

Appamāda as a Foundation for Ethical and Spiritual Development in Modern Mindfulness Practices

ABSTRACT

This research explores *Appamāda* as a mindfulness concept with strong ethical and spiritual foundations rooted in Buddhist teachings. The study investigates how integrating *Appamāda* can enhance modern mindfulness practices, particularly addressing the moral and ethical dimensions often overlooked in secular mindfulness trends. The research utilizes a qualitative approach through library research, gathering data from primary sources such as the *Sutta Piṭaka* and commentaries and secondary sources from scholarly works on *Appamāda*. Content analysis examines how *Appamāda* functions as a foundation for moral and spiritual development within Buddhist teachings and how it can be integrated into contemporary mindfulness practices. The research identifies *Appamāda* as not merely mindfulness but a profound ethical framework that fosters the cultivation of wholesome qualities and moral awareness. It highlights the gap in modern mindfulness practices, which focus on psychological benefits like stress reduction but often neglect ethical self-awareness. *Appamāda* enriches mindfulness by incorporating ethical and spiritual elements, guiding individuals towards holistic personal development and liberation from suffering. Integrating *Appamāda* into modern mindfulness practices offers a more holistic approach to mental and spiritual well-being. It addresses the ethical responsibility that contemporary secular mindfulness lacks, contributing to developing a balanced and ethically conscious mindfulness practice. This has implications for mental health, ethical behavior, and spiritual growth in modern contexts. This study contributes to the growing body of research on mindfulness by reconnecting contemporary practices with their ethical and spiritual roots in *Appamāda*. It offers a new perspective on mindfulness that extends beyond emotional regulation to include moral development and ethical accountability, providing a comprehensive framework for holistic well-being.

Keywords: *Appamāda*; Ethical Development Foundation; Mindfulness; Buddhism

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, stress and anxiety levels have significantly increased, particularly among younger generations. According to recent data, in 2021, around 28% of individuals aged 16 to 29 experienced some form of anxiety, making this age group the most vulnerable. These figures steadily decrease with age, with only 5% of those aged 70 and over reporting anxiety. Furthermore, women are more likely to report high levels of anxiety compared to men, with 37.1% of women and 29.9% of men reporting high anxiety levels in 2022/23. Anxiety levels surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, rising from 19.8% in 2018/19 to 24.2% in 2020/21, before slightly decreasing to 22.5% in 2021/22. Despite this, most people experiencing anxiety reported 'low' or 'very low' levels (59.4%), while 40.5% experienced 'medium' or 'high' levels of anxiety during the third quarter of 2022 (Mental Health Foundation, 2024). This data highlights that while the pandemic contributed to a rise in anxiety, stress remains a significant issue in the modern world, especially among the younger population.

In Indonesia, the rising trend of mental health issues is also concerning, particularly among adolescents. According to the Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (2023), one in three Indonesian adolescents experiences mental health problems, while one in twenty has been diagnosed with a mental disorder in the past 12 months. This equates to 15.5 million adolescents facing mental health issues, with 2.45 million diagnosed with clinically recognized disorders, including anxiety and major depression. Despite the high prevalence, only 2.6% of adolescents sought professional help, such as mental health services or counseling, over the last year. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation, with one in twenty adolescents reporting increased feelings of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. These findings highlight that, although access to healthcare services has expanded, many adolescents and their families are still reluctant to seek help, often due to stigma or a preference for handling issues privately. Given that Indonesian adolescents play a crucial role in the country's development towards its demographic dividend, addressing their mental health is of critical importance.

The rapid rise of stress and depression globally has coincided with the growing trend of mindfulness practices in the Western world, particularly within secular contexts such as stress management, performance enhancement, and mental health improvement. Mindfulness has become a popular tool in addressing mental health issues, including stress and anxiety, by promoting present-moment awareness and emotional regulation. However, much of this secular mindfulness movement focuses on its psychological benefits, often overlooking the deeper ethical and spiritual dimensions inherent in its Buddhist origins. While mindfulness practices in the West aim to reduce stress and improve mental clarity, the traditional Buddhist concept of *Appamāda*—which combines mindfulness with moral and ethical considerations—offers a more comprehensive approach to mental well-being. Integrating this broader understanding of mindfulness, which emphasizes ethical self-awareness alongside mental clarity, could potentially enhance the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in addressing the root causes of stress and depression.

Previous research on mindfulness has predominantly focused on its psychological benefits, often neglecting its moral and spiritual dimensions. This

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trend is evident in several studies: mindfulness is widely recognized for its positive impact on mental health, including reduced mental health issues, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced executive functioning (Reid, de Souza Marcovski, Campbell, Gold, & Miller, 2024). However, as mindfulness has been adapted in Western contexts, its ethical and spiritual elements have largely been stripped away, transforming it into a "science of happiness" (Krägeloh, 2016; Malin, 2023). This secularization often overlooks the moral and spiritual foundations that are intrinsic to traditional mindfulness practices. Additionally, there is a noted tension between maintaining the scientific rigor of mindfulness research and incorporating its moral and spiritual aspects (Ainsworth et al., 2023; Métivier, 2022). In educational contexts, this separation of mindfulness from spirituality may limit its potential for fostering moral development in youth, whereas integrating mindfulness with spiritual or religious contexts can promote positive moral growth (Malin, 2023; Reid et al., 2024). Moreover, in the workplace, Buddhist mindfulness meditation has been shown to enhance ethical behavior by encouraging moral principles and sensitivity to the well-being of others (Dhaka, Gupta, & Sharma, 2024).

Previous research on mindfulness has largely emphasized moment-to-moment awareness, often neglecting the integration of moral and spiritual elements. This focus on the psychological benefits of mindfulness has resulted in the omission of its deeper ethical foundations, particularly those central to Buddhist teachings. *Appamāda*, a unique concept in Buddhism, offers the moral dimension that is missing from many secular mindfulness practices. Unlike secular mindfulness, which often centers solely on emotional regulation and stress reduction, *Appamāda* encompasses ethical awareness and the cultivation of wholesome qualities. It encourages individuals to not only be mindful of the present moment but also to make conscious moral decisions that contribute to their spiritual growth. This integration of ethical reflection into mindfulness could address the limitations of modern mindfulness trends and offer a more holistic approach to mental and spiritual well-being.

The Buddha's teachings heavily emphasize the importance of mental purity and the cultivation of wholesome actions, encapsulated in the principles of refraining from evil (*sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ*), cultivating the wholesome (*kusalassa upasampadā*), and purifying the mind from defilements (*sacittapariyodapanam*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994). Central to these teachings is the understanding that the mind is the root of all actions, whether wholesome or unwholesome, as outlined in the Dhammapada, where the mind is described as the forerunner and chief of all states (*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano setṭhā*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994). A muddled mind leads to harmful actions and suffering, while a pure mind leads to good actions and happiness. In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, it is further explained that unwholesome qualities are preceded by the mind, reinforcing the significance of mental cultivation (Warder, 1961). *Appamāda*, or heedfulness, is pivotal in this context, as it ensures the development of wholesome qualities and the eradication of defilements. The Buddha repeatedly stresses the value of *Appamāda*, stating that all wholesome qualities are rooted in it (*appamādamūlakā*) (Feer, 1976), and it plays a crucial role in the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. *Appamāda*, as a foundation of moral development, is said to

bring great benefits (Warder, 1961), leading to happiness both in this life and beyond (Feer, 1991). This emphasis is reflected in the Buddha's final admonition to his disciples, where he urged them to "strive on with heedfulness" in the face of life's impermanence (R. T. W. Davids & Carpenter, 1966). Despite its importance, research on *Appamāda* remains limited, although scholars like Tantra (2022) have highlighted its role in fostering vigilance and awareness in daily life.

The aim of this research is to explore *Appamāda* as a form of mindfulness grounded in ethical and spiritual foundations, and to examine how this concept can be integrated into modern spiritual practices to enrich the global mindfulness trend. While contemporary mindfulness practices, particularly in the West, often focus on moment-to-moment awareness for stress reduction and mental clarity, *Appamāda* offers a more comprehensive approach by incorporating moral reflection and the cultivation of wholesome qualities. This study seeks to highlight how the integration of *Appamāda*'s ethical dimensions can provide a deeper, more transformative impact on mental well-being and personal development within the framework of modern mindfulness practices. By doing so, it aims to bridge the gap between secular mindfulness and its traditional Buddhist roots, offering a more holistic and ethically conscious approach to mental and spiritual well-being.

The argument of this research posits that *Appamāda* is not merely a form of mindfulness but serves as the foundation for developing moral and spiritual qualities, which can significantly enhance modern mindfulness practices. Unlike secular mindfulness, which primarily focuses on cultivating present-moment awareness, *Appamāda* integrates an ethical framework that encourages individuals to engage in self-reflection and make conscious moral choices. This ethical mindfulness promotes the abandonment of unwholesome mental states and the cultivation of positive, wholesome qualities. As such, the inclusion of *Appamāda* in modern mindfulness practices could lead to deeper personal transformation, not only addressing stress and anxiety but also fostering a sense of moral responsibility and spiritual growth. This integration would align mindfulness with its original Buddhist purpose, which goes beyond emotional regulation to achieve holistic well-being and ethical living.

METHOD

This is library research with qualitative research methodology. Library research is a series of activities involving the method of gathering literature data, reading, taking notes and processing the research material (Zed, 2014). It involves acquiring information through resources offered by library, including books, magazines, documents, and historical records, or conducting bibliographic research specifically relevant to the research topic (Mahmud, 2011). This research is carried out by collecting data from primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources refer to Canon and its commentaries, while secondary sources refer to scholars' works on the issue. Sutta Piṭaka is a collection of the Buddha's discourses which is considered as the primary sources. The journals, books, and articles related to the topic are considered as the secondary sources. Data analysis in this library research is content analysis, namely research that takes the form of an in-depth discussion of the content of written or printed information, then drawing conclusions based on

the data that has been collected and analyzed (Afifuddin & Saebani, 2009). Having collected the information on the teaching of *Appamāda* from primary sources and secondary sources, the data is deeply analyzed and examined in order to draw the conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Definition of *Appamāda*

The word '*appamāda*' is formed by the words '*a*' (negation) + '*pamāda*' (carelessness, negligence, indolence, or remissness) (T. W. R. Davids, 1952). Therefore, *appamāda* is translated as non-negligence, vigilance (Trenckner, 1924), zeal, non-laxity, earnestness, diligence (Nyanatiloka, 1980), thoughtfulness, carefulness, conscientiousness, watchfulness (T. W. R. Davids, 1952). Bodhi, (2012) and Thanissaro, (1998) prefer to translate *appamāda* as heedfulness. Ñāṇamoli, (2006) prefers to translate it as diligence.

There are related terms in regard to *Appamāda*. The word *Appamatta* is used as an adjective of *Appamāda*. The one who is heedful is called *Appamatto*. It is described in the commentary as standing with non-absence of mindfulness (*Appamattoti satiyā avippavāse ṭhito*). *Appamāda* is also called as *Appamajjanaṃ*, which is opposite to *pamāda* (*Appamādanti appamajjanaṃ. Taṃ pamādassa paṭipakkhato veditabbaṃ*). In the *Vibhaṅga*, *pamāda* is explained as unwholesome quality. It is described as wrong bodily, verbal or mental action or the succumbing and repeated succumbing of consciousness to the five strands of sense pleasure, or not working carefully, not working constantly, working spasmodically, being stagnant, relinquishing wish, relinquishing the task, non-pursuance, non-development, non-repetition, non-resolution, non-practicing, heedlessness in the development of good states that which is similar, heedlessness, being heedless, state of being heedless. This is called heedlessness. Therefore, *Appamāda* is the wholesome quality that is opposite to the *Pamāda*.

In the fifth of five precepts, one observes training refraining from intoxicating drinks and drugs which leads to heedlessness (*Surāmerayamajjapamādatṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*). A drunk who is completely out of control because of alcohol is said to be in a state of heedlessness (*pamādatṭhānā*). In this sense, heedlessness is understood as loss of consciousness which is very dangerous because being heedless, one is unable to distinguish the good and bad actions, and it is very possible for him to do bad actions due to his heedlessness. As a negation of it, *Appamāda* is understood as being heedful, in which one is able to control himself in doing actions because of the ability to distinguish good and bad actions.

The word *Appamāda* is not a simple word bearing one meaning. In the commentary, it is said that the word *Appamāda* illustrates the large meaning (*Tattha appamādoti padaṃ mahantaṃ atthaṃ dīpeti, mahantaṃ atthaṃ gahetvā tiṭṭhati*). Even taking all the Buddha's words in the Tipiṭaka, descends the discussion on the word *Appamāda*. The reason is that *Appamāda* structures the entire teaching of the Buddha, containing its many other principles just as the elephant's footprint contains the footprints of all other animals (Feer, 1976).

The commentary explains *Appamāda* as the presence of mindfulness (*Appamādo vuccati satiyā avippavāsa*), which is constantly standing with

mindfulness (*Atthato hi so satiyā avippavāso, niccam upatthitassatiyā etaṃ nāmaṃ*) (Windish, 1889). A similar definition is also given in the commentary to *Cariya Piṭaka*, saying that in meaning *appamādo* is non-absence from mindfulness (*Atthato hi appamādo nāma satiyā avippavāso*). It should be understood as the presence of mindfulness in wholesome qualities (*Ettha vuttassa pamādassa paṭipakkhavasena atthato kusalesu dhammesu satiyā avippavāsa veditabbo*) (Smith, 1978). Though commentary considers *Appamāda* (heedfulness) as similar meaning to *Sati* (mindfulness), Bhikkhu Bodhi states that *Sati* often refers to remembering the cultivation of skillful states, while *Appamāda* is rather focused on avoiding unskillful mental states. He further says that *Appamāda* denotes an attitude of critical scrutiny directed toward one's own mind both in its internal movement and in its reactions to external affairs. The term suggests diligent effort and acute attentiveness, and it further sounds a note of moral caution and care. In the other article, Bhikkhu Bodhi states that Heedfulness (*appamāda*) combines critical self-awareness and unremitting energy in a process of constant self-observation in order to detect and expel the defilements whenever they seek an opportunity to come to the surface (Bodhi, 2012).

Bhikkhu Narada states that *Appamāda*, literally, means non-infatuation, i.e. ever-present mindfulness, watchfulness, or earnestness in doing good. He further states that the ethical essence of Buddhism may be summed up by this word *Appamāda* (Thera, 1993). Tim Lomas introduces three types of mindfulness in Buddhism, namely; *Sati* (awareness of the present moment), *Appamāda* (awareness suffused with ethical care) and *Sampajañña* (awareness suffused with spirituality) (Lomas, 2017). He states that *Appamāda* is not distinct to *Sati*, but a quality that may augment it. *Appamāda* introduces ethical dimension of mindfulness. It is awareness of one's actions in light of ethical guidelines. In another article, he points out the distinction of *Appamāda* (Lomas, 2016). According to him, *Sati* involves non-judgemental awareness of the present moment, *Appamāda* reintroduces an element of judgement (crucially though, a compassionate form), since practitioners are encouraged to appraise the moral worth of their actions. The key point about *Appamāda* is not just that one has an ethical code, but keeps ethical considerations at the forefront of their awareness, and acts accordingly. *Appamāda* introduces a further dimension to mindfulness that is not present in *Sati* alone: here the practitioner advances beyond simply being aware of their experience, but reflects and judges (compassionately) whether their actions are skilful (e.g., in accordance with the precepts) (Lomas, 2016). Therefore, it is interesting because *Appamāda* is understood as mindfulness in wholesome actions. The development of *Appamāda* is in sense of meritorious and wholesome actions (*Yā hi kāci puññakiriyā kusalakiriyā, sabbā sā appamādabhāvanātveva veditabbā*). That is no doubt that the practise of *Appamāda* is regarded as greatest blessing (*Appamādo ca dhammesu, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*) (Anderson & Smith, 1913).

Therefore, the definition of *Appamāda* has become complex meaning. It is not merely heedfulness, but also mindfulness and effort in wholesome actions and preventing from unwholesome actions. Gyula Wojtilla states that the general meaning of the Pali *Appamāda* is "carefulness." Due to the growth of the economy and the emergence of towns in northern India, both of which were closely connected

with the birth of Buddhism, the term has gained a broader semantic field (Wojtilla, 2021).

2. The Essence of Appamāda Based on Sutta Piṭaka

Sutta Piṭaka, one of the Three Baskets (*Tipiṭaka*), which is described as common discourses (*vohāra-desanā*), mainly contains the collection of the discourses of the Buddha. *Sutta Piṭaka* consists of five *Nikāyas*, namely: *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and *Khuddaka Nikāya*. In the *Sutta Piṭaka*, there are a number of discourses dealing with the teaching on *Appamāda*. In the *Bojjhaṅgasamṃyutta* of *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, there is a special chapter named *Appamādavagga*, dealing with the importance of *Appamāda* (Feer, 1976). The similar chapter is also found in the *Maggasamṃyutta* of *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. As the name is similar, therefore it is written as *Appamādapeyyālavagga* (Feer, 1976). The discourses contained in these chapters show that *Appamāda* is very important since it is the root of all wholesome qualities. Therefore, *Appamāda* is also included as one of six respects in the *Saṅgīti Sutta* (R. T. . Davids & Carpenter, 1976).

In many suttas, the Buddha has shown that *Appamāda* brings the benefits that can be experienced in this life and hereafter. The Buddha explains *Appamāda* as one thing, if it is developed and increased, brings both benefits either in this life and future life (Windish, 1889). The *Appamāda Sutta* of *Saṃyutta Nikāya* reports the conversation between the Buddha and King Pasenadi. There, the King Pasenadi of Kosala questions the Buddha about whether there is one thing which secures both kinds of good, the good pertaining to the present life and that pertaining the future life. Then, as the answer, the Buddha explains *Appamāda* as one thing which secures both kinds of good, the good pertaining to the present life and that pertaining the future life (*Appamādo kho, mahārāja, eko dhammo, yo ubho atthe samadhiggayha tiṭṭhati – diṭṭhadhammikañceva atthaṃ samparāyikañcāti*) (Feer, 1991).

In the *Kalyāṇamitta Sutta*, The Buddha instructs King Pasenadi on the importance of good friendship. There, the Buddha also encourages the king to dwell with *Appamāda*. The heedfulness is said to be the one thing which support to good friendship (Feer, 1991). It is explained that when the king dwells with heedfulness as support, retinue of harem women, retinue of *khattiya* vassals, troops, subjects in town and countryside will also follow to dwell with heedfulness. It results in the protection of oneself and other valuable things. The *Dhammapada* of *Khuddaka Nikāya* provides a special chapter that deals with the Buddha's teachings on *Appamāda*. The *Appamāda* teachings as contained in the *Appamādavagga* of *Dhammapada* are as follows:

“Heedfulness is the path to the Deathless. Heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful does not die. The heedless are as if dead already.”

(*Appamādo amatapadaṃ, pamādo maccuno padaṃ; Appamattā na mīyanti, ye pamattā yathā matā*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

In this stanza, the Buddha shows the significance of *Appamāda* since it is the path of attainment of Deathless or Nibbāna. *Appamāda* leads the one to practise of the Noble Eightfold Path which is said to be the Path Leading to the End of Suffering. By being heedful, one is able to practice what should be practiced. Therefore,

heedfulness brings great benefit, especially in leading one on the practice to attain the Deathless, final liberation. While heedless one is useless just as dead body. Heedlessness brings much dangers. Therefore, the Buddha further says thus:

“Clearly understanding this excellence of heedfulness, the wise exult therein and enjoy the resort of the Noble Ones.”

(*Evaṃ viśesato ñatvā, appamādamhi paṇḍitā; Appamāde pamodanti, ariyānaṃ gocare ratā*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

It means, having understood the excellence of *Appamāda*, the wise is pleased in the practice of *Appamāda* and delighted in the resort of Noble Ones. The wise people are always delighted in cultivating wholesome qualities. By being heedful, the wise is stepping closer to the taste of freedom. Therefore, the Buddha states:

“The wise ones, ever meditative and steadfastly persevering, alone experience Nibbana, the incomparable freedom from bondage.”

(*Te jhāyino sātatikā, niccaṃ dalhaparakkamā; Phusanti dhīrā nibbānaṃ, yogakkhemaṃ anuttaraṃ*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

Appamāda brings to development of good things. All achievements are gained with the base of *Appamāda*. The Buddha further states that:

“Ever grows the glory of him who is energetic, mindful and pure in conduct, discerning and self-controlled, righteous and heedful.”

(*Uṭṭhānavato satīmato, sucikammaṃsa nisammakārino; Saññatassa dhammajīvino, appamattassa yasobhivaḍḍhati.*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

With *Appamāda*, one is able to make a protection for himself. Therefore, the Buddha states:

“By effort and heedfulness, discipline and self-mastery, let the wise one makes for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm.”

(*Uṭṭhānenappamādena, saṃyamena damena ca; Dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī, yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

The wise one knows what is beneficial. Not only knowing it, with *Appamāda*, the wise one keeps developing the wholesome qualities which bring to much benefit. For the wise one, *Appamāda* is valuable treasure which should be protected. The Buddha says that:

“The foolish and ignorant indulge in heedlessness, but the wise one keeps his heedfulness as his best treasure.”

(*Pamādamanuyūñjanti, bālā dummedhino janā; Appamādañca medhāvī, dhaṇaṃ seṭṭhaṃva rakkhati*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

The Buddha always encourages the disciples to engage with *Appamāda*. It is only with *Appamāda* wholesome qualities develops. This *Appamāda* brings to great happiness. The Buddha instructs the disciples thus:

“Do not give way to heedlessness. Do not indulge in sensual pleasures. Only the heedful and meditative attain great happiness.”

(*Mā pamādamanuyuñjetha, mā kāmaratisanthavaṃ; Appamatto hi jhāyanto, pappoti vipulaṃ sukhaṃ*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

Heedlessness should be casted away, and heedfulness should be developed. It is said by the Buddha that:

“Just as one upon the summit of a mountain beholds the groundlings, even so when the wise man casts away heedlessness by heedfulness and ascends the high tower of wisdom, this sorrowless sage beholds the sorrowing and foolish multitude.”

(*Pamādaṃ appamādena, yadā nudati paṇḍito; Paññāpāsādamāruyha, asoko sokiniṃ pajam; Pabbataṭṭhova bhūmaṭṭhe, dhīro bāle avekkhatī*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

It is further said that:

“Heedful among the heedless, wide-awake among the sleepy, the wise man advances like a swift horse leaving behind a weak jade.”

(*Appamatto pamattesu, suttesu bahujāgaro; Abalassaṃva sīghasso, hitvā yāti sumedhaso*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

Heedfulness is praised by the wise people, while heedlessness is despised by the wise. It is stated in the *Dhammapada* that:

“By Heedfulness did Indra become the overlord of the gods. Heedfulness is ever praised, and heedlessness ever despised.”

(*Appamādena maghavā, devānaṃ seṭṭhataṃ gato; Appamādaṃ pasamsanti, pamādo garahito sadā*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

Heedlessness should be seen as danger, because it leads to much unbeneficial results. While, heedfulness should be seen as beneficial, because it brings to benefits. Heedfulness destroys the defilements which are the roots of unwholesome qualities. It brings one stepping closer to *Nibbāna*. It is stated by the Buddha that:

“The monk who delights in heedfulness and looks with fear at heedlessness advances like fire, burning all fetters, small and large.”

(*Appamādarato bhikkhu, pamāde bhayadassi vā; Saṃyojanaṃ aṇuṃ thūlaṃ, ḍahaṃ aggīva gacchatī*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

“The monk who delights in heedfulness and looks with fear at heedlessness will not fall. He is close to *Nibbāna*.”

(*Appamādarato bhikkhu, pamāde bhayadassi vā; Abhabbo parihānāya, nibbānasseva santike*) (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

The Importance of *Appamāda* in the Buddha's Teachings

The Buddha has shown the significance of *Appamāda* in various occasions. It is not only for benefit in this life, but also for benefit for the future birth and for the attainment of liberation. The Buddha highlights the importance of *Appamāda* in various suttas scattered in the Sutta Piṭaka.

In the Tathāgata Sutta of Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Buddha states:

“Bhikkhus, whatever beings there are - whether those without feet or those with two feet or those with four feet or those with many feet, whether consisting of form or formless, whether percipient, non-percipient, or neither percipient nor non-percipient - the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, is declared to be the foremost among them. So too, whatever wholesome states there are, they are all rooted in heedfulness, converge upon heedfulness, and heedfulness is declared to be the foremost among them,” (Feer, 1976).

In the *Pada Sutta* of Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Buddha states:

“Monks, just as the footprints of all living beings that walk fit into the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant’s footprint is declared to be the foremost among them, that is, with respect to size, so too whatever wholesome states there are, they are all rooted in heedfulness, converge upon heedfulness, and heedfulness is declared to be the foremost among them,” (Feer, 1976).

In the same manner, the *Kūṭādisuttapañcakaṃ* and *Candimādisuttatatiyakaṃ* reports the importance of *Appamāda* highlighted by the Buddha in simile of the roof peak, roots, heartwood, jasmine, monarch, the moon, the sun, and the cloth (Feer, 1976). In the *Appamāda Sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha elaborates the importance of *Appamāda* with ten similes, which some of them are similar to the suttas mentioned above. In this sutta, the Buddha adds this following statement;

“Just as, whatever great rivers there are—that is, the Ganges, the Yamunā, the Aciravatī, the Sarabhū, and the Mahī—all head toward the ocean, slant, slope, and incline toward the ocean, and the ocean is declared foremost among them, so too, all wholesome qualities are rooted in heedfulness and converge upon heedfulness and heedfulness is declared foremost among them,” (Hardy, 1958).

If it is examined, the significances of *Appamāda* can be explained as follow:

***Appamāda* as the Foundation of Moral Actions**

As the meaning of *Appamāda* denotes the heedfulness in wholesome qualities, *Appamāda* plays significant role in moral actions. It behaves as the foundation of moral actions as it is stated by the Buddha that whatever wholesome qualities have *Appamāda* as its root and junction (Feer, 1976). The Buddha also regards *Appamāda* as the foremost among the wholesome qualities (Feer, 1976). In

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the Maṅgala Sutta, the Buddha mentions Appamāda in wholesome qualities as the highest blessing (Smith, 1978). It is due to heedlessness (pamāda) that leads to the decline of wholesome qualities and it is also due to heedfulness (appamāda) that leads to the arise of wholesome qualities. As reported in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha states the following statements:

“Monks, I do not see even a single thing that so leads to the decline and disappearance of the wholesome qualities as heedlessness. Heedlessness leads to the decline and disappearance of wholesome qualities.”

“Monks, I do not see even a single thing that so leads to the arise and non-disappearance of the wholesome qualities as heedfulness. Heedfulness leads to the arise and non-disappearance of the wholesome qualities.” (Warder, 1961).

Appamāda as the Path of Liberation

Appamāda is considered in Buddhism as the foundation of spiritual progress (Malalasekera, 1998). It is compared just as ascending to mountain and reaching to the tower of wisdom (Hinuber & Norman, 1994). The Buddha states that *Appamāda* is the path of liberation. In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha says that “Heedfulness is the path to the Deathless. Heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful die not. The heedless are as if dead already. Clearly understanding this excellence of heedfulness, the wise exult therein and enjoy the resort of the Noble Ones” (Hinuber & Norman, 1994). Here, the path to the Deathless refers to *Nibbāna*. Because there is no more birth, no decay and no death, therefore it is called as Deathless. *Nibbāna* is final liberation which is described as the supreme or highest happiness in the sense that it denotes the total absence of suffering, which is also called Supreme Blessing (Anderson & Smith, 1913).

Liberation means free from defilements. The path to liberation is the path eradicating the defilements. In this case, *Appamāda* is recommended by the Buddha, since with *Appamāda*, by being heedful, one is able to cast away the defilements, and he is close to *Nibbāna* (Hinuber & Norman, 1994).

Appamāda directs one to the attainment of liberation. *Appamāda* supports to the arising of conditions for spiritual development. As revealed in the *Paṭiṭṭhita Sutta*, the Buddha instructs his disciples that when a monk is established in one thing, namely *Appamāda*, the five faculties are developed and well developed in him. Here, *Appamāda* is explained that a monk guards the mind against the taints and against tainted states. While he is guarding the mind thus, the faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration and the faculty of wisdom goes to fulfilment by development (Feer, 1976).

Appamāda as the Last Word of the Buddha

Before passing away, the Buddha admonishes his disciples with following statement, “All conditioned things are subject to decay, strive on with heedfulness! (*Handadāni, bhikkhave, āmantayāmi vo, vayasammā saṅkhārā, appamādena*)

sampādeṭṭha) (R. T. W. Davids & Carpenter, 1966). In this statement, the Buddha encourages his disciples to strive hard with heedfulness, since all conditioned things are subject to decay. The conditioned things in this world are impermanent and subject to decay. Whatever is impermanent is suffering. Heedfulness or *Appamāda* is an important practice to encounter those conditioned things which are impermanent.

3. The Practice of *Appamāda* in Daily Life

Understanding that *Appamāda* is very important practice, one should practice the *Appamāda* in daily life. What is called *Appamāda* is said by the Buddha as practice of protecting the mind against the mental impurities and the mental states that accompany them (Feer, 1976). Therefore, one has to be mindful, protecting his own mind so that the mental impurities do not have power to control the mind. In this case, *Appamāda* is practiced by presenting mindfulness in every activity in daily life. The practice of *Appamāda*, cannot be carry out without mindfulness (*satiyā avippavāsa*) (R. T. . Davids & Carpenter, 1975). One has to establish mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom (*sampajañña*) in the same time. Mindfulness is to clearly identify all the mental states and wisdom is to decide whether they have to be eliminated or should be developed. The unwholesome mental states are to be eliminated and the wholesome mental states are to be developed.

Appamāda can be practised in daily life by presenting mindfulness in every activity. Mindfulness brings one to the present moment. Mindfulness functions as a moral gate keeper. As *Appamāda* is practised together with mindfulness, therefore, the practice of *Appamāda* brings to moral conduct, refraining from doing evil and cultivating the wholesome qualities. In the *Pamādavihārī Sutta*, the Buddha has given practical explanation on how *Appamāda* is to be practiced. One who dwells restraining the eye faculty, tongue faculty, mind faculty, the mind is not stained by mental phenomena cognizable by the mind. One whose mind is not stained, joy arises. In one who is joyful, exaltation arises. For one who is exalted, the body becomes tranquil. One whose body is tranquil dwells in well-being. For one in well-being, the mind concentrates. When the mind is concentrated, phenomena become manifest. When phenomena are manifest, one is considered as 'one who dwells heedfully' (*appamādavihārī*) (Feer, 1990).

In the *Appamāda Sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha advises to monks that the heedfulness (*appamāda*) should be practised in these four occasions, namely: when abandoning the bodily misconduct and developing bodily good conduct, when abandoning the verbal misconduct and developing verbal good conduct, when abandoning the mental misconduct and developing mental good conduct and when abandoning wrong view and developing right view (Morris, 1976). It means heedfulness should be presented in the effort to abandon unwholesome qualities and in effort to develop wholesome qualities. In this regard, *Appamāda* will bring someone to the practise of right effort. Right effort in Buddhism is to exert oneself to develop wholesome qualities and release unwholesome qualities. It is the effort to prevent unwholesome qualities from arising, the effort to extinguish unwholesome qualities that already have arisen, the

effort to cultivate skillful, or wholesome, qualities that have not yet arisen and the effort to develop the wholesome qualities that have already arisen.

DISCUSSION

This research has found that *Appamāda* is not merely mindfulness in the context of moment-to-moment awareness, but also serves as a profound ethical and moral foundation within the Buddha's teachings. *Appamāda* plays a dual role, not only in cultivating awareness but also as a crucial tool in guiding individuals towards moral and spiritual actions, thereby supporting holistic personal development. By integrating mindfulness with ethical reflection, *Appamāda* encourages the cultivation of wholesome qualities and the abandonment of unwholesome mental states, making it essential for spiritual growth and moral conduct in daily life.

In recent years, the global trend of mindfulness, particularly in the Western world, has primarily focused on its psychological benefits, such as stress reduction and emotional regulation. This secular approach to mindfulness has gained significant popularity, especially as a tool to manage the rising levels of stress and anxiety, which have increased dramatically, particularly among younger populations. For instance, in 2021, nearly 28% of individuals aged 16 to 29 reported experiencing anxiety, with women consistently showing higher levels of anxiety compared to men (Mental Health Foundation, 2024). While the practice of mindfulness in the West has been effective in addressing these psychological challenges, it often overlooks the ethical and spiritual dimensions that are intrinsic to its Buddhist origins. *Appamāda*, a central concept in Buddhism, offers a more comprehensive approach by integrating mindfulness with moral and ethical awareness, which is essential for spiritual and mental well-being. In contrast to the secular trend, *Appamāda* promotes a holistic practice that emphasizes not only present-moment awareness but also the cultivation of ethical qualities and moral conduct. This deeper understanding of mindfulness, rooted in *Appamāda*, provides a necessary balance that is currently missing in Western mindfulness practices, offering an enriched pathway for addressing not only stress and anxiety but also fostering ethical and spiritual growth.

The findings of this research align with previous studies that have recognized the psychological benefits of mindfulness, particularly in reducing stress, improving emotional regulation, and enhancing cognitive functions (Reid et al., 2024). However, this study diverges from the prevailing trend in Western mindfulness research, which often neglects the moral and spiritual dimensions intrinsic to traditional practices. Similar to the critiques raised by Krägeloh (2016) and Malin (2023), this research highlights that secular mindfulness has transformed into a "science of happiness," where the deeper ethical aspects are stripped away. While secular mindfulness has proven effective in mental health contexts, it lacks the comprehensive approach found in *Appamāda*, which integrates ethical self-awareness alongside mindfulness. Additionally, studies such as those by Ainsworth et al. (2023) and Métivier (2022) acknowledge the tension between maintaining scientific rigor and incorporating the moral and spiritual aspects of mindfulness. This research, in contrast, argues that integrating these dimensions—particularly through *Appamāda*—is not only possible but necessary for fostering holistic well-

being. Furthermore, the findings resonate with those of Malin (2023) and Reid et al. (2024) in the educational context, where the integration of mindfulness with spiritual or ethical frameworks has been shown to enhance moral development in youth. Lastly, this study supports Dhaka, Gupta, and Sharma (2024), who found that Buddhist mindfulness meditation enhances ethical behavior in the workplace, underscoring the importance of a more holistic approach to mindfulness that includes ethical and moral reflection.

This research highlights the unique contributions of *Appamāda* to stress management by integrating mindfulness with ethical and moral dimensions, a perspective that is largely missing in secular mindfulness practices. Previous studies have shown that religion and spirituality provide significant coping mechanisms for managing stress, particularly by offering emotional support and a sense of purpose (Gnanaprakash, 2013; Kowalczyk et al., 2022; Perera, Pandey, & Srivastava, 2018; Philip, Neuer Colburn, Underwood, & Bayne, 2019). These findings align with the core principles of *Appamāda*, which similarly emphasizes ethical mindfulness and spiritual guidance as tools for managing stress and promoting well-being. In healthcare settings, particularly among nurses and oncologists, religious and spiritual practices have been found to be effective in managing work-related stress and emotional burnout (Kowalczyk et al., 2022; Perera et al., 2018; Wiśniewska, 2023). This resonates with *Appamāda*, which not only promotes mindfulness but also supports resilience and emotional regulation through ethical and spiritual reflection. Furthermore, like the role of religion and spirituality in improving mental health outcomes—such as reduced depression and anxiety (Dein, Cook, Powell, & Eagger, 2010; Koenig, 2009, 2018)—*Appamāda* also offers a comprehensive framework for addressing both mental and emotional challenges by fostering a deeper moral consciousness.

The therapeutic integration of religious and spiritual elements, as seen in previous research, has been beneficial for addressing existential crises and enhancing overall well-being (Dumulescu, Necula, Sarca, & Cristea, 2022; Plante & Smith, 2010). Similarly, *Appamāda* provides not only a mindfulness practice but also a spiritual foundation that can help individuals navigate existential questions and emotional struggles. For the elderly population, spirituality and religiosity have been linked to greater life satisfaction and lower stress levels (Borole, Pandit, & Dawane, 2013; Callen, Mefford, Groër, & Thomas, 2011), which parallels the role of *Appamāda* in fostering a sense of ethical purpose and spiritual fulfillment. Moreover, the cultural sensitivity required for effective stress management through religion and spirituality (Elkonin, Brown, & Naicker, 2014; Perera et al., 2018) is reflected in *Appamāda*, which can be adapted to various cultural contexts while maintaining its emphasis on moral and ethical awareness. These comparisons illustrate that, like religion and spirituality, *Appamāda* offers a holistic approach to stress management, enhancing both emotional resilience and moral development.

The findings of this research on *Appamāda* highlight a critical gap in modern mindfulness practices, particularly in their detachment from the ethical and moral frameworks that are foundational to traditional mindfulness in Buddhism. This detachment reflects a larger phenomenon where spirituality in the modern era is increasingly secularized, often focusing on mental health and emotional regulation without integrating the moral dimensions that guide personal conduct and decision-

making. The emphasis on *Appamāda* as a practice that nurtures not only mindfulness but also ethical self-awareness suggests a significant potential for addressing this gap. By integrating the ethical and moral aspects of *Appamāda*, modern mindfulness practices could evolve to provide more holistic spiritual development, supporting not just emotional well-being but also fostering personal responsibility and ethical behavior. This is especially relevant in today's social context, where issues of moral decay and ethical lapses are increasingly prevalent. In essence, *Appamāda* could serve as a crucial bridge, enriching modern spirituality by aligning mindfulness with ethical action, thus addressing both individual and societal challenges in the quest for a balanced and morally grounded life.

Integrating *Appamāda* into the global mindfulness movement could significantly enhance the quality of personal development by introducing a holistic approach that incorporates moral responsibility into spiritual practice. Unlike secular mindfulness, which often focuses solely on present-moment awareness and stress reduction, *Appamāda* encourages individuals to cultivate ethical behavior alongside mental clarity. This integration not only enriches personal mindfulness practices but also fosters a sense of moral accountability, thus offering a more comprehensive path to well-being and spiritual growth.

In the face of rising mental health challenges and an increasing societal quest for meaning, *Appamāda* provides a robust ethical foundation for spiritual development. Modern issues such as anxiety, depression, and a lack of purpose underscore the necessity for a practice that not only alleviates mental suffering but also guides individuals toward moral and ethical growth. By offering a structured ethical framework, *Appamāda* helps address the root causes of both mental and spiritual unrest, positioning itself as an essential component in contemporary mindfulness practices.

Moving forward, modern mindfulness practices should integrate the principles of *Appamāda* to strike a balance between moment-to-moment awareness and moral responsibility. This synthesis would not only deepen the spiritual aspects of mindfulness but also direct practitioners toward the ultimate goal of liberation from suffering. By incorporating ethical considerations into daily mindfulness practices, *Appamāda* can guide individuals towards more meaningful and morally grounded spiritual journeys, thereby aligning contemporary practices with the deeper aims of traditional Buddhist teachings.

CONCLUSION

This research establishes *Appamāda* as a fundamental moral and spiritual foundation in Buddhist teachings, offering valuable insights that can enhance modern mindfulness practices, which often overlook ethical considerations. *Appamāda* not only supports the cultivation of mindfulness but also plays a critical role in fostering moral awareness and the development of wholesome mental qualities, making it an essential aspect of spiritual and personal growth. This study enriches the current body of modern mindfulness literature by connecting it with *Appamāda*, thereby reinforcing the importance of integrating ethical consciousness into spiritual development. The analysis of *Appamāda* offers a more holistic

approach to mindfulness, emphasizing the significance of moral judgement and diligence in nurturing a balanced and reflective practice.

The study's limitation lies in the scarcity of empirical sources and contemporary applications of *Appamāda* in modern Buddhist practice. Future research should focus on exploring how *Appamāda* can be effectively integrated into the evolving landscape of global mindfulness practices, potentially offering a more ethically grounded framework for addressing mental health, stress, and spiritual development in contemporary settings.

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