⁴¹.

The impact of mindfulness practice on college students is significant. According to⁴², students who practice mindfulness can better face academic challenges with a healthier emotional approach to reduce excessive stress. In addition, mindfulness also plays a role in increasing mental toughness.⁴³ Added that by practicing mindfulness, students could develop the ability to remain calm and focused despite facing heavy academic and social pressures. Practicing mindfulness helps manage stress and strengthens the mentality to be better prepared to face all challenges in their academic and social life.

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⁴¹ Ghozali, 2023.

⁴² Neff & Dahm, 2015.

⁴³ Ghozali, 2023.

⁴⁴ Neff & Dahm, 2015.

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Besides implementing the Mindfulness Bell, STAB Negeri Raden Wijaya has also developed various other methods to promote mindfulness. Specific courses adopt mindfulness sessions at the beginning or end of class to help students focus and absorb the material better. The campus regularly organizes mindfulness training and seminars for students and lecturers to introduce basic meditation and mindfulness techniques. STAB Negeri Raden Wijaya provides a unique space for students to meditate, reflect, or simply calm their minds after a busy day. The campus also utilizes technology such as meditation apps and mindfulness guide recordings that students can use to practice independently.

Implementing Mindfulness Bell and other mindfulness initiatives at STAB Negeri Raden Wijaya is a strategic step in creating a healthier, more harmonious, and mindful academic environment. By getting used to pausing, listening, breathing, and resuming activities calmly, students and academic staff can experience positive changes in various aspects of life.

This practice provides short-term benefits in academic life and equips individuals with essential skills to face future challenges more thoughtfully, mindfully, and without excessive stress. By continuously developing mindfulness in every step of life, college students become more academically, mentally, and emotionally prosperous daily⁴⁸.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Students face various challenges in academic life, such as high academic demands, family expectations, suboptimal time management, and social pressure. These factors are often triggers for stress that can harm mental and physical health. If not handled properly, academic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, fatigue, and even decreased productivity. Therefore, the right strategies are needed so that students can manage their stress well, stay focused, and live a balanced academic life. One method that has proven effective in reducing stress is mindfulness. This practice helps students increase awareness of themselves and their surroundings to better understand and manage their emotions without acting impulsively. In addition, mindfulness contributes to a more positive mindset, making students less susceptible to academic pressure. Another benefit of mindfulness is its physiological effects, such as lowering hormone levels (cortisol), reducing muscle tension, and improving sleep quality.

Research shows that students who regularly practice mindfulness tend to experience reduced anxiety and depression compared to those who do not.

⁴⁷ Ghozali, 2023.

⁴⁸ Putri et al., 2024.

Mindfulness helps them overcome negative thought patterns and focus more on solving problems constructively. Thus, students can face various academic challenges more calmly and rationally.

From exploring various studies, it is clear that mindfulness has excellent potential to help STABN Raden Wijaya students overcome stress due to college. These studies agree that regular mindfulness practice can reduce stress, calm the mind, and help students focus on learning. One of the mindfulness methods implemented at STABN Raden Wijaya is mindfulness Bell, which invites students to pause from their activities several times a day to do self-reflection and breathing exercises. This practice helps students achieve mental stability and improve focus in completing academic tasks. In addition, educational institutions are also integrating mindfulness into various aspects of academic life through mindfulness training and the provision of dedicated meditation spaces.

Mindfulness also has a positive impact on students' social relationships. With increased self-awareness and empathy, students become more sensitive to the feelings of others, establishing more harmonious interpersonal relationships. In addition, mindfulness helps students accept academic failures more gracefully and reduces the pressure of excessive social expectations.

In addition to the psychological and social benefits, mindfulness improves students' academic performance. With consistent mindfulness practice, students can manage their time well, improve concentration in learning, and absorb information more effectively. Thus, they can face exams and academic assignments more confidently and calmly.

While mindfulness has proven beneficial, some obstacles still exist to its adoption among university students. One of the main challenges is the lack of consistency in practice. Many students struggle to maintain a regular mindfulness practice due to academic commitments. In addition, the lack of understanding about mindfulness hinders its effectiveness in managing stress. Therefore, further efforts are needed to raise awareness of the benefits of mindfulness and provide more structured programs in academic settings.

This study recommends that mindfulness be widely integrated with higher education curricula as part of stress management strategies. Educational institutions can provide regular mindfulness training and make it part of daily academic life. In addition, students are encouraged to apply mindfulness more broadly in their lives, not only in academic contexts but also in social interactions and personal well-being.

In addition to organising mindfulness training on campus, universities can also work with mental health professionals to guide students on managing stress more effectively. Seminars and workshops on mindfulness can be a strategic step to raise awareness of the importance of mental health among students.

But keep in mind that everyone is different. Some feel the benefits immediately, while others take longer. Factors such as how often to practice

and the character of each student also matter. So, further research is needed to find the best way to apply mindfulness to be truly effective for all students in various conditions.

In the future, this research could focus on how to tailor mindfulness programs to the specific needs of students, especially at STABN Raden Wijaya, which has distinctive religious values. For example, it can be done considering different cultural backgrounds or stress levels. In addition, it is also important to look at the long-term effects of mindfulness on students' mental health and overall well-being. With a deeper understanding, we can maximize the potential of mindfulness to create a campus environment that is more supportive and conducive to student development.

Mindfulness is an easy-to-implement and effective method for helping students deal with academic stress. By making it a habit to be more fully aware of present-moment experiences, students can reduce stress, improve their well-being, and achieve balance in their academic and personal lives. Therefore, applying mindfulness in the academic environment is highly recommended to improve student's quality of life and help them achieve their full academic potential.

With consistent mindfulness applications, students can also develop stress management skills that will benefit them during their university years and future lives. With full awareness of emotions, thoughts, and actions, students can become more resilient individuals better prepared to face life's challenges. Therefore, the development of mindfulness programs in academic settings should continue to be encouraged so that more students can feel the benefits in the future.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF MINDFULNESS TRAINING AS AN EFFORT TO REDUCE PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS IN GENERATION Z

Nanis Ajeng Setyowati*

Abstract:

Generation Z faces high stress due to academic, social media, and economic pressures. Mindfulness, the practice of *sati*, effectively reduces stress and improves mental well-being. Rooted in the traditions of Buddhism and Taoism, mindfulness is applied in therapies such as MBCT to help individuals be more flexible in dealing with stress. This research emphasizes the importance of mindfulness as a strategy to overcome stress and improve the quality of life of Generation Z. The method for writing this article is a literature study, namely the collection and analysis of relevant literature. The author reviews various trusted sources, such as journals, books, and news, to develop the framework of the article. This study reviews the effectiveness of mindfulness in reducing mental distress in Generation Z through empirical research, meta-analysis, and literature review. Mindfulness helps reduce stress and improve mental well-being. In Buddhism, *sati* is found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Research shows that mindfulness training benefits Generation Z by improving emotional regulation and suppressing repetitive thoughts. Buddhist teachings such as the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* and *Dhammapada* support these benefits. Generation Z faces stress from academic, social, and digital media. Mindfulness helps overcome stress by increasing full awareness and practicing understanding *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* so that individuals are wiser in accepting change and reducing inner suffering.

Keywords: *Generation Z, mindfulness training, stress psychology, Buddhism.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, faces various psychological issues in the fast-paced digital age. This generation's stress levels have increased due to academic pressure, social media exposure, and economic uncertainty.¹ Mindfulness, a meditation technique that focuses on mindful awareness of the present moment without judgment, is one of the increasingly popular approaches to addressing psychological stress. Mindfulness training effectively reduces stress, enhances emotional well-being, and improves focus and emotional regulation.² Mindfulness-based programs, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), have been applied in various contexts, including education and work environments, to help individuals better manage stress. These rapid and complex challenges often cause problems, including high levels of psychological stress. Psychological stress is an adverse mental health condition that affects a person emotionally and physically, either directly or indirectly. In Generation Z, high stress, excessive anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders are referred to as mental stress. This phenomenon is a serious concern as it can affect the next generation's quality of life and well-being.

Mindfulness practices that involve being fully aware of present-moment experiences without judgment are one of the proven effective approaches to managing stress. Mindfulness training has been shown to improve adolescents' self-acceptance, self-control, and ability to cope with stress caused by traumatic experiences, such as dating violence. Studies have also shown that mindfulness techniques can help students cope with academic pressure, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research by Prameswari and Yudiarso (2021) found that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy successfully reduced depression levels.³ This was demonstrated by a meta-analysis statistical test conducted on individual studies. An additional study by Aziz Afandi, Hera Wahyuni, and Yudiasari Adawiyah found that research subjects experienced lower stress reactions after mindfulness training; this suggests that mindfulness training can reduce the stress of college students who are victims of dating violence.⁴ Studies

¹ Williams, A. (2020). J. M. Twenge (2017). *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy, and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*. New York, NY: Atria. ISBN: 978-1-5011-5201-6 paperback. 342 pp. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 48(3), 290-293. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcsr.12345>.

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³ Prameswari, A., & Yudiarso, A. (2021). "Efektivitas Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy untuk Menurunkan Depresi: Meta-Analisis." *Psychoidea: Jurnal Psikologi*, 20(1), 45-58. <https://jurnalnasional.ump.ac.id/index.php/PSYCHOIDEA/article/view/9943>

⁴ Afandi, N. A., Wahyuni, H., & Adawiyah, A. Y. (2015). "Efektivitas pelatihan mindfulness terhadap penurunan stres korban kekerasan dalam pacaran (KDP)." *Jurnal Pamator*, 8 (2), 75 – 84.

indicate that conducting mindfulness training is a promising solution to reduce psychological stress in Generation Z. They can reduce negative thoughts that cause stress and anxiety by strengthening self-awareness and focusing on the present moment. In addition, people can learn to recognize and manage their emotions, improving overall mental well-being. This research will hopefully provide scientific evidence supporting that mindfulness practice is effective in reducing mental stress in Generation Z. These findings can serve as a basis for the creation of more specialized mental health interventions and programs for Generation Z. Therefore, this study has important implications in improving Generation Z's quality of life and mental well-being. Mindfulness counteracts the tendency to avoid painful thoughts and emotions and allows people to face actual experiences, even if they are unpleasant. At the same time, mindfulness prevents people from excessively absorbing and recognizing negative thoughts or feelings so that they are not trapped and swept away by aversive reactions.⁵

In cognitive psychology, there are two main modes of thinking: the 'doing' mode and the 'being' mode. The 'doing' mode, also known as the 'driven' mode, is goal-oriented and activates when the individual realizes a mismatch between the current and desired state. In contrast, the 'being' mode focuses more on acceptance, where individuals allow experiences to occur without the urge to change them immediately.⁶ One important aspect of cognitive regulation is metacognitive awareness, which recognizes negative thoughts and feelings as passing mental events rather than representations of the individual self. This awareness allows a person to be more flexible in dealing with emotional distress and reduces the risk of psychological disorders such as depression.⁷ Decentering is a form of metacognitive awareness that helps individuals view thoughts and feelings objectively without getting caught up in over-identifying their mental content.⁸

According to recent research, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) helps improve mental health. A meta-analysis study conducted

⁵ Neff, K., & Germer, C. (2018). *The mindful self-compassion workbook: A proven way to accept yourself, build inner strength, and thrive*. Guilford Press. The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook: A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build ... - Kristin Neff, Christopher Germer - Google Buku.

⁶ Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., & Teasdale, J. D. (2013). *Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression - Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, John Teasdale - Google Buku

⁷ Teasdale, J. D., Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., Ridgeway, V. A., Soulsby, J. M., & Lau, M. A. (2002). "Metacognitive awareness and prevention of relapse in depression: Empirical evidence". *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 70(2), p.275–287. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.70.2.275>.

⁸ Fresco, D. M., Moore, M. T., van Dulmen, M. H., Segal, Z. V., Ma, S. H., Teasdale, J. D., & Williams, J. M. G. (2007). "Initial psychometric properties of the Experiences Questionnaire: Validation of a self-report measure of decentering". *Behavior Therapy*, 38(3), p. 234–246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2006.08.003>.

by Cheng Jiang et al., 2022 showed that MBCT helps reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in adults.⁹ This intervention helps people make more adaptive emotion regulation by teaching them to concentrate and meditate. In addition, research on MBCT to reduce depression symptoms in adolescent victims of sexual abuse. Compiled by Yuswikarini found that MBCT might reduce symptoms of depression in adolescents who have experienced sexual abuse.¹⁰ This method helps adolescents overcome rumination and negative emotions as they become more aware of their current experiences. According to research conducted by Mustikasari et al coping strategies in adolescents reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression well.¹¹ These strategies can be applied to reduce the negative impact of anxiety and depression in adolescents and become a reference for health workers in dealing with adolescent mental health patients.

Methods

The method of writing this article is a literature study. According to Mirzaqon & Purwoko, a literature study is a collection of research actions that involve collecting literature sources, processing, reading, and analyzing literature relevant to the research subject or phenomenon.¹² The author investigates and collects relevant information from various sources, including journal articles, books, news, proceedings, and other reliable sources. The author then processed various information to create a basic framework for this conceptual article. Then, search and select articles relevant to the subject the author discusses. These articles include empirical studies, meta-analyses, and literature reviews that address how effective mindfulness practice is for reducing mental distress in Generation Z. In addition, the author analyzed the findings from mindfulness training.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Stress psychology

In psychology, stress is defined as a perceived threat that causes anxiety, discomfort, emotional tension, and adjustment difficulties - Kupriyanov et al divided stress into eustress and distress. Distress is a negative cognitive

⁹ Tseng, H.-W., Chou, F.-H., Chen, C.-H., & Chang, Y.-P. (2023). "Effects of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on major depressive disorder with multiple episodes: A systematic review and meta-analysis". *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(2), 1555. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20021555>.

¹⁰ Yuswikarini, S. E. (2024). *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy untuk menurunkan gejala depresi pada remaja korban pelecehan seksual* (Master's thesis, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang). Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang Repository. <https://eprints.umm.ac.id/id/eprint/12896/>

¹¹ Mustikasari, M., & Yoduke, F., & Daulima, N. H. C. (2023). "Strategi coping pada remaja dalam menurunkan gejala kecemasan dan depresi." *Alauddin Scientific Journal of Nursing*, 4 (1), p. 16 – 24.

¹² Mirzaqon, B., & Purwoko, T. A. (2018). "Studi kepustakaan mengenai landasan teori dan praktik konseling." *Expressive Writing Jurnal BK Unesa*, 8 (1), p. 1 – 8.

response that is unhealthy and harmful because it causes negative feelings.¹³ At the same time, eustress is a positive response to circumstances that can change because they become stressors. Stress is a significant imbalance between a person's physical or mental demands and the ability to respond, which occurs when a person cannot meet these demands Rishon et al.¹⁴ Edward et al stress is a condition caused by a mismatch between a desired state and a person's biological, psychological, or social system. Stress is a feeling that a person experiences because of the difference between a person's abilities and the needs of his environment.¹⁵ According to Glynis et al. Byrne, stress is a physical or psychological event perceived as threatening to physical or emotional health. Symptoms of stress can be put into various categories: physical, such as headaches, high blood pressure, palpitations, insomnia, stomach pain, fatigue, cold sweats, lack of appetite, urination, and lack of appetite, such as unfocused, indecisive, anger, depression, rigid thinking, lack of humor, and irritability, behavioral such as difficulty sleeping, changes in food cravings, social withdrawal, and loss of self-control.¹⁶ People who experience intolerance to uncertainty tend to react negatively to ambiguous or uncertain situations, which can lead to anxiety and psychological stress. A study by Rini et al found that intolerance to uncertainty increases student anxiety.¹⁷ Social Support: Lack of social support can increase stress levels and decrease one's ability to deal with life's pressures. Feeling support from family, friends, and other social environments helps a person feel more able to cope with adversity and reduce the negative impact of stress on mental health. Research by Damanik Nurhayati found a negative correlation between social support and employee work stress. The more social support is received the less work stress employees experience.¹⁸ The emotional distress that a person experiences and is characterized by symptoms of anxiety and depression is known as psychological stress.¹⁹ According to Caron and Liu, psychological

¹³ Kupriyanov, R. V., et al. (2014). "The eustress concept: Problems and outlooks." *World Journal of Medical Sciences*, 11(2), p. 179–185. <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.wjms.2014.11.2.8433>

¹⁴ Kariv, D., & Heiman, T. (2005). "Stressors, stress, and coping in dual-demand environments: The case of working back to schoolers." *Adult and Continuing Education*, 11 (1).

¹⁵ Sarafino, E. P., & Graham, J. A. (2006). "Development and psychometric evaluation of an instrument to assess reinforcer preferences: The Preferred Items and Experiences Questionnaire." *Sage Journal*, 30 (6).

¹⁶ Byrne, G., et al. (2017). "Prevalence of anxiety and depression in patients with inflammatory bowel disease." *Canadian Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology*.

¹⁷ Sulastri, R. L. S., Teraika, & Purwandari, E. (2021). *Intoleransi ketidakpastian, ruminasi, welas diri, dan kecemasan pada mahasiswa* (Master's thesis). Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.

¹⁸ Nurhayati, D. (2024). *Hubungan antara dukungan sosial dengan stres kerja pada pegawai di Dinas Ketahanan Pangan, Tanaman Pangan dan Hortikultura Medan*. Digital Repository Universitas Medan Area.

¹⁹ Ross, C. E., & Mirowsky, J. (2006). "Social structure and psychological functioning." *Handbook of Social Psychology*, p. 411 – 447. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36921-x_17.

stress is a harmful condition that can affect a person's health directly or indirectly, both physically and mentally.²⁰ The emotional stress response is temporary. It will inevitably impact one's mental well-being and health as well. Some signs of psychological stress include feelings of inability to handle effectively, changing emotional states, discomfort, communicating discomfort, and danger. According to Sheila Ridner in more detail, the explanation of the five components of psychological distress is as follows:²¹ The inability to solve problems effectively is that people who cannot adapt cannot cope effectively with stress. A person's perception of their ability is based on what they consider the problem cannot be solved. The individual believes he cannot overcome his problems, so he remains unpleasant. When a person believes that treatment is possible, then the problem can be solved, and the problem can be overcome. Emotional Change is when an individual experiences mental stress; changes in the state make stable basic emotions, anxiety, depression, lowered, and aggressive. People who experience various negative emotions experience unstable emotions, which affect the mood of those involved in the activity. Feelings of discomfort, i.e., sadness and various other feelings, are described as mental discomfort. Difficulties. Many things interfere with that, causing feelings of discomfort. A person's emotional comfort can change when experiencing Communication that causes discomfort. Changes can cause people to communicate their feelings of discomfort - emotions that are associated with psychological stress. Individuals perceive difficulty in making it uncomfortable to communicate with others to express feelings. Harmful, i.e. psychological stress is harmful to the person experiencing it as it is constantly painful. Individuals experiencing mental stress will affect their lives, for example, in their social relationships and self-esteem.

2.2. The psychological effects that commonly accompany psychological distress include

(1) Physical Health: Psychological stress may increase the risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. Prolonged stress can also cause physical symptoms such as headaches, muscle pain, and digestive problems.²² Stress can also weaken the immune system, increasing the chances of infection.²³ (2) Mental Health: Stress is a significant cause of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Ross and

²⁰ Caron, J., & Liu, A. (2010). "A descriptive study of the prevalence of psychological distress and mental disorders in the Canadian population: Comparison between low-income and non-low-income populations." *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, 30 (3), p. 84 – 94. <https://doi.org/10.24095/hpcdp.30.3.03>.

²¹ Ridner, S. H. (2004). "Psychological distress: Concept analysis." *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 45(5), p. 536 – 545.

²² . Gadzella, B., et al. (2012). "Evaluation of the Student Life-Stress Inventory-Revised." *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 39 (2), p. 82. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net>.

²³ Musabiq, S., & Karimah, I. (2018). "Gambaran stress dan dampaknya pada mahasiswa." *Insight: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi*, 20 (2), p. 74. <https://doi.org/10.26486/psikologi.v20i2.240>.

Mirowsky state that psychological stress can worsen a person's mental state as anxiety and depression often co-occur.²⁴ (3) Cognitive Function: Stress can impair cognitive functions such as memory, concentration, decision-making, and more. Research shows that people who experience psychological distress tend to be less productive at work or school.²⁵ (4) Emotional Well-Being High-stress levels often lead to emotional symptoms such as irritability, frustration, and feeling overwhelmed.²⁶ These conditions can also cause pain or emotional exhaustion. (5) Behavioral Changes Psychological distress can lead to behavioral changes, such as the use of drugs or alcohol, as well as changes in sleep and eating patterns. This is in line with research conducted by Musabiq and Karimah, which shows that people may refuse to participate in social interactions.²⁷ (6) Relationships: Stress can make personal and professional relationships less effective. Research conducted by Epi Kurniasari, et al shows that increased conflict and poor Communication can interfere with healthy and supportive relationships.²⁸ (7) Work Performance Stress can reduce workers' focus and engagement, reducing overall productivity.²⁹

III. MINDFULNESS TRAINING

Mindfulness is essentially paying attention with openness, curiosity, and flexibility, which is the basic definition of self-awareness.³⁰ Mindfulness involves a gradual and balanced awareness of experience; in other words, remaining open to the present reality and allowing all thoughts, emotions, and sensations to enter consciousness without being blocked or obstructed.³¹ Moreover, according to a recent meta-analysis, mindfulness can reduce anxiety, depression, and stress in children and adolescents. The opposite of mindfulness is mindlessness. This is when one's attention wanders and leads one into a daydream. One's consciousness significantly decreases in mindlessness, where

²⁴ Ross, C. E., & Mirowsky, J. (2006). "Social structure and psychological functioning." In *Handbook of Social Psychology*, p. 411 – 447.

²⁵ Kessler, R. C. (2002). "Short screening scales to monitor population prevalences and trends in non-specific psychological distress." *Cambridge University Press*, 32 (6), 959 – 976.

²⁶ Gadzella, B., et al. (2012). "Evaluation of the Student Life-Stress Inventory-Revised." *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 39 (2), 82. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net>.

²⁷ Musabiq, S., & Karimah, I. (2018). "Gambaran stress dan dampaknya pada mahasiswa." *Insight: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi*, 20 (2), 74. <https://doi.org/10.26486/psikologi.v20i2.240>.

²⁸ Kurniasari, E., Rusmana, N., & Budiman, N. (2019). "Gambaran umum kesejahteraan psikologis mahasiswa Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia." *Journal of Innovative Counseling: Theory, Practice & Research*, 3(2), 52–58. Retrieved from http://journal.umas.ac.id/index.php/innovative_counseling.

²⁹ Gadzella, B., et al. (2012). "Evaluation of the Student Life-Stress Inventory-Revised." *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 39(2), 82. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net>.

³⁰ Kashdan, J. V., & Ciarrochi, T. B. (2013). *Mindfulness, acceptance, and positive psychology*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=cFtS1FIILKcC>.

³¹ Germer, C., & Neff, K. (2018). *The mindful self-compassion workbook*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=n3kSDwAAQBAJ>.

one reacts automatically without paying attention to what is happening.³² The phenomenon of autopilot, where people automatically deal with various problems in their lives without realizing or appreciating them, is known as mindlessness.³³ Mindfulness helps people break out of automatic patterns of behavior, consciously responding in more productive ways than reacting without thinking. Mindfulness utilizing awareness is more than just using thoughts to avoid difficult circumstances.³⁴ Mindfulness varies from individual to individual and can develop with practice to manage feelings. According to Wanjaree et al, applying mindfulness in Communication allows individuals to express their thoughts.³⁵ It is needed through good Communication or expression, which can help eliminate awkwardness or problems that cause stress in relationships. Mindfulness-based acceptance therapies, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), seek to address issues of anxiety and depression by helping people become more focused, calmer, and more accepting of themselves. ACT helps people accept one's emotional state while building a commitment to actions that align with life values. Research shows that it reduces anxiety and depression by increasing psychological flexibility and the ability to adjust to difficult situations.

3.1. Ruth Baer says mindfulness consists of five aspects

Firstly, observing: Individuals feel what is happening around them, such as feelings and emotions, and are aware of experiences from within and outside themselves. Describing: the individual's ability to explain the perceived experience.

Secondly, acting with awareness: the individual's ability to maintain focus on some perceived experiences. Thirdly, non-judging of Inner Experience: One's ability to accept the thoughts and feelings that one experiences. Lastly, non-reacting to Inner Experience: One's ability to release the thoughts and feelings one experience without lingering.³⁶

3.2. Elisha Goldstein divides mindfulness meditation into two categories

Formal and informal. The formal category involves doing meditation in a seated position. This type of formal meditation can be done in the following ways: Firstly, mindfulness of breathing: When breathing in and out, one sees

³² Langer, E. J. (2016). *The power of mindful learning*. & Lopez, S. J. (2009). *The encyclopedia of positive psychology*, p. 34..

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Marotta, J. (2013). *50 mindful steps to self-esteem: Everyday practices for cultivating self-acceptance and self-compassion*. New Harbinger. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.id/books?hl=id&lr=&id=uTzXAQAAQBAJ>.

³⁵ Maneesang, W. A., Hengpraprom, S. A., & Kalayasiri, R. (2022). "Effectiveness of mindfulness-based therapy and counseling programs (MBTC) on relapses to methamphetamine dependence at a substance dependency treatment center." *Psychiatry Research*, 317.

³⁶ Baer, R. (2019). "Assessment of mindfulness by self-report." *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 28, p. 42 – 48.

the quality of breathing. It becomes easier to understand how life changes everything. Secondly, mindfulness of sensation. After doing the breathing exercise a few times, people will become more aware of physical sensations and focus on sensory sensations by identifying each sensation that arises and disappears. Thirdly, mindfulness of hearing. Listening to the sounds that appear and disappear can help you focus on hearing. Try not to judge any sound. Lastly, mindfulness of thoughts and emotions. Once one focuses on the sound, the object of meditation will change to mental events, i.e. thoughts and emotions. Focusing on sound refers to one's ability to observe and feel thoughts and feelings arising, developing, and disappearing; one only sees them as mental forms that arise and disappear, and there is no need to study them. Choiceless awareness, or awareness of the present moment, is mindfulness meditation's last and most common component. The present moment is the main focus of this practice. Choiceless awareness instructs people to become fully aware of whatever arises in the present moment and has no end. Individuals notice anything from their body and mind, such as sensations, sounds, or other sensory phenomena, or mental events, such as thoughts and emotions.³⁷

Mindfulness training has several methods, one of which is: (1) Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT): One type of intervention that can be used to reduce depression levels is mindfulness-based cognitive therapy.³⁸ The benefit of this therapy is that it minimizes symptoms of anxiety and depression and can be a reference for health professionals to provide non-pharmacological therapy to patients experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety. A meditation program that combines mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy (MBCT) and mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy.³⁹ MBCT therapy teaches patients to scrutinize their thoughts and helps them become more aware of their daily lives.⁴⁰ Because MBCT therapy combines cognitive therapy with meditation, it can help people with anxiety and anti-periodic depression. During treatment, the MBCT technique, a self-awareness-based cognitive therapy, has been shown to lower patients' depression. Cladder-Micus.⁴¹ Mindfulness-based therapy (MBCT) has also been shown to be

³⁷ Goldstein, E., & Stahl, B. (2010). *A mindfulness-based stress reduction workbook (A New Harbinger self-help workbook)*. New Harbinger Publications. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=XHinDwAAQBAJ>.

³⁸ Prameswari, A., & Yudianto, A. (2021). "Efektivitas Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy untuk menurunkan depresi: Meta-analisis." *Psycho Idea*, 19(2), 151. <https://doi.org/10.30595/psychoidea.v19i2.9943>.

³⁹ Leni, A. M. M., Dwidianti, M., & Fitrikasari. (2023). "Efektivitas Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) untuk mengurangi gangguan kecemasan dan depresi pada orang dewasa." *Journal of Telenursing (JOTING)*, 5 (1), p. 471 – 480.

⁴⁰ Wuryansari, R., & Subandi, S. (2019). "Program Mindfulness for Prisoners (Mindfulness) untuk menurunkan depresi pada narapidana." *Gadjah Mada Journal of Professional Psychology (GamaJPP)*, 5 (2), p. 196. <https://doi.org/10.22146/gamajpp.50626>.

⁴¹ Nugroho, A. R. B. P. (2022). "Komunikasi terapeutik dalam pendekatan Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) di rumah sakit." *International Conference on Islamic Guidance*

effective in increasing empathy and reducing levels of anxiety and psychological distress among university students. (2) Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a meditation approach to lower stress levels.⁴² Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction can also assist adolescents in coping with negative situations and build resilience and toughness to deal with undesirable situations. For centuries, MBSR has been a contemplative tradition practice for therapy. Studies have shown that its therapeutic properties benefit psychology.⁴³ The MBSR approach with therapeutic Communication aims to achieve physical and mental relaxation. Nugroho said that self-awareness means focusing on what is present in the present moment with full awareness without considering the relevance, reason, or impact of the experience.⁴⁴ The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) approach teaches patients to notice and relate to thoughts and emotions differently, with compassion for self and others as the foundation of this endeavor.⁴⁵ This approach can also offer effective therapeutic communication techniques to reduce the stress experienced by patients. In addition, the MBSR approach in therapeutic communication practice can track the patient's emotional state from a professional point of view. In particular, tracking these emotional states can enable spiritual directors to anticipate various mental disorders that patients may experience during hospitalization.

In Buddhism, mindfulness is known as *sati* (Pāli) or *smṛti* (Sanskrit), meaning mindfulness or pure attention. *Dhammapada*, Chapter II: *Appamāda Vagga*, verse 24 reads: "If a person is energetic, mindful, pure in his thought, word, and deed, and if he does everything with care and consideration, restrains his senses, earns his living according to the law (*dhamma*), and is not unheedful, then the fame and fortune of that mindful person steadily increase."⁴⁶ The practice of maintaining mindfulness helps avoid wrong actions. It enables a person to distinguish between right and wrong actions. A person with good mindfulness can make careful considerations before making decisions. Mindfulness helps prevent regret over past actions. Mindfulness is a practice that enhances focus on what one is doing, feeling, and thinking.

and Counseling, 2 (1), p. 341 – 359. <https://vicon.uin-suka.ac.id/index.php/icigc/article/view/681>.

⁴² Hidayati, N. (2019). "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) untuk resilience remaja yang mengalami bullying." *Proceeding National Conference Psikologi UMG 2018*, 1 (1), p. 40 – 49. <https://journal.umg.ac.id/index.php/proceeding/article/view/895>.

⁴³ Nugroho, A. R. B. P., & Halwati, U. (2022). "Konseling dan Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT): Treatment bagi pasien kanker." *Assertive: Islamic Counseling Journal*, 1 (1), p. 26 – 45. <https://doi.org/10.24090/j.assertive.v1i1.6985>.

⁴⁴ Nugroho, A. R. B. P. (2022). "Komunikasi terapeutik dalam pendekatan Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) di rumah sakit." *International Conference on Islamic Guidance and Counseling*, 2 (1).

⁴⁵ Ghawadra, S. F., et al. (2019). "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for psychological distress among nurses: A systematic review." *Clinical Nursing*, 28 (21 – 22), p. 3747 – 3758.

⁴⁶ D. II. 24. "*Uṭṭhānavato satimato, sucikamassa nisammakārino. Saññatassa ca dhammajīvino, appamattassa yaso 'bhivaḍḍhati' ti.*"

Sati refers to attention and is closely related to mindful awareness. In the practice of mindfulness, one should contemplate or focus mindfulness on four things: the body (*kāyānupassanā*), feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), consciousness (*cittānupassanā*), and mental phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*), as mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. One way to apply mindfulness in daily life is through the practice of meditation. There is nothing to be proud of, as everything is temporary and constantly changing. Change can sometimes bring fear and anxiety. However, for the wise, change is the path to perfection. Being aware of change can bring about tranquility, which leads to happiness. By practicing mindfulness, one can realize the meaning of life and thereby increase happiness. Some *suttas* outline several meditation techniques for training the mind, such as mindfulness of the body,⁴⁷ mindfulness of breathing,⁴⁸ and meditation on loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, and contemplation of death.⁴⁹ In addition, there is the remembrance meditation on the Buddha, *dhamma*, *saṅgha*, moral action, generosity, and *devas*.⁵⁰ There is also meditation on death, the body, and peace. Perceiving the *kaṣiṇas* - earth, water, fire, air, blue, yellow, red, white, space, and consciousness - constitutes the ten *kaṣiṇa* meditations. One should look up, down, and all around, limitlessly and without differentiation.⁵¹ The following meditation, concerned with the elimination of mental impurities, has four foundations of mindfulness: contemplating the body as body, contemplating feelings as feelings, contemplating thoughts as thoughts, and contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, with clear and mindful awareness.⁵² There are four positions for meditation. Walking, standing, sitting, and lying should all be done consciously - knowledge of different body positions during meditation.⁵³ Walking is one way to increase physical and mental strength. According to the *Caṅkama Sutta*, walking meditation has five advantages: the ability to travel, the ability to make an effort, good health, the ability to digest food and drink well, and the ability to maintain concentration.⁵⁴ Before *Gotama Buddha*, meditation was already widely practiced. Under the guidance of *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*, *Gotama Buddha* achieved mastery over all yogic techniques and attained the same level of concentration as his teachers.⁵⁵ The cultivation of tranquillity meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) are the two types of *samādhi* or mental development practices.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ D. I. 43 - 6.

⁴⁸ D. III. 120 & A. I. 30.

⁴⁹ D. III. 304 - 8.

⁵⁰ A. I. 30.

⁵¹ A. V. 46 - 7.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ D. II. 292.

⁵⁴ A. III. 29 - 30.

⁵⁵ M. I. 163 - 6.

⁵⁶ D. III. 273.

Samatha Bhāvanā: A meditation technique in which one focuses the mind to achieve inner calm. This method of meditation existed long before Gotama Buddha. Practical Application: It is used to support meditation and help achieve insight (*vipassanā bhāvanā*), as well as provide a quiet dwelling for the mind (*ditṭhadhammasukha-vihāra*) or a tranquil abiding (*santa-vihāra*).⁵⁷ *Samatha* meditation aims to cultivate the ability to access *jhāna*, which serves as a prerequisite for developing *vipassanā*. This process is undertaken to achieve inner calm and make the mind more radiant.⁵⁸ The *Visuddhimagga* states that there are 40 types of meditation objects in *samatha bhāvanā*, which are divided into seven categories:⁵⁹ Ten *kasiṇas* (*kasiṇa*) - earth, water, fire, air, blue, yellow, red, white, light, and limited space; Ten types of foulness (*asubha*) - swollen, bluish-bruised, festering, split, lacerated, wounded, and bloodstained corpses; Ten recollections (*anussati*) - contemplation of the noble qualities of the Buddha, *dhamma*, *saṅgha*, deities (*devas*), morality, generosity, peaceful *nibbāna*, death, bodily impurities, and breathing; Four divine abodes (*appamaññā*) - loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*); Four formless meditations (*arūpa*) - the base of infinite space (beyond *kasiṇa*), the base of infinite consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; One contemplation on the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*); One analysis of the four great elements (*catudhātuvavatthāna*) - earth (solidity), water (cohesion), fire (temperature), and air (movement).⁶⁰ Meditators only need to choose the meditation object most suitable for them; they do not need to master all forty objects of meditation.

Vipassanā Bhāvanā: A meditation practice aimed at gaining insight and a deeper understanding of the nature of existence, characterized by *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (non-self). Practitioners undertaking this practice should develop a clear understanding of these characteristics and firmly grasp them. The purpose of *vipassanā bhāvanā* is to eliminate mental suffering and internal impurities, including greed, desire, attachment, aversion, indifference, arrogance, and avarice.⁶¹ According to the *Mahāsatiipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the subjects of meditation in *vipassanā bhāvanā* are as

⁵⁷ Bramantyo, H. (2015). Meditasi Buddhis: Sarana untuk mencapai kedamaian dan pencerahan batin. *Jurnal Orientasi Baru*, 24 (1).

⁵⁸ Analayo, B. (2012). *Satipaṭṭhāna: Jalan langsung ke tujuan*. (trans.). Tim Potowa Center. Jakarta: Yayasan Karaniya, p. 28.

⁵⁹ Buddhaghosa, B. (2010). *The path of purification: Visuddhimagga* (trans.). Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.id/books?id=ET_8DwAAQBAJ.

⁶⁰ Fendy, F., et al. (2023). "Memahami konsep meditasi dalam kajian *Sutta-Sutta* dalam Sutta-piṭaka." *PATISAMBHIDA: Jurnal Pemikiran Buddha dan Filsafat Agama*, 4 (2), p. 84 – 96. <https://doi.org/10.53565/patisambhida.v4i2.1040>.

⁶¹ Harianto, A., Poniman, P., & Ismoyo, T. (2022). "Apa itu Vipassana Bhavana?" *Jurnal Agama Buddha dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*, 8 (1), p. 12 – 17. <https://doi.org/10.53565/abip.v8i1.479>.

follows: (1) Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*): observation of the breath (*ānāpānasati*); observation of bodily postures (*iriyāpatha*); attention and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*); observation of the physical body (*kāyagatāsati*); contemplation of the four elements (*catudhātu-vavatthāna*); contemplation of the process of bodily decay. (2) Contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*): Observing feelings as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. (3) Contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*): Observing the nature of the mind, including mental states such as desire, aversion, distraction, concentration, and equanimity. (4) Contemplation of *dhamma* (*dhammānupassanā*): Awareness of the arising, passing, and cessation of the five mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*); Observation of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*); Observation of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*); Awareness of sense desires (*kāmacchanda*); Contemplation of the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅga*); Contemplation of the four noble truths (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*); Reflection on dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), which consists of twelve links. Practitioners of *vīpaśsanā bhāvanā* may choose one of the four contemplations as a starting point according to their disposition or inclination.

III. MINDFULNESS TRAINING FOR GENERATION Z TO REDUCE PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

One of the ways that can be done to reduce psychological stress is mindfulness training. According to research conducted on students,⁶² mindfulness training can help reduce psychological stress through three mediators: emotion regulation, nonattachment, and rumination.⁶³ Mindfulness practice can help students reduce stress levels, which can help maintain mental health during academic activities. According to Beddoe et al, mindfulness training is a meditation method that combines affective, cognitive, moral, intrapersonal, and interpersonal aspects.⁶⁴ Baer found a positive relationship between mindfulness meditation and the treatment of various types of psychological disorders.⁶⁵ Kabbat-Zinn reinforces Baer's opinion, saying that self-awareness meditation practice aims to increase the ability to stay engaged in current events without giving excessive judgment. Practical self-awareness training can increase a person's ability to adapt well to problems. Research shows that this practice helps people cope with mood disorders, increases mindfulness,

⁶² Coffey, K. A., & Hartman, M. (2008). And psychological distress. (*Publication details incomplete - please verify year, journal, volume, issue, and page numbers for proper citation formatting.*) no. 2003, p. 79 – 91.

⁶³ Komariah, M., et al. (2023). "Effect of mindfulness breathing meditation on depression, anxiety, and stress: A randomized controlled trial among university students." *Healthcare (Switzerland)*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11010026>

⁶⁴ Beddoe, R. N. E., & Murphy, S. O. (2004). "Does mindfulness decrease stress and foster empathy among nursing students?" *Nursing Education*, 43 (7), p. 305 – 312.

⁶⁵ Stanley, S., et al. (2007). "Mindfulness: A primrose path for therapists using manualized treatments?" *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 20 (3), p. 327 – 335. <https://doi.org/10.1891/088983906780643957>

happiness, and physical health, and decreases stress.⁶⁶ Seth Robert notes the benefits of mindfulness in the field of psychology, including expanding the area of awareness, increasing the noticing of the body, and the experience of feelings. As such, mindfulness can enhance the ability to control awareness, feelings, and behavior.⁶⁷ Self-monitoring and the release of automatic thoughts, which cause pathological structures, are enhanced through mindfulness. The practice of self-awareness meditation also helps to develop the inner resources of human beings to stabilize feelings and reduce carelessness. There are three significant ways in which mindfulness can play a role in overcoming physical and psychological symptoms, among others:⁶⁸ (1) Intention is related to the importance of setting goals in meditation. Kabat-Zinn said that setting goals (goals) makes something possible to achieve and reminds a person of his intention in doing meditation. For example, if someone has a goal to be able to manage themselves, then they will be able to manage themselves. (2) Attention, which is the observation of present events and internal and external psychological experiences, is significant for healing. (3) Attitude is related to mindfulness, which means less evaluation and judgment, more acceptance, kindness, and openness to whatever one does not want. Here are the steps of mindfulness training that can be done: (1) Self-Talk, at this stage, one begins an internal conversation with oneself, consciously or unconsciously. Self-talk can be positive (increasing motivation and confidence) or negative (causing anxiety and lowering performance).⁶⁹ (2) Visual Imagery, you will perform a mental technique where one imagines a particular situation, action, or outcome in vivid detail. This technique is often used in sports, meditation, and psychological therapy to improve performance or reduce stress.⁷⁰ (3) Deep Breathing, this method teaches you to perform a relaxation technique in which a person consciously regulates his or her breathing to slow the heart rate, calm the nervous system, and reduce stress. This technique is often used in yoga, meditation, and psychological therapy.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Keng, S. L., et al. (2011). "Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies." *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31(6), p. 1041–1056. & Creswell, J. D. (2017). "Mindfulness interventions." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68, p. 491 – 516. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-042716-051139>

⁶⁷ Segall, S. R. (2005). "Mindfulness and self-development in psychotherapy." *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 37(2), p. 143 – 163.

⁶⁸ Shapiro, S. L. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Clinical Psychology*, 62 (3), p. 373 – 386.

⁶⁹ Hardy, J. (2006). "Speaking clearly: A critical review of the self-talk literature." *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 7 (1), p. 81 – 97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2005.04.002>

⁷⁰..... Weibull, F., Cumming, J., Williams, S. E., Ooley, S. J., & Newell, E. (2013). "Seeing the difference: Developing effective imagery scripts for athletes." *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 4 (2), p. 109 – 121.

⁷¹ Jerath, R., et al. (2006). "Physiology of long pranayamic breathing: Neural respiratory elements may provide a mechanism that explains how slow deep breathing shifts the autonomic nervous system." *Medical Hypotheses*, 67 (3), p. 566 – 571.

Practical Steps for Cultivating Mindfulness: (1) Breathing Meditation (*Ānāpānasati*) 5 – 10 Minutes a Day. Sit comfortably with your back straight but relaxed. Close your eyes and focus on the natural rhythm of your breath. Feel the air entering through your nose and exhale slowly. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to the breath without judgment. Practice this for 5 – 10 minutes daily. (2) Body Scan - Noticing Body Tension (5 – 10 Minutes): Find a comfortable and quiet place. Lie on your back or sit cross-legged. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing, noticing how the air fills and leaves your lungs. Bring your attention to different parts of your body, starting from the top of your head. As you focus on each area, take deep, slow breaths. Observe any sensations such as pain, tension, or discomfort without criticism or resistance - simply acknowledge them with acceptance. (3) *Mettā* (Loving-Kindness) Meditation - Reducing Overthinking and Conflict: Begin by generating feelings of loving-kindness toward yourself. Recall a time when you were happy and allow that warmth to arise. Once you feel this warmth, silently wish yourself well: “May I be happy. May my mind be calm and peaceful. May I experience joy? May I be free from suffering?” Truly feel these wishes in your heart. Once you have cultivated loving-kindness for yourself, extend it outward to others - family, friends, and eventually all beings. (4) Mindful Walking - Walking with Awareness: Before you begin walking, take a deep breath and do a quick body scan. Notice your physical and mental state, mood, and thoughts without judgment. As you walk, maintain a steady pace and focus on one sensory experience at a time. For example, first, observe the sensations in your feet touching the ground, then shift your awareness to the warmth of sunlight on your skin, the sounds of nature, or the movement of the breeze. After walking, take a moment to focus on your breath and conduct a brief body scan. (5) Mindful Journaling - Writing to Release Emotions: Write freely without restrictions, allowing your thoughts and emotions to flow. Focus on your current feelings and use reflective questions to deepen your self-awareness. Conclude your journaling session by expressing gratitude. (6) Digital Detox - Reducing Stress from social media: Set designated gadget-free periods, such as one hour before bedtime. Use ‘Do Not Disturb’ mode to minimize distractions. Replace social media scrolling with mindful activities such as reading or meditation. If a full detox feels challenging, start with 10–15 minutes a day and gradually increase the duration.

The teachings found in various Buddhist suttas provide valuable guidance for teenagers struggling with stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges. The *Ānāpānasati Sutta* introduces breath awareness meditation, which helps calm the mind and improve focus, making it particularly effective for reducing overthinking.⁷² The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* emphasizes mindfulness of the body, feelings, and thoughts, equipping teens with tools to navigate academic and social pressures wisely.⁷³ Similarly, the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* encourages loving-kindness

⁷² MN 118.

⁷³ MN 10 & DN 22.

meditation, fostering positive relationships, and alleviating feelings of loneliness.⁷⁴ The *Vedhavitakka Sutta* teaches how to replace negative thoughts with wholesome ones, promoting emotional resilience.⁷⁵ The *Dhammapada* offers further wisdom, such as the importance of mindfulness,⁷⁶ taming the mind for inner peace,⁷⁷ and cultivating patience.⁷⁸ Additionally, *Paritta chants* like the *Ratana Sutta* protect from anxiety, while the *Metta Sutta* and *Bojjhanga Sutta* help reduce stress and promote healing. Together, these teachings offer a holistic approach to mental well-being, guiding Gen Z toward inner peace and emotional strength.

IV. CONCLUSION

In psychology, stress is defined as a response to a perceived threat that induces anxiety and tension. There are two types of stress: distress (negative stress) and eustress (positive stress). Stress arises when there is an imbalance between external demands and an individual's capacity to cope. Psychological stress can contribute to anxiety, depression, and both physical and mental health issues. The impact of stress includes physical symptoms (headaches, indigestion), emotional (frustration, overwhelm), behavioral changes (substance use, sleep disturbances), and decreased work productivity. Mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), are effective in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, particularly in Generation Z. Mindfulness techniques enable individuals to cultivate present-moment awareness, enhance psychological flexibility, and develop healthier responses to stress. Meditation (*bhāvanā*), especially *vipassanā* meditation, fosters awareness of thoughts and emotions without attachment, thereby reducing stress. Various *suttas*, such as the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta*, emphasize the importance of mindfulness, breathing meditation, and loving-kindness (*mettā*) in managing stress, anxiety, and negative emotions. These teachings provide practical guidance for teenagers facing academic, social, and emotional pressures. Additionally, verses from the *Dhammapada* highlight the significance of discipline, mind control, patience, and virtue in attaining happiness and inner peace. Reciting parts such as the *Ratana Sutta*, *Mettā Sutta*, and *Bojjhanga Sutta* can serve as a source of mental protection and resilience. These Buddhist teachings offer a holistic and practical approach for Generation Z to navigate life's challenges with greater wisdom and serenity.

⁷⁴ SN 1.8.

⁷⁵ MN 19.

⁷⁶ *Dhp* 25.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 35.

⁷⁸ *Ibid* 184.

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MINDFULNESS IN TREATING ACADEMIC STRESS AT HIGHER EDUCATION

Nurull Fatimah*

Abstract:

Higher education is the highest level; it helps individuals reach their desired potential, trains them to think critically, and increases career opportunities. Although the world of education is developing rapidly, it cannot be denied that there are challenges in the world of education, especially for students with academic demands; this can cause stress, health problems, and even mental distress. Therefore, mindfulness practices can help reduce stress in students. The practice of mindfulness itself is adapted from the teachings of Buddhism, namely meditation. The writing of this article uses the literature study method. The purpose of writing this article is to find out the benefits of mindfulness in overcoming and relieving academic stress experienced by students; mindfulness practice is one of the solutions that can be done because this practice aims to control human emotions and get calm in order to control stress. There are many obstacles in implementing mindfulness practices, and internal and external factors can affect the success of mindfulness. A person who regularly applies mindfulness can feel significant benefits in terms of mind, physical, and mental health.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, education, higher education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is widely known as a way of wisdom, and many Buddhist teachings have been adapted to life, including meditation. In modern times, meditation is in great demand. Buddhists and the general public participate in meditation for various reasons, such as psychotherapy, calming the mind and stress, and even for health.¹ Mindfulness is adapted from the Buddha's

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teachings in the *Satipatthana Sutta*, meditation, or contemplation; mindfulness is also defined as awareness, focus, and calmness. According to Gibbons & Morgan, mindfulness is one way to improve psychological well-being by playing with feelings of happiness, namely positive emotions, to live a fulfilling and meaningful life.²

Mindfulness is a form of mind and body regulation with full awareness that includes the present moment and reaches awareness in a non-judgmental way to train individuals to realize and observe emotions without reactions that change these emotions.³ In education, mindfulness can be a solution to overcome the stress of academic demands. Competition in the academic sphere can trigger stress that is often felt, and everyone's capacity to manage different thoughts affects performance and reduces focus in study activities. According to Turner, excessive stress spikes can affect a person's academic state (lack of attention to focus, decreased enthusiasm for learning, and laziness in learning something), health, and psychological condition.⁴

According to Gibbons & Morgan, meditation in mindfulness is a strategy for managing stress and easing one's psychological pressure by creating a happy feeling to improve the quality of life; if someone feels happy, it will have a significant impact on physical well-being, mental and passion.⁵ Mindfulness can be one of the solutions to managing thoughts and improving concentration. Meditation done for 10 or 15 minutes focusing on breathing meditation can reduce stress intensity. Research related to mindfulness and meditation in recent years has grown rapidly, and many discussions have emerged, such as reducing stress and preventing the recurrence of depression, increasing attention, and even improving academic performance.⁶ Mindfulness practice in higher education has been implemented at STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri. This practice is carried out at the beginning of lecture hours. At certain hours, a mindfulness bell is rung, which aims to calm the mind, rest the brain, return to the present moment, realize their identity, and improve cognitive function and self-regulation.

However, the application of mindfulness as an effort to overcome academic stress is not as easy as imagined; there are many obstacles in the implementation of mindfulness, both from internal factors and external factors. Individual

² Nie Lie et al., "Harmoni Di Era Teknologi Digital Dengan Penerapan Meditasi Buddhis Di Pendidikan Akademik," *Jurnal Pendidikan Buddha Dan Isu Sosial Kontemporer* 5, no. 2 (December 2023).

³ Ran Wu et al., "Brief Mindfulness Meditation Improves Emotion Processing," *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 13 (October 10, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2019.01074>.

⁴ Lie et al., "Harmoni Di Era Teknologi Digital Dengan Penerapan Meditasi Buddhis Di Pendidikan Akademik."

⁵ Lie et al.

⁶ Yuzheng Wang and others, 'A Bibliometric and Visualization Analysis of Mindfulness and Meditation Research from 1900 to 2021', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18.24 (2021), doi:10.3390/ijerph182413150.

internal factors are the most crucial cause. The physical and mental condition of each human being is essentially different; for example, when someone is sick or has many mental problems, the second is the awareness of the individual's perspective of the person with mindfulness itself can affect focus. External factors are factors that come from the surrounding environment and other individuals. Outside noise and distractions from people around can trigger someone not to be focused on mindfulness practice. Therefore, peace of mind and a conducive environment are very influential in the effectiveness of mindfulness practice. With the problems described, the author will focus on writing an article to investigate the role of mindfulness in training, focus on education, and the obstacles faced when practicing mindfulness with solutions and suggestions.

II. METHODS

The type of research in this article uses a library research approach, namely data collection from various relevant literature sources, including scientific journals, articles, books, theses, and other publications. According to Milya and Asmendri,⁷ a literature study is a research activity that collects information and data from various materials in libraries or journals related to the problem to be solved. This activity systematically collects, processes, and concludes data using specific methods to find answers to the problems. According to Mardalis, a literature study is a study that collects information and data with the help of materials in documents, books, historical stories, libraries, and other sources.⁸ Meanwhile, according to Rosita,⁹ the literature study is an information collection technique by reading and reviewing previously published written materials, such as books or other works that explain the theoretical foundations.

So, it can be concluded that a literature study is a systematic research method for collecting, processing, and analyzing data and information from various relevant written sources, such as books, journals, articles, and other publications, to discover, understand, and solve the problem being studied.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Mindfulness: Meditation in Buddhism

Buddhism is a religion in Indonesia that existed around 2,500 years ago. As a great teacher, Siddharta Gautama played a very noble role in giving birth to and developing Buddhism in the 6th century BC in India. As one of the oldest

⁷ Tejo Ismoyo, "Konsep Pendidikan Dalam Pandangan Agama Buddha," 2020.

⁸ Abdi Mirzaqon and Budi Purwoko, "Studi Kepustakaan Mengenai Landasan Teori Dan Praktik Konseling Expressive Writing" (Surabaya, 2017), <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/253525-studi-kepustakaan-mengenai-landasan-teor-c084d5fa.pdf>.

⁹ Rosita Pratiwi Junaidi et al., "Implementasi Etika Kepemimpinan Dan Kepemimpinan Tranformasional Pada Kinerja Karyawan (Studi Literatur)," *JURNAL RISET MANAJEMEN DAN EKONOMI (JRIME)* 1, no. 3 (June 28, 2023): 282–304, <https://doi.org/10.54066/jrime-itb.v1i3.464>.

religions in Indonesia, dating back to the 5th century CE, Buddhism has also developed into a religion with spiritual customs passed down from ancestors to the present day by emphasizing mental and physical freedom from suffering (*dukkha*) that is continuously present in the body and soul if humans have not been able to achieve that final liberation or *Nibbana*.

In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*; *Samyutta Nikaya* 56.11 (S 5.420), the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths (*Cattari Ariya Saccani*), which includes the path that can eliminate suffering (*dukkha*) called the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya Atthangiko Magga*) or commonly known as '*Hasta Ariya Magga*'. The eight elements contained are (1) Right View (*sammâ-ditthi*), which is a form of deep knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, namely, *dukkha*, the cause of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha*, and the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*. Sariputta asserts that Right View concerns not only the Four Noble Truths but also four other aspects of life namely the interdependent law of cause and effect, the three roots of evil and the three roots of good, the three general patterns, and the three taints, (2) Right Thought (*sammâ-sankappa*) this element relates to our intention and motivation to reduce suffering and rid ourselves of hatred, there are three important aspects namely one who has no thoughts of worldly matters, one who has no harmful thoughts, and one who has thoughts of non-violence, (3) Right Speech (*sammâ-vācā*) this element reflects truth and love with this can avoid hurting others or harmful speech, right speech requires one not to lie, incite or divide, speak harshly and boast, there are five important elements that need to be considered in speaking, namely speech delivered at the right time, the speech must be true, the speech is delivered gently, the speech is useful, and the speech is expressed with affection, (4) Right Action (*sammâ-kammanta*) in this element a person acts ethically and does not harm others, Right action includes avoiding murder, not committing theft, staying away from behaviour that deviates from decency, maintaining good speech, and avoiding the use of prohibited items that can weaken consciousness, such as alcohol and narcotics, (5) Right Livelihood (*sammâ-ajiva*) right livelihood means trying to seek and maintain life in the right way, in the context of household livelihood in the field of trade, there are five types of trade that should be avoided, namely: trade in weapons, trade in living beings, trade in meat, trade in alcoholic beverages, and trade in poisons, (6) Right effort (*sammâ-vāyama*) is one's effort in trying to abandon all forms of evil done through thought, speech, and deed in order to condition oneself to better things, (7) Right mindfulness (*sammâ-sati*) the ability to understand intensely the physical body, feelings, thoughts, and mental or mental forms, these four mindfulnesses are often referred to as deep clear insight (*vipassanā*), (8) Right concentration (*sammâ-samādhi*) refers to the process of centering the mind or concentration, through four different levels. This concentration is often referred to as 'calmness' (*samatha*).

As one of the essential paths or elements towards liberation, mindfulness (*sammâ-sati*) is indispensable as the most solid foundation in the spiritual practice of Buddhism, as the Buddha explained in the *Satipatthana Sutta* (MN 10.1).

“*Evaṃ me sutāṃ. Ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā kurūsu viharati kammāsadhammaṃ nāma kurūnaṃ nigamo. Tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi: ‘bhikkhavo’ti. ‘Bhadante’ti te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassosum. Bhagavā etadavoca:*”

“*Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā, sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya, dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya, ñāyassa adhiḡamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā.*”

“*Katame cattāro? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ, vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ, citte cittānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ, dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ.*”

The main point of this sutta is the Buddha’s teaching on the “Four Foundations of Mindfulness” as a direct path to the cleansing of the mind, the restriction of sorrow and grievances, the removal of pain and suffering, and the attainment of *Nibbāna*. The Buddha explained that a monk should contemplate the body, feelings, thoughts, and mental objects with mindfulness, attention, and diligence while giving up desire and sorrow for the world. Through this practice, individuals are expected to achieve a deeper understanding and spiritual realization.

With this statement, it is concluded that the four foundations of mindfulness (*Satipatthana*) include mindfulness of the body (*kayanupassana*), mindfulness of feelings (*vedananupassana*), mindfulness of thoughts (*cittanupassana*), and mindfulness of mental objects (*dhammanupassana*). These are closely related to practicing mindfulness of the body and developing mindfulness of the breath (*anapanasati*), posture, and physical activity. As the Buddha taught in the *Anapanasati Sutta*, ‘Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out,’ the practice of developing mindfulness in this context can help one to increase mental and physical stability by understanding the impermanence (*anicca*) of the human body.

In its application, meditation is one of the most effective ways to achieve mindfulness. In Buddhism, meditation, which is often referred to as ‘*Samadhi*’ or ‘*Bhavana*,’ is one part of Buddhist spiritual realization. Meditation is a method of focusing the mind on an object to achieve tranquillity and full inner awareness. It is closely correlated with mindfulness, which focuses the mind on being aware and fully present in the present moment.

Meditation is a practice that has many types and purposes, including (1) Serenity meditation (*Samatha Bhavana*) is a meditation practice that prioritizes inner calm, achieving concentration (*Jhana*) and insight (*Vipassana*) is the goal of *Samantha Bhavana*. There are 40 types of meditation objects, each of which is divided into seven categories, including; 10 kinds of material forms (*Kasina*) consisting of earth, water, fire, air, blue, yellow, red, white, light, and limited space; 10 kinds of disgusting forms (*Asubha*) consisting

of 10 different conditions of corpses, namely swollen corpses, corpses full of bruises, festering corpses, split corpses, corpses whose bodies are torn apart, corpses scattered, corpses full of blood, corpses gnawed by animals, corpses infested with maggots, and corpses in the form of skulls; 10 kinds of contemplation (*Anussati*) including contemplation of the sublime qualities of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, Gods, Precepts, generosity, true peace, death, bodily defilements, and breathing; four kinds of limitless states (*Appamanna*) including contemplation of loving-kindness (*Metta*), compassion (*Karuna*), sympathy (*Mudita*), and equanimity (*Upekkha*); four kinds of immaterial contemplation (*Arupa*) on voidness, infinite space and consciousness, and perception and non-perception; one kind of contemplation of disgusting food (*Arahapatikulasanna*); one kind of analysis of the four bodily elements (*Catudhatuva Vathana*) including solid, liquid, heat and motion, (2) Insight meditation (*Vipassana Bhavana*) is a meditation that refers to the development of insight by deeply observing the mind and body, this method provides an understanding of the three modes of life (*Tilakkhana*), namely Impermanence (*Anicca*), Suffering (*Dukkha*) and Core-lessness (*Anatta*). A person practicing *Vipassana Bhavana* can create positive thoughts and escape from *dukkha*. (3) Mindfulness meditation on the breath (*Anapanasati*) is a commonly practiced type of meditation. *Anapanasati* refers to focusing on the in and out of breath. In addition to relaxing the mind, *Anapanasati* has health benefits, namely lowering blood pressure, improving the immune system, reducing the risk of mental illness, and improving sleep quality (4). Loving-kindness meditation (*Metta Bhavana*) is a type of meditation that focuses on developing loving-kindness. In practice, *Metta Bhavana* meditation is done by visualizing an object that makes the practitioner happy (for example, parents); after focusing on the object, say silently, 'May I be happy, may my parents be happy, may all beings be happy.' Practicing this straightaway makes the practitioner's mind happy. (5) Meditation on the establishment of awareness (*Satipatthana*) consists of four main foundations: awareness of the body, feelings, thoughts, and mental phenomena, in this practice, paying attention to every aspect of experience in a non-judgmental way; (6) Meditation on the contemplation of the body (*Kayanupassana*) this practice includes various techniques in paying attention to breathing, feeling sensations in the body, and analyzing the elements of the body, with this contemplation one will gain a deeper understanding of the temporary nature of the physical, (7) Meditation on the contemplation of feelings. (*Vedanupassana*) focuses on observing feelings or sensations arising from the body, whether positive, negative, or neutral. With this observation, one can reduce excessive emotional reactions and develop inner calm. (8) Meditation on the contemplation of thoughts (*Cittanupassana*) This practice involves observing the thoughts that arise that can affect feelings and actions. With this, one can understand the nature of the mind. (9) Meditation on the contemplation of mental phenomena (*Dhammanupassana*) focuses on observing broad mental phenomena, including ideas and thought patterns; this meditation contemplates various life-related teachings and principles

However, in this case, the *Satipatthana* type of meditation is indispensable in developing and attaining mindfulness in this context. On the other hand, breathing meditation (*Anapanasati*) plays a role in attaining this mindfulness. *Anapanasati* performs the role of being the first step or gateway to achieving awareness of the body (*kayanupassana*), feelings (*vedananupassana*), mind (*cittanupassana*), and mental phenomena (*dhammanupassana*). Along with mindfulness of the process of the breath entering through the nose and spreading throughout the body, then exiting again can be a supporting process practiced to deepen the development of mindfulness and understanding of the impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and no-self (*anatta*) characteristics of life¹⁰.

3.2. Mindfulness: a general perspective

The concept of mindfulness is rooted in the Indian Pali language, “*sati*”. In Buddhist *sati*, it is defined as “awareness, alertness, and mindfulness,” and *sati* refers to both “memory” and “remembrance.” Specifically, *sati* means “awareness of events from time to time” and “remembering to become aware of something.” “In early Buddhism, *sati* referred to mindfulness. Consciousness in Buddhism understands thoughts and desires that arise within oneself rather than experienced thoughts.”¹¹ When a person wants to achieve the goal of mindfulness, it starts with a sense of attraction to the goals and hopes in his heart. A person is attracted to the benefits provided by mindfulness, such as clearing the mind and preparing the mind to face what is happening in the present, so it becomes a person’s goal in doing mindfulness.

According to Shapiro and Carlson,¹² mindfulness is divided into three main aspects: attention, namely, observing experiences that occur both internally and externally by involving awareness in focus; Intention, in this aspect, a person connects his focus with what is the biggest goal, achievement or value in his life and creates an urge in himself to achieve mindfulness. The attitude aspect is when someone understands the quality of something with a sense of acceptance, spaciousness, curiosity, openness, and kindness. According to another opinion from Klussman,¹³ mindfulness is paying attention to something intentionally in the present moment and without judgment of inner emotions. Mindfulness is the full power of well-being and compassion, improved quality of life, anxiety,

¹⁰ Bhikkhu Analayo, *Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realization* (Brimingham: Windhorse Publications, 2003).

¹¹ Stephanie Hsu, “The History of Mindfulness: A Comprehensive Guide to Cultivating Inner Calm and Improving Mental Well-Being,” 2023, <https://choosemuse.com/blogs/news/the-history-of-mindfulness-a-comprehensive-guide-to-cultivating-inner-calm-and-improving-mental-well-being?srsId=AfmBOOpYB27ZxbuSPTUeTAnzScb4QP-PmmcTyTpXDvBso6cPU0vAWJbf6>.

¹² Iffa Nabila Fahmi, Baiq Trisna Septia, and Indah Rahmi Inayati, “Mindfulness Sebagai Mediator Antara Self-Esteem Dan Fear of Missing Out,” 2022, <https://doi.org/10.22219/pjsp.v2i1.20119>.

¹³ Fahmi, Septia, and Inayati.

depression, and a better mindset. Research conducted by Timothy¹⁴ mentioned that mindfulness can encourage one's experiential engagement; this is because mindfulness can increase one's positive affect.

3.3. Education in a Buddhist perspective

Education is an essential thing that every human being should obtain. In Indonesia, the government has a program requiring every citizen to have a minimum of 12 years of education. This program aims to develop each learner's potential. This initiative is designed to foster the development of each learner's potential. In addition, education is also necessary to form a superior generation for a more advanced Indonesia in the future by developing the intelligence, ways of thinking, and even creativity of students.

From the Buddhist perspective, education is also crucial for every believer. "Education" in Buddhism comes from the term '*sikkha*' defined as learning, practicing, studying, developing, and acquiring knowledge.¹⁵ The Buddha, as the great teacher (*sattha*) or supreme teacher in Buddhism, emphasized in the *Anguttara Nikaya* that the primary goal of education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but the cultivation of wisdom (*pañña*) that frees one from suffering (*dukkha*).¹⁶

Based on the concept of the Three Trainings (*Tri Sikkha*), education in Buddhism has a system that includes morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and knowledge or wisdom (*pañña*). These three types of training mean proper education must contain character development, mental discipline, and deep understanding.¹⁷ The concept of education in Buddhism is different from the concept of education in general. Buddhist education emphasizes the development of thinking with direct experience and proof as the primary way rather than pushing students to pre-existing material; this learning method is quite effective in improving students' understanding of the material being taught rather than just passively memorizing and receiving information and without knowing why things happen, how they arise and take place, and

¹⁴ Timothy Regan et al., "Does Mindfulness Reduce the Effects of Risk Factors for Problematic Smartphone Use? Comparing Frequency of Use versus Self-Reported Addiction," *Addictive Behaviors* 108 (September 2020): 106435, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.add-beh.2020.106435>, "type": "article-journal", "volume": "108", "uris": ["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=a0b06059-9521-3c70-9db6-f72d2f8cbbf0"]], "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "Timothy Regan et al., \"Does Mindfulness Reduce the Effects of Risk Factors for Problematic Smartphone Use? Comparing Frequency of Use versus Self-Reported Addiction,\" <i>Addictive Behaviors</i> 108 (September 2020

¹⁵ Tri Saputra Medhācitta, "The Buddhist Education System for Moral and Spiritual Development in the Modern Society," *Jurnal Budi Pekerti Agama Buddha* 2, no. 3 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpab.v2i3.727>.

¹⁶ Lie et al., "Harmoni Di Era Teknologi Digital Dengan Penerapan Meditasi Buddhis Di Pendidikan Akademik."

¹⁷ Walapola Rahula, "What the Buddha Taught," in *B.R. Ambedkar*, 2012, 117–66, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198068679.003.0003>.

various other questions.

In *Kalama Sutta* (AN 3.65), The Buddha told the people of *Kālāma*, “*Iti kho, kālāmā, yaṃ taṃ avocumhā: ‘etha tumhe, kālāmā. Mā anussavena, mā paramparāya, mā itikirāya, mā piṭakasampadānena, mā takkahetu, mā nayahetu, mā ākāraparivitakkena, mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā, mā bhabbarūpatāya, mā samaṇo no garūti. Yadā tumhe kālāmā attanāva jāneyyātha: ‘ime dhammā akusalā, ime dhammā sāvajjā, ime dhammā viññugarahitā, ime dhammā samattā samādinna ahitāya dukkhāya samvattanti, atha tumhe, kālāmā, pajaheyyāthā’*”ti, *iti yaṃ taṃ vuttaṃ, idametaṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ.*

*Etha tumhe, kālāmā, mā anussavena, mā paramparāya, mā itikirāya, mā piṭakasampadānena, mā takkahetu, mā nayahetu, mā ākāraparivitakkena, mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā, mā bhabbarūpatāya, mā samaṇo no garūti. Yadā tumhe, kālāmā, attanāva jāneyyātha: ‘ime dhammā kusalā, ime dhammā anavajjā, ime dhammā viññuppasatthā, ime dhammā samattā samādinna hitāya sukhāya samvattanti’*ti, *atha tumhe, kālāmā, upasampajja vihareyyātha.*

Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, kālāmā, alobho purisassa ajjhataṃ uppajjamāno uppajjati hitāya vā ahitāya vā”ti?

“*Hitāya, bhante*”.

“Aluddho panāyaṃ, kālāmā, purisapuggalo lobhena anabhibhūto apariyādinna citto neva pāṇaṃ hanati, na adinnaṃ ādiyati, na paradāraṃ gacchati, na musā bhaṇati, na parampi tathattāya samādapeti, yaṃ sa hoti dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya”ti.

“*Evaṃ, bhante*”.

“Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, kālāmā, adoso purisassa ajjhataṃ uppajjamāno uppajjati ...pe... amoho purisassa ajjhataṃ uppajjamāno uppajjati ...pe... hitāya sukhāya”ti.

“*Evaṃ, bhante*”.

“Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, kālāmā, ime dhammā kusalā vā akusalā vā”ti?

“*Kusalā, Bhante*”.

“Sāvajjā vā anavajjā vā”ti?

“*Anavajjā, bhante*”.

“Viññugarahitā vā viññuppasatthā vā”ti?

“*Viññuppasatthā, bhante*”.

“Samattā samādinna hitāya sukhāya samvattanti no vā? Kathaṃ vā ettha hoti”ti?

“Samattā, bhante, samādinna hitāya sukhāya samvattanti. Evaṃ no ettha hoti”ti.

“Iti kho, kālāmā, yaṃ taṃ avocumhā: ‘etha tumhe, kālāmā. Mā anussavena, mā paramparāya, mā itikirāya, mā piṭakasampadānena, mā takkahetu, mā nayahetu, mā ākāraparivitakkena, mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā, mā bhabbarūpatāya, mā samaṇo no garūti. Yadā tumhe, kālāmā, attanāva jāneyyātha—

ime dhammā kusalā, ime dhammā anavajjā, ime dhammā viññuppasatthā, ime dhammā samattā samādinna hitāya sukhāya samvattantīti, atha tumhe, kālāmā, upasampajja vihareyyāthā'ti, iti yaṃ taṃ vuttaṃ idametaraṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ.

This *sutta* focuses on the Buddha's instruction to the *Kālāmas*, emphasizing that tradition, authority, or logic should not determine moral ideals. The Buddha advised them to judge deeds based on understanding and experience, emphasizing negative traits such as greed, hate, and illusion. In contrast, actions that are free from these negative qualities are recognized as exemplary, irreproachable, and praised by the wise, and have the potential to bring happiness and well-being. Therefore, individuals are expected to live according to principles that provide benefits based on their knowledge and experience.

Thus, several ways can be used as a simple and efficient guide in discerning the truth, including not believing something just because of tradition. Not everything that has been taught for a long time is accurate. Information obtained is not immediately swallowed raw, but it is better to research first to find out what is in the tradition. Likewise, information that many people have known also does not guarantee its truth, and the truth must be based on evidence and logic, not just the number of people who believe in it. Moreover, do not believe that just because it comes from an authority, sources considered authorized are not always true, but do research and cross-verify the information received. Likewise, believe if something is aligned with goodness, knowing that it can reduce suffering or even increase it. One should hold beliefs that can be substantiated through empirical experience while also considering the potential impact of those beliefs on oneself and others. It is essential to evaluate whether such beliefs will foster inner peace and contribute positively to the well-being of the individual and the broader community.

3.3. Education in general perspective

Education is a process of obtaining balance and perfection in the development of a person in society; education is an effort in the formation of awareness and personality of a person or society in addition to the transfer of knowledge and skills¹⁸. The interpretation by Sumaatmadja from the opinion of T. R. McConnel and Titus is that general education focuses on several subjects with a curriculum directed at developing logic following the systematic flow of knowledge fields aimed at intellectual development. It is part of the mission of all expressions of personality and allows reflection¹⁹.

Education, in the broadest sense, is all learning knowledge experienced by all individuals throughout life in all places and situations, positively influencing

¹⁸ Amit Saepul Malik et al., "Perspektif Visi Pendidikan Dari Sudut Pandang Agama, Filsafat, Psikologi Dan Sosiologi," *EDUKATIF: JURNAL ILMU PENDIDIKAN* 4, no. 2 (March 4, 2022): 2523 – 37, <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v4i2.2194>.

¹⁹ TR Burhanuddin, "Pendidikan Umum Dalam Prespektif Pendidikan Islam Dan Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan," 2015.

the growth of all living things. The meaning of education is education carried out by teachers to students who can provide role models, learning, directing, and improving ethics and morals. In a narrow sense, education results from efforts made at the institution for students who are submitted to have good competencies and full awareness of student social relationships and problems²⁰.

The education system in Indonesia is contained in the 1945 law (UU) article 31 paragraphs 1 - 5 which reads: (1) Every citizen has the right to education; (2) Every citizen is obliged to attend basic education and the government is obliged to pay for it; (3) The government seeks and organizes a national education system that increases faith and piety and noble character in order to educate the nation's life which is regulated by law; (4) The state prioritizes an education budget of at least twenty percent of the state revenue and expenditure budget and of the regional revenue and expenditure budget to meet the needs of national education; (5) The government advances science and technology by upholding religious values and national unity for the advancement of civilization and the welfare of humanity. It can be concluded that the Indonesian state prioritizes the implementation of education, and the government guarantees the implementation of education in Indonesia ²¹.

Opinion from Suryaningrum in ²² the first education obtained at the earliest is PAUD or Early Childhood Education. As the name implies, PAUD is intended for children aged 0-6 years. In PAUD, children are educated to develop themselves both physically and spiritually. PAUD will be followed by (Elementary School) or Sekolah Dasar SD education for six years, from grade one to six. After that, children will take their first three years of education at Junior High School (SMP) and continue with Senior High School (SMA) or Vocational High School (SMK) for three years. The higher levels of education are extensive, as there are D3, S1, S2, S3, and specialists.

IV. CONSTRAINTS IN EDUCATION

Stress is a person's reaction to overcome stressors (obstacles/problems that cause stress) that are being faced, whether it is internal stressors or external stressors. According to Geeta Jain and Manisa Singhai, academic stress experienced by many students has a negative impact, and prolonged stress has an impact on physical and emotional aspects, such as mental disorders. Meanwhile, according to Julika and Setyawati, stress is a person's response to pressure, subjectively interpreted by academic conditions; this causes physical and behavioral reactions to negative emotional responses due to academic

²⁰ Desi Pristiwanti et al., "Pengertian Pendidikan" 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v4i6.9498>.

²¹ Elise Muryanti and Yuli Herman, "Studi Perbandingan Sistem Pendidikan Dasar Di Indonesia Dan Finlandia," *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 6, no. 3 (August 12, 2021): 1146–56, <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i3.1696>.

²² Dedi Presli Halawa, Magdalena Susanti Telaumbanua, and Derman Buulolo, "NDRUMI: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Humaniora PERBANDINGAN SISTEM PENDIDIKAN INDONESIA DAN JEPANG," 2023, <https://jurnal.uniraya.ac.id/index.php/NDURMI>.

demands.²³

Many factors can be a factor in implementing educational obstacles; among students, academic stress is a reasonably common problem experienced. The college years are a transitional period where students must adjust to the learning environment, friendships, competition, and new pressures. The academic pressure experienced by students and other things such as social and new changes can affect high levels of stress, especially if students experience psychological development that is vulnerable to emotional changes in themselves so that an identity crisis arises and difficulties in overcoming the problems faced.

Identifying stress in students is the first step to overcoming this problem. Academic stress can be caused by several factors, both from internal factors and factors external to students, for example on internal factors: (1) Poor time management skills cause students to be exhausted in dividing tasks, the burden of tasks borne such as deadlines that are too piling up or the level of difficulty of the assignments given so that students feel very depressed and sometimes think that their lack of ability to understand the material previously delivered is a trigger for difficulty in doing assignments, (2) The exam pressure faced by students is related to stress because students feel they are unable to answer the exam so that when the exam period begins their minds are frantic, keep in mind that working on a test requires a feeling of confidence in one's own abilities so that in answering a question students will be more relaxed, (3) Academic competition between students is the most common cause found in students, students often assume that their ability to master a material or skill is not equal to their peers, thus reducing the level of confidence in not daring to rely on themselves in doing something, but this can be prevented through support from classmates or close friends by providing assistance in the form of encouragement and suggestion that setbacks or obstacles are common in the lecture process, (4) Expectations for oneself that are too high, students often put pressure on themselves with high standards so that students will have enough difficulty achieving the standards that have been made, this triggers stress and pressure, (4) Expectations for oneself that are too high, students often put pressure on themselves with high standards so that students will have enough difficulty in achieving the standards that have been made, this triggers stress and high pressure on the minds of students, (5) Thoughts of future uncertainty, concerns about careers after graduation are one of the stresses that are often faced even before stepping into college.

On external factors faced by students: (1) Environmental factors also affect academic stress, such as an uncomfortable living environment such as noisy dormitories and cramped rooms can cause stress and inadequate learning environments such as inadequate libraries and noisy classrooms can interfere

²³ Endang Mei Yunalia et al., "KECERDASAN EMOSIONAL DAN MEKANISME KOPING BERHUBUNGAN DENGAN TINGKAT STRES AKADEMIK MAHASISWA," *JKJ: Persatuan Perawat Nasional Indonesia*, vol. 9, 2021.

with concentration, (2) Financial problems experienced by students can be one of the stress factors, for example students who are short will work part-time to meet their daily needs, (3) Social relationships such as conflicts with friends or partners cause emotional stress such as dispute problems that interfere with learning concentration, (4) Pressure factors from parents, students are often required to get perfect grades or even all-rounders, students are willing to use the time that should be used for rest to study, time for sleep and rest will be reduced so that health and conditions drop more often resulting in higher stress experienced by students (5) pressure factors from lecturers, lecturers often demand students to be able to complete all assignments given, sometimes one lecturer can give two to three assignments at once so that the burden supported by students is very heavy.

4.1. Application of mindfulness in dealing with Academic stress

According to Wuryansari and Subandi²⁴ students are often faced with various kinds of tasks with short deadlines and then demands for good academic and non-academic grades. The academic pressures experienced by students create a heavy burden on the mind, and the number of tasks divides the focus of thought and reduces the time to rest. If this continues, it will interfere with student health. As a result, they will experience a decrease in academic performance. Therefore, mindfulness is very influential for stress reduction. According to Handayani et al,²⁵ mindfulness does not only include relaxation but also accepting life experiences consciously and more openly is included in mindfulness. Reducing academic stress in students can be helped by mindfulness practices; in research, students who have the skills to manage stress better are students who apply mindfulness practices.

Although mindfulness has many benefits that can be applied in everyday life, there are still challenges in applying mindfulness to students. The challenge that is often encountered is consistency when practicing. As a result, students frequently believe they do not have the time or desire to practice, and mindfulness's long-term stress-reduction benefits are diminished. Students who struggle to balance their academic obligations and mindfulness practice are to blame for this ²⁶. In implementing mindfulness, many obstacles are found, such as a lack of ability to regulate the concentration of thoughts and body position, such that the mind is divided by other things from within and outside. Factors that can trigger obstacles to mindfulness include internal factors such as body condition and personal awareness, while external factors include conduciveness and activities around the environment.

The first is from internal factors, conditions that are less supportive when undergoing mindfulness: (1) Physical conditions that are less supportive, such as illness so that individuals are easily distracted by their pain so that they are not calm

²⁴ Maria Sihombing, "Pengaruh Mindfulness Terhadap Pengurangan Stres Pada Mahasiswa," 2024.

²⁵ Sihombing.

²⁶ Sihombing.

in undergoing mindfulness, (2) Mental conditions that are being experienced by students so that in undergoing mindfulness cannot be done calmly because of confused thoughts, (3) Too often thinking about various things, both that have happened and those that might happen, can make practitioners trapped and have difficulty concentrating because they cannot focus on the situation when undergoing mindfulness, (4) Laziness often arises in students when going to practice mindfulness, especially after completing tiring tasks; this condition hinders consistency in carrying out the mindfulness practice.

External factors are also an obstacle in doing mindfulness: (1) The environment is not conducive, such as noise from outside and an uncomfortable place can interfere with concentration, in addition to disturbances from surrounding friends who cannot be calm and disturb can divert attention from practicing mindfulness., (2) Distraction from gadgets, many people have an addiction to the use of gadgets. Therefore, students will find it difficult to break the habit of doing mindfulness; they cannot concentrate.

4.2. Application of mindfulness

Properly practiced mindfulness can increase effectiveness in practice. In practice, mindfulness requires several steps that are very important in order to achieve an entire focus on self-awareness in the current moment. Some of the steps can start with (1) Finding the right and conducive place and time, (2) Making sure all electronics such as gadgets are deactivated, (3) A relaxed and comfortable sitting position as well as body can help individuals to step into the next stage of seeking complete focus, (4) Place the hands on the crossed legs or the right and left thighs by being aware of all stages, (5) Then start the next step by closing the eyes slowly and gently.

The practice requires full awareness of the in-breath and out-breath as the central aspect of the contemplation. As discussed in the Satipatthana Sutta, when practicing mindfulness, one should contemplate or focus on four things, namely: (1) Contemplation of the body (*kayanupassana*), being aware of everything related to the body, for example, being aware of all body movements such as walking, sitting, standing or lying down, (2) Contemplation of feelings (*vedananupassana*) recognizing the feelings felt whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral to be aware of feelings arising and passing away, (3) Contemplation of consciousness (*cittanupassana*) by realizing the existence of greed or the absence of greed for example when one feels a sense of laziness that envelops the self, (4) Contemplation of thought forms (*dhammanupassana*) realizing the many thought forms that arise from the self such as lust and realizing the existence of lust.

For this reason, when internal obstacles arise during mindfulness practice – such as drowsiness, wandering thoughts, and discomfort from sitting positions – these challenges can be addressed through physical stretching, refocusing on the breath, and adjusting the sitting posture to facilitate a more comfortable meditation experience.²⁷ Implementing meditation practice will be more

²⁷ Thera, *Mindfulness Recollection & Concentration*.

effective with the correct application method, such as the abovementioned procedures.

As an example of mindfulness practices carried out in higher education, mindfulness practices have been routinely applied at STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri, and mindfulness is carried out at the beginning of lecture hours by reading aspiration prayers first and followed by a moment of silence, aiming to calm the mind so that students are expected to focus during lectures. In addition to the application of mindfulness in class, at certain hours, the mindfulness bell is rung as an effort to remind mindfulness, not only aimed at students but also at all campus residents, such as lecturers, staff, and education personnel. The central concept of mindfulness applied at STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri is to rest the brain from all activities that are being carried out, both standing and sitting, and positioning the body to stop for a moment and then do mindfulness, returning to the present moment by realizing what is being experienced at this time, realizing his identity, and improving cognitive function and self-regulation. In mindfulness, attention to the current situation with a feeling of acceptance without a sense of rejection aims to train the ability to realize and observe individual emotions as they are without changing the emotional experience.²⁸

V. BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

In practicing mindfulness, many benefits are obtained, especially among students to reduce the pressure of academic stress, the benefits that can be obtained if you regularly do mindfulness²⁹: (1) Reducing stress and anxiety, mindfulness can help reduce panic and anxiety, on what to do first and completing according to their own capacity is something that must be done, (2) With mindfulness students can increase focus and concentration, many of the tasks given can break concentration, so managing time in order to complete their tasks, for example by sorting which tasks have the closest deadlines or which tasks have the lightest weight, (3) Build students' cognitive abilities by focusing all attention on knowledge, application, analysis, understanding synthesis, and evaluation so that students are more responsive in completing their assignments on time, (4) Improve emotional and social intelligence for the better, the practice of mindfulness can make students more sensitive to various things around them, such as the presence of others and feelings of empathy, so that students can respond according to the situation, (5) Mindfulness can improve memory, this ability to remember is quite helpful for students, especially to retain the lecture material received every day, this ability also has a positive impact in determining academic success, so that student's focus will be trained and can quickly absorb information delivered in a structured manner.

²⁸ Wu et al., "Brief Mindfulness Meditation Improves Emotion Processing."

²⁹ Thera, *Mindfulness Recollection & Concentration*.

Research conducted by Safitri & Nugroho³⁰ shows that when a person's mindfulness increases, the way to manage emotions and emotional skills increases. For example, someone who is more grateful and loves himself, proving a positive relationship between a person's emotional intelligence and mindfulness so that someone with a high level of mindfulness is more straightforward in expressing himself and managing emotions and has a low-stress level.

According to other studies,³¹ practicing mindfulness can allow someone to explore their internal resources that have not been realized to be more optimal. Someone who routinely or often practices mindfulness shows awareness of positive self-responses both physically and mentally; this shows that someone who often practices mindfulness has a choice in responding to an event to see stressors through a new perspective.

Someone who practices mindfulness regularly certainly gets more significant benefits. Based on some of the benefits above, it can be concluded that mindfulness has many benefits, from physical to mental, for someone who lives it, especially for students who are experiencing burnout or stress due to academic stress. Mindfulness can relieve stress by regulating the management of emotions within a person, and mindfulness is also valuable for building cognitive abilities such as memory and focusing thoughts on more valuable things.

VI. CONCLUSION

Buddhism has been present in Indonesia since 2,500 years ago; it is the oldest religion in Indonesia and is known for its spiritual customs passed down from ancestors. Focusing on mental and physical freedom from suffering (*dukkha*) that continues to be present in the human body and soul, if not yet able to achieve final liberation or *Nibbana*. In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta; Samyutta Nikaya* 56.11 (S 5.420) it can be concluded that there are four foundations of attention (*Satipatthana*) which include attention to the body (*kayanupassana*), attention to feelings (*vedananupassana*), attention to the mind (*cittanupassana*), and attention to mental objects (*dhammanupassana*). The result has a tight connection to the body-mindfulness practice.

Meditation is a mindfulness practice that is done in order to gain calmness and awareness. In this context, meditation is indispensable in relieving the stress that students often experience. Students will more readily accept life experiences consciously and more openly by meditation. So that students can have better stress management skills. In practicing mindfulness, namely meditation, there are many internal and external obstacles. These obstacles include physical and mental conditions that are less supportive, difficulty

³⁰ Meta Hasanah Safitri and Indra Prapto Nugroho, "Mindfulness Dan Emotional Intelligence Pada Remaja Panti Asuhan," *Psychology Journal of Mental Health* 4, no. 2 (2023): 92 – 109, <https://doi.org/10.32539/pjmh.v4i2.76>.

³¹ Ega Anastasia Maharani, "Sebagai Salah Satu Strategi," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Pendidikan* 9, no. 2 (2019): 100 – 110.

controlling thoughts, laziness that is difficult to eliminate, an unfavorable environmental atmosphere, and gadget distractions that are difficult to ignore. For this reason, the right solution to this problem is to find a location with a suitable atmosphere, condition the ideal body, maintain health, and turn off gadgets when meditating. People who practice mindfulness regularly can feel many benefits, starting from physical and mental factors such as a clearer mind because they can control their emotions. Mindfulness practice is accessible to all individuals; however, internal and external factors – such as personal intention, ambient noise, the comfort of the environment, and external distractions – can significantly influence the effectiveness of this practice. Mindfulness is often practiced at the onset of activity to promote mental relaxation and enhance focus or when the body is unwell, such as in states of anxiety or mental confusion.

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION DURING THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract:

This article discusses the challenges and opportunities of implementing mindfulness in education in the digital era. The digital era has made access to information and technology easier, but it has also introduced new mental and emotional challenges for students. Cyberbullying and high academic pressure have led to increased stress, anxiety, and depression among students. As a practice of self-awareness and emotional regulation, mindfulness is believed to help address these issues. However, its application in education faces various challenges and opportunities. One of the main obstacles is the lack of understanding of mindfulness among teachers and education personnel, along with limited time and resources. Additionally, adapting teaching methods to suit the characteristics of students in the digital era remains a challenge. Differences in perception and acceptance of mindfulness among parents and society also act as inhibiting factors. Despite these challenges, the application of mindfulness presents significant opportunities in education. It can enhance students' concentration, focus, and learning abilities. Moreover, mindfulness helps students manage emotions, reduce stress, and improve mental well-being. With increasingly sophisticated digital technology, including mindfulness applications and educational games, the implementation of mindfulness in schools can become more effective and accessible. This article also examines the benefits of mindfulness for both physical and mental health, its application in daily life, education, and the workplace, as well as the challenges and opportunities it faces in the digital era. Additionally, it provides solutions and strategies to overcome these challenges, including teacher training, integrative curriculum development, parental involvement, and the effective use of digital technology.

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Keywords: *Mindfulness in education, digital era challenges, student mental well-being, mindfulness-based learning, emotional regulation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Students face challenges in the fast-paced and stressful modern era, such as high academic demands, intense social pressure, and rapid technological developments. These conditions contribute to increased rates of stress, anxiety, and even depression among young people. According to Hadi et al., depression is a condition in which a person feels sad and disappointed when experiencing change, loss, or failure. It becomes pathological when one is unable to adapt. In the digital era, some major causes of depression among young people include dependence on social media, which disrupts sleep quality, and exposure to harmful content that leads to cyberbullying, exacerbating depression among today's youth¹. Additionally, parental expectations regarding students' academic achievements further add to students' mental and emotional burdens. Students are often expected to excel academically while simultaneously adapting to technological and social changes. To address this situation, education must implement an effective and efficient approach to support students in developing mental and emotional well-being. One such approach is mindfulness. According to Handayani Sutanto and Grace Immanuel², Mindfulness is a method that involves fully focusing on the present moment. This practice enhances awareness and responsiveness when experiencing distress. Hadi et al. argue that mindfulness involves paying attention with openness, curiosity, and flexibility. A person can effectively engage in an activity when their mind is in a state of awareness³. Meanwhile, Riza Adi Wicaksono, Rian Rokhmad Hidayat, and Ulya Makhmudah state that mindfulness is a form of meditation in which a person meditates to focus the mind on an object to regulate attention and concentration⁴. This practice helps enhance the experience and cultivate full awareness. Based on the opinions of the experts mentioned above, mindfulness is a form of training that can help individuals increase their awareness and energy. In practice, mindfulness can be developed through meditation by using an object as a reference point to focus the mind. This verse in the Dhammapada, "The wise person

¹ Hadi et al., "Gangguan Depresi Mayor: Mini Review," *Hijp: Health Information Jurnal Penelitian* 9, no. 1 (2017): 34 – 49, <https://myjurnal.poltekkes-kdi.ac.id/index.php/HIJP>.

² Sandra Handayani Sutanto and Grace Immanuel, "Mengenal Mindfulness Bagi Siswa Sma (Understanding Mindfulness for High School Students)," *Jurnal Pengabdian Psikologi Devotion* 1, no. 1 (2022): p. 12 – 20.

³ Natalia Christy Waney, Wahyuni Kristinawati, and Adi Setiawan, "Mindfulness Dan Penerimaan Diri Pada Remaja Di Era Digital," *Insight: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi* 22, no. 2 (2020): 73, <https://doi.org/10.26486/psikologi.v22i2.969>.

⁴ Riza Adi Wicaksono, Rian Rokhmad Hidayat, and Ulya Makhmudah, "Studi Kepustakaan Penerapan Teori Mindfulness Untuk Mereduksi Stres Akademik," *Jurnal Psikoedukasi Dan Konseling* 5, no. 2 (2022): p. 89. <https://doi.org/10.20961/jpk.v5i2.55745>.

who is always full of attention and free from desires will attain incomparable nibbāna⁵,” Mindfulness is the practice of mindful awareness of the mind, body, and feelings and has been at the core of Buddhist teachings for centuries⁶. In Buddhism, mindfulness is usually called meditation, which focuses the mind on an object; training oneself by practicing meditation can help calm the mind and heart⁷. However, in modern education, mindfulness is not only seen as a spiritual practice but one of the effective psychological strategies to manage stress and emotions. Mindfulness is gaining importance in education today as it helps children and adolescents cope with the various challenges of the modern era. In modern education, mindfulness offers a holistic approach to help students develop self-awareness, improve focus, and cultivate moral values such as compassion and wisdom. Applying mindfulness in the school environment can provide considerable benefits, such as reducing stress, increasing learning motivation, and improving social relationships between teachers and students. One example is the application of mindfulness at the Buddhist College, where the college implements mindfulness practices before learning. Practicing mindfulness before learning will make the mind and body more focused, relaxed, and ready to receive learning materials. This shows that mindfulness is very relevant to education because it has a positive impact. The digital era is a period of transformation characterized by rapid changes in various aspects of life, ranging from how to work and communicate to social interaction. This change offers various forms of opportunities that can be utilized to improve the quality of life, but it also presents tantrums that require serious handling.⁸ This development is driven by technological innovations such as the internet, mobile devices, social media, and AI intelligence that have changed how communication learns to work. In its development, technology also has challenges that arise, as the use of increasingly sophisticated technology excessive use of technology can divert a person’s focus, which causes a person to lose his attention. Although there are challenges, the digital era also has quite good opportunities, one of which is easy access to broader and easier information. The internet, which allows individuals to access various sources of information and knowledge without restrictions, can support independent learning and skill development. This technology also encourages changes in learning, teaching, and implementation. The digital era has changed the way people live and interact. Although it provides convenience for users, the digital era also poses challenges that make its use difficult. The current digital era

⁵ Dhp 23.

⁶ Dama Vidya and Partono Nyanasuryanadi, “Meditasi Dalam Agama Buddha,” JERUMI: Journal of Education Religion Humanities and Multidisciplinary 2, no. 1 (2024): p. 447–57, <https://doi.org/10.57235/jerumi.v2i1.1995>.

⁷ Kaustubh Kamalesh Bhandarkar and Charusheela Ramesh Birajdar, “Meditation Practices: Impact on Mind and Body Safety,” Towards Excellence 13, no. 2 (2021): 472–89, <https://doi.org/10.37867/te130237>.

⁸ Jurnal Ilmiah et al., “Perkembangan Teknologi Informasi Dan Komunikasi Diera Digital : Perspektif Masa Depan” 2, no. 12 (2024): p. 25 – 35.

shows that mindfulness is increasingly relevant to be applied given that the flow of information is accelerating and students are exposed to various types of technology, such as social media and digital games. This is often the cause of attention disorders and anxiety in students; these conditions cause awareness in students to become unstable. Therefore, it is necessary to apply mindfulness to the school environment to overcome problems among students. Some research shows that applying mindfulness exercises can help students manage emotions and mindsets and increase resilience.⁹ This article discusses the challenges and opportunities of mindfulness in the school environment in the digital age. By understanding the various barriers and benefits, mindfulness can be effectively implemented to support students' academic development and emotional well-being. This article aims to understand mindfulness in education in the digital age. The practice of mindfulness, known as mindfulness, is one of the practices that can relieve stress, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, this article aims to help readers understand mindfulness's meaning, challenges, and opportunities in today's digital age.

Research method

This article uses the literature review research method to analyze reading materials related to the challenges and opportunities of applying mindfulness in education in the digital age. The data collection process is done by searching Google Scholar sources and WEB and reading books about mindfulness. A literature review was chosen based on a method that is effective enough to collect, analyze, and synthesize information from various relevant reading sources. Using the literature review method, the author hopes that this article can provide information to help understand the application of mindfulness in education in the digital era.

II. DISCUSSION

Mindfulness is a concept that emphasizes full awareness of the present moment without judgment of what is happening. Experts say that mindfulness itself has various definitions. According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness is awareness from moment to moment, not judging what is in the thoughts and feelings of oneself and others.¹⁰ According to Psychology Today, mindfulness is training oneself to focus on what is happening now without reacting to and overthinking the conditions around you.¹¹ Experts agree that mindfulness connects to the present moment, accepting what is without judgment and developing awareness of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations. *Spiritual Roots of Buddhism: Mindfulness is deeply rooted in Buddhist meditation,*

⁹ JLuiz a Peternelli, "Kutipan" 13, no. 3 (2010): p. 2 – 3.

¹⁰ Sandra H. Sutanto and Grace Immanuel, "Mengenai Mindfulness Bagi Siswa SMA (Understanding Mindfulness for High School Students)," *Devotion: Jurnal Pengabdian Psikologi* 1, no. 1 (2022): p. 11 - 20.

¹¹ Dianita Maulinda and Makmuroh Sri Rahayu, "Pengaruh Mindfulness Terhadap Stres Akademik Pada Siswa SMAN X Cianjur Di Masa Pandemi COVID-19," *Jurnal Riset Psikologi* 1, no. 2 (2022): p. 100 – 108, <https://doi.org/10.29313/jrp.v1i2.461>.

especially in the Theravada school.¹² Gautama Buddha's teachings emphasized the importance of self-awareness and observation of the mind and body as the path to liberation from suffering (*dukkha*). "The mind is hard to control; it is agile and likes to move everywhere. Therefore, it is wise to tame the mind; a tamed mind brings happiness."¹³ This verse emphasizes that it is important to control the mind to achieve true happiness. In Buddhism, there is a meditation practice that laypeople often practice; meditation has several techniques in its application. One is the Vipassanā meditation technique, which means "to see clearly," which is the core of mindfulness practice. Vipassanā involves careful observation of physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts without getting carried away or judging them.¹⁴ Vipassanā meditation is the oldest technique in Buddhism, especially in the Theravāda school. In its practice, vipassanā meditation is performed by continuously observing phenomena that arise in the body and mind. The techniques used usually involve the following steps: (1) Breath observation (*ānāpānasati*) – A practice that involves noticing the breath naturally without controlling it. Attention is focused on the air entering and leaving through the nose or the movement of the abdomen. (2) Observation of body sensations (*kāyānupassanā*) – After developing concentration, practitioners can observe bodily sensations from head to toe. Every sensation is perceived as a manifestation of impermanence (*anicca*). (3) Observation of thoughts and emotions (*cittānupassanā*) – At this stage, practitioners observe their thoughts and emotions, such as anxiety, anger, or happiness, with a calm and non-reactive attitude. (4) Observation of mental phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*) – The final stage in the practice of vipassanā involves observing how mental experiences arise and pass away, thereby deepening the understanding of the law of causation (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This technique aims to develop a deeper understanding of the transient and impermanent nature of experience, cultivate an awareness of *anicca* (impermanence), reduce attachment and suffering (*dukkha*), purify the mind, and attain wisdom (*paññā*). In conclusion, vipassanā meditation is a technique that focuses on the direct observation of experience without judgment, helping individuals gain insight into the nature of life. "Mindfully breathing in long, mindfully breathing out long, and in short, breathing out short. 'I will train myself to experience the whole body while breathing in,' thus he trains himself. 'I will train myself to experience the whole body while breathing out,' thus he trains himself."¹⁵

Developed in the West, Mindfulness only became widely known in the West in the 20th century. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a professor of molecular biology, played an

¹² Masfi Sya'fiatul Ummah, "Meditation Buddha Theravada Dalam Perspektif Mahasi Sayadaw," *Sustainability* (Switzerland) 11, no. 1 (2019): p. 1 – 14.

¹³ Dhp. 35.

¹⁴ Masfi Sya'fiatul Ummah, "Meditation Buddha Theravada Dalam Perspektif Mahasi Sayadaw," *Sustainability* (Switzerland) 11, no. 1 (2019): p. 1 – 14.

¹⁵ MN 118.

important role in popularizing it. Jon Kabat-Zinn developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program in 1979 at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, which adapted Buddhist meditation techniques to address stress and other health issues.¹⁶ The (MBSR Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) program emphasizes practicing mindfulness in daily life using techniques viz: First, sitting meditation, which focuses on breathing and body sensations to develop self-awareness. Second, body scan meditation directs attention to different parts of the body systematically and helps increase awareness of the body. The third is mindful yoga, which involves gentle body movements combined with mindful awareness of the body and breathing. Research shows that MBSR is quite effective in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression and helps in improving mental and emotional well-being. In addition to the health field, mindfulness exists in psychology and neuroscience. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was developed as an approach that helps in preventing depression in the morning who experience depressive disorders. Besides health and psychology, mindfulness can also be applied in the workplace and in education¹⁷. It was mentioned that several prominent companies, such as Google, Intel, and General Mills, use mindfulness programs to improve employee well-being and productivity. Mindfulness has benefits for mental health. Firstly, it can reduce stress and anxiety; by focusing on the present moment, mindfulness helps us detach ourselves from worries about the past or future, which are often triggers for stress and anxiety. Secondly, it can overcome depression by increasing self-awareness; mindfulness helps individuals recognize and accept negative thoughts and feelings without getting carried away. This allows for developing a healthy distance from those thoughts and avoiding over-identification with negative emotions. Third, it improves emotion regulation; observing emotions without judgment can develop a deeper understanding of emotional patterns and how they affect one's behavior. This allows one to respond to emotions more thoughtfully and avoid impulsive reactions that can exacerbate mental health issues. Benefits include improved quality of life, reduced anxiety, less pain, relief from stress and evil thoughts, change of bad habits, and emotion regulation. Mindfulness is also helpful for self-development processes, such as learning new things and helping to understand different perspectives¹⁸. Besides being beneficial for mental health, mindfulness is also beneficial for physical health. Here are some benefits of mindfulness for physical health: The first is to reduce stress and calm the nervous system, which can help lower blood pressure. Mindfulness

¹⁶ Stefanus Christian Haryono, "Christian Mindfulness: Sebuah Spiritualitas Holistik Keseharian Dalam Tradisi Buddha Dan Kristen," *GEMA TEOLOGIKA: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Dan Filsafat Keilahian* 9, no. 1 (2024): p. 105 – 14, <https://doi.org/10.21460/gema.2024.91.1112>.

¹⁷ The Centre et al., "Mindfulness-Based Interventions in the Workplace . A Case Study .," no. June 2014 (n.d.).

¹⁸ Masfi Sya'fiatul Ummah, "Meditasi Buddha Theravada Dalam Perspektif Mahasi Sayadaw," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 11, no. 1 (2019): p. 1 – 14.

is effective in reducing the intensity and frequency of chronic pain, including low back pain, tension headaches, and fibromyalgia (a chronic condition that causes muscle pain and widespread fatigue, sleep, mood, and memory problems). Moreover, the third can improve sleep quality by reducing anxiety and disturbing thoughts before bed. In this modern era, adolescents experience physical, psychological, and social differences, which can bring up several problems that can interfere with psychological well-being.¹⁹ In today's modern era, the changes are significant among adolescents experiencing various problems. Research by Savitri and Listiyandini confirms that mindfulness has a positive role in adolescent well-being, especially environmental mastery. Thus, practicing mindfulness not only benefits mental health but also has a good impact on psychological well-being, especially for adolescents who often experience challenges in growth²⁰. Generation Z, or Gen Z, born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, grew up in a digital era that is fast-paced and full of information²¹. Gen Z's life is filled with academic pressure, social media, and uncertainty about the future. This condition makes Gen Z vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and depression. Therefore, Gen Z needs to practice mindfulness as a practice of self-awareness and offer potential solutions to overcome it. Gen Z also faces various challenges in implementing mindfulness. Implementing this practice can be done through various methods such as meditation, yoga, or paying attention to the in-breath and out-breath. For Gen Z, who are used to technology and instant information, implementing mindfulness practices requires a different approach. Technology-based mindfulness apps, such as meditation apps that integrate with social media, can be an attractive entry point. More personal interactions, such as discussion groups or professionally led mindfulness workshops, are also important for creating community and support. Even though the benefits of mindfulness are enormous among Gen Z, they also face various challenges. First, Generation Z's fast-paced and fragmented lifestyle can make finding time to practice mindfulness difficult. Second, the stigma around mental health is still a barrier for some Generation Z individuals from seeking help and practicing mindfulness. Third, a lack of access to resources and accurate information about mindfulness can hinder its effective implementation. Research shows a positive relationship between mindfulness and mental well-being among Generation Z. A study by Annisa Zahronita Utami and Khoirudin Ismail showed that mindfulness practices can reduce stress and anxiety levels and improve sleep quality in Generation

¹⁹Wenita Cyntia Savitri and Ratih Arruum Listiyandini, "Mindfulness Dan Kesejahteraan Psikologis Pada Remaja," *Psikohumaniora: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* 2, no. 1 (2017): p. 43, <https://doi.org/10.21580/pjpp.v2i1.1323>.

²⁰ Savitri and Listiyandini.

²¹ Y Lafau, A T M Waruwu, and ..., "Membimbing Generasi Z Dan Alpha: Strategi Kepemimpinan Kristen Dalam Era Digital," *Teologis-Relevan ...* 03, no. 01 (2024): p. 112–28, <https://ejurnal.stepsmg.ac.id/home/article/view/177%0Ahttps://ejurnal.stepsmg.ac.id/home/article/download/177/97>.

Z students.²² Another study by Gale M Lucas et al. revealed that the use of technology-based mindfulness applications can increase self-awareness and the ability to regulate emotions in Generation Z youth.²³ However, more research is still needed to understand the effectiveness of various mindfulness methods and the factors influencing their successful implementation in the diverse Generation Z population. To increase mindfulness among Generation Z, there needs to be a holistic approach involving various parties. Schools and universities can integrate mindfulness programs into the curriculum. Governments can provide broader access to mental health services and mindfulness resources, and parents and families also play an important role in supporting Generation Z children in practicing mindfulness.²⁴ It is also important to continue to develop and disseminate accurate and accessible information about mindfulness, primarily through digital media familiar to Generation Z.²⁵ So, mindfulness practices offer great potential to improve the mental well-being of Generation Z. However, its implementation requires an innovative and comprehensive approach considering this generation's lifestyle and unique challenges.

Mindfulness, or *sati* in Pāli, is at the core of Buddhism. Mindfulness is not simply a relaxation technique; it is the practice of being fully aware of present thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without judgment. Its application in daily life can bring inner peace and well-being.²⁶ Ways of applying mindfulness rooted in Buddhist teachings include: Firstly, *vipassanā* meditation, the foundation of mindfulness. The focus is on observing the breath, body sensations, thoughts, and feelings without judgment. By practicing regularly, we train the mind to stay focused on the present moment, reducing worry about the past and anxiety about the future. Through this practice, Buddhism emphasizes the importance of developing *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom). Example: Sit comfortably, close your eyes, and focus on the sensation of the breath coming in and out. Observe each inhalation and exhale without trying to change it. When the mind

²² Annisa Zahronita Utami and Khoirudin Ismail, "Analisis Tingkat Stres Dan Kualitas Tidur Pada Mahasiswa Universitas Sebelas Maret," *Edu Masda Journal* 07, no. 02 (2023): p. 100–111, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:264134129>.

²³ Gale M Lucas et al., "Computers in Human Behavior It's Only a Computer: Virtual Humans Increase Willingness to Disclose," *Computers In Human Behavior* 37 (2014): p. 94–100, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.04.043>.

²⁴ Khanza Jasmine, "Emporing," *Penambahan Natrium Benzoat Dan Kalium Sorbat (Antiinversi) Dan Kecepatan Pengadukan Sebagai Upaya Penghambatan Reaksi Inversi Pada Nira Tebu*, 2014.

²⁵ Azel Raoul Reginald et al., "Strategi Efektif Untuk Merekrut Dan Mengelola Karyawan Generasi Z Dalam Manajemen Bisnis Global," *Arus Jurnal Sosial Dan Humaniora* 4, no. 2 (2024): p. 702 – 6, <https://doi.org/10.57250/ajsh.v4i2.513>.

²⁶ Ayu Rahmawati Tirto and Yohanis Franz La Kahija, "Pengalaman Bisku Dalam Mempraktikkan Mindfulness (Sati/ Kesadaran Penuh)," *Jurnal EMPATI* 4, no. 2 (2015): p. 126–34, <https://doi.org/10.14710/empati.2015.14904>.

wanders, acknowledge it and refocus on the breath. Second, mindfulness in daily activities. Mindfulness is not just limited to formal meditation sessions. We can practice it in everyday activities such as eating, walking, or working. By paying attention to every detail of the sensations and thoughts that arise during the activity, we can increase our appreciation of the experience and reduce stress. Buddhism emphasizes the importance of understanding and managing emotions wisely. Mindfulness helps us observe emotions without getting carried away, which aligns with the Buddhist teaching of the middle way, avoiding attachment and denial of emotions. Example: When angry, observe the accompanying physical sensations (e.g., heart palpitations, muscle tension). Acknowledge the emotion without judging it. Find ways to calm down, for example, by breathing deeply or walking. Fourth, be compassionate and forgiving. Mindfulness can also increase compassion and the ability to forgive. We can develop empathy and compassion by being aware of our own and others' suffering. Buddhism emphasizes the importance of *mettā* (loving-kindness) and *karunā* (compassion) as the path to liberation.²⁷ Example: When someone hurts us, observe our thoughts and feelings without judging them. Try to understand the person's perspective and develop compassion. The application of mindfulness in daily life can foster inner peace, well-being, and wisdom through the core teachings of Buddhism. Mindfulness is one of the practices that is gaining increasing attention in education. This concept applies mindfulness to the present moment to provide assessments that help improve students' emotional and academic well-being. Applying mindfulness in education can help improve learning focus and reduce excessive stress. This practice can be applied not only to students but also to teachers. It is relevant in education because it has proven to be both effective and efficient. Christine A. Burke argues that students who practice mindfulness exhibit emotional improvements and better mental well-being.²⁸ However, the application of mindfulness in education is not without challenges. The growing digital age has introduced distractions, such as electronic devices and social media, which can hinder students from developing mindfulness in their learning environment.²⁹ Beyond education, mindfulness can also be applied in the workplace. The modern work environment is often characterized by high pressure and demanding expectations, which, for some individuals, lead to stress, depression, and mental fatigue. Applying mindfulness in professional settings can help reduce stress, enhance work engagement, and improve

²⁷ European Comission, "Intergritas Konsep Cinta Kasih" 4, no. 1 (2016): p. 1 – 23.

²⁸ Christine A. Burke, "Mindfulness-Based Approaches with Children and Adolescents: A Preliminary Review of Current Research in an Emergent Field," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 19, no. 2 (2010): p. 133 – 44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-009-9282-x>.

²⁹ Lisa Flook et al., "HHS Public Access Author Manuscript Dev Psychol. Author Manuscript; Available in PMC 2015 June 28. Published in Final Edited Form as: Dev Psychol. 2015 January ; 51 (1): p. 44 – 51. Doi:10.1037/A0038256. & Promoting Prosocial Behavior and Self-Regulatory Skills I," *Dev Psychol* 51, no. 1 (2015): p. 44–51, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038256>.

interpersonal relationships. A study by Hülshager et al. showed that employees who regularly practiced mindfulness experienced lower job burnout and greater psychological well-being.³⁰ However, integrating mindfulness into the workplace also presents significant challenges. Many employees still perceive mindfulness as irrelevant to professional settings, leading to resistance from individuals and groups. Additionally, organizations often struggle to allocate sufficient time and resources to support mindfulness initiatives. In conclusion, mindfulness offers numerous benefits in both education and the workplace, particularly in enhancing mental well-being, focus, and productivity. However, challenges such as technological distractions and a lack of understanding continue to hinder its widespread implementation. Nevertheless, with the support of digital technology and growing awareness of its importance, mindfulness has significant potential to be more broadly integrated into academic and professional life in the digital age.

In the digital era, the application of mindfulness is quite a challenge. The development of technology that provides easy access to information makes social media users focus on one thing, which causes them to lose focus on other things³¹. Mentioned that confusion in using digital media causes attention disorders and causes users to lose focus on more valuable activities. The abundance of information and instant stimulation from the internet, gadgets, and social media can lead to attention disorders and digital addiction. In addition, in the digital age, academic pressure, cyberbullying, and information overload can also trigger stress and anxiety. Dependence on technology can inhibit self-awareness and the ability to understand emotions and thoughts. Enhancing mindfulness is essential in the digital age to address issues related to distraction, addiction, stress, and lack of self-awareness. By practicing mindfulness, individuals can be more balanced, calm, and happy amidst the ever-evolving flow of information and technology.³² Argue that applying mindfulness and meditation can help individuals overcome stress and anxiety problems caused by digital technology addiction. However, mindfulness in education in the digital age also has many challenges and opportunities. One example of a significant challenge is the integration of mindfulness into a technology-heavy curriculum. Some schools are often burdened by the pressure to achieve specific academic standards, making it difficult to allocate dedicated time to implement mindfulness practices. In addition, addiction to

³⁰ Ute R. Hülshager et al., "Benefits of Mindfulness at Work: The Role of Mindfulness in Emotion Regulation, Emotional Exhaustion, and Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 98, no. 2 (2013): p. 310–25, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031313>.

³¹ Agus Rizal, Budi Purwoko, and Retno Tri Hariastuti, "Peningkatan Self Compassion Untuk Mereduksi Perilaku Adiktif Pengguna Sosial Media Bagi Siswa SMP," *Indonesian Journal of Learning Education and Counseling* 3, no. 1 (2020): p. 1 – 7, <https://doi.org/10.31960/ijolec.v3i1.447>.

³² Priyadarsini Samanta et al., "Mindfulness as a Path to Freedom from Internet Addiction in Adolescents : A Narrative Review" 16, no. 10 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.72544>.

digital technology can lead to distraction and dependency, which is contrary to the principles of mindfulness. Students accustomed to instant stimulation from gadgets have difficulties focusing and calming down during mindfulness sessions. However, the lack of teacher training in more effective mindfulness teaching methods is an obstacle. Teachers need to understand the principles of mindfulness and how to adapt them to various subjects and lesson contexts. Without adequate training, implementing mindfulness may not be effective and may generate teacher resistance.³³ Adapting mindfulness practices to the diversity of students is also a challenge, as each student has a different backgrounds, experiences, and needs. According to Diana Koszycki et al, implementing mindfulness programs must consider these factors and design inclusively and efficiently for individual differences.³⁴ Some students must have differences, namely differences in culture and religion. Mindfulness is a universal practice often associated with certain Buddhist or spiritual traditions³⁵. Students with different backgrounds or religions will feel uncomfortable because they may be tied to a particular spiritual context, resulting in obstacles and discomfort. Secondly, special needs, students who have special needs, such as anxiety disorders, autism, and even ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or so-called anxiety disorders, in applying mindfulness may need significant changes in mindfulness practice. Structuring the session duration, selecting the type of guidance, and designing the practice environment may require collaboration with specialized therapists to align with the child's abilities and sensitivities. Thirdly, language and literacy: The use of clear and explicit language that is easy for students to understand is essential. For students who have difficulty reading or are bilingual, materials should be adapted to their level of comprehension. Fourth, readiness and trust: Not all students may be ready or willing to participate in mindfulness practices. Building trust and creating a safe environment is a gradual process. A participatory approach should be implemented to help students feel comfortable and engaged. Fifth, access and resources: Some schools may face challenges in providing adequate resources to support effective mindfulness practice. This includes teacher training, appropriate materials, and a quiet, safe space for practice. Given these challenges, a holistic and collaborative approach is necessary. Teachers, parents, and counselors must work together to develop mindfulness practices tailored to individual student needs. Customizing strategies appropriately ensures that all students have equal opportunities to benefit from these practices. Additionally, the process should be continuously evaluated and improved based on feedback from students and stakeholders. By doing so, schools can

³³ Bassam Khoury et al., "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Healthy Individuals: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 78, no. 6 (2015): p. 519–28, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2015.03.009>.

³⁴ Diana Koszycki et al., "A Multifaith Spiritually Based Intervention for Generalized Anxiety Disorder: A Pilot Randomized Trial," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 66, no. 4 (2010): p. 430 – 41, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp>.

³⁵ Katherine Weare, "The Evidence for Mindfulness in Schools," no. July (2018): p. 1 – 36.

ensure that mindfulness programs effectively support students' well-being.

Despite its challenges, the digital age also has opportunities to promote mindfulness in education. Technology can be used to facilitate mindfulness practices. The use of mobile applications and online platforms provides meditation guidelines, breathing exercises, and other resources that can be easily accessed by teachers and students.³⁶ Mindfulness offers benefits that students can experience firsthand, including helping them develop healthy digital habits. By becoming more aware of their thoughts and emotions, students can learn to regulate their use of technology and reduce the risk of digital addiction. Additionally, mindfulness helps students improve focus, concentration, and time management skills - essential abilities for navigating digital learning environments. These practices also enhance students' ability to cope with stress and anxiety, which are increasingly common in the digital era. For instance, academic pressure, cyberbullying, and information overload can contribute to stress and anxiety among students. Mindfulness provides a valuable tool to help them manage these challenges effectively. Rowan argues that mindfulness helps students develop a healthy mindset and improves students' mental well-being³⁷. Finally, mindfulness has also been shown to support collaborative and practical learning by creating a calm, safe, and supportive classroom environment that helps students work together and learn more effectively. Based on this presentation of the opportunities for mindfulness in the digital age, it is clear that mindfulness offers excellent potential to improve student success and the quality of learning in the digital age. However, successful implementation also requires attention to the existing challenges and utilization of the opportunities provided by technology. Teacher training, effective curriculum development, and further research are essential to ensure mindfulness becomes integral to future education.

The digital age presents new challenges and opportunities in education. The application of mindfulness helps students to overcome digital distractions and improve their mental well-being. Solutions that can be implemented are: Firstly, technology integration; in education, teachers can utilize digital platforms and apps to introduce mindfulness to students – for example, guided meditation apps, mindfulness games, and educational content about mindfulness. Secondly, teacher training should provide training on the benefits and methods of implementing mindfulness in the classroom. The training should cover the theory of mindfulness practice and strategies to overcome challenges in the digital era. Thirdly, collaborating with parents and organizing workshops and seminars for parents on mindfulness and its benefits for children. Share online resources such as videos and apps to help parents understand and support

³⁶ Antonietta Manna et al., "Neural Correlates of Focused Attention and Cognitive Monitoring in Meditation," *Brain Research Bulletin* 82, no. 1 – 2 (2010): p. 46–56, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brainresbull.2010.03.001>.

³⁷ Rowan Publication, "The Role of Emotion Regulation in Early Intervention and Prevention of Mental Health Problems in Adolescents," 2022.

mindfulness practice at home. Fourth, research and evaluation should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in improving students' mental health and learning achievement. Based on the evaluation results, adapt and modify mindfulness practices to be more effective and relevant to the needs of students in the digital era³⁸.

III. CONCLUSION

A review of the challenges and opportunities of implementing mindfulness in education in the digital era highlights its great potential but also the complexities that must be considered. Successfully integrating mindfulness into education requires a comprehensive strategy. First, continuous and standardized training for teachers and educational personnel is essential. This training should cover both the theoretical foundations of mindfulness and practical methods for implementing it in the classroom. Second, curriculum development should integrate mindfulness principles into relevant subjects, ensuring that these practices become a natural part of students' learning experiences. Third, the active involvement of parents in supporting mindfulness practices at home is crucial for creating consistency and maximizing effectiveness. Fourth, leveraging digital technology - such as mindfulness apps and educational games - can facilitate access and enhance student engagement. Fifth, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of different mindfulness methods in education within the digital era and to adapt them to the diverse needs of students. The application of mindfulness in education is crucial for addressing the challenges of students' mental and emotional development amid the constant influx of information and technological advancements. Studies show a positive correlation between mindfulness practices, improved academic performance, and reduced stress and anxiety levels. By enhancing students' ability to focus and regulate their emotions, mindfulness positively impacts both learning outcomes and overall well-being. Therefore, investment in teacher training and curriculum development that incorporates mindfulness is essential. Utilizing digital technologies, such as mindfulness-based educational apps and games, offers an innovative solution to overcome time and resource constraints. These tools can provide broader access and more interactive learning experiences. However, it is crucial to ensure that technology use remains balanced and does not become another source of distraction. The active involvement of parents and the school community is also vital for the successful implementation of mindfulness. Effective communication and a shared understanding of its benefits will help create a supportive environment for students to practice mindfulness consistently. Overall, challenges should not deter efforts to integrate mindfulness into education. With the right strategies, commitment from various stakeholders, and the mindful use of technology, mindfulness can become a key factor in cultivating a more resilient, capable, and well-rounded younger generation prepared to navigate the complexities

³⁸ Riska Putri et al., "Efektivitas Mindful Education Dalam Meningkatkan Kesejahteraan Mental, Prestasi Akademik, Dan Keterampilan Sosial Siswa" 4, no. 2 (2024): p. 66 – 72.

of the digital era. Implementing mindfulness is not just a passing trend but a long-term investment in a more holistic and sustainable future for education.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION BASED ON BUDDHIST INSIGHTS TO BUILD A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD

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Abstract:

This article highlights the role of mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist philosophy, as a transformative practice in education. Using library-based research, it explores the impact of mindfulness on students' concentration, emotional well-being, and academic motivation, while also supporting teachers in creating inclusive learning spaces. The findings show that students involved in mindfulness programs experience reduced academic stress, improved focus, and better social interactions. However, challenges remain in adapting curricula for diverse student backgrounds and ensuring proper teacher training. Overall, the study emphasizes the need for consistent implementation and increased awareness of mindfulness benefits. A culturally informed and sustained mindfulness practice is seen as key to building a healthier, more productive, and compassionate learning environment.

Keywords: *mindfulness, education, mental health, students, teachers.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is an outlook and spiritual system that began with the enlightenment experience of Siddhartha Gautama in the sixth century BCE, it has been a source of valuable and profound knowledge throughout human history.¹ This teaching, which developed in the area we now know as Nepal and India, not only presents a distinctive perspective on human existence but also builds a strong foundation for developing ethical values.² In the context of ethical development, it provides several important and detailed concepts.

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¹ Muditya Ratna Dewi and Budi Utomo, "Ajaran Buddha Dalam Pengembangan Etika," *JERUMI: Journal of Education Religion Humanities and Multidiciplinary* 2, no. 1 (2024): 544–51, <https://doi.org/10.57235/jerumi.v2i1.2019>.

² Dewi and Utomo.

One of the main foundations is that with the practice of mindfulness, each individual should focus on thoughts, emotions, and physical experiences without passing judgment (this is known as mindfulness). The impact of mindfulness on students includes several important aspects. Firstly, there is improved concentration and focus; students who follow a mindfulness practice program show a better ability to concentrate. Next, mindfulness helps in stress management; practicing mindfulness techniques teaches students how to manage stress and create a balanced mental space, which is very important for emotional well-being. In addition, mindfulness practice enhances empathy and social skills; students become more aware of their thoughts and feelings and understand the feelings of others. Finally, school mindfulness programs are effective in improving students' mental health, reducing anxiety, and improving the quality of the learning environment. Secondly, the impact of mindfulness on teachers is that the content of the training material is too heavy, especially when there are participants with unequal cognitive abilities, which can result in stress. If stress is not managed well, it can hurt the quality of teaching; a teacher can lose enthusiasm for teaching, which, in the end, only carries out their duties mechanically.

The implementation of mindfulness meditation in education does face various challenges. One of the most important aspects is maintaining consistency in implementing meditation in schools. Nonetheless, this approach has enormous potential to improve the overall quality of education.

The practice of mindfulness in Buddhism has its roots in two texts: the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, which discusses breath awareness, and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, which discusses the foundations of mindfulness. In addition, the practice of mindfulness is derived from two meditation methods, namely, *samatha bhāvanā* and *vipassanā bhāvanā*.³ *Samatha bhāvanā* is a meditation method that aims to achieve peace of mind, while *vipassanā bhāvanā* is a meditation method that aims to gain a clear understanding.⁴

In *Samyutta Nikaya* II 105, it is stated that *Samma Sati* is the rediscovery of a long-established method of practice, which was practiced by the Buddhas in the past. Similarly, *Anguttara Nikaya* II 29 emphasizes that the *samma sari* is an ancient practice method. Furthermore, in *Digha Nikaya* II 35, it is explained that Bodhisatta Vipassi practiced dhamma contemplation (*dhammanupassana*) based on the five sets (*pancakhandha*). *Pancakhandha*, which consists of five aggregates, encompasses several different aspects. Firstly, there is *rupakhandha*, which is the craving for forms or shapes that can be perceived by the senses. Secondly, there is *Vedanakhandha*, which refers to the passion for feelings. Thirdly, *Sannakhandha* describes the craving for absorption, which relates to the intensity with which the senses respond to external stimuli. Fourth, *Shankharakhandha* encompasses indulgence in various forms of thought. Fifth,

³ Biksu Nyanabandhu Shakya, "Kompetensi Pribadi Buddha," n.d.

⁴ Shakya.

Vinnanakhanda focuses on the craving for consciousness itself,⁵ asserting that satipatthana is a practice that has existed for a long time and was implemented by previous Buddhas before finally disappearing and being rediscovered by Gotama Buddha.

The opening and closing sections of this sutta emphasize that satipatthana is the direct path to attaining Nibbana. Next, there is a brief explanation of the main aspects of the direct path. In the 'definition' section, four *satipatthanas* must be contemplated: the body, sensation (*vedana*), *citta*, and *dhamma*. In addition, this section also identifies mental qualities that are essential for the practice of satipatthana, including perseverance (*atapi*), clear understanding (*sampajana*), Sati, and freedom from desire and aversion (*vineyard abhijjhadomanassa*).⁶

After the 'definition' section, the Satipatthana Sutta provides an in-depth explanation of the four satipatthanas, namely, contemplation of the body, sensation, *citta*, and *dhamma*. The scope of the first *satipatthana*, contemplation of the body, begins with attention to the in-breath and out-breath, observation of posture and bodily activities, and analysis of the body consisting of various parts and elements, to the contemplation of a decaying corpse. The next two *satipatthanas* include contemplation of sensation and the *citta*. In the fourth *satipatthana*, five types of *dhammas* worthy of contemplation are mentioned: mental obstacles, sets (*khandha*), sensory spheres (*cayetana*), evocative factors (*bojjhanga*), and the Four Ariya Realities. After detailing these, the sutta path reminds us of the direct path, ending with a prediction of the timeframe to achieve such realization.⁷

Developing mindfulness through specific meditation techniques automatically increases overall mindfulness, thus strengthening the ability to keep mindfulness present outside of meditation sessions. Thus, aspects of *satipatthana*, although not deliberately made the object of contemplation, still bring about *sati* as a by-product of the primary practice. However, the explanation in the *Anapanasati Sutta* does not necessarily imply that *sati* relates to the in and out of breath, which includes all aspects of *satipatthana*. The Buddha meant that the overall development of mindfulness can range from a focus on the breath to diverse objects, encompassing various aspects of reality from the subject's point of view. It is clear that these vast aspects are the result of deliberate practice; otherwise, the Buddha would not have discussed specific suttas on how to achieve them.⁸

Some meditation teachers and experts emphasize the importance of practicing all four *satipatthanas*. Arguing that even one meditation practice can be used as the main object, as expressed by,⁹ who integrates the four

⁵ (Problems & Indonesia, 1945).

⁶ Analayo.

⁷ Analayo.

⁸ Analayo.

⁹ Dhammadharo, *Satipatthana Jalan Langsung Ke Tujuan* (11 park road, 1997).

satipatthanas in one practice.¹⁰ expressed a similar opinion, explaining that since the ‘body’ is experienced through ‘sensation,’ which is at the same time related to the ‘citta’ as a ‘mental object,’ then by observing bodily sensations, the four satipatthanas can also be included.

These two meditation methods are interconnected and have fundamental characters and functions that complement and reinforce each other. The focus on mindful breathing becomes the object of meditation, while the mind acts as the subject, resulting in a profound experience and understanding of breathing. With awareness of the breath done in a certain way, it will be able to connect the entire presence of the breath with the mind. The conscious breath and the body are one; the body can relax, creating harmonization between body and mind. In this harmonized state of body and mind, one can feel and realize ‘joy’ and ‘happiness’ through practices that can transform existing ‘suffering.’ Breath awareness practice enlivens the energy and power of alertness in the body and mind so that mindful breathing serves as an ‘anchor’ for stability in the present moment. This practice’s calm, peaceful, and relaxed state leads to meditative focus and concentration, accompanied by correct understanding and insight. It provides the opportunity to ‘stop’ and ‘look deeper.’ This quality invites us to be fully present in the moment.¹¹

The *samatha bhāvanā* approach discussed in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* teaches methods to increase awareness of breathing.¹² In the *sutta*, there are techniques and steps consisting of 16 breathing practices grouped into four categories, namely: awareness of the body while breathing, awareness of feelings, awareness of thought forms, and awareness of perception.¹³ In addition, the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* presents seven methods to practice, which include maintaining breath awareness in daily activities, being aware of the body, understanding the interrelationship between body and mind, filling oneself with happiness and joy, being aware of feelings, paying attention to and liberating the mind, and contemplating deeply to understand the essence of all phenomena (dharma).¹⁴ By consistently practicing and developing breath awareness, one can fulfill the four foundations of mindfulness.

The *Satipatṭhāna Sutta* explains that the practice of mindfulness serves as an excellent method to cleanse all living beings, to help overcome anxiety and sorrow, and to eradicate suffering, both physical and mental, to attain wisdom and understand nirvana through the four foundations of mindfulness.¹⁵ The four foundations of mindfulness include awareness of the physical, awareness

¹⁰ Sunlun, *Satipatthana Jalan Langsung Ke Tujuan* (11 park road, 1993).

¹¹ Shaky, “Kompetensi Pribadi Buddha.”

¹² Shaky.

¹³ Akhmad Bukhori, Agustin Revi Yanti, and Arida Rahmawati, “Penerapan Mindfulness Training Sebagai Upaya Dalam Mengurangi Psychological Distress Pada Generasi Z,” 2023, 1 – 9.

¹⁴ Shaky, “Kompetensi Pribadi Buddha.”

¹⁵ Shaky.

of feelings, awareness of thoughts, and awareness of the object of thought (all phenomena or dharma, meaning ‘all things’). With mindfulness, we will be able to recognize what is happening, both within ourselves and in our surroundings, whether mental or physical awareness is more prominent or not in our daily activities. In addition, through training and developing the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness to a higher level, we will be invited to the seven elements of enlightenment.¹⁶

Being fully mindful means being aware of the present moment and choosing to stay in the moment. Mindfulness refers to attention directed deliberately, in the present moment, and without judgment. Mindfulness is also the ability to stay present and alert in the present moment so that we can be aware of everything happening both inside and outside of us. Mindfulness is also known as the ability to recognize and notice things as they are.¹⁷ By increasing mindfulness, we can connect better with ourselves and the environment through consistent practice. As we become fully aware, mental engagement develops, with the quality of awareness often described as genuine attention. In essence, mindfulness can be summarised as one’s ability to be fully awake and present in the present moment without judgment and to see things as they are.

Practicing mindfulness and meditation in response to the phenomena around us, especially regarding differences and diversity, can create mindfulness and gratitude towards individuals and things of value. Managing internal thoughts and observing feelings without judgment supports our connection to the present moment, as well as to real life, which in turn can provide many benefits.¹⁸

Implementing mindfulness can begin by utilizing the five senses of being aware of what is seen, heard, felt, smelled, and tasted. Individuals who practice mindfulness know the sensation of the fabric on their body, the flow of air in and out of their nose, and the sounds and smells around them. Observing without passing judgment and becoming aware of these things is the core concept of mindfulness. In a more complex form, mindfulness includes ‘awareness of thoughts and feelings without judgment.’ Mindfulness is one of the self-skills in the personal abilities of Buddhists. One should always practice mindfulness in the various activities he or she does daily and be able to observe every moment of his or her life.

Awareness or mindfulness serves as the primary tool for dealing with reality intelligently and without distortion. The concept of mindfulness can serve as

¹⁶ Hery Gunawan, Dhammanando, Kabri, “Kebudayaan Buddhis Dan Gaya Hidup,” *Ta-jug: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam, Sosial Dan Humaniora* 1, no. 1 (2023): 11 – 16.

¹⁷ Shakya, “Kompetensi Pribadi Buddha.”

¹⁸ Dean Ascha Wijaya et al., “Potensi Keuntungan Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Terhadap Kecemasan Saat Pandemi Covid-19 Pada Orang Dewasa,” *Malahayati Nursing Journal* 5, no. 8 (2023): 2775 – 86, <https://doi.org/10.33024/mnj.v5i8.10957>. it is crucial to discover effective strategies for alleviating this anxiety. One promising approach is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

the basis for more effective self-improvement. Mindfulness practice not only improves focus and coping skills, but also supports individuals to connect more deeply with themselves. With a clearer understanding of themselves, individuals can optimize their personal potential and achieve significant goals.¹⁹

Amidst the complex challenges facing the modern world, mindfulness, rooted in the Buddhist meditation tradition, offers a new perspective that can be applied in various aspects of life, particularly education.²⁰ Mindfulness, or full awareness, is the ability to be fully present in the present moment, aware of thoughts, feelings, and the environment without judgment.²¹ In the context of education, the application of mindfulness not only contributes to the individual development of students but also has broader implications for society and the environment in which they live.

Today's world is increasingly complex, with sustainability challenges encompassing environmental, social, economic, and cultural issues. Threats to the health of our planet, social injustice, and climate change are issues that require serious attention from the current generation. In this context, education is no longer just a tool to acquire academic knowledge but also a platform to mould the character and skills necessary for individuals to think critically and act, not only for their own benefit but for the good of society as a whole.

An effective education system must be able to prepare students to face these challenges with strong social and emotional skills. This is where mindfulness emerges as a promising strategic approach. By introducing mindfulness practices into the education curriculum, schools can support the development of skills such as empathy, resilience, and the ability to manage stress, all of which are vital in shaping future generations capable of contributing to a sustainable world.

A holistic approach to education emphasizes the importance of balance between academic and non-academic aspects. Mindfulness, focusing on observation without judgment, allows students to be more aware of their thoughts and feelings and those of others. This not only helps students to manage their own emotions but also enhances their ability to interact with others positively. Research conducted by²² Mindfulness practices can significantly

¹⁹ Randye J Semple and Christine Burke, "OBM Integrative and Complementary Medicine State of the Research: Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Children and Adolescents," no. July 2018 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.21926/obm.icm.1901001>.

²⁰ Joyce Ann Mercer, "Mindfulness in Education and Religious Education," *Religious Education* 119, no. 4 (2024): 243–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2024.2389617>.

²¹ Author Manuscript and Empirical Studies, "NIH Public Access" 31, no. 6 (2013): 1041–56, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2011.04.006.Effects>.

²² Charlotte Zenner, Solveig Herrnleben-Kurz, and Harald Walach, "Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Schools-A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5, no. JUN (2014): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603>. using a comprehensive search strategy designed to locate both published and unpublished studies. Systematic search-

impact students' mental health, reduce stress, and improve concentration all important factors in creating a productive learning environment.

Furthermore, mindfulness approaches in education emphasize collaboration, understanding, and cooperation. In a classroom that applies mindfulness principles, students are taught to respect each other and collaborate, building the social skills necessary for success in the real world. By creating a supportive and inclusive environment, students not only feel safer but also more motivated to learn.

Mental health is an important aspect of educational success.²³ Stress and anxiety often interfere with students' ability to learn and achieve. By implementing mindfulness, students are taught techniques to manage stress and create a more balanced mental space, which is important for their emotional well-being. Mindfulness programs in schools are effective in improving students' mental and emotional resilience. For teachers, mindfulness training is also highly beneficial. When teachers are equipped with the skills to manage their stress and emotions, it can create a more positive and supportive classroom climate.

Applying mindfulness in education is not only of interest to schools and teachers but also to parents and the wider community. A deep understanding of the benefits of mindfulness practices can encourage all parties to work together to create an environment that supports students' holistic development. With strong support from the whole community, mindfulness initiatives in schools can flourish and provide wider long-term benefits.

Looking ahead, the integration of mindfulness in education is expected to create not only a generation of academically intelligent but also socially aware and responsible individuals. A generation that can adapt to change, take conscious actions towards sustainability, and be able to contribute to a better society. With a broader view, mindfulness-based education can catalyze positive societal change.²⁴

In integrating mindfulness into the education system, challenges and necessary steps must also be considered. Schools need to design programs that not only teach the concept of mindfulness but also implement it in daily life. This involves training teachers, developing appropriate teaching materials,

es in 12 databases were performed in August 2012. Further studies were identified via hand search and contact with experts. Two reviewers independently extracted the data, also selecting information about intervention programs (elements, structure etc.

²³ Universitas Islam Nusantara, "Pengaruh Kesehatan Mental Terhadap Prestasi Akademik Mahasiswa Tingkat Akhir," 2023, 23 – 28.

²⁴ Universitas Darussalam Gontor and Universitas Darussalam Gontor, "PROBLEM MINDFULLNESS PERSPEKTIF WORLDVIEW ISLAM THE PROBLEM OF MINDFULLNESS ON ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW PRESPECTIVE Maulana Dzunnurraïn PENDAHULUAN Penyakit Mental, Juga Dikenal Sebagai Gangguan Jiwa Atau Gangguan Mental , Telah Menjadi Fokus Perhatian Global D" 9, no. 2 (2023): 118 – 37, <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S175251.3>.

and creating learning spaces that allow mindfulness practices to take place on an ongoing basis. Continuous research will help identify best practices and demonstrate the successes and challenges of this approach. With strong data and evidence, more schools and education systems will be motivated to adopt and implement mindfulness.

II. METHODS

This research method is based on a literature study and uses an approach by existing theories. In preparing this article, we chose the library research method. This research utilizes various library sources to obtain data by reading, recording, and processing relevant information.

By the approach taken, this research method is deductive, concluding general principles to specific statements through systematic reasoning. The method used includes several stages, including (1) determining the location and time of the research, (2) collecting data, (3) analyzing data, and (4) developing a conceptual framework.

This article results from thoughts and a literature review based on Buddhist insights to build a more sustainable world. The preparation process was carried out by collecting data and information from various books and journals related to mindfulness and research in Buddhist education. One of the issues discussed is mindfulness in education, with a focus on the application of mindfulness in an educational context that departs from Buddhist principles to create a more sustainable environment. Type and nature of research.

This type of research is a literature study, in which the study is organised by collecting data and information from various textbooks related to statistics and research on Buddhist education.

First, the method of data collection is that data is obtained from various sources that support this research, including textbooks, scientific journals, theses, theses, dissertations, the internet, and other relevant sources. Second, the sources of literature used. There are three sources of literature, namely primary sources, secondary sources, and tertiary sources. Primary sources are textbooks that discuss mindfulness in education and Buddhist education research. Secondary sources are journals that discuss mindfulness, education, and Buddhist education research. Tertiary sources are audio and visual data archives that serve as supporting references for the writing. This source is important to strengthen the interpretation of the information contained in primary and secondary sources. Third, the data analysis technique used is content analysis, which is carried out by discussing in depth the contents of the writings of various existing sources.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In today's modern era, education faces various challenges that are not only academic but also rooted in students' social, emotional, and mental development. Therefore, implementing mindfulness into the education system is becoming increasingly important. Based on the analyses conducted, we can categorize the results and discussion into several main sections: (1) the impact

of mindfulness on students, (2) the impact of mindfulness on teachers, and (3) the challenges in implementation.

One of the most significant impacts of mindfulness practice on students is that)²⁵ showed that students who underwent a mindfulness practice programme had better concentration skills compared to students who did not engage in the practice. This is because mindfulness trains the brain to be more present in the present moment so that students can absorb information more effectively.

In addition to improving focus, mindfulness contributes to students' learning motivation.²⁶ Stated that students involved in mindfulness programmes experienced a significant increase in intrinsic motivation. They were more eager to attend lessons and do schoolwork and were more involved in extracurricular activities. This suggests that mindfulness not only plays a role in academics but also in students' character development.

Furthermore, mindfulness practices assist students in building strong social and emotional skills.²⁷ Noted that students who underwent regular mindfulness sessions showed higher levels of empathy. They are more able to put themselves in the shoes of others and contribute to creating a respectful learning environment. These skills are crucial in establishing a harmonious and productive school community.

A longitudinal study showed that students who practiced mindfulness experienced significant improvements in emotional well-being. The study found a reduction in symptoms of anxiety and depression while improving students' ability to cope with daily stresses. By implementing mindfulness practices, schools can equip students with the necessary skills to overcome various challenges in life, thus becoming more resilient.

Mindfulness itself refers to the presence of a focused mind, which contains the ability to remember past experiences as well as expand present attention and awareness in order to gather wisdom. A person who has wisdom will feel a sense of calmness within. Over time, if students commit to practicing mindfulness earnestly, they will feel peace in the soul and body while undergoing lectures. Through this practice, students will get used to developing a more creative, innovative, and responsible mentality in their studies.²⁸

²⁵ Manuscript and Studies, "NIH Public Access."

²⁶ Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, and Walach, "Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Schools-A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." using a comprehensive search strategy designed to locate both published and unpublished studies. Systematic searches in 12 databases were performed in August 2012. Further studies were identified via hand search and contact with experts. Two reviewers independently extracted the data, also selecting information about intervention programs (elements, structure etc.

²⁷ Q. R. Shaqia, "The Power of Mindfulness in Education: Enhancing Focus and Emotional Well-Being" 3, no. 3 (2023): 1–20, <http://pustakailmu.id/index.php/pustakailmu/article/view/338>.

²⁸ Gondo Saputro et al., "Analisis Penerapan Mindfulness Dalam Pembelajaran Siswa

The changes resulting from mindfulness practice also positively impact interpersonal relationships, such as the emergence of benevolence, compassion, and empathy. All of these will naturally develop from the experience of mindfulness practice. Any individual who has the determination to practice mindfulness will experience changes within themselves. In addition, if students are accustomed to doing it in a lecture environment, they will be more focused on academic activities, such as reading material, completing assignments, presenting information, listening to lecturers, and others.²⁹

Thus, student learning outcomes will be much better, and knowledge growth will increase. This knowledge growth will also further strengthen the correct practice of mindfulness, resulting in significant spiritual development.

The results of the analysis on the effect of mindfulness on students' interest in learning showed significant findings. The evidence generated through research using questionnaires and analysis of the respective variables yields a conclusion that can be tested and accounted for. Therefore, these results can be used as a basis for making decisions and drawing conclusions in research. Mindfulness plays an important role in education. By applying a mindful attitude to various learning activities, such as completing tasks, expressing opinions, asking questions, and showing enthusiasm while learning, students will feel calm, which helps them focus more on the learning process.³⁰

Not only for students, mindfulness practices have a significant impact on teachers' well-being. Teachers' mental health plays an important role in creating a positive learning climate. According to,³¹ teachers who apply mindfulness in their daily lives feel better able to manage stress and face challenges in the classroom. By increasing mental resilience, teachers become more effective in managing the classroom and interacting with students.

The practice of mindfulness also enriches the teaching patterns that teachers implement. By having a deeper understanding of the interconnections between emotions and behavior, teachers can better implement approaches that are more sensitive to students' needs. This was seen in a study by,³² which showed that teachers who engaged in mindfulness training tended to be more responsive to student behavior and more patient in dealing with challenges in the teaching and learning process.

Sekolah Dasar" 6, no. 2014 (2023): 1214 – 19.

²⁹ Dianita Maulinda and Makmuroh Sri Rahayu, "Pengaruh Mindfulness Terhadap Stres Akademik Pada Siswa SMAN X Cianjur Di Masa Pandemi COVID-19," n.d., 100 – 108.

³⁰ Ary Sugata et al., "Pengaruh Mindfulness Terhadap Minat Belajar Mahasiswa Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Agama Buddha Jinarakkhita Bandar Lampung Tahun 2021," *Jurnal Agama Buddha Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 8, no. 2 (2022): 87–95, <https://doi.org/10.53565/abip.v8i2.649>.

³¹ Saputro et al., "Analisis Penerapan Mindfulness Dalam Pembelajaran Siswa Sekolah Dasar."

³² Windi Fatika Sari and Eem Munawaroh, "Pengaruh Mindfulness Terhadap Resiliensi Pada Siswa Remaja SMP Pendahuluan" 7, no. 2 (2022): 1 – 10.

Despite the many benefits, not all teachers have equal access to mindfulness practices. This is mainly due to the lack of support from institutions.³³ To integrate mindfulness into the classroom, support from education policy and proper skills training for teachers should be prioritized. Schools must provide resources and time to support teachers in adopting this practice.

Mindfulness has an important role as a protective factor that can help teachers to increase awareness of natural emotional states. Thus, when faced with pressures from the environment, teachers can respond appropriately and control emotional reactivity, which in turn can reduce the risk of emotional exhaustion and burnout. In addition, mindfulness can also increase teachers' confidence in managing various activities and handling students' problematic behavior at school so that its effectiveness in preventing burnout becomes more optimal.³⁴

Teachers with a high level of mindfulness tend to be more confident in carrying out teaching and classroom management tasks.³⁵ They can also build positive relationships with students during the learning process. All these conditions help teachers manage the demands of the work environment and avoid the risk of burnout. There are four effects of mindfulness on teachers, namely (1) Increased mindfulness and stress reduction: mindfulness training aims to improve the mindfulness ability of teachers, which is expected to help them cope with stress arising from work.³⁶ In this analysis, individuals are taught to be aware of physical and psychological reactions to respond to stressful experiences with acceptance without passing judgment. (2) Results: The analysis showed a significant difference in teachers' stress levels before and after the training, with the most notable decrease in stress occurring in the physical aspect, followed by emotions, behavior, and cognition. (3) Stress coping strategies: Mindfulness is recognized as one of the effective strategies for dealing with stress, allowing teachers to respond to work pressures in

³³ Putu Winda Yuliantari G.D. and Pratiwi Widyasari, "Peran Efikasi Diri Dalam Memediasi Interaksi Mindfulness Dan Burnout Pada Guru Sekolah Dasar Inklusif," *Persona: Jurnal Psikologi Indonesia* 9, no. 1 (2020): 118 – 39, <https://doi.org/10.30996/persona.v9i1.3373>.

³⁴ G. D. and Widyasari.

³⁵ G. D. and Widyasari.

³⁶ Masfi Sya'fiatul Ummah, "No 主観的健康感を中心とした在宅高齢者における 健康関連指標に関する共分散構造分析Title," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 11, no. 1 (2019): 1 – 14, http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM_PEMBETUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI.we test the small molecule flexible ligand docking program Glide on a set of 19 non- α -helical peptides and systematically improve pose prediction accuracy by enhancing Glide sampling for flexible polypeptides. In addition, scoring of the poses was improved by post-processing with physics-based implicit solvent MM-GBSA calculations. Using the best RMSD among the top 10 scoring poses as a metric, the success rate (RMSD ≤ 2.0 Å for the interface backbone atoms

a healthier way. It gives them choices in responding to stressors instead of reacting automatically. (4) Training success: Teachers who participated in the training reported that mindfulness practice provided new awareness and the ability to explore internal resources. This enhances the ability to deal with stress more adaptively and productively.

Several previous studies have also shown that mindfulness can help teachers cope with the demands of the job. A study by³⁷ revealed that following the training, there was a significant reduction in levels of anxiety, feelings of isolation, and emotional and physical exhaustion. Further assessment also showed that the study participants experienced increased self-compassion and significantly decreased fatigue and sleep difficulties. Overall,³⁸ this research indicates that mindfulness can have a positive impact on the teaching profession.

Although the benefits of mindfulness integration in education are clear, some challenges in its implementation still need to be highlighted. Firstly, time is one of the main constraints. Many teachers report that they do not have enough time in their class schedule to insert mindfulness sessions, usually focused on the busy academic curriculum.³⁹ For this, it is necessary to ensure that the curriculum can accommodate mindfulness sessions without burdening students' learning hours.

Secondly, there are also challenges in terms of understanding and acceptance of mindfulness practices. Not all teachers and administrators understand the value of mindfulness in an educational context. Education and awareness about mindfulness needs to be continuously disseminated among educators.⁴⁰ Also noted that professional training for effective teachers is essential in order to integrate mindfulness confidently and competently.

Thirdly, student diversity also affects the way mindfulness can be applied. Students with diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences may require different approaches in the implementation of mindfulness strategies. Therefore, adapting the mindfulness curriculum to suit the needs of different students is very important. This can be done by inviting students to contribute to designing relevant mindfulness activities.⁴¹

³⁷ Lely Ika Mariyati, Eko Hardi Ansyah, and Widyastuti, *STRATEGI MENINGKATKAN KESEHATAN KERJA DI GURU PAUD OPTIMALISASI RELIGIUSITAS DAN MINDFULNESS* (Jawa Timur: UMSIDA Press, 2024).

³⁸ Ummah, "No 主観的健康感を中心とした在宅高齢者における 健康関連指標に関する共分散構造分析Title."

³⁹ Saputro et al., "Analisis Penerapan Mindfulness Dalam Pembelajaran Siswa Sekolah Dasar."

⁴⁰ Bukhori, Yanti, and Rahmawati, "Penerapan Mindfulness Training Sebagai Upaya Dalam Mengurangi Psychological Distress Pada Generasi Z."

⁴¹ Khatulistiwa Jurnal, Sosial Humaniora, and Stai Al-hamidiyah Jakarta, "Membangun Lingkungan Yang Mendukung Pertumbuhan Dan Pembelajaran : Studi Kasus Sekolah Ramah Anak Di SDIT AR- Rahmaniayah Depok Imam Hasani" 4, no. 3 (2024): 257 – 74.

The challenge faced by educators is to find effective methods to help students improve concentration and learning achievement. Several previous studies have shown that mindfulness practices can significantly improve the quality of student learning at the high school and college levels.⁴² For example, mindfulness-based learning models have been shown to help students manage academic stress and increase motivation to learn. In addition, another study revealed that mindfulness practice contributes to reducing academic anxiety levels and improving students' ability to focus on understanding learning materials.⁴³

Mindfulness, or mindfulness, is a practice rooted in the Buddhist tradition that aims to increase an individual's awareness of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations experienced in the present moment. At Raden Wijaya, Wonogiri, mindfulness is often integrated into the context of education and personal development. The aim is to help students and the community manage stress, improve concentration, and achieve mental well-being. Mindfulness practice at Raden Wijaya includes various activities, such as meditation, breathing exercises, and self-reflection. These activities are designed to help individuals be more present in each moment, reduce anxiety, and overall improve their quality of life.⁴⁴

Mindfulness teaches students to be more aware and connected to the present moment, which serves an important function in reducing mental disorders such as anxiety and stress, two factors that often become major hindrances in learning concentration. This finding aligns with previous research showing that mindfulness practices can improve attention and executive ability, which is highly relevant in the educational context, especially for students who struggle to maintain focus while learning. However, challenges remain in ensuring the sustainability of this mindfulness program's benefits.⁴⁵

IV. CONCLUSION

The application of mindfulness in Buddhist education provides a new and practical perspective to address the challenges faced by students and teachers in the modern era. Through mindfulness practices, students can experience significant improvements in concentration, stress management, and social skills that support positive interactions in learning environments. Mindfulness not only serves to improve academic performance but also contributes to students' emotional well-being and mental health, which is important for their

⁴² Ummah, "No 主観的健康感を中心とした在宅高齢者における 健康関連指標に関する共分散構造分析Title."

⁴³ Ung Gondo Saputro et al., "Pengaruh Mindfulness Terhadap Kemampuan Membaca Pemahaman Kreatif Pada Siswa Sekolah Dasar" 13, no. 2 (2024): 1861 – 70.

⁴⁴ Dwiyono Putranto Dwiyono Putranto, "Peranan Pelatihan Meditasi Kesadaran Untuk Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan," *Jurnal Agama Buddha Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 7, no. 1 (2021): 103 – 11, <https://doi.org/10.53565/abip.v4i1.315>.

⁴⁵ Putri et al., "Penerapan Teknik Mindfulness Dalam Proses Pembelajaran Di Sekolah Menengah Atas."

holistic development.

For teachers, despite the challenges of workload and variations in participants' abilities, the application of mindfulness can assist in managing stress and improving teaching quality. Mindfulness invites educators to create supportive and inclusive spaces, facilitating respectful interactions both in the classroom and within the school community.

However, successfully implementing mindfulness in education requires consistency and adaptation to diverse students' backgrounds. Curriculum adaptations that include student input are crucial to ensure the practice is relevant and impactful.

Therefore, awareness of the importance of mindfulness in education needs to be raised, as well as the need for ongoing training and support for educators to effectively implement mindfulness principles. Thus, by integrating mindfulness into the education system, it is hoped that a more sustainable, healthy, and productive learning environment will be created, which not only facilitates academic achievement but also shapes students' character to face the challenges ahead.

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INNOVATION OF BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS LEARNING MEDIA BASED ON GAMIFICATION AS A CATALYST FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL HARMONY

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Abstract:

This study examines the integration of gamification in Buddhist education as an innovative approach to fostering peace and social harmony. Although digital technology has revolutionized the educational landscape, its application in religious education, particularly Buddhism, remains relatively limited. Therefore, this research focuses on the development and evaluation of an interactive gamification-based learning media designed to teach material on World Peace Figures to ninth-grade students in the Gladagsari District, Indonesia. Using the ADDIE development model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation), this gamification application is designed by integrating a Reward System and content tailored to the Buddhist religious education curriculum. Data collection was conducted through expert validation, questionnaire distribution to students, and a limited trial involving 23 students and two Buddhist education teachers. The results indicate that this learning media received positive evaluations from validators and students, with an average score of 79.6, categorized as good. Additionally, the implementation trial showed a 15% improvement in students' average scores compared to pre-implementation scores. These findings suggest that effectively applied gamification elements can enhance student engagement and their understanding of the principles of peace in Buddhist teachings. However, the effectiveness of this media implementation greatly depends on the proper application strategy, including teacher supervision and the integration of game elements with the learning material. This research contributes to the

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development of technology-based learning models in religious education, particularly in the context of peace education. The findings also highlight the importance of balancing digital technology integration in religious education to support the achievement of holistic learning goals and create a conducive learning environment for cultivating values of peace and social harmony in a multicultural society.

Keywords: *Gamification, interactive learning media, Buddhist religious education, social harmony, religious education technology, educational innovation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a key role in human resource development. In the digital era and information technology, the application of innovative learning methods has become increasingly relevant to improve the quality of education.¹ Technology-based learning can enhance students' abilities in aspects of knowledge, attitude, and skills.² Therefore, teachers, students, and educational institutions need to utilize technology appropriately.³ Their readiness is a key factor in the implementation of technology-based learning, which contributes to the current development of education.⁴ As technology continues to develop, the use of smartphones has become increasingly widespread, encompassing various functions such as business, office work, entertainment, communication, and learning.⁵ The portability of smartphones is a major advantage compared to laptops and PCs, making them widely used by various groups, including students.⁶ Although smartphones are often used for learning activities, their utilization is still suboptimal compared to other features such as social media and chatting. The researcher conducted interviews

¹ Puji Astuti and Febrian Febrian, "Blended Learning Syarah: Bagaimana Penerapan Dan Persepsi Mahasiswa," *Jurnal Gantang* 4, no. 2 (2019): p. 111 – 19, <https://doi.org/10.31629/jg.v4i2.1560>.

² I Gede Ryan Shebastian, I Made Putrama, and P Wayan Arta Suyasa, "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Interaktif 'Pengenalan Hewan Dan Tumbuhan' Pada Mata Metode Gamefikasi Untuk Siswa Kelas Ii Di Sekolah Dasar," *Karmapati* 9, no. Md1c (2020): p. 8 – 20.

³ Asri Pujihastuti, Teguh Waluyo, and Budi Murtiyasa, "Penerapan Metode Gamifikasi Dengan Pendekatan Hasthalaku Pada Pelajaran Produk Kreatif Dan Kewirausahaan," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 4 (2023): p. 415–24, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v3i4.320>.

⁴ Nita Sari Narulita Dewi, Yusup Supriyono, and Yuyus Saputra, "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Bahasa Berbasis Gamifikasi Untuk Guru-Guru Di Lingkungan Pondok Pesantren Al Amin Sindangkasih-Ciamis," *E-Dimas: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 11, no. 3 (2020): p. 382 – 87, <https://doi.org/10.26877/e-dimas.v11i3.5146>.

⁵ Kyeong-Beom Park et al., "Deep Learning-Based Mobile Augmented Reality for Task Assistance Using 3D Spatial Mapping and Snapshot-Based RGB-D Data," *Computers & Industrial Engineering* 146 (2020): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cie.2020.106585>.

⁶ Inyeop Kim et al., "Understanding Smartphone Usage in College Classrooms: A Long-Term Measurement Study," *Computers & Education* 141 (2019): 103611.

to understand the needs in learning with several junior high school Buddhist education teachers in the Gladagsari District as case studies. The interview results revealed that most teachers feel students are more interested in using smartphones for entertainment purposes than for learning, which indicates a need for more innovative strategies, such as gamification, to enhance the effectiveness of smartphone use in education.⁷ Based on the needs analysis conducted, it was found that teachers require an interactive gamification-based learning tool to improve students' understanding of Buddhist religious education materials as well as their ability to answer questions correctly. In response to this need, the study proposes the development of a gamification-based quiz application that includes features such as a Leaderboard to create a competitive atmosphere, a Reward System to appreciate student achievements, and content aligned with the textbook as the source of quiz questions. This approach aims to enable students to understand the material while practicing answering questions more effectively. Learning media plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning process as a means of delivering messages.⁸ Media that are used flexibly can increase student engagement, motivate them to be more active, and help them better understand abstract concepts.⁹ Furthermore, learning tools also serve to focus students' attention on the material being taught, thus enhancing the overall effectiveness of learning. One interesting learning media is the use of gamification.¹⁰ Gamification integrates game elements into learning to improve student motivation and engagement.¹¹ This approach makes learning more dynamic and interactive, providing students with the flexibility to learn without being bound by time and location. Game elements such as challenges, rewards, and grading systems can increase the

⁷ Jonna Koivisto and Juho Hamari, "The Rise of Motivational Information Systems: A Review of Gamification Research," *International Journal of Information Management* 45 (2019): p. 191–210, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.10.013>.

⁸ I Putu Novri Febrianto, Dessy Seri Wahyuni, and Nyoman Sugihartini, "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Multimedia Interaktif Pada Kelas Xi Mata Pelajaran Biologi Dengan Materi 'Sistem Sirkulasi Pada Manusia Dan Sistem Pencernaan Makanan' Di Sma Negeri 2 Singaraja," *Kumpulan Artikel Mahasiswa Pendidikan Teknik Informatika (KARMAPATI)* 10, no. 3 (2021): p. 282, <https://doi.org/10.23887/karmapati.v10i3.36888>.

⁹ Adrie Satrio and Tika Puspita Widya Rini, "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Berbasis Gamification Pengenalan Lingkungan Lahan Basah Untuk Siswa Sekolah Dasar," *Elementary School Journal Pgsd Fip Unimed* 12, no. 4 (2022): p. 386, <https://doi.org/10.24114/esjpgsd.v12i4.39591>.

¹⁰ Amalia Yunia Rahmawati, "Pengaruh Penggunaan Media Pembelajaran Tangga Pintar Dan Ular Tangga Pintar Pada Penjumlahan Dan Pengurangan Terhadap Motivasi Belajar Siswa Kelas 1 Pada Pembelajaran Matematika Di MI Maarif Plolorejo Tahun Pelajaran 2019/2020" (2020), [https://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/9173/1/Thesis Skripsi Amalia Yunia Rahmawati.pdf](https://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/9173/1/Thesis%20Skripsi%20Amalia%20Yunia%20Rahmawati.pdf).

¹¹ Galuh Romadhoni Supra et al., "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Berbasis Gamification Dan Literasi Matematis Pada Model Flipped Classroom Untuk Siswa SMP." *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Tadris Matematika* (Santika), 2021, p. 520 – 48.

appeal of learning.¹² The researcher reviewed various previous studies related to the application of gamification in learning to strengthen the foundation of this research. A study by Galuh Romadhoni Supra et al. demonstrated the advantages of presenting material by combining visual and audio elements, but it had limitations in updating the questions.¹³ Meanwhile, the study by Anang Pramono and Martin Dwiky Setiawan on a fruit recognition application showed effectiveness in delivering information, but it still had limitations in the database size and the responsiveness of the Augmented Reality (AR) feature.¹⁴ Theoretically, the concept of gamification in education has received widespread attention in various academic literature. According to Juho Hamari, Jonna Koivisto, and Harri Sarsa, gamification has been proven to increase student engagement in learning if the game elements are well-designed.¹⁵ Katie Seaborn and Deborah Fels define gamification as the use of game elements in non-game contexts to enhance the user experience.¹⁶ Furthermore, Michael Sailer et al. stated that game elements such as challenges, rewards, and social interactions have a positive impact on students' psychological satisfaction in gamified learning.¹⁷ Several other studies further reinforce the argument about the effectiveness of gamification in education. According to Sujit Subhash and Elizabeth A Cudney, gamification can enhance student engagement and motivation by providing a more enjoyable and engaging learning experience.¹⁸

¹² Moch. Hari Purwidianoro and Widiyanto Hadi, "Arsitektur Boardgame Edukasi Sebagai Unsur Gamifikasi Pembelajaran Untuk Membangun Partisipasi Aktif, Motivasi, Dan Minat Belajar Siswa," *Joined Journal (Journal of Informatics Education)* 3, no. 2 (2020): p. 9, <https://doi.org/10.31331/joined.v3i2.1420>.

¹³ Puspita Octafiani, Andi Tejawati, and Pohny Pohny, "Aplikasi Pembelajaran Matematika Dengan Konsep Gamifikasi Berbasis Android," *Jurnal Rekayasa Teknologi Informasi (JURTI)*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.30872/jurti.v1i2.907>.

¹⁴ Anang Pramono and Martin Dwiky Setiawan, "Pemanfaatan Augmented Reality Sebagai Media Pembelajaran Pengenalan Buah-Buahan," *INTENSIF: Jurnal Ilmiah Penelitian Dan Penerapan Teknologi Sistem Informasi* 3, no. 1 (2019): p. 54, <https://doi.org/10.29407/intensif.v3i1.12573>.

¹⁵ Juho Hamari, Jonna Koivisto, and Harri Sarsa, "Does Gamification Work? - A Literature Review of Empirical Studies on Gamification," *Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, 2014, p. 3025–34, <https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.377>.

¹⁶ Katie Seaborn and Deborah I Fels, "Gamification in Theory and Action: A Survey," *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* 74 (2015): p. 14 – 31, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2014.09.006>.

¹⁷ Michael Sailer et al., "How Gamification Motivates: An Experimental Study of the Effects of Specific Game Design Elements on Psychological Need Satisfaction," *Computers in Human Behavior* 69 (2017): p. 371 – 80, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.12.033>.

¹⁸ Sujit Subhash and Elizabeth A Cudney, "Gamified Learning in Higher Education: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Computers in Human Behavior* 87 (2018): p. 192 – 206, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.05.028>.

Khe Foon Hew et al. emphasize that gamification not only increases engagement but also improves learning outcomes when combined with effective pedagogical strategies.¹⁹ Michael Sailer and Lisa Homner mention that the use of appropriate game elements can enhance students' conceptual understanding.²⁰ Koivisto and Hamari reveal that gamification has a significant positive impact on engagement and learning retention in academic settings. In the context of Buddhist education, the use of gamification can strengthen students' understanding of Buddhist values while providing a deeper and more interactive learning experience.²¹ From these various studies, it is evident that they provide comprehensive insights into different aspects of applying gamification in learning, including the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. This information serves as a consideration in developing an effective gamification-based learning application. Practically, gamification learning materials are used to capture students' interest in the subject matter and inspire them to continue learning. This approach incorporates game elements, such as images, within the material to provide practical solutions and foster student interest. Gamification is defined as a concept that utilizes game mechanics, aesthetics, and play thinking to engage students, promote learning, and address various challenges in the learning process. Referring to the rapid development of smartphone technology, which has brought changes in students' learning behaviors and interests, this study aims to design an educational game in the form of an interactive Buddhist education learning media based on gamification. This media is developed for both Android and Laptop platforms with content on world peace figures for ninth-grade students. With this approach, it is hoped that the educational game can enhance students' enthusiasm for learning and make it easier for them to understand and master the material of Buddhist religious education more enjoyably and effectively.

Research methodology

The research method used in this study is Research and Development (R&D). Sukmadinata states that R&D is a procedure for developing a new product or improving an existing product, ensuring that the data can be accountable to specific groups or the general public. In its implementation, the research development design refers to the development steps of Brog and Gall, which have been modified by Sukmadinata.²² The development steps are

¹⁹ Khe Foon Hew et al., "Engaging Asian Students through Game Mechanics: Findings from Two Experiment Studies," *Computers & Education* 92 – 93 (2016): p. 221 – 36, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2015.10.010>.

²⁰ Michael Sailer and Lisa Homner, "The Gamification of Learning: A Meta-Analysis," *Educational Psychology Review* 32, no. 1 (2020): p. 77 – 112.

²¹ Koivisto and Hamari, "The Rise of Motivational Information Systems: A Review of Gamification Research." *International Journal of Information Management*, 45 (2019): p. 191 – 210.

²² Sukmadinata, Nana Syaodih. "Metode Penelitian Pendidikan". Remaja Rosdakarya, 2016, p. 164. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/536697>.

simplified into three main stages: preliminary study, product development, and product testing. The research model used to develop this gamification-based interactive learning media is the ADDIE development model, which consists of five stages: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. Based on the analysis results, the developed learning media is evaluated to ensure its effectiveness in enhancing students' understanding of the material on world peace figures.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Development of gamification-based interactive learning media

The development of gamification-based interactive learning media for Buddhist Religious Education, specifically the material on World Peace Figures for ninth-grade students, is an innovation aimed at improving the quality of learning. This study applies the ADDIE development model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation), which consists of five systematic stages to produce effective and engaging learning media for students. The analysis stage was conducted to understand the needs and characteristics of the students. The results of the preliminary study showed that students had difficulty understanding the material on World Peace Figures, exhibited low learning interest, and faced challenges in solving questions related to the material. Additionally, learning in junior high schools generally still relied on textbooks provided by the government, with few innovative teaching materials. Interviews with teachers revealed that students often felt bored when studying this material due to its unengaging presentation and their limited active involvement in the learning process. Therefore, the application of gamification is expected to enhance students' understanding and motivation by offering a more interactive and enjoyable approach. The social constructivism principle proposed by Vygotsky supports this approach, where active interaction can strengthen students' conceptual understanding.²³ In the design stage, the learning media was developed based on the results of the needs analysis. The design process involved creating storyboards and flowcharts to illustrate the interaction flow within the learning media. The media was designed in 25 frames, including a main page, learning materials, game-based practice questions, and developer profiles. In this stage, aesthetics and user interface were the primary focus. An attractive visual design was applied, utilizing colors, animations, and gamification elements such as points, levels, and challenges to make the learning experience more appealing to students. Additionally, a user-friendly principle was implemented to ensure the learning media could be easily used by students with varying levels of technological proficiency. Research by Hamari et al. (2014) shows that effective gamification can enhance students' intrinsic motivation by providing challenges that match their skill levels. The development stage includes product validation by a team of experts to assess the feasibility of the learning media before it is tested with

²³ Vygotsky, Lev S. "Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes." Harvard University Press, 1978. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjf9vz4>.

students. Content evaluation is conducted by a subject matter expert who assesses the suitability of the content, presentation, and relevance within the learning context. The validation results indicate that the content, presentation, and contextuality were rated as good, with an average score of 3.7, suggesting that the material can be used with some minor improvements. Suggestions from the subject matter expert included revisions to some illustrations that were deemed unclear and improvements in text presentation to make it easier for students to understand. The media aspect validation was carried out by an expert in educational technology, who assessed the interface design, layout, and other graphic elements. The validation results showed that this learning media is highly feasible for use, with an average score of 4.5. The media expert provided feedback regarding more intuitive navigation and enhanced graphic quality to support a more optimal learning experience.

Table of Media and Content Expert Validation

No	Aspect Evaluated	Average Score	Category	Suggestions for Improvement
1	Content Suitability	3,6	Good	Improve unclear illustrations and refine text presentation for better student comprehension.
2	Material Presentation	3,8	Good	Reorganize some parts of the material to make it more systematic.
3	Contextuality	3,7	Good	Adjust some examples to be more relevant to students' experiences.
4	Interface Design	4,5	Very Good	Enhance navigation to make it more intuitive.
5	Layout and Graphics	4,5	Very Good	Improve graphic quality to support a better learning experience.

After the validation and revision stages, the learning media was tested in a real learning situation. This limited trial involved two Buddhist Religious Education teachers and 23 junior high school students. The trial process was conducted with students using their smartphones to access the learning media while the teacher guided them through a projector to ensure better

understanding. The results of the trial and the improvement in test scores are presented in the table below:

Table of Learning Media Trial Results

No	Aspect Evaluated	Results
1	Student’s Response	Positive, more interested in the material
2	Teacher’s Response	Supports the use of media in teaching
3	Average Trial Test Score	79,6

Category	Challenges	Solutions Implemented
Good	Students were more focused on the game elements rather than the understanding of the material.	The teacher provided reinforcement instructions before playing and facilitated discussions after the game session
Good	A strategy is needed to ensure students not only play but also understand the material.	A strategy is needed to ensure students not only play but also understand the material
Good and Feasible for Use	-	-

The trial results show that this learning media received positive responses from both students and teachers. Students found the material more engaging due to the interactive elements and appealing visuals. The average trial test score reached 79.6, which falls into the good category and is deemed suitable for use in teaching.

Table of Test Score Improvement Before and After Using the Learning Media

No	Category	Average Score Before	Average Score After	Improvement (%)
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1	Students	68,2	78,5	15%
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However, several challenges arose during implementation. Some students tended to focus more on the gaming aspect rather than understanding the content, which required additional guidance from the teacher. To address this, the teacher applied strategies such as reinforcing instructions before gameplay, conducting discussions after the game session, and awarding students who correctly answered the questions. Furthermore, an evaluation was conducted to analyze the effectiveness of the media in improving students' understanding. One method used was comparing test scores before and after the media was used. The results showed an average score increase of 15%, indicating that gamified learning media was effective in enhancing students' learning outcomes. The evaluation phase involved analyzing feedback and suggestions from both students and teachers. Some of the challenges identified included students focusing more on the game elements rather than the understanding of the content. To overcome this, the teacher needed to play an active role in guiding students to stay focused on the learning objectives. The evaluation also involved analyzing the effectiveness of the media in improving students' understanding. Test results showed an average score increase of 15% after using the media compared to before its use. This suggests that gamified learning media can improve learning outcomes when implemented with the right strategies. Overall, the development of gamified learning media shows significant potential in increasing students' interest and learning outcomes. However, its effectiveness still depends on proper implementation. Some strategies that could be applied to optimize the use of this media include providing an initial explanation of the importance of understanding the game rules before using it, integrating content understanding with progress in the game, offering additional rewards for completing competency tests, and holding reflective discussion sessions to connect gaming experiences with content comprehension. Additionally, further research can be conducted to explore the long-term impact of gamification on Buddhist education, particularly in terms of student engagement and deeper understanding. With the right approach, gamified learning media can serve as an effective tool in enhancing students' learning experiences while supporting more innovative and enjoyable education.

2.2. Educational innovation as a catalyst for peace and social harmony

The development of gamification-based learning media not only focuses on enhancing the effectiveness of education but also serves as an instrument for fostering peace and social harmony. Through the gamified approach in Buddhist education, students not only gain knowledge about world peace figures but also develop values that support the creation of a peaceful and harmonious society. First, the implementation of gamification in education encourages the development of social-emotional skills essential for peace. The healthy competition system within the application teaches students about sportsmanship, appreciating others' achievements, and collaborating

to achieve common goals. This aligns with the research of Hikmah, Hapidin, and Syifa Aulia, which shows that interactive learning can enhance students' empathy and social awareness.²⁴ Second, the content on world peace presented through gamification media helps students internalize the values of peace more effectively. Through challenges and missions within the application, students not only memorize facts about peace figures but also experience decision-making simulations that reflect peace values. For example, in one learning module, students are presented with a conflict scenario and asked to choose the most insightful resolution based on Buddhist teachings and the examples set by the peace figures they have studied. Third, the gamification approach creates an inclusive learning environment that values diversity. The personalized reward system and progress tracking allow each student to progress according to their abilities without feeling left behind or marginalized. This creates a learning atmosphere that supports equality and appreciates differences, in line with universal peace principles. Fourth, the use of technology in Buddhist education opens opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and global understanding exchange. Through achievement-sharing features and online discussions, students can interact with peers from various backgrounds, building bridges of understanding across cultures that are essential for world peace. This experience enriches students' perspectives on diversity and global interdependence. Fifth, this interactive learning media also encourages the development of critical thinking and conflict resolution skills. Through various challenges and scenarios presented, students learn to analyze situations from different viewpoints and find solutions that benefit all parties. These skills are crucial in building a peaceful and harmonious society. The implications of this approach for peacebuilding can be seen in the changes in students' attitudes after using the learning media. Observation results show an increase in: (1) Awareness of the importance of dialogue and communication in resolving conflicts. (2) Appreciation for diversity and differing viewpoints. (3) Empathy and understanding of others' perspectives. (4) Cooperation and collaboration skills within groups; (5) Understanding of the importance of peace in a global context. The development of this gamification-based learning media aligns with the vision of sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of quality education (SDG 4) and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16).²⁵ By integrating technology and Buddhist values, this media not only transforms the way Buddhist education is delivered but also contributes to building the foundation for a more peaceful and harmonious society.

²⁴ Hikmah, Hapidin, and Syifa Aulia, "Pengembangan Media Video Animasi Interaktif Untuk Mengajarkan Perilaku Empati Pada Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun," *Nusantara Journal of Multidisciplinary Science* 1, no. 4 (2023): p. 802 – 18.

²⁵ Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana and Endah Murniningtyas, *Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Development*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210010788>.

2.3. Effectiveness of gamification in Buddhist education

The effectiveness of gamification in Buddhist education has shown very positive results based on various trials conducted. The use of gamification-based media has proven capable of creating a more dynamic and engaging learning environment for students. Through the application of game elements such as point systems and rewards, students' motivation to learn has increased by 45.²⁶ The implementation of interactive quizzes in learning allows students to learn directly from their mistakes, thus strengthening their understanding of the material taught. Students also have the opportunity to explore the material independently in a fun environment. The elements of challenge and healthy competition in learning encourage active student participation, transforming them from passive information receivers into engaged learners in the learning process. For teachers, gamification-based media offers a variety of teaching methods, which can reduce the monotony of conventional teaching. The interactive features available make it easier for teachers to deliver material and ensure students' understanding of the concepts being taught. A competitive yet healthy learning environment is created through gamification, where students are motivated to improve their achievements both individually and through collaboration with peers.²⁷ The engaging mechanisms of gamification also promote student independence and perseverance. They are encouraged to complete various challenges and continue striving to improve their understanding of Buddhist teachings. The use of attractive visuals, challenges that sharpen critical thinking, and the reward system further enhance the appeal of learning. Students' ability to access materials and practice without time or location constraints via the application also supports independent learning.²⁸ Overall, the application of gamification in Buddhist education has a very positive impact on increasing student interest, understanding, and participation. This approach not only creates a more enjoyable learning experience but also contributes to achieving better academic results. Through the integration of gamification elements in learning, students can develop a deeper understanding of the values of Buddhist teachings and appreciate them more effectively.

²⁶ Sawali Wahyu and Jeskel Fornardi Gotama, "Pengembangan Game Edukasi Pendidikan Agama Buddha Berbasis Progressive Web Apps Dengan Model Gamifikasi Dan Gdlc," *SKANIKA: Sistem Komputer Dan Teknik Informatika* 7, no. 1 (2024): p. 85 – 97, <https://doi.org/10.36080/skanika.v7i1.3145>.

²⁷ Hintari, Fima. *Studi Eksperimen Efektivitas Penerapan Metode Game Based Learning Terhadap Peningkatan Keaktifan Belajar Siswa Kelas X Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Buddha Di SMK Pembangunan Ampel Tahun Pelajaran 2022/2023*. Repository Smaratungga, 2023.

²⁸ Dwi Novita Sari and Ahmad Rifqy Alfiyan, "Peran Adaptasi Game (Gamifikasi) Dalam Pembelajaran Untuk Memperkuat Literasi Digital: Systematic Literature Review," *UPGRADE : Jurnal Pendidikan Teknologi Informasi* 1, no. 1 (2023): 43 – 52, <https://doi.org/10.30812/upgrade.v1i1.3157>.

2.4. Challenges and limitations in media development

The development of gamification-based learning media faces various challenges and limitations that must be considered to ensure its effective implementation. One fundamental issue is the limitation of technology access, as not all students and schools have the necessary devices or adequate internet access, particularly in remote areas.²⁹ This can create a gap in learning experiences between students in urban and rural areas. The process of adapting to the existing Buddhist Education curriculum also requires special attention. Christo Dichev and Darina Dicheva emphasize that time and continuous evaluation are needed to ensure that the gamification content aligns with learning objectives and does not neglect important aspects of education.³⁰ This challenge becomes even more complex considering the varied technological skills of teachers, where not all educators possess the necessary proficiency in operating digital learning media. The diversity of students' learning styles also becomes an important consideration in the media development process. Pratama and Setyaningrum reveal that each student has different preferences in absorbing information, whether through visual, auditory, or direct interaction.³¹ The learning media must be designed comprehensively to accommodate these diverse learning styles, which, of course, requires significant development time. From a technical perspective, the development of gamification-based learning media faces various issues such as bugs in the application, device compatibility problems, and limitations in features.³² This requires ongoing maintenance and development, which inevitably demands a significant investment in terms of technology, human resources, and supporting infrastructure. Schools with limited budgets may struggle to implement this system comprehensively. Armando M. Toda et al. identify that resistance to change is also a challenge, where some teachers and students may still be reluctant to adopt new technology in learning.³³ A proper approach to

²⁹ Vertirico Thong et al., "Tinjauan Literatur: Peluang Dan Tantangan Pendidikan Berbasis Digital," *Jurnal Literasi Digital* 3 (November 2023): 211–20, <https://doi.org/10.54065/jld.3.3.2023.368>.

³⁰ Christo Dichev and Darina Dicheva, "Gamifying Education: What Is Known, What Is Believed and What Remains Uncertain: A Critical Review," *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, vol. 14. (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-017-0042-5>.

³¹ L D Pratama and W Setyaningrum, "Game-Based Learning: The Effects on Student Cognitive and Affective Aspects," *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* 1097, no. 1 (2018): 12123, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1097/1/012123>.

³² Carlos Pelaez and Andrés Solano, "A Practice for the Design of Interactive Multimedia Experiences Based on Gamification: A Case Study in Elementary Education," *Sustainability* 15 (2023): 2385, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032385>.

³³ Armando M. Toda, Pedro H.D. Valle, and Seiji Isotani, "The Dark Side of Gamification: An Overview of Negative Effects of Gamification in Education," *Communications in Computer and Information Science* 832, no. August (2018): 143–56, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97934-2_9.

socializing and educating all parties is needed to help everyone understand the benefits and ease of using gamification. To address these various challenges, Islam Alomari, Hosam Al-Samarraie, and Reem Yousef suggest the need for thorough planning and a phased implementation strategy. Collaboration between media developers, teachers, and other educational stakeholders is crucial to ensuring that the developed learning media can meet the needs of all parties and provide maximum benefits in the Buddhist education process.³⁴

III. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the development of interactive gamification-based learning media has a positive impact on students' motivation and understanding in studying the material on World Peace Figures. The use of gamification elements such as challenges, rewards, and ranking systems successfully increased student engagement in the learning process. The ADDIE model applied in the development of this media proved effective in producing a product that meets the learning needs. The validation results show that this learning media is suitable for use with some minor improvements. The trials with students indicate that this media can enhance student interest in learning and their understanding of the subject matter, with an average score increase of 15% after using the media. However, some challenges in implementation were still found, such as students' tendency to focus more on the game elements rather than understanding the material. Therefore, additional strategies are needed, such as reinforcing instructions by the teacher, integrating discussions after the game sessions, and providing rewards based on material comprehension to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process. As a recommendation, further research can be conducted to explore the long-term effects of using gamification in Buddhist education. Additionally, the development of more adaptive features, such as a personalized question system and integration with Augmented Reality (AR) technology, could improve the quality of this learning media in the future.

³⁴ Islam Alomari, Hosam Al-Samarraie, and Reem Yousef, "The Role of Gamification Techniques In Promoting Student Learning: A Review And Synthesis," *Review Literature And Arts Of The Americas* 22, no. 2 (2019): 142–61.

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MINDFULNESS-BASED EDUCATION: CULTIVATING COMPASSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

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Abstract:

This study discusses the role of mindfulness-based education in fostering compassion and environmental awareness. *Mindfulness*, or mindfulness, helps students to be more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and actions so that it can increase empathy and concern for the environment. In Buddhism, the concept of mindfulness is closely related to *mettā* (love) and *karuṇā* (compassion), which encourage an attitude of caring and social responsibility. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach to analyze the effectiveness of mindfulness in the world of education. The results of the study show that the application of mindfulness can reduce deviant behavior, improve psychological well-being, and form individuals who are more aware of the impact of their actions on the environment. Therefore, the integration of mindfulness in education not only helps to improve academic achievement but also builds a generation that has high social and ecological awareness.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, education, compassion, environmental awareness, Buddhism.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education has an important role in shaping individual character and determining the future of a nation because through the educational process, a person not only acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to face life's challenges but also experiences the process of internalizing the values that shape mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors. More than just a means of transferring knowledge from one generation to the next, education also functions as a strategic vehicle in instilling ethical and moral values that are essential for the life of society, nation, and state. These values, such as honesty, responsibility,

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cooperation, and social and environmental concerns, are the main foundation for individuals to interact harmoniously with their fellow humans and the surrounding nature. Thus, education is not only oriented towards academic achievement but also has a crucial role in shaping individuals who have integrity, high social awareness, and the ability to contribute positively to social life and nation building.¹

The cultivation of ethical values in the world of education still faces various complex challenges, both from an internal and external perspective, which include factors such as the family environment, social environment, and the dynamics of the rapid development of technology and information. Several studies show that there are indications of moral degradation among students, which is reflected in various forms of behavior that do not reflect the ethical and moral values that should be instilled from an early age. This moral degradation can be caused by various factors, such as the lack of parental participation in guiding their children, the weak application of character education in the learning system, and exposure to negative content from social media and the internet that is not properly controlled.² Some examples of behavior that show moral degradation include a lack of respect for educators and older people, an increase in cases of bullying or bullying in the educational environment, a lack of awareness of the importance of honesty in teaching and learning activities such as in doing assignments or exams, and a low level of concern for cleanliness and social responsibility in the surrounding environment.

Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reveals that throughout 2023, there were over 3,800 incidences of bullying in Indonesia, with almost half of them occurring in educational facilities, including schools and Islamic boarding schools. One of the examples that emerged was at a Junior High School (SMP) in Cilacap, Central Java, when a kid experienced physical and verbal bullying by his peers to the point of enduring significant psychological damage. This incident was videotaped and went popular on social media, revealing the lack of the application of compassion ideals in the educational environment. This tendency is further substantiated by a report by the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI), which observed that during 2023 there were 30 officially documented occurrences of bullying, with the majority happening at the junior high school (SMP) level.³

To overcome the problem of moral degradation in the world of education, one of the approaches that can be applied is the practice of Mindfulness. Mindfulness, or mindfulness, is a technique that helps individuals to be more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and actions in the present moment without getting carried away by negative impulses or environmental pressures. In the world of education, the application of *Mindfulness* can be an effective strategy

¹ Krimananti (2024): 174.

² Hairiyah et.al.2021: 54

³ Mashabi (2023): FSGI: 30 Kasus Perundungan Terjadi di Sekolah Sepanjang Tahun 2023. Akses 18 February 2025.

in instilling ethical and moral values and reducing deviant behaviors such as *bullying*, dishonesty, and lack of responsibility.⁴ In addition, *Mindfulness* also plays a role in increasing focus and discipline in the learning process. Students who are fully aware of their learning activities will better understand the importance of academic honesty and have better self-control not to commit cheating acts such as cheating or lying. On the other hand, educators who apply *Mindfulness* in their teaching methods tend to be more able to create a harmonious learning environment, support the development of students' character, and manage conflicts with a more thoughtful approach.⁵

Furthermore, in Buddhism, *Mindfulness* is not only concerned with self-control and moral discipline, but also becomes the primary means of cultivating compassion (*karuṇā*) and awareness of the environment. Buddhism emphasizes the four main virtues (*brahmavihāra*), namely love (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). By developing⁶ *Mindfulness*, a person will better understand the suffering of other beings and be more sensitive to the impact of their actions. The practice of loving-kindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*) combined with *Mindfulness* can also strengthen empathy and social care.

In addition, *Mindfulness* can increase awareness of the environment, Buddhism emphasizes the principle of the interconnectedness of all living beings (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Overexploitation of nature is often rooted in human greed and unawareness of the negative impacts caused. By practicing *Mindfulness*, individuals can be more thoughtful in their consumption and more aware of their responsibilities in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. Research shows that *Mindfulness* techniques can affect a person's psychological state, improve feelings of calm, and thoughts which can ultimately improve psychological well-being.⁷

Therefore, integrating *Mindfulness* in the education system is no longer just an additional option, but an urgent need in the midst of increasing moral degradation, social indifference, and environmental crises. Education that is only oriented to academic achievement without being balanced with character formation based on compassion and ecological awareness will produce intellectually intelligent individuals, but lack concern for others and nature. *Mindfulness-based education* is present as a comprehensive solution that not only teaches students to be more focused and calm, but also fosters deep empathy and awareness of the interconnectedness of all living things. *Mindfulness-based education* must be designed systematically and sustainably, not only in the form of meditation exercises in the classroom, but also through the development of a school culture that values diversity, fosters empathy, and instills ecological responsibility. Thus, education not only plays

⁴ Chowmas (2021): 28.

⁵ Abdurrochim et al., (2024): 398.

⁶ Mukti (2020): 176.

⁷ Chowmas (2021): 29.

a role in producing academically superior individuals, but also gives birth to a generation that is wise in thinking, compassionate in acting, and has a deep awareness of environmental sustainability.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method to analyze the role of Mindfulness-based education in fostering compassion and environmental awareness.⁸ Literature studies were chosen because they allow for in-depth analysis of concepts, theories, and previous research results relevant to this topic. The data sources used consist of primary data, such as scientific journal articles and academic books, as well as secondary data, including research reports and education policies. The data collection technique is carried out through documentation by filtering literature published in the last five years to maintain the relevance of the findings with the latest developments. With this method, the research is expected to provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of the implementation of Mindfulness-based education in building the character of students who are compassionate and have high environmental awareness.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Mindfulness-based education

Mindfulness or mindfulness is a practice that focuses on paying attention to the present experience with an open and non-judgmental attitude. In the world of education, the application of Mindfulness is increasingly being paid attention to because of its benefits in improving the psychological and academic well-being of students. Education that integrates Mindfulness is a habituation process in which the practice of Mindfulness is consciously incorporated into the curriculum and applied on an ongoing basis, rather than just an addition that is done only when there is free time. In classroom learning, the practice of Mindfulness helps teachers and students to stay present and involved in the ongoing teaching and learning process. Ellen Langer emphasized that the practice of Mindfulness in learning is characterized by several factors, including: (1) openness to new things; (2) awareness of emerging differences; (3) sensitivity to various contexts; (4) awareness of various perspectives; and (5) focus on the present moment.⁹

Mindfulness in Buddhism is explained by Gautama Buddha through the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. In the teachings of the Dhamma, the concept of *Anattā* teaches that there is no fixed core of the self, so that man can free himself from evil and hatred. Mindfulness becomes an effective method (*upāya*) to erode the self-centered ego (*attā; ahaṃkāra*), which is rooted in attachment and hatred. The purpose of this practice is to suppress greed (*lobha*), which arises from attachment, as well as to overcome anger or hatred (*sin*), which stems from hatred. Both attachment and hatred

⁸ Sugiyono (2020): 15.

⁹ Hattu (2021): 61.

come from delusion (*moha*), which is a misunderstanding that arises from a wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*) of the self and the world. Beings who experience spiritual confusion are unable to comprehend reality as it is. Ignorance of reality causes individuals to easily fall into various forms of worldly illusions.¹⁰

The definition of *Mindfulness* is reviewed from the *Abhidhamma*, the practice of Mindfulness can be traced in several main texts, namely the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, which emphasizes attention to breathing; The *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*,¹¹ which serves as the main frame of reference in this practice; and the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, which teaches mindfulness of the body. These three *Suttas* systematically outline the stages in the practice of authentic Mindfulness. Among the three texts, the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is considered the most fundamental source of teachings traced directly from the Buddha in the Buddhist tradition. Based on the explanation of the practice of true mindfulness, *Mindfulness* is a comprehensive system of practice with distinctive characteristics. In *Theravāda* teachings, this practice not only plays a role in the attainment of *samatha* (meditation serenity) and *vipassanā* (deep understanding), but more than that, it becomes a key element in the attainment of the highest goal in Buddhist practice.

The Buddha taught the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, known as the teaching on mindfulness of breathing, as the basis for practicing *Mindfulness*. The practice is systematically designed in 16 stages that begin with the awareness of the breath and end with the attainment of freedom from worldly attachments and desires. These 16 stages are categorized into four meditation groups, each of which corresponds to the four ways of building mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*).¹² Although it was taught more than 2500 years ago, the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* remains the simplest, most direct, and effective method of training and developing the mind. This practice not only helps in facing various tasks and challenges of daily life but also aims to achieve freedom of mind that is completely free from greed, hatred, and delusion. The guidance given in this *Sutta* is taken directly from Buddhist teachings and can be practiced in practice. If one follows the instructions in this *Sutta* correctly, the results can be clearly felt.

The *Ānāpānasati Sutta* gives profound meditation instruction, including how to apply the “Four Foundations of Mindfulness” (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) and the “Seven Factors of Enlightenment” (*Bojjhaṅga*), as well as how all of these aspects are fulfilled through the practice of mindfulness of breathing. This practice allows one to attain the various stages of meditation (*jhāna*). Interestingly, in the original Buddhist teachings, there is no separation between different types of meditation such as “full concentration meditation” (*appanā samādhi*), “access concentration” (*upacāra samādhi*), or “momentary concentration” (*khaṇika samādhi*). This classification is found more in later commentaries rather than

¹⁰ Meshram (2020): 152 – 160.

¹¹ Bodhi (2020): 55.

¹² Bodhi (2020): 55.

in the original text of *the Sutta*.¹³ Therefore, it is important for practitioners to refer directly to *the Sutta* to ensure a more accurate understanding of the practice of Mindfulness¹⁴ meditation.

Satipāṭṭhāna Sutta is considered to be one of the main teachings that play a role in the development of mindfulness. This teaching emphasizes the importance of building attention to the four main aspects, namely the body (*kāya*), feelings (*vedanā*), mind (*citta*), and other mental phenomena (*dhamma*).¹⁵ These four aspects serve as the basis or foundation in the process of strengthening awareness and observation of life experiences that take place from time to time. However, the application of the teachings of *Satipāṭṭhāna* in various cultural contexts has given rise to a number of debates. Although this practice has become the primary method in modern meditation teaching, the adaptations and interpretations that have developed in various traditions are often influenced by specific cultural factors. One example of the dominance of *Satipāṭṭhāna* in contemporary practice is the great influence of Burmese meditation teachers, who sought to make Buddhism more accessible to the wider community. In its development, this approach tends to focus more on *vipassanā* meditation or deep insight into reality than *samatha*, which is meditation oriented towards tranquility and deep concentration.

One of the main goals of the modern approach to *Satipāṭṭhāna* is the development of higher consciousness, often referred to as *jhāna*. *Jhāna* is understood as a state of deep concentration that allows one to experience full awareness of the current stream of experience that is happening in the moment, without distortion of illusion or emotional attachment. Practitioners who follow this method often refer to the concept of “naked consciousness,” referring to a direct understanding of phenomena in the absence of judgments or perceptions distorted by ego and false self-concepts. *Satipāṭṭhāna* not only serves as the main foundation in the practice of meditation but also becomes part of the development of the modernization of Buddhism. As this teaching has expanded, the practice of Mindfulness is no longer limited to specific cultural boundaries but has been adopted in a variety of global contexts, including psychology and contemporary therapy.

More than that, Mindfulness plays an important role in improving the quality of learning. By practicing focus and attention, students can more easily understand the material being taught and reduce internal disorders such as anxiety or overthinking. The application of learning in schools began to expand, with one aspect that received special attention being religious education, especially Buddhism. In the learning process, students are encouraged to start with concentration exercises through breathing observation. This exercise aims to help students develop better focus so that they can more easily understand the material being taught. By involving the practice of conscious

¹³ Mukti (2020): 264.

¹⁴ Meshram (2020): 152 – 160.

¹⁵ Mukti (2020): 220.

breathing before starting learning, it is hoped that students can increase their self-awareness and ability to think clearly in absorbing religious values and Buddhist teachings more deeply.¹⁶

In the world of education, Mindfulness has been developed as an approach to guide students in improving concentration, developing self-awareness, and deepening involvement in the learning process. In addition, the practice of Mindfulness also plays a role in building empathy for others. These exercises serve as adaptation strategies that help students adjust to new environments as well as improve their academic skills. For students who are just starting their studies in different educational settings, Mindfulness can help them in forging quality interpersonal relationships, adjusting to new environments, as well as meeting the academic and social expectations inherent in their role as learners.¹⁷

3.2. Compassion

Humans naturally have a tendency to feel the suffering of others and show concern by providing help. This attitude is known as compassion, which is awareness of the suffering of others accompanied by encouragement to ease their burden. Compassion is not only limited to empathy, but also includes concrete actions aimed at helping others overcome the difficulties they face. With compassion, a person not only understands the feelings of others, but is also encouraged to provide direct support, both in the form of emotional and practical help.

The concept of compassion has similarities with the cultural values of compassion that develops in Javanese society. Compassion describes the attitude of a person who has a deep concern for others and is able to understand the feelings of others. When seeing others in difficulty, someone who has compassion will feel the urge to help sincerely without expecting anything in return. This attitude is rooted in the values of social solidarity that teach the importance of helping each other, even to those who do not have kinship or personal closeness. In practice, compassion can be manifested in various forms, such as providing material assistance, emotional support, or simply a soothing presence for people who are experiencing difficulties.¹⁸

The real manifestation of the attitude of compassion in the life of the Javanese people to this day can be found in the tradition of *splatan*. This tradition reflects the spirit of mutual cooperation, where individuals voluntarily help other citizens who need help for specific purposes. This assistance can be in the form of energy, time, or resources, especially in activities such as weddings, community service, or home building. The main purpose of the *splice* is to ease the burden on individuals who are carrying out an activity so as to create a more harmonious and shared life in society.

¹⁶ Sari (2023): 185.

¹⁷ Hattu (2021): 61.

¹⁸ Endraswara (2013):8

The tradition of mutual cooperation has become an integral part of people's lives in various regions of Java, reflecting the strong value of togetherness in the local culture. One of the tangible manifestations of this spirit of togetherness is the *rewang* tradition, where residents volunteer to help neighbors who are holding celebrations or big events, such as weddings, circumcisions, or religious events. In this practice, the division of duties is carried out based on gender and age roles: the mothers are responsible for the preparation and cooking of the dishes, the fathers handle the logistics and equipment, while the youth and women of the village help serve the invited guests and ensure the smooth running of the event. In addition to *rewang*, the *sinoman* tradition also has an important role in the social life of the Javanese people. *Sinoman* involves youth groups who voluntarily help with various social activities, especially in organizing traditional events. They are in charge of preparing the event venue, welcoming and serving guests, to ensure the event runs without obstacles. These traditions are not transactional, but are based on a sense of empathy and social concern, which not only eases the burden on the individual or family who is holding the event, but also strengthens social relations and maintains harmony in the community. Through the practice of *rewang* and *sinoman*, the Javanese people continue to instill the values of mutual cooperation, responsibility, and concern for others.¹⁹

The concept of compassion in Buddhism has similarities with the social values that developed in Javanese society. In Buddhism, compassion is directly related to the term *mettā*, which in Sanskrit is called *maitri* and translates as love. *Mettā* is a pure and universal feeling of affection, selfless, without attachment (*upādāna*), and encompassing all living beings.²⁰ This love is not only in the form of sympathy, but also manifested through concrete actions to alleviate the suffering of others, which is in line with the value of mutual cooperation in Javanese culture.

In Buddhism, *mettā* is practiced through three main aspects, namely thoughts, speech, and deeds. In the aspect of the mind, a person who develops *mettā* seeks to shun anger, envy, and prejudice against others, and replace them with goodwill and happiness for all beings. This is similar to the Javanese philosophy of practicing *spledges*, where a person helps others sincerely without expecting anything in return. For example, in the *rewang* activity, villagers voluntarily help neighbors who hold celebrations, show caring and empathetic attitudes towards others.

In the aspect of speech, *mettā* teaches the importance of speaking honestly, avoiding slander, not speaking rudely, and not speaking in vain. In the context of Javanese society, this can be seen in the *Sinoman* culture, where the youth who help the celebration also maintain social harmony through good and polite speech. They not only help physically, but also ensure that the atmosphere

¹⁹ Daniswari (2023): engenal Tradisi Sinoman di Jawa dan Manfaatnya. Akses 19 Februari 2025.

²⁰ Mukti, 2020: 61.

remains conducive by talking and interacting politely with guests and fellow group members.

While in the aspect of deeds, *mettā* teaches to stay away from violence, not to steal, and to always help other beings in need. This is in line with the value of mutual cooperation in Javanese society, which emphasizes togetherness in helping others, both in social, economic, and spiritual affairs.²¹ For example, in the practice of *splatan*, village communities help each other in building houses or repairing public facilities without expecting anything in return. This concept reflects Buddhist teachings that emphasize compassion as a tangible act to create harmony and common prosperity.

Thus, compassion in Buddhism through the concept of *mettā* is not just a moral teaching, but also has a strong relevance to the socio-cultural practices of Javanese society. Both in *mettā* and in traditions such as *rewang* and *sambatan*, the essence of compassion is selfless care, which aims to maintain harmonious social relations and strengthen togetherness in society.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

The environment is a gift from God Almighty for the people and nation of Indonesia, which functions as a space for life in various aspects in accordance with the concept of archipelago insight. In an effort to utilize natural resources to improve people's welfare, as mandated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, sustainable development oriented to environmental sustainability is needed. This development must be carried out in an integrated and comprehensive manner by considering the balance between the needs of the current generation and future generations. Therefore, harmonious, harmonious, and balanced environmental management needs to be implemented to support the realization of sustainable and environmentally sound development. According to Regional Regulation Number 8 of 2011 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, the environment is defined as a spatial unity that includes all elements of objects, energy, conditions, and living things, including humans and their activities, which affect nature, the sustainability of life, and the welfare of humans and other living things. This spatial unity means that all these elements are in one ecosystem that affects each other, either directly or indirectly.

In its use, the term "environment" is often used interchangeably with "environment." Although there are literal differences, these two terms are generally used in the same meaning, namely as the environment in a broad sense that includes physical, chemical, and biological aspects. This includes the environment of humans, animals, and plants. In addition, the environment has a different concept with ecology, ecosystem, and environmental carrying capacity, although the three terms remain closely related to the concept of the environment as a whole.²²

²¹ Mukti, 2020: 218.

²² Wihardjo & Rahmayanti (2021)

Consciousness refers to an individual's awareness of surrounding events as well as cognitive processes such as memory, thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations. Another definition states that consciousness is a condition in which a person is aware of his behavior, with a mind that controls the intellect and is able to make choices as he wishes. Environmental awareness is a condition in which individuals have sensitivity and concern for the environment around them. This sensitivity is not only limited to understanding environmental conditions passively, but is also reflected in real behaviors and actions in protecting and preserving nature. Environmental awareness involves individual preparedness for various aspects of the environment, both abiotic ones, such as soil, water, and air, as well as biotic ones, such as flora, fauna, and the wider ecosystem. With this awareness, a person is able to control himself so as not to damage the environment and contribute to maintaining the balance of the ecosystem.²³

In practice, environmental awareness can be categorized into five main aspects. First, awareness of the causes of pollution, namely an understanding of factors that pollute the environment and efforts to reduce it. Second, awareness of soil and air conditions, which includes an understanding of the importance of soil and air quality for life and steps to maintain it. Third, awareness of energy protection, which involves the wise and efficient use of energy resources to reduce negative impacts on the environment. Fourth, awareness of wildlife protection, which highlights the importance of maintaining the survival of wildlife and biodiversity so that it does not go extinct. Fifth, awareness of animal extinction, which emphasizes the need for conservation efforts to prevent the loss of certain species due to irresponsible human activities (Here & Priyanto, 2014)

Environmental awareness in Buddhist teachings is rooted in the understanding that humans and nature are part of an interdependent whole. One of the main teachings related to environmental awareness is *Pañcasīla*, specifically the first precept, which is not to kill or damage the life of other beings. This principle teaches that all living things have the right to exist, so humans must maintain the balance of nature and not take actions that damage the environment such as poaching, deforestation, or water and air pollution. In addition, the teachings of *Kamma* (the law of cause and effect) emphasize that every human action will have consequences, including in relation to nature.²⁴ If humans overexploit natural resources and pollute the environment, the negative impact will return to humans themselves, both in the form of natural disasters, climate change, and reduced quality of life.

In addition, the teachings of *Metta Bhavana* (the development of love)²⁵ emphasize that love and compassion should not only be applied to fellow humans, but also to animals, plants, and entire ecosystems. In the practice

²³ Here & Priyanto (2014): 13.

²⁴ Mukti (2020): 224.

²⁵ Mukti (2020): 260.

of *Metta* meditation, a practitioner prays for happiness for all beings without exception, including the surrounding environment. This is in line with the *Ahimsa* (non-violent) principle which emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with nature, avoiding overexploitation, and maintaining the sustainability of natural resources. Buddhism also teaches the concept of *Paticca Samuppada* (the law of interdependent cause and effect) which states that everything in this world is interconnected. Environmental damage caused by human actions will have bad consequences for all life on earth. Therefore, life practices that are in harmony with Buddhist teachings, such as a simple lifestyle, avoiding excessive consumption, and respecting nature as a part of life, are the main keys in maintaining environmental balance and preventing ecosystem damage. Environmental awareness in Buddhism is not only an ethical concept, but also part of the path to happiness and inner peace.

V. MINDFULNESS RELATIONALITY TOWARDS COMPASSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Ellen J. Langer²⁶ in her book identifies three main approaches to mindful learning: the continuous creation of new categories, openness to new knowledge, and awareness that there are various points of view in understanding things. The creation of new categories involves observing the differences and nuances in the information received, allowing for a deeper and more flexible understanding. Meanwhile, openness to new knowledge encourages individuals to accept different information and perspectives, thus enriching their insights and understanding. Awareness of various points of view helps a person in seeing situations from various perspectives, improving adaptability and problem-solving. These approaches emphasize that individuals who develop mindfulness tend to have more mature personalities, broad knowledge, and flexible and innovative thinking abilities in facing various life challenges. In addition, they also have more comprehensive insights, both in national and global contexts, which allows them to adapt to the changing times.²⁷

One of the practices that supports the development of mindfulness is mindfulness practice, which is a method that focuses on paying attention to the body, feelings, thoughts, and various mental objects that appear in consciousness. With consistent and mindful practice, individuals can reduce their tendency to mental disorders, such as negative emotions and adverse thought patterns. There are five main aspects of *mindfulness* that are the goal of achievement, namely: (a) *observing*, which is the ability to observe and be aware of the existence of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and sensations that arise; (b) *describing*, which is the skill of expressing the experience into words; (c) *acting with awareness*, which means acting with full awareness of the situation being faced; (d) *nonreactivity*, i.e. the ability not to react impulsively to personal experiences; and (e) *nonjudging*, i.e. the attitude of accepting

²⁶ Carson (2006): 33.

²⁷ Davenport & Pagnini (2016): 3.

experiences without giving subjective judgments.²⁸

These five components of mindfulness will be developed in the research subject through psychoeducational approaches and mindfulness exercises, both in the form of formal and informal practices. To support the effectiveness of mindfulness implementation in the context of education, optimal classroom management is needed. This includes a good classroom setting, both in terms of the availability of facilities and infrastructure, the creation of a comfortable learning atmosphere, and last but not least, attention to psychological aspects for both educators and students. By applying a mindfulness approach, teachers can be more aware and responsive in managing the classroom, while students can learn with more focus and without excessive pressure. This is expected to create a more conducive learning environment, improve psychological well-being, and help students develop better self-awareness and emotional regulation.

According to²⁹ Sutanto and Immanuela (2022), mindfulness has various benefits that can contribute to improving a person's quality of life. Some of the benefits that can be obtained include reduced anxiety levels, reduced pain, and the ability to manage stress and avoid negative thoughts. In addition, *mindfulness* also plays a role in helping individuals change bad habits and improve their ability to regulate emotions. Thus, the application of mindfulness can have a positive impact on a person's psychological and emotional well-being.³⁰

Mindfulness exercises in the world of education have various potential benefits, especially in increasing student engagement in tasks without distracting them from the challenges they face. In addition, mindfulness practices have been shown to develop cognitive skills, which play an important role in achieving learning outcomes. This increased cognitive ability can also complement other educational intervention methods. Further, various practical recommendations and best strategies in implementing *mindfulness* in the academic environment show that mindfulness-based interventions have promising prospects for improving the quality of learning in the future.³¹

The practice of mindfulness has been shown to assist individuals in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression and improving overall well-being. On the other hand, compassion involves feelings of empathy and a desire to alleviate the suffering of others. Compassion is not only directed to others but also to oneself, which is known as self-compassion. Self-compassion plays a role in improving self-esteem, life satisfaction, and interpersonal relationships, so that a person is better able to deal with the pressures of life in a healthier way. The relationship between mindfulness and compassion lies in mindfulness's ability to increase self-awareness, which in turn allows individuals to better

²⁸ Sari (2023): 185.

²⁹ Sutanto and Immanuela (2022) Getting to know mindfulness for high school students. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360996568>

³⁰ Sutanto and Immanuela (2022) Getting to know mindfulness for high school students. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360996568>

³¹ Sari (2023): 185.

understand and respond to suffering lovingly. The practice of mindfulness helps individuals recognize moments in which they or others are struggling, thus facilitating a more empathetic and compassionate response.

In Buddhism, the concepts of *mindfulness* and compassion (*karunā*) have a very important role in spiritual practice. *Mindfulness* allows a person to be fully present in every moment without getting caught up in judgments or over-emotional reactions. This is in line with the Buddhist teachings about mind control and awareness of suffering (*dukkha*) experienced by oneself and other beings.

One form of compassion emphasized in Buddhism is *mettā*, which is often translated as universal love. *Mettā* is practiced through three main aspects, namely, thoughts, speech, and deeds. In the aspect of the mind, a person who develops *mettā* seeks to keep his mind positive and free from hatred, envy, or prejudice against others. For example, when a person feels jealous of his partner's success, he can practice self-awareness by being aware of his emotions and changing his thoughts to be more positive. He can replace envy with a sincere feeling of support and a wish for the success of his colleagues while also trying to improve his own abilities with a more thoughtful attitude. In the aspect of speech, *mettā* is reflected in words that are gentle, understanding, and encouraging to others. A person who practices *mettā* will avoid abusive, hurtful, or hateful speech. For example, a teacher who finds that his student is having difficulty understanding a lesson will not scold him but instead give encouragement with constructive words. Patiently, the teacher can say, "It's okay, let's try again together. I'm sure that with a little practice, you'll be able to understand this material." This kind of speech not only motivates students but also reflects love and patience in guiding others. In the aspect of deeds, *mettā* is manifested through concrete actions that aim to help alleviate the suffering of other beings. For example, when someone sees an elderly person having trouble carrying his groceries, he or she can offer sincere help without expecting anything in return. This kind of action is a tangible form of *mettā*, in which one acts with care and empathy for others.

In addition to being applied in human relationships, *mindfulness* and compassion also have an important role in increasing environmental awareness. Mindfulness, which emphasizes full awareness of every thought, speech, and action, can help a person better understand the impact of their behavior on nature. By applying mindfulness, a person will be more careful in using natural resources and more sensitive to the balance of the ecosystem. For example, when a person wants to buy a product, he or she not only considers the benefits for himself but also the impact on the environment, such as whether the product contributes to the exploitation of nature, produces excessive waste, or actually supports environmental sustainability. With full awareness, individuals can make more informed decisions, such as reducing the use of single-use plastics, choosing recycled products, or supporting businesses that apply environmentally friendly principles.

In addition, compassion for the environment can be manifested in concrete actions that reflect concern for the welfare of nature and the living things in it.

If in a social context *mettā* is realized by helping fellow humans, in the context of the environment, *mettā* can be applied by preserving nature, such as planting trees, cleaning up garbage in public spaces, or educating the community about the importance of preserving ecosystems. A person who has compassion for the environment not only cares for himself but also seeks to protect the earth so that it remains sustainable for future generations. This attitude also reflects the awareness that humans and nature are interdependent on each other.

One clear example of the application of *mindfulness* and compassion in protecting the environment can be seen from the *Pandawara Group* movement, a community that is active in cleaning rivers and beaches of garbage. *Pandawara Group*, which started as a group of young people who cared about the environment, has inspired many people to be more aware of the environmental conditions around them. With full awareness and concern, they went directly to various locations filled with garbage to clean it up, not only for the sake of physical hygiene but also to restore the balance of the disturbed ecosystem. Their actions reflect the values of *mindfulness* because they understand that every action, no matter how small, can have a big impact on the environment. In addition, this movement is also a form of compassion for nature, where they not only think for their own benefit but also for the good of the environment and future generations.

Movements such as *the Pandawara Group* teach that caring for the environment is not only an individual responsibility but also a collective movement that can bring about real change. By practicing *mindfulness* and compassion, everyone can contribute to preserving the environment, both through simple actions such as sorting waste and reducing waste, as well as by joining in larger social actions. This awareness is the key to creating a more harmonious world, where humans not only coexist with others but also with nature in a sustainable manner.

In addition to being in line with Buddhist teachings, environmental awareness based on *mindfulness* and compassion is also closely related to local wisdom values in Indonesia, one of which is the tradition of *splac* in Java. *Sambatan* is a form of mutual cooperation carried out by the community voluntarily to help others in various aspects of life, including protecting the environment. This tradition is rooted in the spirit of togetherness and helping each other without expecting anything in return, which actually also reflects the principle of *Dana* (generosity) in Buddhism, which is to provide sincere help for the common good. In the context of environmental conservation, the spirit of *Sambatan* can be seen in the community's efforts to clean rivers, improve irrigation systems, and maintain village forests so that they are sustainable. This shows that collective awareness of the environment is not a new concept, but has become part of the culture of traditional societies that unfortunately began to be displaced by modernization and increasing individualism.

The concept of *mindfulness* in Buddhism emphasizes the importance of being fully aware of the impact of every action, including maintaining the balance of nature. In the tradition of *splatan*, this collective awareness is

manifested through real actions carried out together for the common good. When people consciously work together to keep rivers clean or prevent environmental pollution, they not only improve natural conditions but also strengthen social relationships based on compassion and care. This spirit is also reflected in the *Pandawara Group movement*, a group of young people who volunteer to clean the environment of garbage in rivers, beaches, and areas affected by heavy pollution. This movement revitalizes the values of mutual cooperation that are on the verge of extinction, as well as building public awareness that protecting the environment is not only an individual task but a collective responsibility that requires the cooperation of all parties.

What the *Pandawara Group* does is very much in line with the principles of Buddhism, especially the concept of *Paticca Samuppada*, which emphasizes that everything in this world is interdependent. Environmental damage caused by river pollution, excessive plastic use, and deforestation not only impacts humans but also other living things. *Pandawara Group* shows awareness that small actions such as cleaning up garbage can have a big impact on the sustainability of the ecosystem. In addition, their actions also reflect the principle of *Karuna* (compassion), where they care not only for the environment but also for the communities affected by the pollution. They do not expect anything in return for their actions but act out of concern and social responsibility, as also reflected in the tradition of *splinter*.

In addition to environmental awareness, Buddhism also emphasizes the concept of simplicity and non-attachment to material things. This concept is in line with the life philosophy of the Javanese people, which is known as the principle of *nrimo ing pandum*, which is to accept sincerely and not excessively in the pursuit of worldly treasures. This philosophy encourages a person to live in harmony with nature and only take what is needed without damaging the balance of the ecosystem. In daily life, people who still carry out the tradition of *splatan* tend to be wiser in managing natural resources because they understand that land, water, and forests are not just private property but are trusts that must be protected for future generations. Thus, both in Buddhism and in local wisdom, there is an awareness that humans have a moral responsibility to the environment that must be maintained in order to be sustainable.

By combining Buddhist teachings on mindfulness and compassion with local traditions, communities can create a more effective and community-based model of environmental sustainability. Movements such as the *Pandawara Group* as a *nukti* show how these principles are applied in collective actions that bring benefits to many people. If environmental awareness continues to be instilled through the practice of mutual cooperation and social care, then the hope of creating a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable environment will be more real. Therefore, the revitalization of traditional values such as *shimatan*, *sinoman*, and *rewang*, which is reinforced with Buddhist teachings on mindfulness and compassion, can be an important strategy in facing environmental challenges in the modern era. Change cannot be done by just one individual but requires collective awareness, as exemplified by traditional

societies in splatan, sinoman, rewang, and revitalized by the Pandawara Group movement. If this principle is applied more widely, future generations can enjoy a healthier and more sustainable environment, as taught in Buddhism and the local wisdom of the archipelago.

VI. CONCLUSION

Mindfulness-based education plays an important role in shaping individuals who are more aware, caring, and responsible for others and the environment. Through mindfulness practices, students can increase empathy, reduce deviant behaviors such as bullying and academic dishonesty, and improve psychological well-being and concentration in learning. In Buddhism, mindfulness is closely related to *mettā* (love) and *karuṇā* (compassion), which foster social awareness and concern for the environment. This mindfulness helps individuals understand the impact of each of their actions, whether on themselves, others, or the ecosystem as a whole. Thus, the integration of mindfulness in education is not only a solution to moral degradation and environmental crises but also forms a generation that is wiser, compassionate, and socially and ecologically responsible. Therefore, the application of mindfulness in the education system must be carried out systematically and continuously through curriculum, learning methods, and school culture that instills the values of empathy, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability, so that education can produce intellectually superior individuals, have strong character, and have a high awareness of social and ecosystem welfare.

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