

## Appendix 14: Sample of A Best Student Paper

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### Buddhism's Contributions to the World

One need not look far to see the profound influence of Buddhism in our world today. Buddhist practices like mindfulness and meditation are now common household terms, prescribed by mental health experts, functional medicine practitioners, and western doctors alike to aid in the mental wellbeing of individuals who struggle with conditions like anxiety and depression. And according to a survey of 1,220 respondents, 31% of Americans believe "very strongly" in karma and 34% "somewhat strongly" in karma: the notion that behaviors motivated by intention produce consequences that is a central tenant of Buddhist thought (Varrella, 2019). Not all of the survey respondents or population they represent may necessarily practice Buddhism and believe in samsara —the constant cycle of death and rebirth —but a paradigm that places import on good intentions undoubtedly alters the way people behave within a society, henceforth dramatically affecting prominent ethical diagrams in today's world. It must also be mentioned that volunteer work and other acts of compassion can largely be attributed to Siddartha Gautama's teachings. Buddhism places great value on karuna, (the Buddhist term for compassion), citing that while other elements of Buddhist practices may be challenging for everyone to adopt, karuna is one that anybody can employ (Karuna and Metta, 2021). Thus considered, the Buddha's teachings from centuries ago continue to carry much weight on an international scale today, aiding in the treatment of mental health issues, influencing ideological norms, and inspiring kinder ways for people to treat one another.

One of the most important impacts of Buddhism in today's world includes the tools it provides to treat those suffering from mental health issues which are an increasingly more pressing problem for the health care industry to address. According to a study by John Hopkins, 26% of Americans 18 and older struggle with a diagnosable mental health disorder (John Hopkins, 2021) .

Considering the veritable likelihood that many people with mental health issues have yet to be diagnosed, there is certainly a large concern for emotional wellbeing. While medication can be helpful to some people suffering from conditions like anxiety and depression, functional medicine practitioners and medical doctors alike often prescribe lifestyle enhancements such as the addition of meditation to one's daily activities to help manage their symptoms. In Buddhism, a meditation practice trains an individual to experience their thoughts from an elevated perspective that allows them to detach from any emotions triggered by those thoughts while also connecting to something greater than themselves (Greenstein, 2016). That being said, it is not difficult to understand how someone with a mental health illness like anxiety might benefit from an exercise that forces them to relax and find peace despite the chaotic intermediary of their regular mindset. And for sufferers of depression who endure emotions associated with feelings like loneliness and a general disconnect from the world, the way "Buddhism gives its followers a profound feeling of connectedness without loss of identity", provides a sound solution for handling the suffering their illnesses may ensue (Greenstein, 2016).

Another significant impact of Buddhism in the world today is its implementation of the concept of karma and consequentially, the widespread ethical adoption of the notion that good deeds garner good results and vice versa. To Buddhists, actions with intention—karmic actions—can be exemplified in a variety of ways. For example, one may eschew the consumption of meat to avoid causing suffering to another being. Not all practitioners of the Buddha's teachings are

vegetarians, and not all people who believe in karma may go as far as changing their diets to avoid the consequences of bad karma. However, a general ethical diagram that influences an individual to avoid saying or doing things that hurt other people certainly impacts the world when many individuals adopt it. Buddhism is in part responsible for the international dispersal of the paradigm that makes it generally unacceptable or taboo to perform actions like stealing and lying to one another. The inevitable consequence is a society with an ethical foundation built from Siddhartha Guatama's teachings which many might argue is a privilege despite Buddhism being a minority religion in the United States.

Volunteer work, donation organizations, and resources like podcasts or free online books for self-help that exist in our world now were doubtlessly created by compassionate minds that likely owe some responsibility to Buddhist ideals for this compassion. The Buddha himself took part in the virtue dana in which he donated his possessions and flesh to help others while relieving himself of material attachments (Trainor, 2004). Acts of generosity and kindness are intrinsic to Buddhism, and it's not difficult to observe how they bled into the royal lines of Sri Lankan Kings and eventually meandered across the world to inspire organizations like food pantries, donation drop-offs, and other groups that work to give the less privileged the resources they might need to move through the world. Many humans may be naturally inclined to act compassionately, but the spread of Buddhism and the rise of yoga classes and other activities that disperse karuna, or compassion, at the very least serve as a reminder for people to continue cultivating a life purpose to help ease the suffering of others combatting the endless grind of the American dream that seems to make people forget consideration for others entirely.

The list of ways that Buddhism has influenced our world today is long and rich, even if many people remain unaware of the entity responsible for many of the mental health resources available, a guiding force behind their ethical system, and the way they view and treat other beings. Buddhist ideas have not only persisted since Siddhartha Gautama first stepped foot on this planet but have expanded with the popularization of meditation, good-intentioned action, and compassionate behavior. The accumulation of time only seems to solidify the various benefits of Buddhism in the modern world, helping people manage mental health issues and find a certain level of tranquility by seeing the world through a more compassionate and loving lens.

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